

Facilitated Event Summary

Parish: St. Teresa of Avila

Date: 12th August 2012

Venue: Parish Centre

Introduction and Purpose:

On Sunday evening 12th August 2012, 26 people from the Parish of St. Teresa's gathered together in the Parish Centre for the 4th in a series of meetings designed to culminate in the forming of a Parish Pastoral Council. The number was very high, especially given that we knew of a number of people who would have come except that they were away on holiday. This reflects the interest that there is for the regeneration of the Parish.



As always at our meetings we began in prayer. We sat in our Sacred space in the room. We had a lit candle and a book of Scriptures as our focal point. The lights were dimmed and the atmosphere was at once relaxing and prayerful. This evening we prayed and reflected on the Lord's Prayer. One member of the group read out a line from the prayer and then a short reflection on that line. Fr Brendan then concluded the prayer asking the lord to bless the meeting Following the prayer we moved from our Sacred Space to our work space to begin the session.

Before agreeing our purpose for the evening we agreed a set of guiding principles for this series of meetings:

-  We are not the Parish Pastoral Council
-  We are in the business of giving and receiving wisdom from all

- ✚ We collect any questions as we go
- ✚ Our work informs the way forward
- ✚ We meet in the Spirit of Christ-what does God want?
- ✚ We seek consensus- not voting
- ✚ Not 'did I get what I want or did you get what you want- more can I live with the outcome and is it what is best for our Parish.

Agreeing this allowed us to reflect that in this process we must set aside our own issues or agendas and really pray and discern what God is telling us in our time in our Parish.

The purpose of the evening was then agreed as:

- ✚ To gather together as a community in prayer
- ✚ To review our last session
- ✚ To consider in more depth the relationships within the Parish

Review of the Previous Meetings:

We were thankful that this evening we had a number of people who were new to the process. For this reason, we spent quite a bit of time looking back at the work that had been done in the previous sessions. This seemed to be helpful for us all and served to re-focus our minds on the task at hand after a break of a month or so. Following this review, the people took some time to discuss what they had heard in small groups. We concluded that we were content that the work we had done so far would be of great use to any Council formed in the future and set out good themes for the Parish in moving forward. For details of previous meetings, please visit <http://www.downandconnor.org/livingchurch/pastoral-area-teams/>.

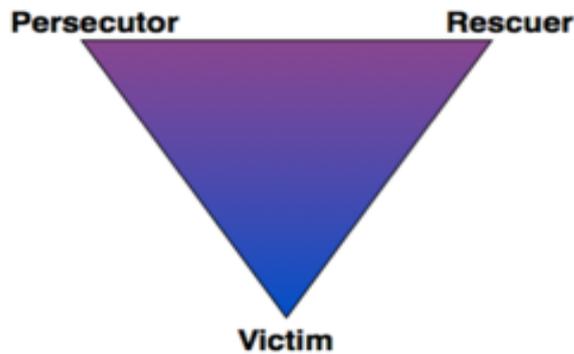
Fr Brendan then gave the group a summary of our journey as a Church towards Co-responsibility, highlighting the less helpful ways that Priest and Laity had interacted in the past. (See figure below).



Fr Brendan invited us to see that the further up the 'Ladder' we go, the more benefits there are for all of us. He affirmed that in our Parish in our time we would strive for Co-responsibility in all we do, especially in our Parish Pastoral Council.

Exercise- The Challenge of Human Relationships

In our mission to create Co-responsible structures in our Parish we have to move away from the long held style of relationships that we have all become accustomed to. Doing so, will help us to move up the 'Ladder of Co-responsibility' and towards a more genuine realisation of what it means to be Church. However, we do this in the context of human (and therefore imperfect) relationships. We looked at one model for understanding how human relationships can go wrong and lead to hurt for those involved:



In this model we can see that if one person in relationship with another is constantly in 'victim' mode, it may force another person to try to 'rescue' the person. However, this in turn may lead the person who is rescuing to feel that the victim is actually a 'persecutor' should that cycle go on for some time. In another way, a person who is in 'victim' mode who is not rescued as they see it will feel the other person is a 'persecutor'. Repeated cycles of this way of relating can be very damaging to relationships (primarily because the pattern of relationships is not working for either party and often is unspoken about).

We took some time to consider this model in light of what can happen in a Parish. Small groups of people were invited to think of examples of these relationships. Importantly, the small groups were asked not to name names; not to be spiteful or hurtful. Each group achieved this and we reflected that we could still deal with difficult issues without hurting anyone. This will be a valuable lesson for those who sit on our Parish Pastoral Council (who will, at times, have to deal with difficult situations but who should do so in a Christian manner).

The second half of this exercise was to look at developing a '**Charter for Healthy Relationships**'. Each of the small groups who had gathered for the first part of the exercise was asked to consider what they felt the elements of healthy relationships would be. They were asked to feedback their top two ideas. Each of the ideas was compiled into the following list:

Respectful to others

**Explaining our positions and reasons
for decisions**

Honesty

Truth

Justice

Arbitration

Discernment and listening

Unity

Empathy

Developing Friendships

**Dealing with difficulties up front and
in a timely fashion**

We agreed that this would be a good template for relationships within the Parish Pastoral Council, the Parish in general and, indeed, within our personal relationships.

Personalities within a Group

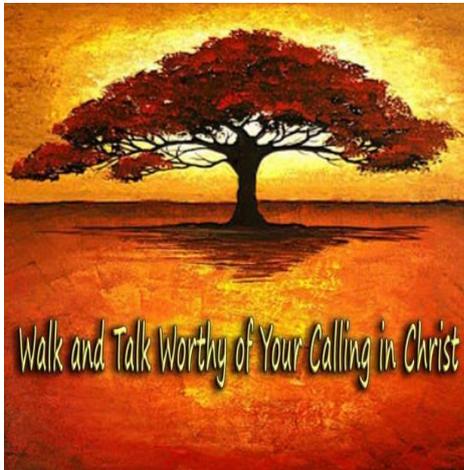
At this stage we moved on to look at the different types of personalities that we can bring to group work. We acknowledged that we are all different and that this difference is something to celebrate. However, if unrecognised different styles or approaches to working in a group may lead to conflict. We looked at the following as one way to understand the different personalities we see in groups:

		TEAM-ROLE CONTRIBUTION	ALLOWABLE WEAKNESSES
	IDEAS CREATOR: Creative, Solves difficult problems		Loses touch with everyday realities
	RESOURCE FINDER: Enterprising, Quick to explore opportunities		Weak in follow through
	CO-ORDINATOR: Makes good use of group activities		Manipulative
	SHAPER: Driving and challenging		Provocative, Aggressive
	COMPLETER FINISHER: Painstaking, Conscientious		Anxious, Reluctant to delegate
	TEAMWORKER: Co-operative, Averts friction		Indecisive
	EVALUATOR: Discerning and Objective		Slow-moving
	IMPLEMENTER: Disciplined, Efficient, Practical		Slow to see new possibilities
	SPECIALIST: Single-minded, Professionally dedicated		Limited in Interests

In discussion we agreed that we could each of us see ourselves in the descriptions above. We acknowledged the positives as well as the 'allowable weaknesses' of all of us. We also said that the reality of any group is that there will be different personalities within the group. In fact, it is the difference in our approaches that our potential strength as a group lies. The important this was to have adult discussions about our own way of working in a group.

Conclusion:

We concluded the evening by, once again, gathering in prayer. We used the second reading from that day's mass as a reflection. The reading was from Ephesians 4:29-32:



“Guard against foul talk; let your words be for the improvement of others, as occasion offers, and do good to your listeners, otherwise you will only be grieving the Holy Spirit of God who has marked you with his seal for you to be set free when the day comes. Never have grudges against others, or lose your temper, or raise your voice to anybody, or call each other names, or allow any sort of spitefulness. Be friends with one another, and kind, forgiving each other as readily as God forgave you.”

This session was certainly full. We worked extremely hard as a group of people. Discussing relationships and personality types can, at times, be difficult. However, this session was approached with humour as well as integrity and those who took part seemed to enjoy it. Importantly, it also helped gather more information that will be of great use to the Parish Pastoral Council once it has been established.

Jim Deeds

Living Church

August 2012