



Facilitated Event Summary

Vicariate: Vicariate: Group X (Portstewart, Portrush, Loughguile, Coleraine, Ballymoney & Derrykeighan, Dunloy & Cloughmills, Rasharkin, Ballycastle (Ramoan), Armoy, Ballintoy, Culfeightrin)

Vicar Forane: Fr. Austin McGirr

Date: 15th May 2012

Venue: St. Malachy's Pastoral Centre Coleraine

Speaker: Tony Hanna

On Tuesday 15th May 2012 people from the Parishes of this Vicariate gathered in St. Malachy's Pastoral Centre. There was no group from Culfeightrin, Armoy and Rasharkin. The purpose of 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;

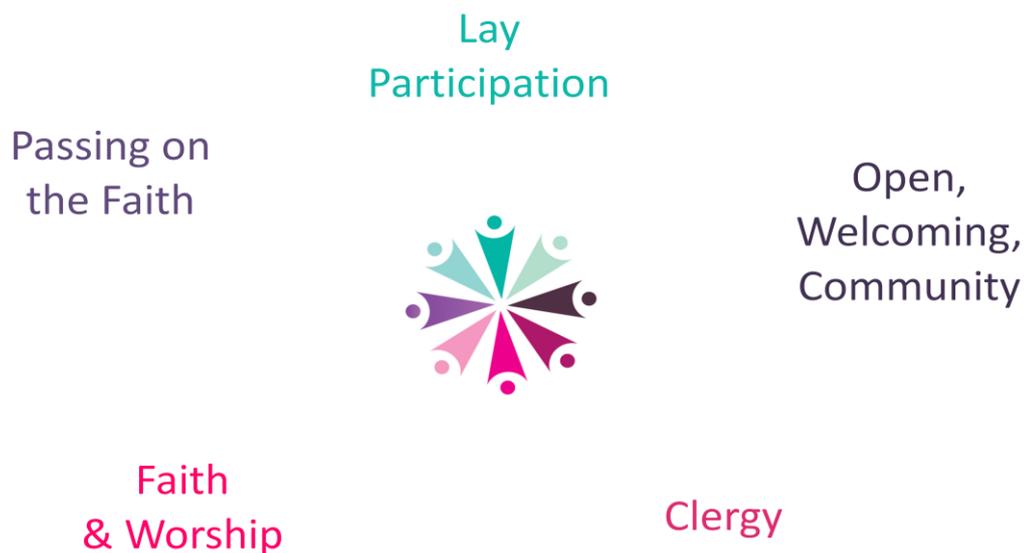
Hope	Curiosity	Holy Spirit
Called	Jesus	Courage
Loving	Future	Movement

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

Fr. Alan McGuckian and Jim Deeds from Living Church then introduced themselves and spoke about the agenda for the evening. Fr. Alan spoke about the Living Church project to date. He 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

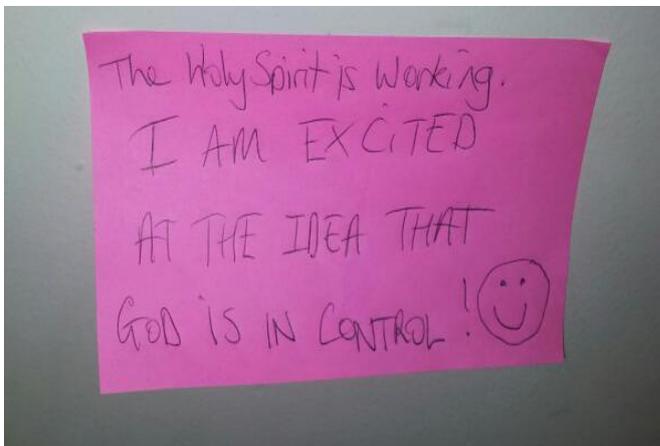


A this point, we introduced the guest speaker for the evening, Mr. Tony Hanna, asking the people to allow the words from Tony to sink in and in particular to see how his words resonated with them when they thought of the themes of Living Church.

Tony proceeded to give us a very interesting talk that began by asking us to consider what co-responsibility meant. Tony informed us that Pope Benedict had used this word to describe to priests how they should consider lay people- not as collaborators, but as people who are co-responsible for the church. Tony used the analogy of parenthood to describe what co-responsibility was. One parent may deal with one particular area of parenting or another. Yet both parents use their



skills in their own way in a partnership of co-responsibility for their family. He acknowledged that this is a new dispensation for the Church and for some priests in particular and that they may need to 'relearn' to be priests in this new dispensation. He challenged lay people as well: lay people need to be equipped for this new dispensation. He reflected that people in Ireland have low 'theological literacy' with their understanding of God and education in theology stopping for the most part after primary school. He told us of an initiative in Armagh where they have run firstly informal and then formal theology courses as a way of preparing the lay people for their role in a co-responsible Church. He affirmed that, through baptism, we are all called to ministry in the Church and that we cannot be Church on our own- we need to work together. He challenged us to think about what being Catholic really means in a world where some surveys show that while 85% of people call themselves Catholic, perhaps only 35% attend Mass. A Living Church, he told us, will have to go to the people as opposed to wait for the people to come to the Living Church. Tony finished by saying that this makes the call we all have at baptism even more important. In hearing some questions from the floor it is clear that the people there were keen to see some actions in the Living Church which would bring the spirit of Vatican II alive. There was also a note of caution from some who felt that there was a schism in the Church at present. Tony held us in this by saying that the Spirit of God was at work in all of this, even the conflict and problems. Tony's talk was well received and certainly got the group thinking.



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 below.

Church based on Law of Love not the Love of Law

Need for Catechism

Faith without work is dead

Co-responsibility

Hope

How to reach people?

Education

Orthodoxy

People are beginning to feel heard

Confident- change will come

Adult Faith

The importance of baptism

We need our Faith explained

Family

To be ready to give reason for the hope that is in me

The Holy Spirit at work

We all share in ministry but need to be skilled up

Freedom to discuss faith/theological differences

Participation of laity

The people seemed to be drawn several themes strongly. The need for people to be educated in their faith came through for a lot of people. People used different words for this: catechesis, education, qualification, theology. There was also a voice for lay participation in the church and a sense that people wanted to reach out to those not involved in Church life. There was also a hopeful theme of recognition that God was at work in all of this.

Following a short break, 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 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.

The people took to the task with great energy and the results of the exercise are recorded below:

Ballycastle (including representatives from Ballintoy and Loughguile):

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Lay Participation Faith and Worship Promote Scripture and the Bible	Meetings about lay participation in helping in running the Parish Visit people in their own homes Children's Liturgy and Youth provision Parish survey to ascertain what people would like e.g. mixed marriages	Guidelines for formation and remit of a Parish Council Local gathering e.g. Ballycastle

Portstewart:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Lay Participation Passing on the Faith	Lay speakers Welcoming committee and organisers Fun Lay speakers A youth led faith and worship celebration Young Eucharistic Ministers etc...	

St. Malachy's Coleraine:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Lay Participation	<p>What is already happening?</p> <p>Get the existing groups to come together e.g. St. Vincent De Paul, Legion of Mary, Eucharistic Ministers, Bridge Builders etc...</p> <p>Parish Groups Fair- to showcase what is already happening</p> <p>To be empowered to reach out to the congregation and involve them</p>	<p>What is available?</p> <p>Information sheet</p> <p>Courses?</p> <p>What is the progress in getting grid of old ideas about lay participation on a broader level? e.g. Deacons able to provide ministry to help over-worked priests.</p>
Passing on the Faith	<p>Understanding our Faith- courses and speakers for those who want to deepen their knowledge of the Catholic faith</p> <p>Pre-Sacramental Preparation -working in parallel with the schools -Confirmation at 16 so that secondary schools are involved in faith development?</p>	

Ballymoney:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Open Welcoming Community	Meet regularly to watch it grow and improve Give out leaflets Meet and greet Tea after Mass	
Passing on the Faith	Youth Mass Bring together as a group Encouragement	

St. Patrick's Portrush:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Lay Participation	Identify where and who they are Bring them in through Parish Compendium -Mass times -Priest's name -School, principal -Social activities Children's evangelisation- using them as evangelists for adults	

Dunloy and Cloughmills:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Passing on the Faith	Basics of Catholicism. What we believe etc... Series of talks How do we get young parents and young people there?	Someone like Tony giving that series of talks to Vicariate/ Parish
Faith and Worship	Living Worship More knowledge of what the sacraments are, what they mean and how to live them Children's Liturgy in Dunloy side of the Parish Religion not just for the primary school Joy/Happiness in Church	Some sort of (very basis) catechism Course for secondary level students

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 Passing on the Faith, Faith and Worship and Lay Participation in the Church were the three strongest themes for this Vicariate group and may form a basis for moving ahead together.

In response to a challenge put to the Living Church Team about the need for action on the ground we responded by saying that this is the time for action- not only by Living Church but in the Parish as well. 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 Coleraine 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, Tony Hanna, 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