



Facilitated Event Summary

Vicariate: Group V (St Malachy's, St Colmcille's, Holy Rosary, St Bernadette's, St Brigid's,

St Anthony's, St Matthew's, Drumbo & Carryduff)

Vicar Forane: Fr. Patrick McKenna

Date: 23rd May 2012

Venue: St Colmcille's Parish Centre

Speaker: Jim Corkery

On Wednesday 23rd May 2012 people from 7 of the Parishes of this Vicariate gathered in St. Colmcille's Parish Centre, Belfast for a facilitated evening reflecting on the Living Church process thus far and where there Parishes were in terms of the Living Church. We also had an extra group made up of representatives from the Search organisation who joined us for the evening. The purpose of the evening was 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;

Curiosity	Belong	Calling
Faith	Rebuild	Commitment
Inspiration	Duty	Communion

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



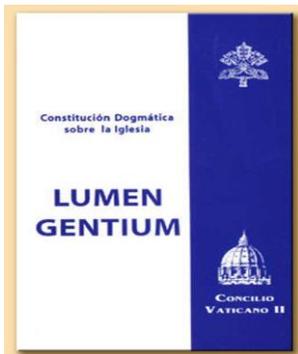


At this point we introduced our guest speaker for the evening, Fr. Jim Corkery, SJ. In a wide ranging talk Jim began by reflecting that in the media and indeed in how we often talk about the Church we do so by objectifying the Church. We speak of it as an institution- a thing. The Church ‘condemns’, the Church ‘slams’ were two examples he gave us of this kind of reference. However, Jim reminded us from the start that the Church should be spoken not in terms of ‘it’ but in terms of ‘we’. The Church is a living thing. It is us, the People of God, gathered around someone who is alive- Jesus Christ. The Church can only be alive because He is alive and when we are gathered in relationship with Him.

Jim told us that, having read the Living Church Report he sees that we conceive of our Living Church not as an object, but as ‘we’ or ‘us’. He proceeded to tie up our 5 themes of Living Church into one well crafted sentence. He said a Living Church would be:

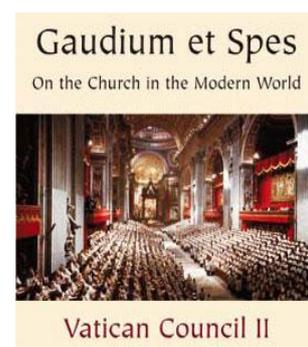
“An open, welcoming community of active participating laity and renewed, supported clergy engaged together in common worship and understanding in which all can grow and which they will share with future generations.”

He went on to say that much of what we have set out in the report has already been said in the reports of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) 50 years ago. Jim reflected on two documents of the Council: Lumen Gentium and Gaudium et spes. The first he would tell us is about the relationship of the Church with itself; the second the relationship the Church has with the world.



Jim told us that Lumen Gentium set forward an ecclesiology of Communion (communion). It envisaged us as a ‘Pilgrim People’ moving together in relationship with God. Indeed, Jim told us that the Trinity models this communion, with each in a ‘loving dance’ with the other. In this way, Jim was glad to see that between Lay Participation and Clergy sections of our report we have put the need for an Open Welcoming Community. He told us that it is only by developing this community (in communion) that we will develop as the People of God- lay, clergy and religious alike.

Gaudium et spes dealt, not with internal relationship, but with external relationships. That is, how the Church interacts with the world. Before Vatican II there had been a vision of a perfect Church whose job was simply to correct and inherently evil world. Gaudium et spes sets out a different vision. Yes, the Church still has a role in educating and challenging the world and in particular in righting wrongs. However, Gaudium et spes spoke of a ‘mutual’ relationship with the world. This mutual relationship meant that the Church could learn from the world, the signs of the times, the ‘other’. He told us that this would mean that, even within our own Church, there should be dialogue between those of

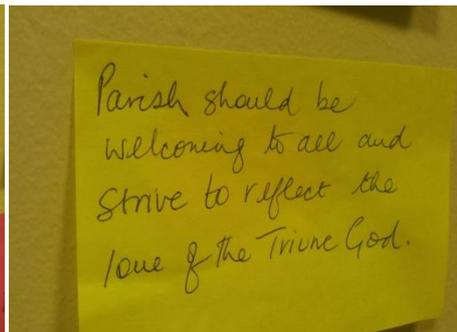


differing opinions. He spoke of a learning Church as well as a teaching Church. In a challenging statement he told us that, while central tenets of the faith are unchangeable much of what is accepted as Church teaching now was shaped by the lived experience of Christian people. He wondered if there were enough people who wanted dialogue on Church teaching, why this would not happen. Acknowledging the Church as not a democracy, explained that mutuality allows for real and open dialogue. A culture of synodality is being called for right across the traditions within the Church and he felt that the Church would be enriched on its journey by this culture.

Jim went on to 'hold a mirror' up to some of the problems within the Church which he felt could be addressed by creating an Open Welcoming Community in communion with itself and in mutual relationship with those who differ from us. Two of these were; the overly male nature of the institutions of the Church (and the failure to appreciate the talents of women) and; the central nature of the Church (in this case those on the periphery suffer). He concluded by encouraging the Church to be a place where we can speak freely and hear openly.



Following Jim'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' for all to see. They made for a very colourful, interactive and interesting way to gather feedback.



Two of the many ideas from our gallery, summarised below



The people seemed to be drawn to reflect on the need for honest dialogue on the matters that face the Church now and those that they feel the Church will face in the future. There was broadly a welcome for the discussion on Vatican II and a frustration that they felt it was not implemented in Ireland. One parishioner called for Vatican III. There was a sense of a group of lay people who were ready to enter into dialogue with clergy vis-a-vis finding their true role in the Church.

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.

St. Malachy's:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Lay Participation	<p>Invite Parishioners to become involved- select specific targets for specific areas (this is being done- not working)</p> <p>Organise prayer service with people of the Parish community on a street by street basis (target those who are not coming to Church)</p>	
Passing on the Faith	<p>Street prayer as mentioned above</p>	

Search Group:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Passing on the Faith	<p>Promote 'Search' and like programmes within Parishes, schools and local community</p> <p>Youth orientated Masses- including youth participation and ministry</p>	<p>Financial support</p> <p>Spiritual Director/ clergy support</p> <p>Promotion via websites/ Parish Bulletins</p> <p>Inclusiveness/ Mutual relationships</p>
Faith and Worship	<p>Age appropriate opportunities for bible reflection and</p>	<p>Youth ministry/ Liturgy training for leaders</p>

	<p>discussion</p> <p>Openness to developing Mass liturgy to include drama/mime</p> <p>Reflection on Gospel during Masses homilies (to inspire, learn from, understand)</p>	<p>Bible resources</p>
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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 Open Welcoming Community, Passing on the Faith and Lay Participation in the Church were the three strongest themes for this Vicariate group and may form a basis for moving ahead together. However, all of the 5 themes were mentioned and planned for in the Vicariate. This is an indicator of just how energetic, focussed and active the meeting was. 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. There seems to be an energy for this type of Parish based support in the future. Each Parish gathered there in St. Colmcille’s Parish Centre 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, Jim Corkery, 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