

Report by Chairperson to Annual General Meeting **of Tranmere Parish Pastoral Council, Sunday 25th July 2009, In the Parish Hall**

Being a member of the PPC is really quite unlike being a member of almost any other committee.

It's an interesting committee, quite relaxed much of the time....it's reflective....we don't count votes...we work towards consensus rather than outright or other types of majority voting systems....because our task is to "Care" for the Parish...to be the Pastoral arm of the Parish governance.

We look at the big picture of the Parish, within the framework of the Archdiocese and of the whole Church

We listen to parishioners....try to discern needs...discuss them.

We don't handle money...we look at what is important for the Parish and then make recommendations to the Parish Finance Council.

So, without going into every detail of what we have done in this last year, because we have given quite specific reports at Mass after each meeting, I'd like to concentrate on the areas of major focus.

Obviously, the retirement of Monsignor Swann at the end of this year, and what might happen from next year on, has been high on our Agenda.

We've looked at it from two perspectives

- The work of the subcommittees which answer to the PPC
- The welfare of the Parish Community

The Subcommittees

When Mgr David Cappo visited here last August, he assured us that while we would have a priest resident at Tranmere, it was unlikely that the priest would be able to give as much time to the parish as does Mgr Swann, and that we should spend the following months ensuring that all of our committees and processes were in a good order which would support the new incumbent. Given the further reduction in priests since he spoke to us, and the fact that we have heard no more from the Archbishop's office on the matter, we do not know what is happening next year, but whatever it is, we are well on the way to being ready!

We have had for some time a well formulated **Parish Aims and Activities Document** which lists the 13 groups or subcommittees working directly under the auspices of the PPC. The document shows the membership, the aims and objectives and the tasks of each group. The PPC has reviewed these, and then asked each group to update its entry. Each group has been invited to a PPC meeting so that we can hear of their hopes and aspirations and for them to tell us of ways in which we can be supportive.

In this review process it became evident that there were some gaps, and our Pastoral Associate, Ms Sue Wakeham, was asked to develop both a Bereavement Group, which assists families to plan funerals, and then follows up with support for as long as it is necessary, and a group which could plan and lead Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion for those occasions when there was not a priest to say Mass. Sue has done this.

We then sent this document to Mgr Cappo, asking for suggestions on ways we could further prepare for the future. His reply told us that he was most satisfied with what we had done and he could not add to it.

As part of this planning for the future, and in dealing with the reality of the present, the decision was made to **consolidate both Sunday Masses** to the one time of 9:30am.

With the possibility of Mgr Swann being unable to say Mass for one reason or another, it had become increasingly difficult to find replacement priests for two Masses. In looking at the most recent edition of the Southern Cross, of the 60 or so Metropolitan Mass centres, 50 have only one Sunday Morning English Mass. Another few have maybe another Mass in say Polish, Vietnamese, Italian....but we are far from alone as many parishes too have either made this decision for themselves, or have had the decision made for them.

Change is never easy, and people cope with it in different ways, but if we approach the situation with an open, generous heart, and try to see the big picture rather than what just affects us, we can usually cope.

Parish Community

Our other main focus has been on maintaining and nurturing our parish community....our people.

Our people who come to Mass regularly or occasionally, our people who are members of our school community, our people who come here when they have special needsweddings, funerals, baptisms....we have concentrated on making this a **welcoming community** where the door is always open.

One way of doing this has been to ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for us to gather, in large or small groups, at times other than our Sacramental celebrations, to have prayer groups, welfare groups, social occasions, whatever it takes to help people know each other and feel that they are an integral part of the Tranmere Parish.

The significant **upgrades to the Hall** over the past few years, air-conditioning last year, the new kitchen and painting this year, with new chairs to come shortly, a major "toss out" of bits and pieces have all contributed to making this a venue where we can meet and enjoy being Tranmere parishioners....in comfort.

Even small details like always having the sufficient urns, cups and supplies for our wonderful tea and coffee after Mass occasions can be traced back to having all of the details of the Parish plan well worked out.

We have been so fortunate to have had Mgr John Swann, devoting his life to us in our Parish and when he leaves us he will be sorely missed.

Our Pastoral Associate Sue Wakeham is a treasure...she packs so much work into the hours she spends here, always calm and serene as she not only deals with the obvious aspects of her job, but finding new directions for her role on an ongoing basis.

We have had wonderful service from our Parish Councillors (especially Sandy Mazzarolo who retires this year.)

We are blessed with an amazing array of volunteers who do just about everything.

And we will need you all in the next phase of our Parish life

The next stage, once we know precisely what is to happen next year, is up to us.

The structures are there to make our future a good one, but having it on paper is one thing. Having it work is another. It relies on each of us accepting that our lives as parishioners of St Joseph's Tranmere will change. Maybe we'll love the change. Maybe we will struggle to accept it. But each of us will not be doing it alone. With God's grace, we can be open, supportive, accepting and loving. We can help those who find it difficult to see the best in each situation. We can know that we are part of a change in the Church happening world wide, and we can help Tranmere Parish to be vibrant worshipping community, focused on the Eucharist, caring for each other as members of the family of the Church