

Planning the Way Forward for Sheffield Parishes

Fr Martin summarized the current situation and introduced the main themes of the meeting:

In 2018 there will be 16 active priests in Sheffield. In the following six years four priests will have reached the age of retirement. This does not take into account other factors such as death, illness or clergy moves. Bishop Ralph has already said, in a recent Hallam News, that bringing in more priests from abroad was not the answer.

Most of us do not like change but often it comes upon us by necessity. Whatever the perceived timescale may be for your particular Parish we are most likely facing a future where priests will need to cover larger areas and so will need to be free enough to do so without neglecting the priestly duties for which they were called and ordained.

This could be a golden opportunity to further develop all the complementary ministries of the People of God together in Sheffield. How can neighbouring parishes help each other? The Catholic Church has always favoured the poor in its Mission. How do we ensure that the poor are not neglected? Evangelisation is an essential part of being Christian. How can we remain faithful to the gospel and bring the Good News to others? If our parish is rich in a particular resource, are we willing to share? Some of you may be ready to move forward on these ideas whilst others may need more time to reflect and work on the various possibilities.

Three possible models were introduced for discussion

Model 1: "Twinning"

Two (perhaps more) parishes would share resources and clergy including a single parish priest, aligning mass times and other activities across the parishes. The two parishes might in time be canonically merged into a larger parish with one or more mass centres.

Model 2: "Liturgical Centres"

Sunday Mass is celebrated at a smaller number of large churches, allowing for concentration and development of liturgical excellence. Local faith communities would be maintained (perhaps corresponding to existing parishes) but a number of these communities would come together at the large central church to celebrate mass on Sunday. Apart from the main Sunday celebration, mass would still be celebrated during the week or on occasions throughout the year at all centres. The area would be served by a number of clergy, who would optionally live together at the main church.

Model 3: "Team Ministry"

A group of clergy (living together or separately) serve a larger pastoral area composed of several faith communities (perhaps existing parishes) without any one priest being specifically connected to any one local community. This differs from model two in that mass would continue to be celebrated in each local community. For both practical and theological reasons, the Mass Centres would generally gather around one mass on a Sunday (although in large communities, this may not be possible).

Part 2 – Feedback from Groups

Sheffield South-West

Principles and Priorities

- Need to understand why changes are necessary and what is the goal?
- This is an opportunity as well as a challenge
- Use the gifts of the laity : fulfil the vision of Vatican II
- Make more use of Eucharistic ministers and deacons
- Need more time to arrive at a decision (but perhaps not too much time), but critically need objectives and clear plan.

Initial Response to the Three Models

- Examine the possible adoption of a ‘Doncaster Model’ – took 12 year to tune this, but Sheffield should take less time to apply.
- Concerns with twinning model: loss of local identity, overload on priests.
- Proposed Model Three (team ministry) generally viewed positively.

Overall

In the conversations and the subsequent whole group discussion some key points emerged:

- Realistic acceptance that change is needed, and that more than a short-term plan should be implemented
- Sense of “We’ve been here before; let’s actually make the changes this time.”
- See this an opportunity for positive change especially with regard to use of the laity and evangelization/mission
- Local Catholic presence in the community seen as very important
- Need for formation, training across range of roles and competencies.

Next Meeting

- July 20th 2017 (TBC), Hallam Pastoral Centre 7pm-9pm
- This meeting is intended to bring together input from wider Parish consultations (as wide as possible), following the first meeting.
- In order to prepare for this, Sacred Heart parish has share a very short questionnaire which is recommended for widespread use and has been distributed with this report. The key questions to consider are :
 - *What is important to your parish today?*
 - *What are the most important factors to be taken into account when deciding on changes for your Parish?*
- **This information needs to be provided for each parish to the appropriate dean by June 10th** to allow it to be used to plan the July meeting:
 - Fr Martin (Sheffield North): stthomasmoresheffield@gmail.com