

## **Our Lady of Lourdes, Wanstead Parish Meeting 22 Sept 2016**

### OVERVIEW

The meeting was well attended (60-70 parishioners)

Following an introduction by Father Sammon and Anne Marie Fox, discussion took place on the six main themes that had emerged from the parish survey.

Feedback from the discussion was consistent with the findings of the survey and gave rise to some practical suggestions, as summarised below.

It was recognised that the feasibility/timescales for proposed initiatives would require further investigation.

Overall, parishioners felt that there is considerable scope to continue to draw on the skills and interests of the people in the parish, both Catholic and non-Catholic, to promote a mutually supportive, faithful and vibrant community in the future.

Resources for paid workers would be needed, at least in the short term, to enable the parish to adapt to fewer priests and to update its role in a wider and increasingly diverse geographical area. A culture of open-ness, transparency and flexibility in how things are done was felt to be important.

Vocations may naturally then flow from increased understanding and relevance of the Church locally and a sense of belonging amongst all groups.

### PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

#### **1. Young people – they are the future.**

- a) Do not 'dumb down' the Catholic religion in order to attract followers – make the essentials known to young people.
- b) Enabling young people to know and love Christ is paramount – e.g. through first Holy Communion feeling exciting rather than routine.
- c) Consider what is missing that leads to young people drifting away - would changes in the Sacramental order help – or children's / young people's liturgy post first Holy Communion?
- d) Link with University chaplains.
- e) Prioritise continued funding of youth worker.
- f) Ensure cost of participating in youth activities does not exclude anyone
- g) Sports teams to enter local competitions (Catholic and non-Catholic young people)
- h) SVP junior section - to enable volunteering and links with older people (bringing 'exposure' and respect for traditional Catholic values as well as practical help)
- i) Social media can enable instant communication of the Church's messages
- j) Design youth activities so that young people 'feel' the faith (as in Pentecostal churches). This might come about through music and other talents
- k) Consider 'Night Fever' type initiatives – spiritual haven for young people on a night out
- l) Encourage involvement via CAFOD and social justice focus /inter-church co-operation
- m) Youth council for 14+

#### **2. Keep and extend what is working well – lay roles, a funded focus on young people, a welcoming and happy atmosphere, inclusive environment, opportunities for spiritual and community development, social events.**

- a) More Pastoral Assistants and an extended role
- b) Paid Parish Administrator
- c) Parish pilgrimages (social and spiritual dimensions combined)
- d) One big event every 2-3 years
- e) Retreats – hold them locally and with variable timings to reflect constraints on different groups

**3. Review how we use resources – people, time, buildings and money - how do we adapt them to meet future needs and pressures inside and outside the Church?**

- a) Paid workers to organise duties so that skills/talents may be used efficiently and effectively
- b) Skills bank with administrator
- c) Succession planning/buddying
- d) Job fairs
- e) Clear information available year-round, not just in newsletter, on roles available and how to express interest in them
- f) Transparency on how roles are allocated /what is required to undertake them
- g) Have an annual parish diary / set dates well in advance

**4. Modernisation and remaining relevant - considering women and married priests, using technology, style of services and changing population.**

- a) Recognise that changes such as women or parish priests are outside local influence but useful to have discussion so that opinions can be offered
- b) Priests' time to be used primarily for Sacraments
- c) General absolution rather than confession
- d) Consider priests being located in a central hub serving a wider geographical area, where they can support and cover for each other
- e) Train lay people to lead weekday services
- f) Establish flexible pathways for lay and vocational development - for example – towards being Deacons
- h) Recognise that how accessible and relevant the Church feels will vary at different times in people's lives
- i) Discussion groups for young people especially post confirmation.

[Other ideas under other headings, Youth etc]

**5. Role of OLOL Catholic Church - in the wider community.**

- a) Increase visibility and understanding of Catholic church by inviting non-Catholic people in and getting involved in local projects (stop "keeping ourselves to ourselves")
- b) Explicitly consider how we want to be seen by the wider community – and therefore how we should behave in it, both individually and collectively.
- c) Develop parishioners 'skills bank' and offer skills/time to offer other organisations (e.g. people who can help serve lunches at the Allan Burgess centre if they are suddenly short of volunteers)
- d) Stalls at events e.g. Wanstead Festival
- e) Notices in High Street e.g. for cake sales
- f) Build on Area masses – e.g. develop links with Catholic and non-Catholic people who would like to volunteer via SVP.
- g) Invite local newspaper to do a feature
- h) Train Catholic 'spokes people' – to give a Catholic view on local matters
- i) Develop community leaders as contact points for Redbridge Council / police / Transport for London for consultations on local policies – to provide a distinct Catholic community perspective
- j) Convey Catholic values by doing – e.g. getting involved in a local project such as a food bank, or promote own 'project of the year'
- k) Use networks of Catholic organisations and charities
- l) Consider leafleting

**6. Maintain spirituality - and increase vocations.**

- a) Special interest groups in which people can explore their faith – e.g. Pan African group
- b) Retreats locally (at lower cost)
- c) Look at the role of 'anchor points' – the points at which people become anchored to their faith.
- d) Set up a local group to look at promoting vocations