



Nottingham Deanery Roadshow

Saint Barnabas Cathedral, Nottingham

Monday 7th March 2022

7.00pm

Canon Philipp Ziomek, Dean, welcomed everyone present and then led those gathered in a version of evening prayer, including the Prayer for the Synod.

Yvonne May, from Scunthorpe Deanery, then outlined the purposes of the evening:

- Explanation – difficult decisions have been made, different avenues have been explored;
- Exploration – these explanations have been given – how can we make these work?
- Expectation – what will happen next, how will we make this happen, what are the next steps?

Yvonne also indicated that although questions raised might not be answered tonight, everything raised would be recorded, and time would be given after the formal part of the evening for individual questions to be raised.

Bishop Patrick then outlined the current situation in our diocese with reference to statistics:

- In 1985
 - Mass attendance in our diocese was 50,391;
 - we had 145 active priests;
 - we had 158 Churches in which Sunday Mass was celebrated;
 - we had 24 students for the priesthood in major seminary, 2 in pre-seminary and 8 in Junior Seminary.
- In 2015
 - Mass attendance was 29,848 (a reduction of 41%);
 - we had 92 active priests (a reduction of 37%);
 - we had 156 Churches in which Sunday Mass was celebrated (a reduction of just 1%);
 - we had 8 students in major seminary, 1 in pre-seminary, and 13 training for the Permanent Diaconate which has proved to be a very helpful ministry across the diocese.

So over that period of 30 years this diocese experienced an average 39% reduction in both priests and parishioners; but only a 1% reduction in the number of churches. That's the position, pre-covid. Let's now take a look statistically at the impact covid has had on our diocese.

- In 2021
 - Mass attendance last October was 17,468 (a reduction of 65% since 1985);
 - we had 85 active priests (a reduction of 41% from 1985);
 - we had 140 Churches in which Sunday Mass was celebrated (a reduction of 11% since 1985);
 - we had 1 student in major seminary, 1 in pre-seminary (a reduction of 94% since 1985);
 - and 3 training for the Permanent Diaconate (a reduction of 77% since 2015).

The covid pandemic has fast-forwarded the decline in our diocesan statistics, but the number of churches hasn't declined in the way the numbers of parishioners and priests have. We can't continue in this vein of having so many buildings which are used for only a short period of time each week. In some cases we'll have to take the painful decision to close some churches, and we are all, bishop and people, aware of the pain of these decisions. What we keep has to best serve Christ's mission in our diocese. We are all part of Christ's Church, and Christ will always lead us forward. For our part we must continue our reorganisation of deaneries, to be better equipped in Christ's mission. After a two-year covid period we now have to move forward again.

The average age of priests in our diocese is 63 years. Priests are feeling the increasing administrative burden, which doesn't present a good picture for the future. A clear roadmap has been asked for, and one which shows us all the way forward, giving a way forward in co-responsibility between clergy and laity.

There are green shoots, such as young men expressing a desire to consider priesthood, but this can take a couple of years of discernment, and then some (maybe seven) years in formation. Our schools have 30,000 pupils and students in them, embracing the three pastoral themes in the diocese: encounter, discipleship, and missionary discipleship. Young people, helped by the growing number of chapels and lay chaplains in our schools, need to be channelled into the future of our Church.

The laity in our diocese have many gifts and talents, but these aren't always brought into the best service for Christ's mission. The Curia are working to assist the laity, as are the worldwide organisation Divine Renovation, transforming from maintenance to mission mode. This helps us to embrace the three pastoral priorities in our diocese: to help children and young people to encounter God's love and to become active disciples of Christ Jesus in the life and mission of the Church; to offer support and formation to parishioners to enable them to be confident agents of missionary discipleship, both within their parish and wider society; and thirdly, ongoing support for our clergy to free them up to be pastors, leaders and enablers of mission.

Will this discussion tonight lead to anything? Yes. There is a pledge tonight to make decisions which will help to make disciples in the Church of the future. It won't be easy, but we can all help to transform our diocese.

Feedback from the tables

- Can all the churches in the deanery which are currently not used be repurposed as centres for the homeless, to meet them where they are at?
- Saint Hugh of Lincoln, Bilborough, is a thriving parish and numbers are growing. What is the rationale for closing this church in a part of the city which needs churches very much?
- How are the parents of primary school children engaged with, to ensure that the enthusiasm of young people isn't stifled? Can more be made of sacramental preparation, and engagement with parents at this stage?
- What efforts are being made to reverse the trends of declining numbers of people coming to Mass? If more people came to Mass then churches wouldn't need to be close.
- More discussion needs to be had with children, to speak with them directly, and circumvent parents.

Canon Paul Chipchase, Episcopal Vicar for Finance and Administration, explained the role of the diocesan curia, a full range of skills and expertise to support mission in our diocese, through parishes, school, and other communities. The curia, from the Latin, 'cares' for people, for business situations, for agencies in the diocese, etc. The curia's aim is to take burdens off people in the parishes, especially where these don't need to be undertaken by those currently so doing: for example, assisting with financial issues, or building matters. We live in a world which is very much more regulated than in the past, and expertise is not always available at the local level, but can be provided by the curia. Sometimes there's a direct mission input, sometimes it's working through those who are in the parishes, schools and communities.

The key focus is to assist mission but with an eye to compliance, and ensuring everything is legal. A new booklet, 'Meet the Curia', has been produced this year, with copies available this evening.

The curia exists not to control, but to allow subsidiarity, with decisions being made at the lowest possible level, at the local level. However, to be more mission-focused there needs to be a shift in focus from bricks and mortar, to people, noting that funding is always necessary, and an 'enabling mission fund' has been recently established. There is a desire to enable all parishes to have all the resources they need, even when this might mean a degree of 'levelling up' to take place.

David Lawes, the Diocesan Chief Operating Officer, began with explaining that the Curia wishes to support parish and deanery pastoral plans. We might have too many churches, but we are not here to manage decline. We want transformation, not rationalisation. We have a very good curial team, but it is a small team, and so might not be able to meet every challenge faced by every parish immediately: a development of capacity is being developed. Parishes need to be reorganised to be effective, they have to be good stewards of finances and property, and have the support to be truly missionary. This can be assisted by the establishment of deanery cluster administration centres, to relieve some of the administrative burden at parish level. The disposal of surplus property can be advised upon, the employment of project management support is another element of assistance, and an awareness of statistical trends can be helpful to communicate.

A desire to alleviate administrative burdens at the local level is another priority, since this isn't a missionary activity, although does have to be undertaken. Common, on-line systems are being developed (such as finance), alongside internal and external expertise for areas such as property, IT, and other specialist elements. Working with young people (such as the very promising young adults group, and the National Schools' Singing Project) are areas in which the curia offers direct assistance. Ways of catechising parents and families is another area in which the curia seeks to offer assistance, so that parishes can be rebuilt post-pandemic. Clergy are being assisted to be leaders and facilitators of mission. The curia is here to assist.

Feedback from the tables

- Given the pressure on resources in the diocese, has any thought been given to bringing in external resource, such as the Franciscan Friars?
- Very few parishes feel that they have an accurate and comprehensive databases; could this be considered by the diocese centrally? A centrally produced form is being produced currently.
- What provision is being made to keep websites up to date? The diocesan website is now very up-to-date, but this isn't the case with parish ones sometimes.
- Will the Curia's presence really be felt in parishes? The newly-produced booklet will greatly assist with this.
- If a parish produces a viable proposal how seriously will this be considered by the diocese? All such proposals will be listened to and thoroughly considered.

Canon Eddy Jarosz, Vicar General, outlined the process so far, talking back to the Diocesan Assembly in 2003, and *You Are Living Stones* from 2011. In this specific deanery much work has been done already in bringing parishes together into new groupings. There is a desire to create outward looking communities, to reorient the expectation that there is a way of working which allows us all to be more missionary, rather than simply maintaining what we have at the moment.

Canon Joe Wheat, Vicar General, outlined the new groupings for the deanery, noting that much of the clustering has already happened in this deanery, although there are still separate parishes within the

deanery, and so separate pastoral council, bank accounts, etc. These new clusters will also have responsibility to work with existing areas of pastoral care and mission. How can the funds released from the buildings which are being disposed of be best used for mission? What other elements should be taken into consideration? The clusters will be:

Parish	Priests (now / future)	Deacons	Primary Schools	Secondary Schools
Assumption, Beeston Saint Francis of Assisi, Long Eaton	1 / 1		English Martyrs	
Cathedral Church of Saint Barnabas, Nottingham	1.5 / 1.5	David Kerry		
Corpus Christi, Clifton Our Lady and Saint Patrick in the Meadows	1 / 1 (Religious)	2 lay brothers	Blessed Robert W St Patrick	
Good Shepherd, Arnold Saint Anthony, Calverton	1 / 1		Good Shepherd	Christ the King
Holy Cross, Hucknall Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Bulwell	1 / 1	Martyn Swaby	OL of Perpetual Succour Holy Cross St Margaret C	
Holy Family, East Nottingham (including the churches of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Lady and Saint Edward, and Saint Augustine, Apostle of England)	2 / 1.5	Anthony Sullivan	OL & St Edward Sacred Heart St Augustine	
Holy Spirit, West Bridgford Our Lady of Grace, Cotgrave Saint Anne, Radcliffe-on-Trent Saint Margaret Clitherow, Keyworth	3.5 / 2	Peter Swarbrick	St Edmund C	The Becket
Our Lady of Good Counsel, Eastwood Our Lady and Saint Thomas of Hereford, Ilkeston	2 / 1 (1 Ordinariate)		St Thomas The Priory	St John Houghton
Saint Paul, Lenton Boulevard and Saint Mary, Hyson Green	1 / 1 (Ordinariate)		St Mary	
Saint Teresa of Lisieux, Aspley Saint Thomas More, Wollaton	1 / 1	Anthony Cordes	St Teresa	Trinity

Other Places of Worship

- Lithuanian Catholic Centre, West Bridgford
- Our Lady of Czestochowa, Nottingham (with three resident Polish priests)
- Our Lady of the Holy Patronage and Saint Alban, Sneinton (Ukrainian *sui iuris* Church)

Religious Communities

- Dominican Sister, Keyworth
- Little Company of Mary, Cathedral parish (2 houses)
- Little Company of Mary, Woodthorpe
- Little Company of Mary, Daybrook
- Poor Clare (Collettines), Bulwell
- Presentation Sisters, Mapperley
- Sisters of Saint Joseph of Peace, Carlton
- Sisters of Saint Joseph of Peace, Hyson Green
- Sisters of Saint Joseph of Peace, Wollaton

Chaplaincies

- HMP Lowdham Grange, Gedling
- HMP Nottingham
- HMP Whatton, Radcliffe on Trent
- Nottingham Trent University
- University of Nottingham
- Arnold Lodge Hospital
- City Hospital, Nottingham
- Haywood House, Nottingham
- Highbury Hospital
- Ilkeston Community Hospital
- Lings Bar House, Gamston
- Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham
- The Park Hospital, Nottingham
- The Wells Road Centre, Nottingham
- Woodthorpe Hospital

Closures

- Saint Hugh of Lincoln, Bilborough
- Saint John the Evangelist, Stapleford
- Bingham (cease to be used as a Mass centre)



Feedback from the tables

- One parish cluster of two parishes mentioned that some elements of the two parishes are being combined already. There are some tensions, but these are being worked through positively.
- Some parishioners from Stapleford don't feel that they have had any previous knowledge of plans to combine parishes and possibly close the church, and so are still in shock. They note that their community would be better being kept together.
- It is important for parishioners to get to know each other if they are from different parishes; likewise there might be merit in beginning to use a 'cluster' title or name even before the canonical process has been undertaken.
- Mass times for different churches could be advertised in each church of a cluster.
- It would be helpful to know something of a time-line for possible clusterings of parishes.
- Simply talking together, and getting to know each other, should happen before more difficult discussions about administration, etc.
- Churches could be kept open for Eucharistic Services and homeless shelters perhaps.
- Schools should include vocations to the priesthood and religious life in any jobs / careers literature being produced.
- Aspley, Bilborough and Wollaton feel that they haven't been listened to, and that mixed messages have been given and received in some parishes.
- Could the school communities be more integrated into parish communities?
- The Cathedral is at the service of the diocese, and could other city-based parishes help in the ministry to the city of Nottingham?

Bishop Patrick addressed the meeting, noting that this is step one in the journey, and thanked everyone present for their openness in the meeting. Notes from the meeting will be made available via the Dean; please ensure that these notes are shared far and wide within each parish, sharing with those not present what you've seen and heard. The crucial question now is 'what do we do next to make this work'? During Eastertime a visit to the deanery will be made by the Vicar General, Canon Eddy, to see what progress has been made towards making this work. Timelines will be discussed and all viable options considered. The emphasis is on everyone in each parish, not just those present tonight. We need to present this not in a negative way, but in an honest way.

The bishop ended with a reading from Saint Paul's prayer to the young Church in Ephesus: the breadth and the length, the height and the depth of God's love for us, which is beyond all knowledge. Glory be to Him, whose power is at work in us, for ever and ever.