



Facilitated Event Summary

Vicariate: Group V (St Teresa's, St Agnes', St Michael the Archangel, St Oliver Plunkett,

Hannahstown, Holy Trinity)

Vicar Forane: Fr. Brendan Hickland

Date: 22nd May 2012

Venue: St. Michael's Parish Centre

Speaker: Fr. Jim Corkery, SJ

On Tuesday 22nd May 2012 people from 5 of the Parishes of this Vicariate gathered in St. Michael's Parish Centre, Belfast for a facilitated evening reflecting on the Living Church process thus far and where their Parishes were in terms of the Living Church. There were no representatives from Holy Trinity Parish. 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	Direction	Encouraged	Support
Concern	Rebuild	Worried	Last Chance
Love	Duty	Hope	Commitment

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



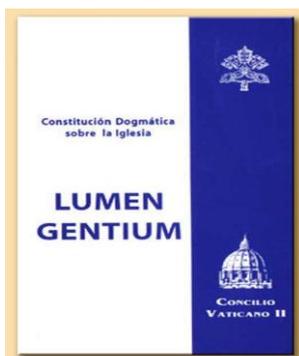


At this point we introduced our guest speak for the evening, Fr. Jim Corkery, SJ. In a wide ranging talk Jim began by reflecting that in the media and indeed in how we often talk about the Church we do so by objectifying the Church. We speak of it as an institution- a thing. The Church ‘condemns’, the 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:

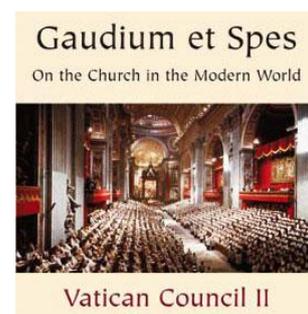
“An open, welcoming community of active participating laity and renewed, supported clergy engaged together in common worship and understanding in which all can grow and which they will share with future generations.”

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 Communio (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 communio) that we will develop as the People of God- lay, clergy and religious alike.

Gaudium et spes dealt, not with internal Church relationships, 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 an 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 form 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, he 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.

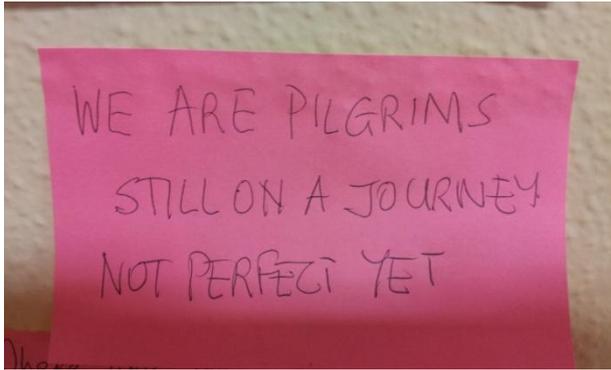
Following Jim's talk, we moved on to ask the people to gather in groups of two or three and to ask, 'what struck me about the talk?' They then wrote their answers on paper provided and stuck them in a 'gallery area' for all to see. While some felt that the talk was pitched at a level which made it feel a little academic, many were touched by Jim's words. There were lots of themes for people on the night and below some are recorded:

**The Living Church model is
the model on which the
Church was founded- can we
start again?**

**Build a learning Church
Opportunity for dialogue
No opportunity for lay people
to put forward ideas on
Church teaching
Communion between lay and
priests
Not enough mention of
present problems
Need for constant renewal
Open communication
If only Ireland had been
introduced to this theology**

**Mutual- the need to be
inclusive**

**Needs to be openness
Where are the structures to
help the Church to be open?
Need to prioritise Passing on
the Faith
I have been empowered to
talk out
Pilgrims on a journey
Communio
We can bring real change in
union with Christ
A new beginning
Right to ask questions
Release the energy of the
Spirit**



The people seemed to be drawn to reflect on the need for renewal and change in the Church. Particularly, there was a call for a Church that is more open to dialogue between laity and clergy. There was also a call for recognition of the current problems in the Church and a need for dialogue on these issues. Many people reflected that there was an opportunity in our time for this renewal and

these people expressed hope that the Living Church process may offer this opportunity. They reflected that the Second Vatican Council did not seem to have been implemented but should be. Others expressed concerns that there were no structures in our Church to facilitate the openness and dialogue that are being called for.

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.

There were five groups for this task-one per Parish. However, St. Teresa's and St. Oliver Plunkett Parishes decided to split into two groups for the second part of the task given the large numbers of people who gathered for their Parishes. The people took to the task with great energy and the results of the exercise are recorded below:

St. Teresa's:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
<p>Passing on the Faith</p>	<p>Be firm in our faith in order to pass on the faith</p> <p>Lead by example</p> <p>Children's liturgy</p> <p>Raise awareness of all the different groups and the work they are doing</p> <p>Going into schools and talking about the Gospel</p> <p>Adult liturgy group to explore faith</p> <p>"What is means to be a Catholic today"- discussion on this book</p> <p>Deeper understanding of our faith</p> <p>Collaboration with schools</p> <p>Go into schools and ask children why they don't go to Mass</p> <p>Teach adults to communicate with children</p> <p>Make Mass more interesting for young people</p> <p>Be up to date</p> <p>Live out of adult faith-not what you were taught years ago</p>	
<p>Lay Participation</p>	<p>Form a Parish Council</p>	

St. Agnes':

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Lay Participation	<p>A listening ministry of trained people who can listen to Parishioners and bring their views to the Pastoral Council</p> <p>Involvement of young adults</p> <p>Pastoral Council to receive a report of this meeting</p>	<p>Involvement of young adults</p> <p>Guest speaker to speak at all weekend Masses having previously visited the Pastoral Council</p> <p>Provision of a day of reflection for the Vicariate</p>
Faith and Worship	<p>Encourage more reverence</p> <p>Programme of Liturgical Formation</p> <p>Ministry of Welcome</p>	

Hannahstown:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Open and Welcoming Community	<p>Identify and recruit young people for Ministry of Welcome</p> <p>Introduce yourself to strangers</p>	<p>Ministry of Welcome Training</p>
Faith and Worship	<p>Meet once per month to understand Sunday readings</p> <p>Explore the possibility of establishing a Cell Group</p>	<p>Help to establish a Cell Group</p>

St. Michael's:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Lay Participation	<p>Group of people giving Catechism</p> <p>Welcoming Committee at each Mass/ Baptism/First Holy Communion</p> <p>More people from Parish engaged and trained to participate in Parish activities</p> <p>Pray for more people to participate in Parish events</p>	
Passing on the Faith	<p>Teaching grand children prayers</p> <p>Eucharistic Adoration for children</p> <p>Help and empower parents to pass on the faith to parents</p>	

St. Oliver Plunkett:

Living Church Area	Points for Immediate Action	Request from Living Church
Open and Welcoming Community	<p>Forum for feedback (this would be social too)</p> <p>Lay visitation in the Parish</p> <p>Invitation to be involved in the Parish</p>	

Lay Participation	<p>Faith formation for the individual before taking on the role of evangelisation</p> <p>Find a personal approach to inviting people to participate who have not done so before</p> <p>Parish groups must represent all areas of the Parish- don't forget those on the periphery</p> <p>Discussion between the clergy and laity using documents which can be studied- which ones?</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 was the strongest theme for this Vicariate group with a call for Parish Pastoral Councils and a real desire for new lay people to become involved in Parish matters. This theme may form a basis for the Vicariate moving ahead together.

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. Michael's Parish Hall 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