

PARISH DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2 – Draft Report 11 February 2010

2. DEEPENING OUR FAITH (Group 2)

Introduction

PDP 2 will help us to understand our faith, to deepen our faith and to express our faith

Group 2 of the three Groups tasked to research and produce a five year development plan is required to focus on the practices which foster a deepening of faith. We are asked to evaluate how well we already achieve this in such practices as: Religious Affairs Group (RAG), Liturgy, Pilgrimages, Meditation and Open Cloister etc. This first draft report summarises the progress or otherwise of the recommendations contained in PDP 1, identifies the current status of parallel initiatives and comments in general terms as to 'where are we now' before moving on to make recommendations for future action as and where such need is identified. Please recognise this draft report as being a work in progress. The Group have identified various areas of activity and relied to a considerable extent on the results of the Parish Survey as to the involvement of the parish in those activities.

Liturgy

PDP 1 said '*Liturgy can refresh and strengthen each of us as part of a community and enable us to live our faith fully*' The report went on to make a number of recommendations, some of which have been implemented more successfully than others.

- **Liturgy times and places** – Vigil Mass at the Abbey and removal of 8am Sunday Mass - Implemented in 2006
- **Building Community** – The parish survey is ambiguous in measuring the success.
- **Strengthen the Involvement of the Parish in the Sunday Liturgy** – Implemented. Father James and Deacon Chris play an active role on the first Sunday of each month
- **Increase the number of people actively involved in ministries** – The survey indicates this has been successfully implemented with the possible exception of the involvement of younger people
- **More explanation of the Liturgy** – A mixed response. '**In Touch**' contains the readings of the following Sunday. The homilies more often than not focus on the message contained within the readings.
- **Encourage personal spiritual preparation** – A small number, between eight and twenty attend the Lectio Divina on a Tuesday evening, House Groups focus on the Gospel readings. In more general terms the readings are available in the 'In Touch'
- **Embrace our children into the Liturgy** – The Junior Church is now an active part of the Sunday Mass both at the Abbey and St Dunstan's.
- **Raise hands as a community for the Lord's prayer** – A mixed response, probably no more than 30% at any Mass

- **Welcoming Ministry** – Well established and deemed very successful.
- **Mass leaflet** – Not implemented.
- **Elevation of a larger Host** – Not implemented – Various options looked at but not deemed suitable

The above should be construed as a brief summary. More detailed analysis is contained within the Parish survey,

It is important to remember Worth Abbey parishioners are guests of the monastic community. The main Mass on Sunday (at 9.30 a.m.) is set by the monastic community and the parish has limited influence on the liturgy. The liturgy is organised by the Liturgy Planning Group. Currently the parish does not have a representative on this group. A nomination is under consideration by the Abbot.

There is more flexibility with the 5.15 p.m. vigil Mass on Saturdays at Worth Abbey. This is a 'Parish Mass' where all liturgical arrangements are within the province of Father James and Deacon Chris.

Some parishioners have expressed a sorrow that the 'quiet' 8 a.m. Sunday Mass is no longer available indicating a desire for more reflection time within the Mass.

Parishioners are invited to attend the monastic offices and weekday Masses at Worth. Of the parishioners taking part in the survey 23% had attended a weekday Mass at Worth and 21% had attended a monastic office. The current attendance at the weekday Mass is eight to fifteen with slightly less attending the monastic offices. These numbers increase when non-parishioners are on Retreat with Open Cloister.

Music

The parish survey highlighted very divergent views among parishioners about the type of music they like! The music for the 9.30 Mass on Sunday is provided by the School Choir on the majority of the term-time Masses. The Community Choir sing about once a month. The number of choristers in the Community Choir is disappointingly small given the overall number of parishioners. What are the barriers to more people becoming involved?

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Available before the 9.30 a.m. Sunday Mass. There are occasional reconciliation services and Father James has given two talks on the sacrament to parishioners. The sacrament of reconciliation is not widely taken up by the parish – perhaps because people prefer to go to priests that they do not know, perhaps because many of the older parishioners have not found it easy to adapt to open confession.

Healing Ministry/Rosary/Lectio Divina Group/Meditation

These are all on offer at Worth but the take up is relatively low. Are they widely enough publicised? Do people know what is on offer? Are there other barriers to people joining these groups?

These are all ways in which people can deepen their faith and access the gifts of the spirit. However, individuals will have a preference for which of these will be suitable for them. Other spiritual 'tools' that could be explored include Easter Cross Walks, meditation, prayer groups, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Benediction and Marian devotion. The Group is grateful to Father Aiden Murray for his in-put on information pertinent to 'Lectio Divina'

Stations of the Cross

This is available in Lent but not at other times of the year. Is this sufficient?

Private Daily Prayer

Father James has put a major focus on encouraging private daily prayer among parishioners. He has issued prayer cards and sales of the Glenstall Prayer Book were encouraging. The Prayer book was the subject of three seminars at Worth Abbey.

Spiritual Direction

Spiritual Direction is readily available and is of great benefit. Parishioners generally choose to go to someone they do not know socially i.e. a director who is not connected to Worth Abbey. Could we encourage more people to seek a Spiritual Director?

RCIA (Rite of Catholic Initiation for Adults) is currently used in the parish for non Catholics who are interested in exploring the Catholic faith, often with a view to being received into the Church. However, RCIA is potentially a very powerful catechetical tool for Catholics.

What does it mean to be a Benedictine Parish?

Many are drawn to worship at Worth Abbey by the simplicity of the church and by the Benedictine way of life. For many people contact with the monks has had a profoundly beneficial influence on their faith. The monks provide a powerful witness to their faith. We talk about being a Benedictine parish but how much do we know about the rule of St. Benedict? We might provide weekly readings from the rule?

Have we anything to learn from the Manquehue movement in Chile? This is a lay Benedictine movement, established in 1977 in Chile with support from Ampleforth Abbey. Could this help fulfil the needs of the many Christians in our parish who are 'hungry' to know more about their faith and to deepen their faith? The Group consider this element to be of significant importance.

Religious Affairs Group, Pilgrimages and Retreats

The RAG has put on a series of successful parish retreat days and a pilgrimage to Aylesford Priory. A pilgrimage to the Holy Land is taking place in September 2010. The Open Cloister provides a range of retreats which are open to parishioners. Only 10% of the parishioners taking part in the survey had been on an Open Cloister retreat. The parish survey has identified a desire for more retreats.

Youth Involvement

The following is outside the remit for this first draft report and will be an essential element of our next report. The content is considered of such importance we have taken the liberty of commenting now. We are grateful to Father Martin McGee for his input. Father Martin has found that 'peer group ministry' is ideal. He suggests finding a group of teenagers who can lead the process with input from an adult. He finds that teenagers respond very positively to 'Lectio Divina' and also enjoy raising money for charity. The three young adults from the Manquehue movement in Chile currently at Worth, have had a very positive influence in the school and they could be asked to help get a parish group established. One of the principles of the movement is the idea of establishing 'spiritual friendships'. He warns against setting up a youth group that is focussed on fun activities – keep it sufficiently spiritual. The Chaplaincy Representatives at Worth (who are in Year 12 i.e. aged 17) have a weekly planning meeting and use part of the meeting for 'Lectio Divina'. They also have training days and outings. They have their own school tie which they like. The Chaplaincy organise a very successful retreat for Year 10's (aged 15) at Kintbury and days of reflection for each year group.

Father Martin cautions that the first year or two of a new venture will be the toughest. It takes time to get a new initiative established with young people. He suggests that there should be a tight focus to any initiative – don't try and do too much and do not be afraid to drop any aspects that don't succeed. His other comment is that the earlier you can get teenagers in to a youth group the easier it is. Adult leaders need to be able to establish good rapport and must not be too didactic.

Bereavement

There is not a bereavement group at Worth. Recommendations will be contained in our next report.

Vocation/Discernment

Father Luke Jolly was asked for his input on 'vocations' Worth Abbey currently has four novices under tuition, the latest of whom Brother Augustine was influenced by his membership of the 'Compass' programme run by Father Luke. We do not have a specific parish initiative addressing the issue of lapsed Catholics, however we are active in supporting inter-faith initiatives. We are conscious that a vocation is not just about the clergy. We all have a vocation and need prayer and discernment to fully work out what we are called to do. Perhaps we could develop a programme to support all parishioners in discerning their vocation.

Relevant extracts from the Parish Survey

We have extrapolated elements from the Parish Survey as listed in Annex A in bullet point form. Some of those elements are commented on in the body of this report where they impact on 'where are we now'. Others will be the subject of further comment in phase two of this project.

ANNEX A

Worth provides spiritual formation and nourishment and the parish benefits from an important association with the monastery and the rule of St Benedict.

68% of House Group members feel their involvement has deepened their faith.

We have an excellent RCIA group, but could do more to reach out to lapsed or non-Catholics.

Strong commitment and involvement with Irundu of value – charitable works.

19.8% consider our involvement has helped our parishioners deepen their faith a great deal. 33.8% a little.

Justice and peace group.

Involvement in Fair Trade.

Work actively in poverty reduction and social injustice.

Pilgrimages. Aylesford mentioned.

Reinstate Easter Cross walks.

Desire for more Retreats. But only 10% have been on retreat at Open Cloister.

Half day retreats.

Free retreats and activities for children to help them understand their Faith and grow in God.

Weekday Mass – 23% have attended.

Monastic offices – 21% have attended.

Meditation.

Prayer groups.

Recitation of the rosary.

Lectio groups.

Opportunities to have a ministry eg. Reader, server, Eucharistic minister, welcomer, choir.

Adult Faith formation.

Engage with other faith groups, not necessarily Christian.

Parish missions led by youngsters.

Faith workshops for parishioners offering instruction to help people understand and deepen their faith.

Evenings on topics, eg. The catechism, St Paul.

Weekly prayer or intercessory prayer groups for family, friends and community.

Theological instruction.

Opportunities to engage with theology and learn more about our faith, without having to join a house group.

Reflective silences at Mass.

Opportunities to deepen our faith at Mass, now lost through old fashioned music and hymns.

Benediction.

Stations of the Cross. Outstanding stations during Lent. Have something in Advent?

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Political/environmental/economic initiatives linked to the Catholic Faith, and broader principal of living good life as caring responsible citizens.

Visits from Evangelist speakers to talk about their Faith journeys.

Interfaith events to develop a better understanding.

Rule of St Benedict to be more fully in parish life, prayer and faith experience.

Reintroduce the link with Lay community of St Benedict.

Convey more Benedictine spirituality to parish.

Opportunities to learn and deepen our Faith.

Opportunities to be one-to-one with a monk to speak about spiritual or needy problems.

More Marian devotion.

Challenge the traditional expression and understanding of Faith and find a way of opening a contemplative dimension to all our prayers and action.

Shared silences are more powerful than words.

Bible study.

Study days.

Friday night gatherings to deepen our Faith.

More emphasis on living our Faith by actions as well as words.

Deepen our understanding of scripture and its relevance to daily lives.

Deepen our Faith and put it into action.

We need to be challenged in our faith.

Have the privilege of hearing others' faith journeys.

Sharing my own journey.

Deepen an understanding of scripture and its relevance to our daily lives.

Promotion of daily prayer using the Glenstal prayer book.

Increasing the appeal of the liturgies a parish events for young people