

Fears that Scotland will run out of priests



THE VOCATIONS crisis in Scotland has intensified with the expectation that there will be only one man ordained to the priesthood this year, writes Brian Morton. There were just three ordinations to the priesthood in Scotland in 2014, igniting fears that the Church may run out of priests in the foreseeable future.

The three new Scottish priests for 2014 were ordained in Edinburgh, Motherwell and Dunkeld. This year it is believed only one ordination is taking place – in the Diocese of Motherwell.

The figures confirm an informal survey conducted by Fr Michael Conroy of Corpus Christi, Scotstounhill, Glasgow, who has identified just 279 deployable priests in Scotland and a sharply rising age profile, leading to fears that the locally based parish priest is an “endangered species”.

Commenting on the figures, (which exclude ordained Religious), Fr Conroy asked, “What ecclesiology will you have if you don’t have priests?”

The Archbishop of Glasgow, Philip Tartaglia, said in his homily for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations that the priesthood now presents a “daunting” challenge to young men.

At present, there are only 25 seminarians from Scottish dioceses, with seven in the Diocese of Motherwell. A restructuring process is under way in a number of dioceses that will take account of the shortage of priests. It has been suggested that in St Andrews and Edinburgh, just 33 priests will serve 111 parishes by the end of the decade.

Brian Morton-The Tablet