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Pastoral Letter

Weekend 10th/11th October 2026

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

For years now there has been much talk of the need to restructure and reduce the number of parishes in the Archdiocese. A plan for that restructuring has now been drawn up, reducing the number of parishes by half and seeing the closure of two dozen churches. You can read the details in this weekend's edition of Flourish.

There are too many parishes but too few people, too many churches but too few priests. Compared to when these parishes were formed and our churches built, there are significantly fewer people coming to Mass. Some of our largest churches are in places where there are the fewest of people. And as for priests, I have been Archbishop for less than five years and the number of our active priests is down by a third in that time. Only one of our priests is under the age of 45, most are over the age of 60. Thank goodness we have foreign priests and religious willing to serve in the Archdiocese, otherwise the situation would be even more critical than it is.

Our parishes and our churches hold great memories for us and are dear to our hearts, so any reduction in parishes and any closure of churches will be a painful experience. We cannot avoid that pain, though, by not facing up to reality. Just as the vinedresser cuts back the vine so that it may grow, so we too must trim and prune in order to stay healthy, in order to grow.

I would ask everyone in the Archdiocese to respond to these plans with a spirit of cooperation and a willingness to make sacrifices, to look to the past with fondness, but to let the past go in order to enable a new future to take shape.

May we trust in God as we face the road ahead.

Let us pray for each other as we make difficult decisions in these changing times.

In Christ,

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+William Nolan
Archbishop of Glasgow