

Parish Management Group (PMG) – Chair's Report 2012

For some time prior to 2012 the PMG had been working on putting together a parish plan. To draw this together, in early 2012 members participated in an exercise to define their collective vision for the parish, which would also reflect the hopes and expectations of as many fellow parishioners as possible. The exercise asked people to describe what they would like to find if they came as a visitor to Sacred Heart Flitwick in 2016.

The overwhelming message was that people would want to find a vibrant, welcoming and friendly parish where everyone could feel involved. There was a wide range of ideas about pastoral and social activities. More importantly there were strong opinions on opportunities to develop the parish spiritually that recognised work that had already been undertaken, which could be built on.

Another strong theme was the desire to see the parish grow. The potential was demonstrated at Christmas when it is estimated there were up to 350 people at the 6 o'clock Mass and both the other Masses were full, with the Parish Room having to be opened up again to cope with 9 o'clock. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have that 'problem' every weekend!

Delivering the vision is a long-term project but some areas of progress so far are:

- You will have seen various newsletter notices about starting a second children's liturgy group, so that our youngest parishioners are introduced to God's word at both Sunday Masses, and become aware that they are valued by the whole parish. This is now a reality thanks to the persistence, patience and flexibility of a number of parishioners. They know who they are, and I welcome this opportunity to express our appreciation for their efforts.
- Building on the foundation created by the new sacramental preparation programme for children launched in September 2011, the next step was to explore what can be done to support children and young people after they have made their First Holy

Communion, and encourage them to continue their journey of faith. A lot of work has been put into this in recent months, and it has been encouraging to see it reflected through involvement in the Youth Sunday Mass, younger readers joining the rota and having servers more regularly.

- The programme to offer an ever-wider variety of ways to develop spiritually continues: another successful pilgrimage; exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in Holy Week; Stations of the Cross during Lent; more ecumenical and Celtic services; the establishment of an annual parish retreat; the introduction of talks on the social teaching of the church; and the 100 days of prayer around the Olympics. The launch by the Pope of the Year of Faith in October means many of these will be repeated and there will be others that will be new so 'watch this space'!
- Welcomers at all Masses are now meeting to share best practice and ensure consistency in this important element of our vision – they are often the first person a visitor or new parishioner will speak to, so getting this right is very important.
- Have you spotted the new road signs? As a contribution to the aim of the Year of Faith to encourage resting Catholics to return to Church, this practical step was taken to help people who may be searching – both spiritually and practically – to find us.
- Getting our message across where people look for them. Some work has been done but more is needed to enable the parish to develop its offering on social media.
- Groups and services. There are an increasing number of activities causing people to visit our church, whether it is one of the regular groups that meet, the different range of services that are being held, or one-off activities such as charity fundraisers. By no means all those who attend are Catholics, let alone our own parishioners, so these activities all play a vital part in introducing people to us and our faith. It is important that this trend is allowed to flourish and grow.

- At a more practical level again an important element of creating the community of our vision is that it is also a safe community and environment. Both safeguarding and health and safety are taken very seriously, and are now standing items discussed at all PMG meetings. Our thanks to all those who contribute to this work but especially to John Flanagan (safeguarding) and John Fletcher (health and safety).

For the future

As I said at the start, the building of the parish vision is a long-term initiative and there is more to do. The plan is in place, it can be added to if opportunities and resources (mainly people with time to offer) become available but whether that happens or not, the new PMG, which forms at the AGM, will carry the vision forward under its new chair.

The AGM is on the 14th March in the Parish Room at 7.30 pm. You are all welcome to attend and learn more about what the PMG does.

Anne Gadsden, Chair of Parish Management Group
January 2013

PARISH STATISTICS FOR 2012

Average Mass attendance	360	Confirmation Candidates	11	Marriages	4
Baptisms	23	First-Communion Candidates	12	Deaths	4
Adults received	4				

Sacred Heart Catholic Church

Pope Close, Flitwick



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