

BISHOP NIALL COLL ACKNOWLEDGES THE RELEVANCE AND IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

Honouring *World Day for Consecrated Life*, theme: *Pilgrims and Sowers of Hope*, Bishop Niall Coll celebrated Mass in St. Fiacre's Church, Loughboy, Kilkenny, on Wednesday, 29th January 2025 at 1.00 p.m., acknowledging the invaluable contribution of women and men who have dedicated their lives to God and to His people through religious vocation.

The celebration of the Eucharist brought together a prayerful gathering of members of religious communities, diocesan priests and people of Ossory, in a spirit of unity and thanksgiving, acknowledging and reaffirming the vital role of members of consecrated life (religious life) in the Diocese of Ossory and beyond.

Established by Pope Saint John Paul II in 1997, this annual observance highlights the dedication of religious sisters, brothers, and priests, who serve in various ministries, embodying Christ's love through their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

Bishop Niall was joined by concelebrants Fr. Stephen Cummins, OP, Fr. Mike Burgess, OFM Cap and Father James Kelly, SJ, and Father Michael Reddan, SVD, currently serving in parishes in the Diocese, along with diocesan priests. All gathered with Religious and people as a community of faith giving thanks for the beauty and significance of religious life in our Diocese.

Bishop Niall carried the *Jubilee Year of Hope* Crucifix in the entrance procession, assisted by Bro. Joe Gallagher, OFM Cap and Sr. Ninian, a Novis with the Little Sisters of the Poor. Followed by a representative from each of the following Religious Congregations and Orders ministering in our Diocese: Brothers of Charity, Capuchins, Christian Brothers, Daughters of Mary and Joseph, De La Salle Brothers, Dominicans, Little Sisters of the Poor, Loreto Sisters, Presentation Sisters, Sisters of the Little Company of Mary, Sisters of Mercy, Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary and Sisters of St John of God. Each carrying a lighted candle which was placed on a table at the Altar before the *Jubilee Year of Hope* Crucifix, symbolising the gift of hope, as *Pilgrims and Sowers of Hope*, found in the witness of religious life.

Brother John Burke, CFC, and Sr. Kathleen Lawlor, PBVM, were the Lectors. Father Stephen Cummins, OP, proclaimed the Gospel. Sr. Regina Delaney, RSM, Br. Martin Curran, FSC, and Sr. Louvenagh, IBVM, prayed the Prayer of the Faithful. The Offertory gifts of Bread and Wine were presented by Sr. Helen Maher, SJJG, and Br. Pius Higgins, OFM Cap. Master of Ceremonies for the celebration was Father Roderick Whearty, Diocesan M.C. Music was provided by Sean O' Neill, Organist, and Father Willie Purcell, Cantor. Violin Instrumentalist Roberto from Budapest played a post communion reflection, Prayer of St Francis, *Make me A Channel of your Peace*.

During his homily, Bishop Coll underlined the fact that in this *Jubilee Year of Hope* it is appropriate that we recognise consecrated life and religious life which down through the centuries have offered the Church a concrete sign and a witness to Christian hope and service to God's people.

Lunch was served afterwards in the adjoining Pastoral Centre, providing an opportunity for bishop, religious, people and priests to share some good conversation in appreciation for the many and varied ministries in our Diocese.