



DIOCESE OF EAST ANGLIA

Diocesan policy on the ONGOING FORMATION OF PRIESTS

‘Ongoing formation is a need which begins and develops from the moment of receiving the Sacrament of Orders...’ (*Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 69)

After discussions at Deanery Clergy Meetings, the Council of Priests and College of Consultors, and a discussion and vote at the annual meeting of parish priests on 28th April 2005, the Diocese of East Anglia has adopted the annual programme of spiritual and intellectual formation presented below. It was revised and re-adopted unanimously at the meeting of Parish Priests on 11th May 2006.

Any programme of Ongoing Formation in our diocese needs to be realistic and carefully focused, ensuring that the subject matter meets the real needs of our priests. Priests are invited to suggest topics at Deanery Meetings and at the Council of Priests. The Director of Ongoing Formation has been co-opted onto the Council of Priests to ensure closer liaison between the priests and the ongoing formation team.

Priests are strongly encouraged to attend all parts of the programme if at all possible. The annual study/retreat week should have a high priority. Ongoing formation is vital for priests’ service of God’s people. There will be times when such formation will make it impossible for daily Mass to be celebrated in a parish: this should be positively accepted by both priest and people for the long-term benefit of all.

Deacons have their own programme of ongoing formation and retreats, but are to be fully included at very least in items 5 and 6 of the programme below. Some of the study days (2-4) will also be open to deacons.

- (1) **Week for Priests at Merville or elsewhere (Monday evening to Friday lunchtime)**
with a Study/Social Week and a Retreat in alternate years (in June/July)
We are aware of the desire for alternative venues for this event, at least in alternate years. The Ongoing Formation Team will explore the viable options both inside and outside the United Kingdom. This annual week is an important opportunity for priests not only to reflect and pray together, but also to grow in unity as the *presbyterium* of the diocese.
- (2) **Study day at Poringland** led by the Bishop on the year’s diocesan theme (in early Summer)
- (3) **Study day organised by Ongoing Formation Team**
at a central venue (e.g. Thetford or Newmarket) on a topic suggested by the priests (in the Autumn)
- (4) **Occasional extra study days on practical issues as the need arises**
(e.g. Finance, Child Protection, Liturgy, etc)
- (5) **Study & discussion session at one deanery clergy meeting**
(e.g. sharing good practice on Baptism Preparation, etc)
This should take place at the January deanery clergy meeting; the diocese needs to help to ensure that no other matters for discussion are provided at that time.
- (6) **Deanery Day or Half-Day of Reflection for Priests & Deacons.**
This is in addition to the usual annual round of deanery clergy meetings.
- (7) **Better communication re courses & retreats available elsewhere.**
- (8) **Occasional provision of suggestions for reading in the *Ad Clerum* (books, articles, etc)**
- (9) **A diocesan policy on sabbaticals has been discussed and agreed** (see pages 20-30).

Ongoing Formation Team

If this agreed programme is to be fully and fruitfully implemented, we need to continue to build an active team of people ready to take responsibility for the organisation of the various events, particularly the annual retreat/study week and the study days.

Revised 11.5.06