‘Call to Action’ meeting July 18th., 2012

Reports from the groups responding to keynote speakers

Many expressed their concern with what they perceived as a culture of fear and secrecy at every level within the Church. The bishops are fearful of speaking out because they might be reported to Rome, priests because to do so might affect their position in the Church and laypeople because they fear they may be alone in their opinions and there is no forum in which they may discuss their faith with others.

The need for dialogue within the Church at every level was expressed many times. It was felt that we do not listen to one another and that the bishops are predisposed not to do so. However, this dialogue it was thought must begin with us at parish level and we have to ask ourselves what are the power structures in our communities and who makes the decisions. It was recognised that priests have the power to build up or to destroy what has been built up. There seems to be a fear of consultation at every level , not least because the vociferous minority might highjack things.

Loyalty and trust were also issues frequently voiced. Loyalty was only possible if it were able to be both positive and critical but this would bring about growth, though the Roman authorities do not seem to understand this. The Y.C.W. process was suggested as a way in which the Church might act, the bishops seeking first to see the true situation in consultation with laity and priests, then judging that situation with them and coming to a decision together.

The need to involve all the people of the church and not just the clergy was keenly felt so that lay people might find their voice and the vocation of all the baptised might be recognised.

It was felt that the people had not been instructed in the thought of Vatican II and that both dioceses and parishes had not been ‘obedient’ to its decrees in that the structures of dialogue, Diocesan Pastoral Councils, Parish Pastoral Councils and so on which would facilitate it were conspicuous by their absence.

Four special areas of concern were mentioned often, the place of women in the Church, the shortage of priests and no strategy to deal with this, the loss of young people within the Church and the age of most of our parishioners. It was felt that the Bishops are in denial about these issues and refuse to face up to them.

Finally, it was felt that any future meeting should be for all the people of the Church, clergy and lay and that there was a great need to establish a forum in which a dialogue with the bishops might be ensured.