

# Parish of Our Lady of the Holy Souls, KENSAL NEW TOWN

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I'm writing to you all about the important topic of 'service' in the parish.

My dad used to be a Catholic headteacher of my primary school from the 1980's to 2010's. He used to walk around the school, pop into classrooms to play his guitar, and teach. At some point that stopped. I recently asked him why. He said that being a head teacher was originally easy. But since the 1990's, there were various new administrative requirements such as health and safety, data protection, safeguarding, building regulations, and national curriculum requirements. He said his job became less of a headteacher and more of an administrator/manager.

The same is true with parish priesthood. The parish priest is ordained with 3-fold gifts to "teach, sanctify, and lead." It used to be the case that priests could spend a good amount of time teaching, leading prayer, administering the sacraments, and offering pastoral contact. Much like school headteachers, every parish priest now has to spend a significant amount of time dealing with increasing administrative demands – often without the necessary expertise, training, or support – that were not there 30 years ago. He is less able to give time doing the things that he was ordained to do. He is often working alone or at best with only one or two part-time employees.

Additionally, for the first time in a census of England and Wales, over half of society describe themselves as non-Christian. Even some nominal Christians may not have heard, or invited to respond to, the Good News of Jesus Christ. The need for evangelisation is paramount. These new realities highlight the need for parish life to become even more of a team game.

I am extremely grateful to everyone who already volunteers so generously and joyfully. It is inspiring to see people come alive through service. The parish cannot exist, let alone live out Jesus' mission to make disciples, without you. Thank you!

My dream is for everyone to play their part here to live out Jesus' Great Commission to "Go, make disciples of all nations" (Mt. 28:19). I appreciate people's lives are busy, and life is challenging in many ways. However, it is useful to reflect how we are maximising our serving potential.

The bible encourages everyone to serve. In 1 Corinthians 12:27, St. Paul writes "You are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of it." The bible says the priest should not be expected to do everything himself. Rather his role is to "equip" the baptised for service. In Ephesians 4:11, St Paul writes, "Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers, to **equip** his people for works of service..."

Similarly, the bible says that priests needs to spend less time trying to meet all the pastoral demands himself, and more time equipping the baptised to meet pastoral needs. In Exodus 18:17 ff, Moses' Father-in-law told him, "What you are doing is not good... The work is too heavy for

you; you cannot handle it alone... select capable people ... and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens." If I'm honest, I often feel this heaviness. I need your help. I ask your help.

I want to introduce soon a formal parish 'Way of Life', with 5 areas in which people can serve:

1. **Fellowship:** Welcoming people to Mass, serving teas and coffees, friendships, organising social events, inviting non-churchgoers to parish events, prioritising newcomers
2. **Evangelisation:** alpha (e.g., set up, welcome, hospitality, tech, table helpers and listeners, discussion facilitators, prayer facilitators), giving testimonies of faith
3. **Worship:** liturgical ministries: e.g., proclaimer of God's word, sacristan, altar server, Eucharistic Minister; music groups, tech for liturgy; prayer groups, commitment to individual daily prayer
4. **Formation:** adult ongoing formation groups; sacramental preparation (e.g., baptism, 1<sup>st</sup> Holy Communion, Confirmation, Marriage, funerals); youth work
5. **Service:** social outreach: St Vincent de Paul Society, foodbanks, visiting the sick & housebound, fundraising events; social media, cleaning, minor building repairs and maintenance, financial groups, etc

Ask yourself, "What can I do to serve Jesus in our parish? What gifts has God given me that I can share with others? (If you are already serving) Who else can I invite to serve with me?"

Every contribution, even if it seems small, is valuable and makes a difference. God is never outdone in generosity. Say "yes", if you are able to serve - even if only for a small amount of time. You are not called because you are worthy. You are worthy because you are called!

Please, look at the new "**Church Ministry and Team's**" sheet on the parish noticeboard and website. This sheet lists various areas where help is needed in our parish.

Please, contact **Kaiser**, our **Parish Administrator**. He will pass your name and contact information to the lead person, and they will contact you.

Our parish's draft vision statement is "to be a family where everyone is loved, life's meaning is awakened, and hope is ignited." Following the above 'Way of Life', my definition of how we do this is "we personally encounter Jesus Christ and commit to follow him (evangelisation), and filled with his Spirit gather as a community (fellowship) to joyfully worship him (worship), grow in knowledge (formation) and **service** (service) of him, to make disciples of all nations and transform society in God's love."

Paraphrasing John F. Kennedy, "Ask not just what your church can do for you - ask what you can do for your church." St. Mother Teresa said, "I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things."

Brothers and sisters, may God bless you, and give us all joy in his service!

Yours in Christ,



Fr. Damian Ryan