

## **Parish Zoom Meeting 1 Summary – Developing our Parish Mission Together – 26 May 2021**

**Overall outcome of the Zooms** to develop our understanding of what St Barts is aiming to do through its Mission of Evangelisation and to involve parishioners in both the conversation and in defining our focus.

### **Fr Francis' perspective on why a Parish Mission of Evangelisation?**

We are aiming for a vibrant parish where all feel welcome and included, with a variety of types of worship and prayer, opportunities for spiritual development for adults and children and a range of social events which enabling unity and building of friendships and support for each other. We will also look outside the parish so we are inclusive and welcoming in the local community.

### **Why now and where are we as a parish now?**

We have an opportunity, post the pandemic, to bring the community together again, to develop ourselves and ensure our parish is relevant for the future. The parish lives in the wider community around us. Our first priority is to enable our parishioners to return to mass and re-ignite their sense of belonging to our parish community.

We have a strong base and we need to build on it and to raise awareness in the parish of our many long-standing parish groups who do fantastic work inside and outside the parish and who, in some cases, need additional members to enable them to continue their work.

I have outlined **5 overall focus areas** which are interlinked, fit with and extend our existing group activities. The PPC has been working on these as we aim for an overall, joined up plan, created through inputs from as many parishioners as possible and visible to all.

### **Summary of Evangelisation – what does it actually mean for St Barts?**

- Togetherness - all actively involved in parish activities and supporting each other
- All looking to develop and learn more about our faith and the use of prayer
- Looking outside our parish too, into our local community and sharing what we have (our faith) with others

### **A summary of Paul O'Connor's perspective on becoming a missionary disciple at St Barts**

Developing our understanding of our faith and being able to draw people to us through what we say and do individually and collectively. Getting involved, contributing to our parish activities. Ultimately, over the longer term we will become confident in sharing our faith with others.

### **Inputs from 5 breakout groups on 26 May 2021 for each of 3 questions covered (mainly verbatim)**

#### **Q1. How do you feel about being a missionary disciple? What more do you need to become a missionary disciple?**

- It means individual participation in activities in the parish to help build the community, especially after the pandemic
- Live your faith, be grounded in your Christianity and simply "be yourself" and bring that vision of being happy in your faith. Even if you cannot do as much as before, you can pray, write letters, sign petitions. Do not preach.
- Being a Good Neighbour
- Prayer and participation
- It means individual participation in activities in the parish to help build the community, especially after the pandemic
- Live your faith, be grounded in your Christianity and simple be yourself and bring that vision of being happy
- We can pray for one another, ourselves, our families and the world.
- Continual learning, following scripture, a disciple is someone who learns from our Lord. Use the resources we have available eg Newman society, courses (eg Abbey Education Centre), Lent and Advent groups, adult catechesis, books articles, the Focolare (movement) and the bi-annual Celebrate (Catholic Charismatic Renewal) weekend gatherings (at Nicholas Breakspeare School in recent years).

- Missionary Disciple/ship is a "mindset", being an evangeliser in our everyday lives, developing an attitude of inclusively- going out to the other, especially newcomers
- Proclaiming our faith from where we are i.e. sharing our own experience
- Being a missionary disciple can sound like a scary term; but not so; it can start with nearby people in every day life, always there is someone we know who needs practical/physical help and prayer (remember the Rosary is a most powerful means).
- Needful persons may be told we are praying for them!
- Now is a good time to be trying to reach other people. A lot of people won't have liked what they've been living with over the past few months under lockdown, so it may well be a key time to be developing our mission.

*Some perceived barriers to being a "missionary disciple" were expressed*

- *It's challenging to bring in new people, when we don't reflect first within our own homes and families.*
- *We are not used to engaging with people at our workplaces, even though people there may know we are Catholic.*
- *Religion is a personal thing and other's opinions need to be respected.*

**Q2. Which one of the 5 focus areas is most important to you and why? Are we missing anything? (The 5 focus areas are: Building Community, Spirituality, Youth, Ecumenism, Social Justice)**

- Although it was felt by some that all focus areas were broadly equal in importance, ***Building Community and Youth were seen as critical***
- The range and breadth of focus areas is good; it enables engagement by those with specific interests eg Social Justice, Ecumenism
- Adult spiritual formation is key to developing understanding and confidence to speak about our faith.
- Youth –focus here is crucial needs to be some Youth Club or activities– some fun for younger parishioners
- The focus on pastoral elements within Building Community, supporting each other. How is this actually being done day to day at St Barts, do we need more infrastructure eg a pastoral network to make sure all those in need of support/friendship are being contacted at least once per month? The SVP is the main group delivering this support currently within the parish and to individuals outside the parish itself along with Fr Francis, Deacons Justin and Paul.
- Reflect and consider what we define as "pastoral care" going forward, after the pandemic.

**Q3 How could we build on the strengths of our parish to deliver this evangelising mission? (NB insufficient time to cover this question fully so this is a partial answer only – to be continued at later session)**

- Reflect and consider what we define as "pastoral care" going forward, after the pandemic, and infrastructure
- Engagement and encouragement to get involved, by possibly joining a parish group that previously we had not considered, and discover what we could be good at, for St Barts
- There is a strong commitment of many to their "spiritual home", St Barts
- Understand why parishioners have left the church (NB this is not a St Barts only issue)
- There is much knowledge and experience and established groups in the parish – we build on this foundation

***Input received from a parishioner*** – *The question raised is "Do you consider that focussing on climate change is an effective way of bringing souls to Christ? Our current position is that we are each guided by God's teaching in looking after His creation. The parish wishes to involve our younger members, many of whom are interested in this topic. Caring for God's creation is proposed as a strand of the Social Justice focus area currently but please share your thoughts on this at a meeting or in writing.*

**Join us on 8 June at 7.30 pm for a further Zoom (short recap, any questions and then into small groups) so bring your thoughts and to help develop our plans together.**

**3 June 2021**