

Volunteer Reply Sheet

I am interested in getting involved in the following areas.

Please tick

Proclaiming the Scriptures at Mass

The gift of time in prayerful preparation before Sunday so that the Lord can touch the hearts of his people through your voice.

Parish Youth Choir

The gift of your voice in song to help lift our hearts in joyful praise and worship.

Playing Musical Instruments at Mass

The gift of your talent with any musical instrument to make our Sunday Eucharist more beautiful.

Parish Youth Pastoral Council

The gift of your presence on a small group of young people and some adults who meet every few weeks to discuss parish life and to advise and take action in reaching out to young people.

Youth Faith Group

The gift of your presence in a parish youth faith group who meet to explore our faith in more depth, to pray and to organise activities and events to promote the Gospel in a spirit of real friendship and fun. Projects might include pilgrimages to Knock, Croagh Patrick, Lourdes, Rome or World Youth Day.

Community, Justice and Peace Group

The gift of your time and energy to serve others in Jesus' name, for example; visiting the elderly, fundraising events for Trócaire, promoting human rights and religious freedom etc.

Other suggestion - as described below

*These are my contact details.
Please contact me with follow-up information.*

Name _____

Address _____

Date of Birth _____

School Year _____

Email _____

Phone _____

SMS _____

Parish of Lisdoonvarna and Kilshanny

serving the Churches of Lisdoonvarna, Kilshanny, Doolin and Toovahera

a letter and an

Invitation

to the

Young People of our Parish



The ancient cross of Toovahera Church - a parish treasure

Dear young people,
the decision to believe in Jesus Christ
and to follow him is not an easy one.
It is hindered by our personal failures
and by the many voices that point us towards easier paths.
Do not be discouraged.
Rather, look for the support of the Christian community,
the support of the Church.
The Church depends on you!
She needs your lively faith,
your creative charity and the energy of your hope.
Your presence renews, rejuvenates,
and gives new energy to the Church.

Pope Benedict XVI

to young people gathering for World Youth Day 2011, Madrid

Dear young parishioners,

I write these lines to place an invitation before you to think about becoming more involved in the life of your local Christian community. Our parish certainly could do with the gifts of your presence, your time and your talents!

Even to begin to think about your reply to this invitation raises a load of questions. *What exactly is a Christian? What is the Catholic Church? What is a parish? Why Should I bother getting involved?* Allow me try to sketch a brief word on each of these biggies.

What is a Christian?

A Christian is a person who believes that there is a God, that he created everything out of pure love, that his masterpiece is the human person who he made in his own image - that is to say we are Godlike in that we can love like God loves, we are totally free as God is free, and we are designed to be as eternal as God. A Christian believes that human beings ruined God's original dream by abusing their freedom to reject love, life and Godlikeness. A Christian believes that we therefore needed a restorer, a redeemer, a saviour, and that God himself broke through into our world and into our very humanity in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. A Christian believes that Jesus is God and Man, the long-awaited messiah, the anointed one, and so we call him Jesus Christ, the Lord. By the power of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection a Christian joyfully believes that we can rise above our sins, and over death itself, and aim for the eternal bliss of heaven. Faith in all this gives us bedrock joy and strength to face the challenges of life.

What is the Catholic Church?

The word 'Church' comes from a Greek word meaning 'a calling together of people', and the word 'Catholic' comes from a Greek word meaning 'universal and all-embracing'. The Catholic Church believes that it is a community of people called together by God and that everyone is invited - age, colour and national borders do not matter. The Lord sends his power and his Holy Spirit into this called together community so that we may witness to Jesus before the whole world and that we may serve all of humanity in his name.

Can't I believe in Jesus without being part of his Church?

Jesus speaks frequently in the Gospels about his Church. He taught that his Church would continue his presence and action in the world. He spoke lovingly and movingly about his Church the night before he died for us. It therefore does not make any sense to claim to follow Jesus and at the same time reject this central part of his teaching and his mission. It is not possible to be a true Christian without accepting his call to know and serve him in his Church.

What about all the scandals in the Church, isn't it better to just protest and walk away from it all?

Scandals and bad leadership in the Church are certainly a great source of shame for people who love Jesus and who love his Church. Our hearts break when we hear of people who were gravely hurt and let down by the very people who should have been signs of Christ's love to them. We pray for them constantly, and we have worked hard to put steps in place to help ensure such things do not happen again. It is understandable if people walk away out of anger or shame, but it is not the right thing to do for those who believe in Jesus. He calls us instead to each play our own role in the renewal and purification of his community. He asks us not to leave him but to be brave, honourable and faithful enough to stay, and to help bring his reign of joy, peace and human rights into our world.

What exactly is a parish?

A parish is often understood as a specific geographical area of the worldwide Church, but it is more correct to say that it is actually the community of Christ's followers in that area. The word 'parish' comes from a Greek word that means 'a household alongside a household'. The early Christians picked this word for their local church communities because they wanted to convey the idea that although they lived alongside the broader, civil, secular society and cooperated with it and served it, that they were really a distinct community in themselves, and that the eyes of their hearts were fixed on God's kingdom rather than on the things that non-believers base their lives upon.

Why should I get actively involved in my local parish?

I know you are very busy with studies, sports, home duties and many other activities, all of them good and life-giving in themselves. Some day though - if it has not happened already - you will ask yourself some big questions about the meaning of life itself. *What is it all about? Why am I here? How can I live life to the full?* Your parish offers you real answers to these questions, answers that come directly from God and that are revealed to us in the person of Jesus. We encounter him at our Sunday Mass as he makes himself really and truly present in each other, in his holy word of scripture and in his living presence in the holy Eucharist to be our strength from heaven.

At our Sunday gathering your parish offers you friendship, faith, and a firm and joyful foundation for your life. Your parish in turn needs your presence, your personality, and your talents and gifts if we are to thrive and carry the joy of Christ into the lives of others.

Dear friends, I know these lines are full of crucial questions dealing with some fairly mind-blowing themes. I deliberately didn't want to over simplify things or to write as if you were still very young children. When I was your age at school I did not want to be spoken down to or treated as if I couldn't handle big questions. I invite you to reflect with honesty on these crucial questions of philosophy, faith and spirituality. It would be a good idea to contemplate them in God's presence while you pray.

I hope that your reflections and your prayer might lead some of you to step forward and volunteer for more active involvement in parish life in some of the areas suggested on the attached form which you can return to me as soon as you're ready. My contact details are below. You can get in touch with me anytime if you'd like to chat a bit more about anything. You might also like to 'like' our parish Facebook page.

Thanks for taking the time to read this letter. I will continue to keep you and your loved ones in my prayers. May the Lord bless you now and always.



Father Conor Cunningham

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**Parish of
Lisdoonvarna and Kilshanny**