

THE HOOK OF FAITH MISSION STATEMENT:

‘TO DIGITALLY PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL IN THE DIOCESE OF FERNS
AND BEYOND’

OUR EIGHT PRINCIPLES:

1. Evangelical and Kerygmatic:

After Pentecost, the first Christians went out into the streets or wherever people gathered and preached a fundamental message in the power of the Holy Spirit – ‘Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and he is Lord. In him we know God loves us; he gave his life to save us and now he is living to enlighten, strengthen and free us. In him is eternal life and the forgiveness of sins. Repent and believe the Good News. Receive the gift of his Holy Spirit’.

‘The Hook of Faith’ seeks to continue this first proclamation of the Gospel because, in the words of Pope Francis, ‘it is the principal proclamation, the one which we must hear again and again in different ways, the one which we must announce one way or another at every level and moment’ (*The Joy of the Gospel*, 164).

The mission and content of ‘the Hook of Faith’ seeks to bring the power of the Gospel to a wide audience through the new media.

2. Christological:

The Good News of the Gospel centres on the person of Jesus Christ. It believes that everything revolves around and returns to Christ. Creation, relationships, theology, politics, art, philosophy and culture all find their point of convergence in the person of Jesus, the Word made flesh (John 1:14). This is the same Christ who immersed himself in human history as ‘Immanuel’ the name which means ‘God is with us’ (Matt. 1:23).

‘The Hook of Faith’ re-proposes that faith in the person of Christ is what makes life meaningful and beautiful. At a time of religious decline, it seeks to ‘start afresh from Christ’ who is still ‘the way, the truth, the life’ (John 14:6) and ‘the light of the world’ (John 8:12). By contemplating his life, death and resurrection ‘we have come to know and believe in the love God has for us’ (1 John 4:16).

Our hope is that through the outreach of ‘The Hook of Faith’, many will experience or experience again this life-changing encounter with the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord..

3. Cultural:

Pope Paul VI once wrote that ‘the split between the Gospel and culture is without doubt the drama of our time... Therefore every effort must be made to ensure a full evangelisation of culture or more correctly of cultures’ (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 20).

The Good News of Jesus Christ is not lived in a vacuum or private worlds. Its message must engage with the cultural influences with which it interacts - music, art, history, politics, law and education. As he summoned the Church to a New Evangelization, Pope John Paul II called for faith to become culture: ‘Faith that does not become culture is not wholly embraced, fully thought or faithfully lived’ (*Address to Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Culture*, 18th March 1994).

‘The Hook of Faith’ seeks to evangelise our culture so that faith becomes culture. It seeks to help and inspire Christians to be creators and shapers of culture so that together we can ‘reach true and authentic humanity through culture by cultivating natural gifts and values’ (Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 53).

4. Recognising woundedness:

‘The Hook of Faith’ initiative is launched at a particular time in the history of the local Church here in Ferns and the Irish Church. It is a time when many are wounded because of scandals and sins in our recent history.

The mission of ‘the Hook of Faith’ seeks to contribute to the process of healing and re-building trust. While acknowledging past wrongs and probing their causes, we believe that we still can treasure all that is good, true and beautiful about the Christian faith and help people explore its power that St Patrick referred to as ‘this great and salutary gift’ (*Confessio*, 36).

5. Eucharistic and Sacramental:

For Irish Christians, rites and rituals have always been important. Blessings, prayers, patrons, anniversaries, sacraments and rites of passage in life and death are all moments of grace in the Christian Tradition that give meaning to the pilgrimage we are undertaking. They are also moments when we pause, give thanks for what has been and seek God’s blessing for what lies ahead.

‘The Hook of Faith’ acknowledges the importance of these prayerful and sacramental moments, especially the role of the Eucharist in the weekly life of the Christian community. It believes that the sacraments are key opportunities to share the Good News about God’s saving love as they build on our natural desire to mark the passage of time and our desire to worship and praise.

6. Ecclesial:

Regarding the role of the Church in facilitating an encounter between Christ and himself, the French Jesuit Cardinal Henri de Lubac (1896-1991) once famously wrote: ‘What would I know of Him without her?’ With these words de Lubac testified that his coming to know, love and believe in Jesus Christ was initiated and sustained by the Church, his mother. Centuries before him, St Augustine (354-430) preached ‘the whole Christ’ - that is Christ the head united with his body, the Church (*Commentary on the Psalms* 85: 90, 2).

Although the content of ‘the Hook of Faith’ will be viewed by individuals via their computers, it upholds the importance of the Church community in facilitating our encounter with Christ – that when we come in contact with the Church community, this encounter somehow mediates Christ’s presence and action. There are many who are waiting and longing ‘to know and love Him through her’. Together, let’s help make it happen by creating communities and parishes where people feel welcome, accepted and loved.

7. Collaborative:

Reading the signs of the times and discerning the future, there is little doubt that the Church of the future will be a collaborative Church with priests, religious and laity working together as a body to bear witness to the Gospel. At a Pastoral Convention of the Diocese of Rome in 2009, Pope Benedict XVI said: ‘The laity must no longer be viewed as collaborators of the clergy but truly recognized as co-responsible for the Church's being and action’ (Basilica of St. John Lateran, 26th May 2009).

From the outset, ‘the Hook of Faith’ has been a collaborative project involving priests and laity working and planning together. It has called on the gifts and skills of many who have generously put these at the service of this missionary initiative. As we proceed, the hope is to involve an even wider circle of people who are willing to write reflections and articles or share their faith on the digital highway.

8. Universal:

Perhaps at no other time in human history can we appreciate better the reality of belonging to a singular human family. With the efficiency and speed of communications and the opportunities for travel, we realise that the world is comprised of a multiplicity of cultures, traditions, nations and languages. Despite this plurality, the Church is a community of faith that embraces all this diversity. She is one and she is catholic or universal as she was on the day of Pentecost.

Though originating in a local Church (the diocese of Ferns, Ireland), ‘the Hook of Faith’ seeks to evangelise our own culture but reach out to other nations, cultures and traditions. It seeks to have a catholic or universal scope via the internet that transcends national and cultural boundaries. In the words of Pope Francis: ‘Missionary spirit is not only about geographical territories, but about peoples, cultures and individuals, because the “boundaries” of faith do not only cross places and human traditions, but the heart of each man and each woman’ (*Message for World Mission Day 2013*).

The Hook of Faith is a response by us who hear the words of Scripture with new hearts: ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth’ (Acts 13:47; cf. Is. 49:6).