

## **Pastoral Council Coordinating Group: Meeting 13/11/24**

Present: Fr John, Magda, Trish, Dominic, Kate and Norman.

Dominic welcomed the meeting noting that this is the second meeting of the group. The group had been asked by Father John, the OLOL Community Forum and the Forum Support Group to establish a Pastoral (Parish) Council. The meeting of this group had been advertised at church and at the Forum and all were welcome.

After some lectio from 1 Peter 4 v 8-11, Dominic introduced the idea of a synodal approach to pastoral council meetings, appropriate for more substantial topics and ways forward for the parish.

Dominic also introduced some potential models for the working of a pastoral council:

- i) one where the council met in different modes on alternate meetings: one dealing with more summary, business type matters in a non-synodial way; then the next dealing with matters which needed more space taking a more spiritual, synodial approach.
- ii) where a group of 10-12 met quarterly on say a Saturday morning for 2 hours to consider both business and issue-based items; and
- iii) where there was a small core pastoral council group which ran the 'business' side of the church, and alongside it a more prayerful group which considered the ongoing mission of the parish.

There was no clear agreement as to whether any of these models were viable.

The meeting briefly considered the constitution of St Lawrence's parish as a model which might be adopted. The meeting considered some of the possible areas of parish life which might be represented through roles on the council: Families, children and youth, Adult education, and spirituality etc.

The meeting noted that including the voices of parishioners in the decision-making processes (advising Father John) was really important and the Forum was an excellent avenue for that, being open to all and with regular attendance of at least 20 participants. It was also noted that the former Parish Council which had been in place until the pandemic had made a huge contribution to Parish life and it would be important to learn from what worked well as well as using this as an opportunity for a refresh.

It was noted that finding up to 10 people who would be willing to meet monthly, representing different areas of parish life would be difficult. Dominic reported that three likely people he had approached had shown no interest. Father John suggested that the people who are involved in the different areas of parish life are likely to not be able to devote further time to monthly meetings.

Magda praised the energy and teamwork of the group assembled by Iza N to deliver the Christmas Bazaar. This group, with a clear practical purpose, had been highly proactive in developing different stalls and money raising ideas. She suggested that this was the

sort of motivating venture which helped the community grow, and just one example of meaningful initiatives in the Parish.

The group listed the different groups which were active at present in the parish: Hope into Action; the Wednesday Club; the Catechism Group; Mary's Meals; the Music Group; the Syro Malaba Group; the Cantonese Mass Group; the Lourdes Group; the Finance Committee; the Fabric Committee; the Office Group. Groups which were currently less active than in the past are the CAFOD Group, the Addenbrookes Group, the Missio Group, and the Prison Visiting Group.

Fr John said that he recently learned that only about a quarter of parishes currently have an active/functioning Parish Council. There are more Parish Councils which have a written constitution but do not function in practice. On reflection, Father John said that whilst establishing active Pastoral Councils is the direction from the Bishop and Vatican, this perhaps is not right for our Parish at this time but should be revisited in the future. Father John added the Community Forum makes a positive contribution to decision making.

Fr John and the Meeting took the view that in the light of all this, for the time being, the parish should concentrate on developing and encouraging areas of Ministry and projects where there was a clear need and enthusiasm in the parish. This would mean continuing with the Parish Forum as presently functioning, meeting three times a year to provide advice and an annual AGM. Moreover, there might be scope to further publicise and support the various groups through perhaps an event which explains what they did and what help they needed. This might be after a Mass or as part of an AGM of the parish.

Next meeting of the Forum Support Group (not the Pastoral Council Group!) would be Tuesday January 7 2025 at 7.30pm in the parish house.