



Corpus Christi Church, 51 Langdon Street, Tring, HP23 6BA

PARISH MEETING 24 SEPTEMBER 2014

Dear Parishioners

I want to thank all who came to the Parish Meeting last Wednesday. It was a very fruitful meeting. 15 parishioners came and eight people offered their apology. These are the Minutes of the meeting:

Minutes

1. The meeting was called to consider whether a parish pastoral council ('PPC') would help bring together and coordinate everything that is happening in our parish. Canon Berry chaired the meeting and 15 parishioners attended.
2. At the start of the meeting, attendees were invited to read a background note prepared by Canon Berry which is attached to this meeting note. Canon also circulated a copy of the constitution of the PPC which had been in existence at Corpus Christi prior to his arrival and which is available on the parish website; <http://parish.rcdow.org.uk/tring/> There then followed a scripture reading, prayers and a short period of reflection before Canon Berry introduced the meeting. He pointed out that whilst the Code of Canon Law required there to be a finance committee (which exists and meets quarterly) the establishment of PPCs is a matter for the diocese and whilst they are encouraged by the Archbishop, it is not mandatory. Whilst the finance committee is required to help the parish priest in the administration of the parish, canon law states that a PPC has a consultative role.
3. There followed a brief discussion on the role and activities of the Corpus Christi PPC which had existed previously and which had played a significant role in the planning, building and fund raising for the new church and in leading the parish during the illness of the two previous parish priests and the period prior to the appointment of Canon Berry.
4. In relation to a new PPC, there was general agreement that it must have a clear objective and that a starting point should be the bringing together of representatives from the various parish groups (activities and ministries) in order that parishioners would become better aware of all the activities taking place and who to contact within those groups. Key to this would be identifying the groups, asking representatives to talk about their work and publishing a summary on the parish website. A representative from each group could for example form the basis of a PPC.
5. Attached to the parish newsletter issued on 13 July was a questionnaire in which Canon identified many of the existing parish groups and possible future groups and asked parishioners to offer themselves to fulfil one or more of the ministries and activities listed. Completed questionnaires will now be analysed by Canon with the help of one or two parishioners who kindly volunteered at the meeting.
6. As part of the move towards establishing a PPC, it was also agreed that a parish specific website was needed. The existing website is a subset of the diocesan website and is somewhat inflexible. Communication could also be improved by a greater use of email within the parish.
7. The following action plan was agreed:
28 September – Canon will appeal for volunteers to form a website committee
12 October – Parishioners will be invited to give Canon their email addresses
9 November – Representatives from the existing parish groups will be asked to meet after the 10.30 Mass to speak about their activities and outline their views on establishing a PPC.
Thereafter, drawing on the views obtained, Canon will propose the form that a PPC should take.

The meeting closed with a prayer.

Background Notes

1. Since his election Pope Francis has captivated and energised Catholics throughout the world. He is a man who is full of surprises. He puts across very profound thoughts in very plain words. Last November he summed up his whole ministry as pope in the letter called *Evangelii Gaudium* which means *The Joy of the Gospel*. For him Christianity is not an ethical system but a community of faith whose origin and identity are founded in the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. In this letter he spoke about parish life: *"The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community."*

2. The Code of Canon Law describes a parish as "a definitive community of the Christian faithful established on a stable basis within a particular church [diocese]; the pastoral care of the parish is entrusted to a pastor [parish priest] as its own shepherd under the authority of the diocesan bishop" (Canon 515).

3. The Code states that "in each parish there is to be a finance committee to help the parish priest in the administration of the goods of the parish" (Canon 537).

4. The Code also states that "If, after consulting the council of priests, the diocesan bishop considers it opportune, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish. In this council, which is presided over by the parish priest, Christ's faithful together with those who by virtue of their office are engaged in pastoral care in the parish, give their help in fostering pastoral action. The pastoral council has only a consultative vote, and it is regulated by the norms laid down by the diocesan bishop" (Canon 536). No such norms have been laid down by the Archbishops of Westminster but Cardinals Heenan, Hume and Nichols have encouraged all parishes to have pastoral councils.

5. It has been left to each parish to draw up its own rules. Some have formal constitutions, others a simple set of guidelines. At Corpus Christi, Tring, there exists an undated Parish Council Constitution for a council that appears to have ceased to exist. It is timely to reconsider the matter. Each parish should have two councils or committees, a parish pastoral council which handles all matters of a pastoral nature and a parish finance committee which handles all matters related to parish finance and property matters.

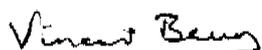
6. Parishes are established for the good of souls. Each local community is made up of persons of various ages and unique gifts, young and old, rich and poor, saints and sinners. The vitality of our families and parishes is an accurate gauge of the vitality of the Church in a particular territory or country.

7. Pope John Paul II issued a letter to mark the beginning of the Third Millennium in which he stressed the importance of the role of lay people in the life of the Church and said that the Church must "encourage all the baptised and confirmed to be aware of their active responsibility in the Church's life." Pope Benedict XVI in 2009 visited one of the parishes in Rome and said the following: "It is necessary to improve pastoral structures in such a way that the co-responsibility of all members of the People of God in their entirety is gradually promoted ... This demands a change in mindset, particularly concerning lay people. They must no longer be viewed as 'collaborators' of the clergy but truly recognised as 'co-responsible' for the Church's being and action."

8. At about the same time Donal Murray, the Bishop of Limerick in Ireland wrote: "The parish is not just the priests; it is not just the people who have special roles in the liturgy or in the schools or in parish pastoral councils. All of these are an important part of the richness of parish life, but the parish needs every one of its members and all of their gifts. A vibrant parish is one where all the parishioners understand that the life of each one contributes to the well being of the parish."

9. What kind of pastoral council will best suit the needs of our parish? It can be an open meeting with a small numbers of elected officers and representatives of existing parish groups or a completely elected body. How often should it meet? Monthly, quarterly or less frequently? Please help us reach the right decision.

Yours sincerely



Parish Priest

28 September 2014