



Facilitated Event Summary

Vicariate: Vicariate: Group XI (Ballymena (Kirkinriola), Braid, Glenravel (Skerry), Ahoghill, Portglenone, Duneane, St. Comgall's and St. Joseph's, Antrim, Randalstown (Drumaul)

Vicar Forane: Fr. Patrick Delargy

Date: 24th May 2012

Venue: Parish Centre, Ballymena

Speaker: Pat Mullins



On Thursday 24th May 2012 people from 5 of the Parishes of this Vicariate gathered in the Parish Centre, Ballymena for a Living Church event. There was one person from Duneane (and therefore no group feedback later in the report and there were no representatives from Braid, Ahoghill or Portglenone. The purpose for the evening was set out and agreed as follows:

- To raise awareness of Living Church
- To begin a process of discernment for our Vicariate
- To pray together and take inspiration from the words of our guest speaker
- To prioritise areas of actions for the Parishes gathered

After introductions the evening began with a period of relaxation and guided prayer using Psalm 126 as our guide. The facilitators encouraged the people gathered there to reflect on the fact that God was, indeed, in the work that they were doing and to ask of themselves, 'why am I here'?

At this stage we invited the people to gather in groups of two's and three's to discuss their answers to that question. We further asked the people to attempt to summarise their motivation in one word which could be shared with the group. There was great energy in this task and in feedback we heard a range of reason why people had gathered. Some are recorded below;

Hope	Curiosity	Commitment
Love	Caring	Way forward
Faith	Future	Interested

We acknowledged each word as it was said and agreed that these words would act as our motivation for moving forward tonight and in the time to come.

The Living Church Team then introduced themselves and spoke about the agenda for the evening. Paula McKeown spoke about the Living Church project to date. She spoke of the Listening Events, the Living Church Report and gave a sense to those gathered that **'Living Church seeks to release the energy of the Spirit at work within each and every one of us and listen to what the Spirit is saying to us. In this way, we will not create a Living Church but reveal it'**.

We reminded the people of the five core areas of Living Church as called for by the people in the Listening Events:

The 5 Themes of Living Church



A this point, we introduced the guest speaker for the evening, Pat Mullins. Pat spoke of 'Living in Communion with God'. He skilfully used the Gospel readings for this week to illuminate what he felt God was trying to say to us about the Living Church.



The Gospel reading of the day was from John Chapter 17 and it spoke of the relationships of love between us as Christians- this could apply to Parish and to Diocese. Pat highlighted the need for unity, but that Disciples of Christ cannot achieve unity by themselves- we need Christ. Our Catechism tells us that while the perfect Christ (our Head) has ascended to heaven, those of us who remain on earth (the Body) are imperfect. Pat highlighted this by saying that while in Lumen Gentium from the Second Vatican Council, we hear that we all have gifts given to us as baptised Christians (the hierarchical gifts given to the ordained and the charismatic gifts of the lay), in our imperfection, tensions arise between the two sets of people and these two sets of gifts. This tension can lead to break down in Parish and indeed, in Church. So even though we pray in the creed, 'I believe in one Church' tensions and divisions do arise. The unity we have, however, is set out in Catechism (n866) where we read about 'one Lord...one faith...one body...one Spirit...one hope'. Pat told us that the Living Church process in our Diocese has a job to be a witness to this unity, recognising the gifts of all, lay, religious and clergy.

Pat quoted from John 17: 20-24 to illuminate the words of Jesus in relation to the issue of unity. He argued that Jesus is telling us clearly that he wants us all to be one in Him (as He is one in His Father), recognising our imperfections and that we will only attain glory at the end of time when we ascend to heaven to be with Him. Pat reminded us that we are in this world but not of this world and that we need to seek the glory of Christ, not the glory of this world. While the worldly cannot know and accept Jesus, those who do so will have this glory in the next life. The witness of this is the immeasurable love the Lord showed in allowing His Son to die for our sins and the power of His resurrection.



Pat went on to speak about St. Jeanne D'Arc whose feast day is on 30th May. He spoke of her as a young woman who had a God given commission to challenge the gender stereotypes of her day and who lived and died bravely in the name of her faith. He spoke of the fact that she was put to death by the Church despite being a woman of great faith herself. And like many, after her death her faith was recognised and she was canonised. Pat told us that this was an example of where the Church on earth is not in unity with the Church in heaven- sometimes the Church on earth gets is very wrong. Pat summed up by saying that we should not take the unity between the Church on earth and in Heaven for granted. In the same way we must realise that at times it is through the charisms of the lay (as in Jeanne D'Arc's case) and not the sacramental gifts of the clergy that we become a Living Church in communion with the Church in heaven.

Following Pat's talk, we moved on to ask the people to gather in groups of two or three and to ask, 'what struck me about the talk?' They then wrote their answers on paper provided and stuck them in a 'gallery area'. They made for a very colourful, interactive and interesting way to gather feedback. Some of the key themes that struck people are recorded here.

God's love for His Church

The Holy Spirit blows
where he will

Faithfulness to God's call

The Church in Heaven

Empowerment

The Church must take
women seriously

Perseverance and
determination

The legacy of Jeanne D'Arc

The charisms of the lay
have been 'invisible'

Trust

Unity in diversity

Empowering love of Our
Lord's Word

Trinitarian love made
concrete in reality of local
community

The special gifts of all
Beautiful explanation of
the Gospel

We need to use the
charisms of the lay

If the Spirit gives the gift
it should be allowed
to be used!

The people seemed to be drawn to reflect the fact that we all have gifts given to us from God. They reflected also that these gifts should be used and recognised in the Church. Some spoke of the role of women needing special attention. The theme of unity in diversity was strong in the group and the people were keen to see the Living Church process deliver the type of Church where diversity was respected but where we went forward in unity also.

Following a short break for tea and coffee, we re-convened for the second part of the evening where we set the task of seeing how we can create action points for Parishes to manageably move towards achieving some of the above. The people were asked to break into their Parish groups and then to take part in a two part task:

1. To arrange themselves into appropriate Parish groups and discuss the 5 themes of Living Church. They were then asked to vote for their 'top two' themes in terms of how they felt their Parish needed to develop.
2. To set action points for each of these two areas- providing a contact name for Living Church and some suggestions of how Living Church could help.

We encouraged the people to hold the ideas they came up with 'lightly'. We acknowledged that, once back in the Parishes, the people may decide to go with these areas and action points or not, according to what they felt was best. As such, it is important to note that the following plans do not (necessarily) represent definitive Parish plans. The important point is to have gained the experience of what the process of Parish planning is like.

There were four groups for this task with each group representing a Parish. The people took to the task with great energy and the results of the exercise are recorded below:

Randalstown:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Lay Participation	Encouraging lay people to participate by celebrating and acknowledging their participation Identifying our priorities for lay participation at our next Parish meeting	Copy of the Presentation Summary of the Evening on the Living Church Website Make sure to share good Practice with all Parishes
Passing on the Faith	Follow-up from baptism to invite family their year of faith, including other sacraments	

All Saints Parish, Ballymena:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
<p>Passing on the Faith</p>	<p>More pre and post sacramental by 'trained personnel'</p> <p>Finding more occasions for children and adults to come to the Church</p> <p>Discovering the talents of people in the Parish and using them</p> <p>Parish Mission</p> <p>Embrace the Year of Faith- guidelines, Share the Faith etc...</p>	<p>Welcome advice, guidance and training in these areas</p>
<p>Lay Participation</p>	<p>Strengthen the Pastoral Council</p> <p>Educate the pews on their gifts</p> <p>Development of one's own prayer ministry and spirituality</p> <p>School Mission, Church Mission</p>	<p>Outside help to restructure and inform from inspirational leaders</p>

Glenravel:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Passing on the Faith	Catechism back in school Bible and scripture study classes Children's liturgy development	
Faith and Worship	Adult Catechesis Visiting speakers Prayer days Discussion forums	

Antrim:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Faith and Worship	Adult faith development Provide opportunities for all to participate in Bible study How to make the most of our Parish website Tea/talk/coffee/conversation Guest speakers to the Parish to instruct parishioners on themes such as: *Understanding our Catholic Faith *Scripture reading	Contacts of speakers Scripture materials

Passing on the Faith	Try to develop sacramental programmes for the Parish: *Baptism *Confession *Holy Communion *Confirmation *Marriage As a welcoming Parish follow up with parents Encourage parents to take an active role e.g. confession prior to First Holy Communion Pastoral Council to consider how we can engage with members of the Parish to Pass on the Faith	
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Conclusion and Recommendations

The above information gives an interesting insight into where the energy lies in terms of individual Parish development. It can be said that the participation of the lay people in the life of the Church and Passing on the Faith were the strongest themes of the night. These themes may form the basis for joint working in this Vicariate area.

We welcome the requests from Parishes for support from Living Church and will gather requests from across the Diocese with a view to establishing a training and support programme to meet the needs expressed. In the mean time Living Church is happy, if asked, to return to the Vicariate/ Parish to facilitate another meeting where the action points discussed herein can be developed into meaningful action plans for each Parish.

Each Parish gathered there in Ballymena now has a sense of the direction that could be taken in developing their Parish. We would encourage each Parish to work to build on the suggestions of the night. We recommend that this report and the information gathered is shared with each individual Parish and those gathered on the night- perhaps through their contact people. It could also form the basis for further discussion at Vicariate meetings. The report summary will be available for all to read on our website. It can be downloaded at <http://www.downandconnor.org/livingchurch/may-vicariate-event>.

This was a very lively and prayerful evening which saw a sizeable group of God's people come together to help move this Vicariate forward. In terms of the purpose of the evening we can say that we achieved what we set out to achieve. It is our hope that the evening was a realistic and hopeful glimpse into the work that lies ahead. Our guest speaker, Pat Mullins, added to the evening with his

inspirational talk and the people participated enthusiastically in the group work. The Living Church Team offer sincere thanks to all those involved in organising the event.

Jim Deeds

Training and Facilitation Officer, Living Church