

Feedback on

Cluster Meeting II

Evaluation of Our Joint Resources

Please see appendices and attachments.

The meeting was less well attended than Meeting One – 27 parishioners from across the Cluster, with St Mary of the Angels being slightly better represented than the other parishes.

Mystagogy on the scripture verses from Acts II brought the following reflections and ideas:

- Sharing between parishes needs to be more focussed
- Parishioners could deliberately attend different Masses across the Cluster
- More Cluster pilgrimages and retreats
- More information sharing
- Participation in cross-Cluster events still low
- Not enough has happened intentionally in terms of working as a Cluster
- There *is* fellowship happening across the Cluster, but it's not celebrated enough
- Safeguarding Training as another way of sharing resources

PPT

Fr Jamie showed a power point, breaking down statistics for the Cluster (See attached). The following points emerged in discussion:

- Of the self-identifying Catholics in the most recent census, approximately one third are practicing
- New builds in Larbert are bringing new Catholics to the area
- The 'scandalous' costs of maintaining the A-listed Coia church in Camelon
- The parish halls of the Cluster availability for parish functions for Larbert, which has no parish hall
- The halls at St Anthony's and St Mary of the Angels are very underused
- Need to encourage uptake
- Constant 'firefighting' maintaining such large properties
- Parishioners taking more responsibility for upkeep and maintenance
- RCIA now a fully shared resource
- The burden of so many funerals on the priests in terms of time and spiritual 'load'
- Mass attendance figures no longer a true picture - people travel between Masses
- Poorest parishes often have the greatest debts
- The felt injustice in Camelon at its inherited debt due to roof repairs (£128,000)
- The need for effort to begin repaying that debt to the Archdiocese
- The fear of 'throwing good money after bad'

There was an extended debate on the sharing of debt across the Cluster. Canon Law prohibits this. Each parish is a financial entity unto itself. Sharing the debt would involve

suppressing the parishes via Rome and becoming a new entity; a long, involved process. The desire for the debt to be absorbed by the Archdiocese or shared across the Archdiocese was expressed, as well as frustration at costs caused by the grade listing. Camelton parishioners felt the debt had been 'forced' on them without their agreement. There was a voiced sense that people of goodwill across the Cluster would help fundraise, and an understanding that the parish itself would need to develop revenue streams to help fund the debt, which is real and must be honoured.

There was dissatisfaction at the financial opacity of the Archdiocese itself. People felt its financial situation should be better known.

Evaluation of Resources

PEOPLE

- Skills and gifts are abundant - they need to be identified and 'tapped into'
- More 'enthusiasm' needed from the People of God
- Age groups present show the clear need to engage the young more fully
- Creation of 'opportunities' to bridge the gap between mere attendance and participation
- 'Jobs for Life' – ministries must be for agreed shorter terms and positions rotated
- Motivation to join in is 90% 'personal invitation'
- There is great concern for our young families
- Need to give the young people real ministry opportunities
- We need to plot trends properly, and understand fully what they mean
- Truthful, fearless analysis is needed for our future
- Need for proper 'follow through' with families after children receive Sacraments
- Notice, don't criticize - let's celebrate the good much more!
- Prayer is essential
- 'Happy to be still healthy' – increase possibilities for fellowship

PLANT

- People were encouraged by how well maintained the parishes are
- Are the buildings as they stand still 'fit for purpose' in a changing church?
- Two halls badly underused – we should challenge ourselves to raise their revenue
- Need for a proper, planned maintenance programme rather than 'firefighting'
- Easier to then budget , given fewer unexpected bills
- A 'radical idea' - one of the churches should be 'mothballed'
- Costs of maintenance will increase
- Older buildings not necessarily more expensive to maintain than new
- Sustainability: four parishes reduced to three reduces costs and releases capital
- Potential loss of parishioners should that happen
- Professional accounts needed in future to identify potential savings/possibilities

- Identifying ways to increase revenue
- Seeing a 'Coia' church as an asset, not a liability – even a revenue source?
- Thinking outside the box required!
- Exploring de-listing/grants available

CELEBRATIONS

- Priests cannot be expected to continue as things stand
- Celebrations as a 'burden' on clergy
- Lay-led funerals?
- These would require formation of the lay
- Deacons needed
- Need for a profound change of mind-set/expectations in lay people
- Lay require much more education – **this became a prominent theme**
- The spiritual pain that re-education involves, individually and as a community
- We need more fully practicing Catholics
- Evangelization of the people in the pews - call to active participation
- Share ministry needs/gaps more publically – raise awareness
- Huge 'welcome' signs and fuller welcomes for visitors and returners
- How accurate a reflection are the numbers? Celebrations as 'rites of passage' only
- More 'community' based language and mind-set required
- Moving forward, far greater opportunities for the lay to live out their baptismal call!
- Welcoming married priests and female priests
- Using our gifts to free up priests to live out their vocation, not 'manage'

FINANCE

- We are comparatively rich as a Cluster
- More forward planning needed
- Need to manage finances in much more detail
- Need for increased income – we need to 'up' our weekly offering
- 'Not just loose change' - Church seen as 'almost a freebie'
- More professionalism needed in church finances
- Camelon hall costs more to run than it brings in
- Clearing the Camelon debt as a Cluster?
- Again, we need to know what the trends are and plot the facts for the future
- Idea that all parishes are losing £10,000 a year on average
- Canon Law should be challenged to allow sharing of financial burdens in this new 'place'
- Prayer and trust
- Avoid complacency
- Give parishioners a good break-down of finances so they are better informed
- Improve planning – include parishioners in financial planning
- 'Invest – don't spend!'
- Investigate investment as a revenue source

Although very sensitive and often difficult topics were raised, the meeting was calm, productive and discussion was free.

It was announced that the report on the meeting would be made available online and in the churches, to allow others to give comment or make suggestions.

The meeting ended with prayer.