

**LAY PARTICIPATION** / Bishop says Baptism ‘calls us to serve in new ways’ to relieve pressure on fewer priests

# Clogher gets 30 lay funeral ministers

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**BISHOP OF** Clogher Lawrence (Larry) Duffy has commissioned the first 30 lay funeral ministers for the diocese, telling the congregation at Holy Cross Church, Lisnaskea that Baptism “calls us to serve in new ways”.

His message echoed the title of his pastoral letter of July last year in which he said Clogher must look “at a whole new model”, given the predictions for the next 20 years. These include fewer than 10 priests covering 85 churches and just one ordination expected in the next seven years.

Last weekend’s commissioning of lay funeral ministers in Clogher was described by the diocese as an “historic” day. It is part of a plan for greater lay involvement in the diocese which Bishop Duffy said had become “far too dependent on our priests for not just



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Bishop Duffy and the ministers at the Holy Cross Church, Lisnaskea

pastoral care but for administration, property maintenance, planning and governance of parishes.”

The new lay ministers will accompany bereaved families and will lead some parts of funeral liturgies.

Speaking to *The Tablet*, Frances Callaghan, one of the lay ministers commissioned in Lisnaskea

church, said they are authorised to officiate at various stages of the funeral rites, including ceremonies at the deceased’s residence, receiving remains at the church, conducting services in crematoriums, and offering solace and prayers at gravesides.

“Lay funeral ministers play a pivotal role in providing solace and support to grieving families,”

she said. The new ministers underwent “thorough training and formation”, provided under the guidance of Bishop Duffy.

Ms Callaghan has a degree in theology and a MPhil in Christian Theology from Trinity College, Dublin. However, she said that those seeking to join the bereavement team “do not require these qualifications and full training is provided for this ministry”.

“Central to my decision to embark on this journey into funeral ministry is the recognition of the universal call to holiness and service inherent in my baptismal vows,” she said.

Clogher’s initiative, she said, “reflects the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, which in 1965 urged greater involvement of the laity in the life of the Church” and “aligns seamlessly” with the synodal emphasis on collaboration between clergy and laity.