



26<sup>th</sup> April 2026

## **A CALL TO COURAGE**

Dear Friends,

As I write this Pastoral Letter, our minds and hearts are filled with the stories of a troubled world, where peace often feels distant. Yet we are in the season of Easter – the season of hope and promise. Above all, it reminds us that we are made for a life beyond death, where our differences and disputes will dissolve in the wonder of God’s presence.

### **Overcoming the Fear of Change**

In our shared human journey, the fear of change is often rooted in our deepest fear of death. It raises the anxious question: “*Will my life have mattered when I am gone?*” This very human question reflects our search for lasting meaning in a world of constant change, as though our worth depended on holding on tightly to what we know.

### **The Power of the Resurrection**

As I continue to journey with you, I invite you to lift your gaze to the radiant truth of the Resurrection. When we believe in the risen Christ, who burst the bonds of death and declared, “*I am the resurrection and the life*” (Jn 11:25), we are set free. We can stand more lightly on this good earth, unafraid of change, because our lives are already hidden with Christ in God (Col 3:3). The Resurrection gives us shared courage and pilgrim hearts. It inspires us to adapt boldly to every new season in parish life, in society and in our personal trials. We can trust that the same power which raised Jesus is at work within us, turning our fleeting days into eternal fruit.

### **Our Baptismal Call**

Through our Baptism, we are called in this present moment to make a difference in the world. In particular, we are called to welcome the outsider and the stranger with radical hospitality, always following the example of Jesus, who drew everyone into his friendship and, through it, into the Kingdom of God.



it challenges us to find a path together where everyone's gifts can shine. It reminds us of the ancient truth: the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The word that struck me most while reading '*Field Notes from Ferns*' was courage. We often think of courage as bravery in the face of physical danger, but the courage I have in mind is the resolve to work with those who are different from us and to create a new path that serves the common good. It is impossible to be truly curious and deeply fearful at the same time. When we choose curiosity over fear, we open the door to genuine listening, to discovering the image of God in the other and to the joyful adventure of walking together.



### **Adapting Our Structures**

This courage is especially needed when long-established structures begin to change or must be reshaped to meet new realities. In our changing ecclesial landscape, we are invited to think creatively about how the Church is structured. Our Diocese of Ferns and the neighbouring Diocese of Ossory are being invited to explore ways of sharing administration and conversations about a possible merger will follow shortly. These developments are not signs of defeat, but of a living Church adapting so that the Gospel may continue to be proclaimed effectively.

Our parish structure has served us well in keeping the Church alive at local level. However, it was built on a greater number of priests than we will have in the years ahead. For this reason, we have begun developing Pastoral Areas as a new way of organising our resources. Like every human

endeavour, this has had its successes and its setbacks – some of which are reflected in the ‘*Field Notes*’. Yet every experience, whether success or failure, becomes a synodal learning moment that deepens our understanding of what it means to journey in faith together.

### **Gratitude and New Opportunities**

In all this important work, I want to express my sincere gratitude to our dedicated priests, the members of our Pastoral Councils and Finance Committees, and the many lay people who generously give their time and talent. I particularly commend those completing the Diploma in Pastoral Ministry, and all who collaborate in faith to advance the mission of the Church today. Increasingly, lay people will play vital roles – working with families in the preparation for Sacraments, accompanying the sick, leading prayer services, supporting families at the time of funerals and taking on co-responsible roles formerly attached to priests alone.

I am also pleased to announce a new diocesan Certificate in Collaboration and Mission. Applications are invited before 31<sup>st</sup> May 2026. Details and application forms are available on [www.ferns.ie](http://www.ferns.ie) or by e-mailing [pdw@ferns.ie](mailto:pdw@ferns.ie).

May the Risen Lord, who walks with us on every road, give us the courage we need for the journey ahead.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

✠Ger Nash

Bishop of Ferns

