

The 50th International Eucharistic Congress – a Kairos for all?

I believe that the 2012 International Eucharistic Congress, to be celebrated in Dublin June 10th to 17th, is a “**kairos**” - *a time of God’s special favour* –not only for Catholics but also for all the Christian Churches in Ireland. The Congress theme focuses everyone on the bond of divine grace which unites us all – *communion with Christ and with one another* – our shared ecclesial reality

On March 24th 2011 when sending the **Congress Bell** on pilgrimage throughout Ireland Cardinal Sean Brady said: “The Congress and the journey of the Bell through the country are events for everyone. My hope is that people from the other Christian Churches will also hear the **Call of the Bell**”.

The Congress theme challenges the Churches in Ireland to find creative ways to manifest and proclaim together the grace which unites us to Christ and to one another. God’s Spirit will surely show us such ways if we search for them together in faith and friendship. For “**God must be allowed to surprise us**”. The Congress is an invitation to Eucharistic renewal for every Catholic parish and indeed for every local congregation of the other Churches. I believe that some shared grassroots ecumenical preparation for it can enhance our response to this call.

Preaching on Holy Thursday 21st April 2011 Archbishop Diarmuid Martin announced that the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev. Michael Jackson had accepted his invitation to preside at the **Liturgy of Word and Water** on Monday 11th June 2012, a special celebration on the second day of the International Congress. So the ecumenical celebration of the Eucharistic Congress is already in place.

We met with Fr Eddie McGee, the Down and Connor diocesan representative on the I.E.C. National Committee, to explore what we can do to help our brothers and sisters in Christ from the local congregations of the other Churches to hear the call of the Congress Bell. He encouraged us to work through ecumenical initiatives already established. These are:

- a) **Wednesday Prayer** - Catholic unity pilgrims meet in the Adoration convent chapel for a weekly hour (7.00pm – 8.00pm) and a monthly vigil (7.00pm to 7.00am) praying that unity among Christians will bless the Eucharistic Congress.
- b) “**Together on Sunday**” - Catholic unity pilgrims go as **living bells** of the Congress theme - *communion with Christ and with one another* – when they visit other congregations in faith and friendship on the Lord’s Day.
- c) “**In Joyful Hope**” celebrations during 2011/12 in St Dorothea’s, Gilnahirk on Sept. 29th; in St Malachy’s Alfred St on Nov. 23rd; in Joanmount Methodist on Feb. 7th 2012; in a Presbyterian Church in April/May 2021. We will help new groups to begin such celebrations outside of Belfast.

To help foster a local ecumenical dimension we have arranged a Catholic/Protestant meeting in **Clonard Monastery on Wednesday 14th September: 11:00am - 12:30pm** to explore together God’s call to us all in this “**kairos**” year. The agenda will comprise two 10-minute presentations (a) **Fr Eddie McGee on “The local ecumenical dimension of the International Eucharistic Congress”**; (b) **Rev. Dennis Cooke on “The Grace of the Eucharist”**. Small group discussions on questions set by the speakers for 30 minutes followed by open forum and next step?