

REPORT OF THE PARISH ASSEMBLY

Held on 18th November 2017

The Parish Assembly was held on Saturday 18th November 2017. It followed a series of meetings held by the Parish Pastoral Council, between March and September 2017, with representatives of thirty groups active in the parish. The purpose of these meetings was to thank people for their contribution to parish life, to hear their views and to take note of their suggestions in preparation for the parish assembly. A report of the meetings with parish groups is available on the website or can be obtained from the parish office.

The purpose of the assembly was to update parishioners on developments, to identify issues of concern to them and to get their views on strengthening faith development in the parish. About 100 people attended the Parish Assembly which was facilitated by Ellie McKeown.

The agenda for the day was as follows:

- Prayer/Reflection
- Introduction and overview by Fr. Liam
- Presentation on the parish finances
- Progress report following meetings with parish groups
- Presentation by youth leaders on youth evangelisation
- Preparations for the World Meeting of Families
- Feedback from discussion groups
- Closing prayer

The following were the main themes which emerged from the feedback from the discussion groups:

Communications

In common with the views expressed by parish groups, communication emerged as a significant issue for parishioners attending the assembly both in terms of communicating and supporting the good work being done by the groups in the parish, providing information to parishioners, spreading the good news of the Gospel and communicating more effectively with young people. Social media and the development of the website were mentioned, in particular, as providing effective tools for communication.

Strengthening Community

The desirability of a community/parish centre was raised in view of the aging profile of the parish. It was also felt that it would provide an opportunity for evangelisation. The diocesan requirement that 90% of the funding be in place (as well as other stipulations) before a project could commence was mentioned as a major factor inhibiting the construction of a parish centre. A number of people felt that the parish had contributed substantially to diocesan collections over the decades but significant obstacles were being put in place by the diocese when the need for a parish centre was identified.

A number of suggestions were made regarding re-arranging the church and extending the conference room to provide a facility for people to meet and have a cup of coffee. The issue of the Blue House and its ownership was also raised.

Other suggestions for strengthening community included having a welcome pack for new parishioners and hosting a women's/men's/youth's breakfast.

Parish Finances

A number of queries were raised in relation to the parish finances particularly in relation to tax relief and its applicability to certain collections. A number of these queries were dealt with on the day and a number of specific queries put in writing were dealt with by way of written answer in the Sunday Message in the weeks following the assembly.

The possibility of other fund-raising activities, e.g. holding concerts in the church, was also raised.

Young People

People attending the assembly were energised by the presentation given by youth leaders on their work. The general consensus was that these young people should be actively supported by the parish to enable them to continue their work. Equally, it was felt that they should not be burdened by asking them to take on some of the more intractable issues e.g. around youth evangelisation.

It was agreed also that existing initiatives such as the after-school group for children aged 9-11 should receive greater publicity.

Evangelisation

A number of suggestions were made in relation to out-reach. It was suggested, for example, that a service might be provided for people living in apartment blocks who don't normally attend Mass. This has been done in other areas.

A blessing for families held once a year (perhaps in the schools) should be considered.

The Liturgy

A number of issues were raised in relation to the Liturgy. Some of these related to young people, and more specifically, the need to explain the Mass and the meaning of the different elements of the liturgy. Educating parents and children on being respectful during Mass would also be useful.

A number of specific suggestions were made in relation to liturgical practices generally as follows:

- Adopt latest liturgical practices re kneeling, sitting and standing at Mass.
- Ensure that the Eucharistic Prayer said on the day is the same as that on the leaflet.
- In general, the homilies should be short and relevant.
- It would be helpful if a short explanation could be given at the start of the Mass putting the Saint/Feast of the day in context.

Ongoing training for altar servers was also mentioned.

The Fabric of the Church

A number of specific suggestions were made in relation to the following:

- Improvements to the toilets to conform with modern requirements
- Improve lighting around the church
- Improve the ramp for coffins.

Follow-up

Since the assembly, the Parish Pastoral Council, together with Fr. Liam and Deacon Noel, has been working through the suggestions made at the assembly, in addition to those made by parish groups, with a view to implementing those that are within our control.

Parishioners will be aware that the toilets have been revamped to meet current regulations. Signage has also been improved. Work is on-going in relation to improving communications but the next significant job of work to be undertaken by the PPC will be to develop a communications strategy to enable us to communicate more effectively with the faith community and the wider community in Ballinteer and elsewhere.

The Parish Pastoral Council continues to welcome comments/suggestions from parishioners for its monthly meetings and can be contacted via the parish office or its secretary, Mary Golden, at mary-at-home@hotmail.com.

Parish Pastoral Council

October 2018