

Parish Mission Feedback

What did the responses have in common?

There was a general consensus that we will need to operate in hubs which should be sited close to youth and high schools in particular. It was felt that the youth need the priests as role models if we are to encourage vocations amongst them. The hubs should provide homes to groups of priests to avoid isolation.

There was also consensus that the priests should be relieved of administrative responsibilities and that the laity should be carefully recruited and trained to relieve the priest of these responsibilities. Several people suggest that more of these functions could usefully be carried out centrally for the diocese, making use of technology. Several parishioners wondered whether there might be a role for technology in transmitting homilies or liturgies.

There was also general consensus that the role of the deacon should be explained clearly to parishioners and expanded. One parishioner questioned whether we should be actively recruiting a deacon for each of our churches. It was felt that deacons should be encouraged to lead liturgies when possible to ease the burden for priests.

More contentiously, but widely argued, was the belief that our priests should be free to marry. Many felt women are an untapped resource in ministry.

Whilst most people seemed to feel that there is an inevitability that new hubs/ church centres will be the outcome, several people argue that we should not abandon our existing churches and their communities lightly. There would be no undoing this. Also, it was argued that communities can be very fragile and that the priests should go to meet the people and not the other way around. Someone suggests that we should look to the early church as a model for us today.

Some interesting ideas that come from this consultation process include the appointment of a roaming priest with a focus on pastoral work and the marginalised. Also, the appointment of a lay pastoral worker and a lay youth worker. It is suggested that communities should be challenged to find ways to fund this from the financial to the good in kind eg. A rent-free room.

Finally, many parishioners point out that to be successful moving forward we need to address the following:

- The need to build up communities based on social action
- The need to get to know our church communities better
- The need for more empathy and understanding of issues such as divorce, contraception and homosexuality (described by a 21 year old as the racism issue of our time with the power to alienate young people. We are playing catch up to the general consensus in morality!)

Feedback - Diocesan Vision for Mission - Parishioners
Parish of St Mary Magdalene's, Bexhill
(incorporating St. Mary Magdalene's, Our Lady of the Rosary & St. Martha's)

1/ Given the Mission entrusted to us all, what three things do you think we most need for Mission effectiveness?

The dominant themes were:-

Prayer / Lay formation/catechesis / Christian Living/witness / Mission/support for youth (Baptism, First Holy Communion & Confirmation) / Fostering domestic church - house groups, etc

Also mentioned were:-

Strong faith / priestly ministry / priest/deacon leadership / women priests / married priests / expansion of the diaconate / improved liturgy / importance of the Sacraments / preparedness for change / collaborative ministry / Evangelisation via example (personal witness) / Listening to the Holy Spirit (help people discern their gifts) / Interfaith dialogue / Ecumenism / Honesty by the Diocese and hierarchy / community working together / emphasis on salvation rather than concentrating on rules and church laws.

2/ What roles in the Mission can be best carried out by the lay-faithful?

The dominant themes were:-

The lay-faithful can carry out everything save for the Sacraments

Also mentioned were:-

Expansion of the lay faithful / fun and faith / pastoral councils / outreach / formation / visiting / evangelising / assisting priests and deacons / formation of laity / administration

3/ What roles in this Mission belong to the Priest?

The dominant themes were:-

Sharing the Sacraments / Guidance / Support of the laity to give them the tools to take on roles / Accessibility

Also mentioned were:-

Youth formation / liaising with Bishop/hierarchy on behalf of parishioners / joyful approach to ministry / leadership / empowering / encouraging parish formation

4/ What factors, do you think, have brought about the present situation that we are having to address in our Diocese?

The dominant themes were:-

Apathy after Vatican II - stuck in the past / Secularisation / Church no longer seen as relevant in people's day to day life / Laity consulted but not given feedback / Scandals and cover ups / Not allowing married priests

Also mentioned were:-

Taking sacramental instructions out of schools / watered down doctrine (teaching) / not inclusive / Ostrich mentality of the church / failure to adapt / modernisation and the present Pope / failure to adapt / lack of transparency and continuity / stuck in patriarchal roots / women and equality / blind arrogance / curia the new Pharisees / lack of catechesis / changing world / lack of formation of the young / shortage of leaders / change in married life / existence of hell has been forgotten / lack of community building / lack of support of the married / failures in communication / lack of communicate widely the good works of the catholic locally and globally / losing priests who have left to get married

5/ If we were starting the Diocese today, with 25 priests, where would you place them?

The dominant themes were:-

Deprived areas / To cover area - 360° / one priest per Deanery / Near catholic schools

Also mentioned were:-

Hubs (community living as God models with the Holy Trinity) / Deanery Teams / rural areas must not be forgotten or overlooked (transport to and from masses) / Near the youth (fostering vocations) / Relieved of all administrative duties / priests travelling around to look after the sick and elderly / geographically groups / system of masses for different areas

FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS - ST. RICHARD'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE, BEXHILL

Only 25 priests in 2030 - how would you respond/organise the Church in A and B?

- Priest exchange from other countries/parishes.
- Shorter time in the Seminary.
- Women priests.
- Live stream Mass - webcam.
- More Masses for everyone to attend.
- Priests from other countries.
- Have a rota in the Deanery for Mass.
- Raise profile of vocations.
- Priests can marry/have families.

Priest shortage - how can we respond?

- Shorter time in Seminary.
- Consider letting priests get married.
- Deploy order/monastic priest where possible.
- Women priests ... hmm ... Vatican III!
- Live-stream Mass - each church to have a webcam - so that people can watch Mass, particularly the housebound.
- Pray for more priests - this is a big concern.
- If parishes closed, have more Masses on a Sunday.
- Increase financial provision for priests.
- Recruit priests from other countries.
- Deacons being commissioned to say the Mass.

How to organise the Diocese in 2030 - Year 10 thoughts

- Support families.
- Women should be able to become priests. Would make the church more welcoming. It would note the importance of Mary as the mother of the church.
- Allow priests to be married and have families to open the priesthood to more (they saw this as a first step before allowing women to be ordained).
- Male and female priests would open the church to more and could support one another as the role is difficult.
- Ordain gay priests.
- Make Mass shorter.
- Pay priests - they deserve a wage.
- Talk to people more about vocations. We don't know what it entails.