

DIOCESE OF HEXHAM AND NEWCASTLE



✠ *Rt Rev Séamus Cunningham*
Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle



PASTORAL LETTER – LAY TRAINING FUND

24th Sunday of the Year – 13th September 2015

My dear people

When Jesus asked his disciples the question, "Who do you say I am?" it came after a period of time where He had instructed and enlightened his friends. Jesus wanted to know how far they had grown in their understanding of who He was. In other words - how far had they grown in their faith?

St James reminds us in the second reading today that faith is more than just understanding that Jesus is the son of God - but that our faith must be put in to action by our love and service of neighbour. This is precisely what Jesus did. It is by faith that we link our lives to the Lord by imitating His service. Our faith as Christians is lived out in the public arena as well as being at the heart of our community and private devotional life. Like Jesus, our faith must inspire each one of us to reach out to others.

The Lay Training Fund was established several years ago to support the lay people of our worshipping communities to be further formed in their lives of faith. It is there to support all areas of adult formation and education which are not normally provided as part of parish life. Whether we work in the Diocese or in the wider world, whether we are involved in parish life in catechesis, liturgy or other ministries, we need to really understand our faith and we need to know what the Church teaches, and be able to understand our calling. Then we can live out our vocation and mission and thus witness to the faith we have received, in response to the changing needs of the Church within society. The Lay Training Fund is there to support this vision, helping people grow in witness to their faith. The Guidelines have been recently reviewed and broadened and are available for viewing on the diocesan website and e-newsletter. I would encourage as many of you as possible to make use of this fund. As well as welcoming individual applications, the administrators of the Fund, in consultation with the Diocesan Board of Directors, will identify emerging priorities and will be proactive in seeking the appropriate people to respond to these priorities.

In 2015 - 2016 the priorities identified are:

- 1) The Church and those seeking asylum in our locality. We are seeking to support people financially to deepen their knowledge of the Church's social teaching to respond in their voluntary role of reaching out to asylum seekers and refugees.
- 2) The optimum use of Diocesan properties.
- 3) The Church and medical ethics.

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Bishop's House, East Denton Hall, 800 West Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE5 2BJ
Tel: +44 (0) 191 228 0003 Fax: +44 (0) 191 274 0432 Email: office@rcdhn.org.uk

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Applications forms and further details are available from the Diocesan Department for Adult Formation and Evangelisation.

“Who do you say I am?”

The Jesus of the Gospels is countercultural and brave and courageous and strong and determined. He is about a way of life. He is about the decisions we make and our care and concern for others.

“Who do you say I am?”

What would you say to Him? How would you respond to that question? I ask you to give that question a lot of thought over the next weeks and months. It is at the heart of our Diocesan programme of renewal ‘Forward Together in Hope’. A lot rides on your answer to his question: “Who do you say I am?”

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "+ Séamus". The plus sign is a simple cross, and the name "Séamus" is written in a cursive, flowing script.

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