

About our Parish, PPC AGM, 25 May 2017 Sacred Heart Catholic Church



Catholic Parish of The Sacred Heart

Our Mission

Through the power of the Holy Spirit we will be a parish renewed in our knowledge and understanding of the love of Jesus Christ, to enable each of us to fulfil our Christian mission.

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THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE OF THE PARISH IN 2016 IN 8 NUMBERS

The life of the parish is marked out by the celebration of the sacraments of the Church, week by week we celebrate the Eucharist that leads us to sharing in five more of the gifts of the church – the only sacrament missing from our year was an 'Ordination'!

- 23** *Baptisms*; we welcomed a record number of babies and children into the community of the Church during the year and marked the sacrament with our regular celebration of baptism with a gathering of families in June
- 19** *Confirmations*; Bishop Peter visited us in July to confirm a large group of young people, who had been preparing for the gift of the Holy Spirit since the feast of Christ the King, in November 2015
- 3** *Adult Confirmations*; a couple to be married in December joined the young people to be confirmed, and at Easter 2017 we baptised and confirmed Sharon Thomas into the Church, the first adult catechumen for three years
- 16** *First Communions*; were celebrated in the highlight to the two-year preparation for this very special step for our children and their families
- 12** *First Reconciliations*; our children joined us for the morning when they celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time, with a prayer tent to welcome them the children are gently guided towards this gift of mercy and forgiveness
- 5** *Weddings*; were solemnised in the parish over the year. Each involves a unique journey of discernment and preparation culminating in a holy day for each couple
- 10** *Funerals*; we helped the families of faithful members of the parish community to offer their farewells to their loved ones through a mixture of requiem Masses and funeral services, celebrated at the church and the local crematorium
- Sacrament of the Sick*; was frequently administered by Fr. Bennie, supported by the parish people who carry the Blessed Sacrament (Viaticum) to those sick and at home
- 17** *Catechists*; all these sacramental gifts were made possible by the dedication and hard work of a group of men and women who prepare and deliver the week by week events of formation

CARING PARISH

During the last twelve months, the Parish Pastoral Council has been looking at how we ensure that everyone in our parish receives the care they need. The need to know people by name is vital. Work has begun in this area, and how we welcome people to Mass and into the parish forms part of this work.

Other areas include:

- Providing effective communication for people in need of visits and for receiving Holy Communion at home
- Support for the bereaved
- Opportunities for those in need, to pray

And more will follow. We are all part of this process.

COMMUNICATION

Communicating with each other in the parish and with others beyond our parish is important. In addition to our weekly bulletins handed out at weekend Masses, the website (www.sacredheartflitwick.co.uk) has a great deal more information. We have an active Facebook page with followers from the parish and further afield.

On a more personal level we have **welcomers** at our weekend Masses, who may be the first parishioners you speak to, but we trust not the last!

CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS

We encourage all parents to bring their children to church

Baptismal Preparation When seeking baptism for their child we invite parents and Godparents if possible to attend a short preparation course, held regularly throughout the year. Parents are invited to bring their child to one of our weekend Masses for the Rite of Welcome, to allow the whole parish to welcome the infant and rejoice that he or she is joining our community of faith.

Little 'Uns For pre-school children, meeting again on Friday mornings in term time. It provides an opportunity to develop faith through play and song as well as a social gathering for the children's daytime carers.

Children's Liturgy For children age 3+, an opportunity to follow their own liturgy based on the theme of the day's Gospel available at both weekend Masses.

Catechetical Programme We have a comprehensive, integrated programme starting when children reach school age. We then run a two-year programme leading to First Communion with the sacrament of Reconciliation being celebrated in the first year. Sessions are then available for children after First Communion until they are ready to join our confirmation programme.

Altar Servers After First Communion we welcome any young people who wish to serve at Mass. New servers are always welcome – training will be given.

YouCat This post Confirmation Group has recently started. It is a youth group for young people to find out more about their faith.

CONFIRMATION AND WELCOMING ADULTS INTO THE CHURCH

Confirmation The Sacrament of Confirmation is held every two years and we hope to have enough young people to hold it again in 2018.

Rite of Catholic initiation for Adults (RCIA) We are always ready to support adults who wish to explore a calling to join us in full communion.

FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Events and programmes are run regularly to provide opportunities for formation ranging for Lenten and Advent courses, exploration of the Gospels and other Bible subjects and other topics of interest. This Lent, we had a course on the Mass as well as participating in an ecumenical programme with the local churches.

LITURGICAL INVOLVEMENT

We have a team of Extraordinary Ministers of Word and Communion who support the clergy in the distribution of the Blessed Sacrament, take communion to the sick and housebound and take Services of Word and Communion when required.

Masses are also enriched by our team of readers. At weekend Masses they also call the congregation to prayer as well as deliver the Word to us all.

PRAYER AND PRAYER GROUPS

Our programme for **spiritual renewal** includes our annual Quiet Day, Retreat, Men's Breakfast meetings as well as a pilgrimage programme. In 2016 over 30 parishioners and friends enjoyed a wonderful and uplifting pilgrimage to Assisi. In many of these activities we are joined by people from other parishes and other faiths. There are also opportunities for Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction.

Mothers' Prayers Group A well-established group that meets fortnightly in the intimacy of a parishioner's home for prayer and fellowship. They pray for their children, grandchildren and anyone who has asked for prayers, or who is our heart.

Charismatic Prayer Group This group meets for a time of informal praise and worship, intercession and prayer ministry. They offer prayer ministry to the parish after Mass at the beginning of each month.

SOCIAL

Tea and coffee after 11.00 am Mass on Sundays is an opportunity for social interaction in a relaxed atmosphere. Our sewing group meets regularly, and there are an annual Macmillan coffee mornings, Soup for Sudan lunches during Lent and other social events such as a parish dinner or barbeque.

This year along with our Men's Breakfast we had Ladies' Afternoon Tea where Deacon Philip told us of his pilgrimage to Compostela

SVP – SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

Our SVP conference continues to work visiting those in need, offering help and support. Its work is part of the Caring Parish Plan. New members are always welcome. Members organise a Mass for the sick of the parish annually in June, followed by afternoon tea. There is the annual Giving Tree in Advent but the core work of visiting goes on week in, week out. Anyone in need can contact the SVP on 01525 406 810.

PPC CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – 2017

As we take the time to reflect on 2016 and early 2017, the words of our parish prayer 'to grow and flourish' resound each Sunday and echo how well the Sacred Heart Parish has embraced and adapted to significant change. I believe the sustained growth, as a community is something in which we should be immensely proud, in what have been challenging times.

I mentioned last year that I hoped that Canon Bennie would be granted energy and zeal to fulfil his ministry with us and we have been blessed by his support, enthusiasm and dedication – albeit at times his attempts to soak the parishioners with holy water has led to some suggestions that we should issue umbrellas!

Deacon Philip has been unstinting in his work and dedication to the parish and taking on the parish administration role which has supported us all and we need to recognise and thank him for all that he does.

The active vibrant parish to which we are all accustomed does not happen by accident. The active support of a huge number of parishioners is to be commended and a big thank you for your service in making the parish tick. I want also to a special thank you to Suzanne Yates who as parish secretary and much more, has been so supportive this year.

2016 brought great sadness to me personally, when the Lord called my beloved mother to her final resting place after a short illness. I took great strength from our wonderful community at Sacred Heart, which made me feel at home, and I am really grateful for this support.

I have to admit that since taking the role of chair of our Parish Pastoral Council, we seem to have had our share of 'challenge and change' to work through. In the PPC we remain conscious of Bishop Peter's pastoral vision, to ensure parishes would continue to be served with the forecasted reduction in priests over time. Early in 2017, a small group was formed to look at the key elements to support a parish without a parish priest to ensure it could continue to sustain its growth and flourish as a community, it was intended this work would be shared during Bishop Peter's visitation in June.

This work has focused on a number of key themes. We need to focus to communicate more effectively, to ensure the 'orchestration' of all the activities is enhanced recognising that there are many parishioners with different needs, that we really focus on growing in faith and formation and become even a more welcoming and caring parish and a 'home'.

The recent announcement that Fr. Richard at Biggleswade is to retire later this year, reduces the number of priests again in the pastoral area. In line with the plans in Bishop Peter's vision, no new priest will be available to support the pastoral area. The Bishop's letter last week brought clarity to the situation and it is unfortunate that we will be impacted once again. We will be sad to see Canon Bennie move from us and we can only wish him the health and energy he will require to take on this new challenge. We welcome Fr. John Danford and over the next few months the detailed arrangements will be worked through. We did not expect to be faced with such 'challenge and change' so quickly, but I urge you all 'to work together' so that this parish continues to thrive.

The PPC is working to plan and support the parish through this change,

God Bless.

Siobhan Campbell