

SUMMER 2026



Down and Connor Vocations Newsletter



A word of welcome

We are delighted to share this summer update and offer a glimpse into some of the encouraging vocation work taking place across the Diocese of Down and Connor. We are deeply grateful for the continued prayers, encouragement and support of our priests and parish communities as together we seek to foster a culture in which vocations to the priesthood and religious life can be heard, nurtured and generously answered.

Vocations updates

It was a wonderful summer for vocations in our Diocese, marked by the joyful ordination of Fr Thomas Hampton just a few weeks ago. We are also delighted that, after spending a year at the Irish College in Rome, Edward McKendry, from the Parish of Glenravel and the Braid, will enter Maynooth for the Diocese this September. Meanwhile, Cian from Saul and Ballee Parish, and Uanán from St Michael's Parish will travel to Valladolid, Spain, to begin their propaedeutic year at the Royal English College. Our current seminarians, Damien, Ciarán, Gareth, Darach, Pascal and Gerard continue their formation and studies at Maynooth.

Looking ahead to the autumn, we will host a Discernment Night for women considering a vocation to religious life, providing an opportunity for prayer, reflection, conversation and community; further details will be shared once plans are confirmed. We will also be encouraging our current discerners to attend a Come and See event at St Patrick's National Seminary, Maynooth, giving them an opportunity to experience seminary life and further explore where the Lord may be calling them. We will begin visiting post-primary schools across the Diocese, speaking with pupils about the beauty and joy of the priesthood, helping them understand what discernment means, and explaining in an accessible way the pathway towards becoming a priest in our Diocese; alongside this, our regular discernment nights, parish visits and one-to-one accompaniment will continue.



What's been happening?

One-to-One Accompaniment

One-to-one accompaniment of men discerning the priesthood has been an important part of Fr Conor's vocation ministry for many years, and David has been delighted to continue and build upon this valuable work. Usually meeting informally over coffee or lunch, David provides discerners with a safe and open space to speak freely about where they are in their discernment and to share honestly the questions, hopes and challenges they are experiencing. This has proven to be one of the most fruitful aspects of David's ministry so far, providing an opportunity to listen carefully, ask questions and accompany each man individually as he seeks to discover where the Lord may be leading him.

Discernment Nights

David has also had the opportunity to organise and host two Discernment Nights so far—one at the Queen's University Chaplaincy and another at St Peter's Cathedral—both of which were very encouraging and well received. Across the two evenings, around 15 men attended, coming together for a time of prayer and reflection, followed by an opportunity to socialise over pizza. These evenings provide the men with space to pray with Scripture, reflect on their own vocation, to meet other men who are discerning and build a sense of community, as well as to meet priests from around the Diocese.

Parish Visits

Over the summer, David has been visiting parishes across the Diocese, with his first visits taking him to Kircubbin and Ballymena, where he had the opportunity to speak at weekend Masses about vocations. These visits have been a wonderful opportunity for David to encourage parishioners to continue praying for vocations, to speak openly about encouraging young people who may have a vocation to the priesthood or religious life, and to meet parishioners afterwards who have questions or know someone who may be discerning. It is important that vocation promotion reaches every part of Down and Connor, and David hopes to continue making a concerted effort to visit many more parishes across the Diocese in the months ahead.

Other Events

Earlier this month, Fr Conor hosted a beautiful 24-Hour Prayer Vigil for Vocations at St Colmcille's, with hundreds attending to pray for vocations. This was followed by our Vocation Allies Evening, where around 25 priests and parish leaders gathered for presentations from the Knights of Columbanus, Fr Conor and David, followed by a constructive discussion on fostering vocations across the Diocese. Fr Conor also continues his longstanding monthly Vocation Dinners at the presbytery, bringing discerners and priests together for fellowship and an opportunity to build fraternity.

