

Cluster Meeting Three

23rd February, 2017

Theme: Spiritual Vibrancy

This meeting was better attended (45 lay) and was itself spiritually vibrant with active participation and lively and productive discussion. All parishes were represented. Lay and ordained collaborated positively to create the three SMART goals called for by the format. There were clear calls for improved evaluation of the effects of the clustering process, particularly with regards to RCIA and its rootedness in individual parishes, but the overall sense was that our cluster is working and growing. Our youth were represented by two young people. Younger families were not. That there was no representation by our Polish and Syro-Malabar communities was a source of regret but also questions regarding ways to strengthen the bridges between us.

Two ‘**signs of vibrancy**’ emerged clearly in discussion:

Eucharist: Though we acknowledged that there is clear room for growth, this essential aspect of our life in God, our worship as a community and the strength we receive from it, received the most positive response.

Outreach: This vital part of our mission in Christ was rated next highest but this may have been due to the already existing high level of involvement by those at the meeting. This fundamental aspect of our call in Christ is already being evaluated by our Joint Pastoral Council as a core issue.

Two ‘signs of vibrancy’ were **less evident** amongst us:

Evangelisation and Catechesis received equal ‘could do better’ status. A clear link between the two was agreed – one flows from the other, formation building confidence, leading to more joyful evangelisation and further growth in our Catholic faith.

Two areas emerged where we are **least spiritually vibrant**:

Lay leadership – we need both a clearer model and a more visible authorization process with which to build and encourage lay leadership.

Stewardship - we lack a clear understanding of this motivating concept at parish level, together with its value in combating the many challenges and stresses which discourage deeper lay engagement and activity.

Growing realizations and perspectives:

- Compared to other parishes we have very healthy lay involvement
- There is concern that clustering at times stifles independence eg RCIA
- Potential for growth via new build residents in the area – consider outreach?
- ‘Geographic’ parishes are gone
- New initiatives are emerging – eg Tots and Toddlers group as outreach, lay led catechesis
- St Bernadette’s and Our Lady’s feel they are ‘catching up’ in the clustering process
- We are a work in progress – this is a long term project
- Time is needed – ‘still little more than an idea’ for some
- Clear need to differentiate between parishes, retaining identities
- We need more ‘buy in’ from parishioners at ground level
- We want to build more of a sense of engagement, of ‘walking together’
- Mentorship – becoming Paul to someone’s Timothy – we could grow here!
- Process has been a valuable reality check as we face 2020 with 33 priests

Challenges we face:

- We are an aging population!
- The ‘Missing’ – our youth and young families – why don’t they stay with us? How are we failing them? Evaluation and action needed.
- Our youth don’t feel welcome enough. We don’t ‘appeal’. A hard truth – without sufficient involvement, encouragement and youth leadership we are boring them
- Challenging family busyness/commitments.
- How can we combat the challenge of secularity with a much deeper understanding/catechesis of what Christ offers?
- Recognizing that our families need support and encouragement, first and foremost
- Ages and stages of faith development – we must reach out to all in an intentional, *understood*, planned way
- Intergenerational, strategic formation – how do we build this?
- We need to courageously address the question – **why** aren’t more people coming forward to be an active part of Christ’s ongoing mission?
- How do we better share what is working well? Our good practice?
- We need much more Catholic Social Justice teaching– possible Caritas connection?

Ideas/ 'areas for growth'

Catechesis

- 'Youth Day' with formation input
- We want to be taught how to 'go past our comfort zone'
- Deeper understanding of the elements of the Mass
- Empower catechists
- Continue to offer and encourage training
- Make clearer that formation is *our* responsibility
- Witness to the joy that comes from ongoing growth in Christ
- Witness talks by the happily catechized would build 'buy in' to faith enrichment
- Funding for formation
- Follow up after sacramental preparation – better and more outreach to parents
- RCIA framework expanded to all parishioners
- Clear focus on mystagogy

Stewardship

- A 'talent audit', identifying qualities and skills
- Build a stewardship framework and work from there
- Clearer, known job descriptions for roles which include time limits/rotation
- Preaching – we need to be challenged more
- Intentional preaching on particular, pre-agreed themes eg stewardship, 'joining the dots' across the cluster?
- 'Altar calls' for involvement/focus on our lay vocation
- More and specific 'calls to action' – low expectations will be easily met
- Stewardship events to encourage understanding and participation
- 'Commissionings' at Mass to improve visibility of lay ministries
- A 'Welcome Ministry'
- An 'enabling environment'
- More 'thank yous' and encouragement!
- Communication needs to be improved

Lay Leadership

- Address the need for rotation
- Shorter, known terms to increase commitment
- Succession planning – identifying and accompanying our ‘replacements’
- Mentoring
- We need education on our vocation as lay people and our co-responsibility with the priest
- Address and make clear its necessity – ‘hammer home’ the idea of 33 priests remaining
- Education on our *priesthood* as lay
- Clericalism – acknowledge that this is a two-way street
- Encouragement of vocations should include the permanent diaconate

Our SMART goals as a cluster

Catechesis:

After Easter offer and encourage formation on the parts of the Mass to deepen our understanding and love for Eucharist. Ongoing catechesis thereafter, beginning with the Sacraments, to be offered immediately after.

Stewardship:

Grow our understanding of the principle of stewardship, beginning with a Stewardship Event. Fr Jamie will evaluate timing around Pentecost.

Lay leadership:

Formation on our lay vocation and our common priesthood, both from the pulpit and in the parish, ‘beginning **now**’.