



**Parish of Drumbo & Carryduff – 9<sup>th</sup> February 2011**

Facilitators: Rosemary Woods, Anne McKeefry, Clare Gilmore

Group Profile: 59 in attendance (36 women, 23 men; 6 under 35yrs; 40 over 60yrs)

**Question 1: What would our parishes and our diocese look like if the Catholic faith was being fully lived?**

**Listening Process**

- Question seems loaded
- Question format is unexpected
- By definition the question seems leading in terms of “faith fully lived”
- The beginning 25mins seems a waste
- Future groups – make questions available beforehand
- Format needs explained
- Format suggests we are willing to listen to responses to questions, but not to what people really want to say
- Parishes want our voice to be heard, to have a part to play and not to be constrained
- Question can be interpreted in an open manner
- Council of priests seems out of touch based on these questions
- When format was designed, were lay people involved in how it happened
- Who chose the facilitators?
- 7pm time for this process – eliminates large numbers with families and young children – the ones leaving the church!
- Tonight’s group is not representative of the whole parish – not many young families present
- The question could have been phrased “if the Catholic Church had lived up to expectations”
- 2013 for action – how much will still be relevant, how much will the church have lost in the meantime?
- Process/Journey up to now, we need to step back and review to allow others, not here, to be heard (disabled, multi-sensory, estranged). We should provide opportunity to listen to all.
- Where are the representatives from the working party tonight – it is unfair to put the facilitators in this situation
- In today’s modern society, listening process is like cavemen...modern ways such as stenographers, every word should be heard and recorded
- This idea of listening has been triggered by the South of Ireland; it stirred something
- Bishop Treanor expected negative criticism – of course he will get it!
- Team of 3 women – is the bishop making a point?

### **Safeguarding Children**

- Would like to see GIFT programme run in every parish, without Access:NI hold-up
- Regarding GIFT, issue of child protection was a knee-jerk reaction as a result of child abuse scandals
- Child protection requirements are off-putting to potential volunteers and they feel stigmatised and this relates back to history of child abuse in the church
- If we really want to commit and support we will wait 8 weeks on Access:NI check
- Humanity, will help a child in need, with or without Access:NI check

### **Church Structures**

- Problems we have can be appointed to many of our bishops' lack of humility, and we can't see Christ
- Parishes/Diocese all-inclusive from young to old
- To date one thing comes across: the Church (local, diocesan, worldwide) has one common problem – need to restore confidence, eliminate suspicion about 'tunnelling'
- Broad view of Church – major source of problems stem from Rome, from Vatican, and distinct reluctance to change and listen fully.
- Full and radical reform needed
- Individual priests are brilliant – hierarchy is the issue
- GIFT programme – the topic fell on its face – related to hierarchical church
- Disgrace nothing has been done in the church
- After all that has happened and promises made, hard to believe a new Missal will be released, sets us back 50years!
- Need to learn from other Protestant Christian churches and their decision making process
- Need to reorganise the dynamic of the church; has been from the top down
- Involve more men and women, ethnic minorities, young people, sick people.
- Lay involvement – “if laity takes over role of clergy I dread the directions they will get from our bishops”
- Relationship with God is direct and eliminates the need for hierarchy
- I hang my head in shame regarding the past, but would like our church to cleanse and purify, but by using clergy and Pope we will get nowhere”

### **Lay Involvement**

- This is first opportunity for the laity to have a say
- Our parish is full of talented people
- Told as laity become more involved, there are fewer priests, but that is wrong - Vat II call for laity to be involved. Question – if there were more priests would laity still be called? Motivation?
- A bishop in the South deferred permanent diaconate due to the good work laity are doing
- Why are permanent deacons not introduced here, it would help address the difficulty

### **Priesthood**

- We need to look at other models e.g. women priests, married clergy
- Why do we not have enough priests now and we have allowed good priests to fall aside? Is it because we have not allowed them to love a partner, are we going against human nature?
- Training of priests – we are in a totally different society now
- “ ‘within 30yrs the order of priests would be extinct’ ” – Pope knows the Irish situation, is he willing to allow the priesthood to die out in Ireland without considering other options (e.g. married priests and women priests)
- Would opt for married clergy before female clergy
- “Support” this is what our church needs, we are listening to lots of issues here, we need to support each other, our good priests should be recognised and supported
- Scripture, if Jesus had wanted his apostles to bring their families he would have. No female was among the 12. There are women in our church who are rocks of faith, they are being overlooked, does that matter, they remain rocks.

### **Abuse Scandal**

- Where are the answers coming from about this? The churches are emptying
- Trust – we have lost trust
- Diarmuid Martin - has been silenced due to his courage to take a stand over the scandal
- Context of our reflection should be in the context of clerical child abuse
- Young person asks “why am I here and my friends not?” Feels fear for the future, feels some peers use sex scandals as an excuse
- Grass-roots, working class was the foundation of faith – what went wrong? Social change? Church? Need to say sorry much louder.
- Church response to sex scandal, what has been Irish bishops’ response since return from Rome? Seem to have sat back and reluctant to take positive action
- If you read Murphy and Ryan report, the bishops were getting a handle on the issue, they reported to Rome. Bishop Connell defended these attempts to de-frock the priests, but got nowhere with Rome
- Bishops should have said NO to Rome, and gone ahead with their recommendations
- The bishops have tried. We as laity committed the sin of omission for not finding out
- Ireland has addressed the issue, and produced reports, there are other countries still to come out of the cover up

### **Education**

- Protestant clergy and Christian churches – Millennium Integrated School has been sidelined, while not within parish boundaries, has a high number of students from within Carryduff
- Same dictatorial way of decision making, lack of transparency and openness, in particular with relation to integrated education
- Pastoral care is pastoral care and should be provided by Catholic church regardless of agree/disagree with integrated education
- Ecumenical – are we listening?
- The church being packed – we have to give up on that and acknowledge less numbers. We need to look at how we will hand on the faith.

## Question 2: What things need to be done to make this a reality?

### Listening Process

- Our parish, and others, organise a “talk-back” session for anyone to come to
- We must see the actions that follow the Listening
- If there was digital recording it would be more effective
- “Listening Exercise” requires a response. 2013 is too late to respond. These comments need to be put into effect right away.
- They aren’t really listening to us. Who listens? We have no power
- If we listen, record and report, bishop doesn’t get the ‘feel’ of the room
- The People of God are asked for comments, listened to, but no response. Every parish priest should be instructed to listen to parishioners in every parish, and involve people
- Why will it take to 2013? He needs to listen now. Why is Bishop Trecanor not here tonight?
- Let’s get the reports back now, and action taken now
- We can only hope the working party is not made up of those involved in preparing the questions
- Priests in working party needed to be asked – we are here tonight because we want to be, it is a sad reflection of the priests
- Will you consult with all Catholic children not just the Catholic children in Catholic schools but also those who attend integrated schools, special schools, and controlled schools?

### Communication

- Need for root and branch review, especially from bishops office, to parishes and within parishes
- Need for review of communication systems and networks
- Need to be truthful, honest and accountable, and fully transparent
- St Joseph’s Young Priests society wrote to parish priests asking for the society to be set up in more areas. They wrote to 5 priests and are still awaiting response from any of them
- Give all 12-16 yr olds a questionnaire of why they do not attend Mass/arrive late/sit at back and talk
- There was a parish questionnaire with hundreds of responses when this church was built, with lots of suggestions – we don’t know what came of it

### Liturgy

- Liturgy in church – a lot is of little relevance. Imbalanced, men on the altar. Language “men/man” used a lot more than “women”
- Need to look at use of language and symbolism in liturgy, and have more creative liturgies
- People should be there because of what the church represents
- Liturgy – real sense it lacks dynamics. Need for review of how liturgy incorporates People of God
- Need for more transcendental relationship with God and within the Church. On a collective not individual basis
- Need for use of music in the liturgy
- Reality of day to day spirituality reflected in approach to liturgy

### **Priesthood**

- Bishops from other churches have been accepted in that are married, why do we not bring it in for all? We have lost too many good priests; fully trained and experienced, left by force as they want to marry.
- Support the priests, and get the respect the “good” priests have earned back again
- More consideration and compassion for priests wrongly accused of child abuse – allegations take too long before names are cleared
- Statistics about abuse – passed over as no priests or religious involved
- Priests/Sex Scandal – most priests are excellent, good priests. Most allegations happened in 50s and 60s and we are judging them by 21<sup>st</sup> century standards – we should be able to stand up for our priests

### **Church Structures**

- Trained, effective and elected pastoral councils in every parish
- Lack of communication – pastoral councils can address this, vehicle for laity to express views and have active role in making them happen
- Training – pastoral councils, laity, priests
- Pastoral council here was appointed, not elected, and no minutes are passed on
- Need democratisation – those that need to hear, priests who have sacrificed and tried to be good leaders – leadership comes from example, not authority. Needs to give us, and good priests, a voice.
- Women should be more prominent in administration in the church, may make it more user-friendly
- Paid employees, not volunteers only
- Has to be recognition of deep betrayal felt over abuse cases. “Have considered leaving church – but why should I be forced out”
- Vatican website, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith – what it says about women in the church would frighten you
- Need for more financial transparency. Bishop Walsh had fundraising for restoring St Peter’s, sick and retired priests, and youth. This is still being asked in addition to parish costs. £1.5million in each.
- Who is advising our church on the use of our money? Why are we not cashing in our investments from time to time?
- Finance, are we not paying priests enough? If priests are paid they must pay tax and insurance, therefore they are entitled to same benefits as the rest of us.
- £1.8 million, invested – in this diocese how many sick and retired priests are there – and what does this £2million do?
- Media will sensationalise all stories; ‘church’ attracts more lurid sensations
- Key word “reality” – we all need to get real
- Sexual abuse was not exclusive to the Catholic Church in Ireland. It has been going on since time began and mostly started in family homes perpetrated by those nearest and dearest.

**Education**

- Don't like word 'laity'. Need a new evangelisation that involves all of us, bishops, priests and People of God.
- Community and social level – need back to basics of 10 commandments. Some kids haven't a clue – need to follow these basic guidelines.
- Society as well is different
- Irish News – triple murder in Coleraine reported – diabolical we don't hear enough about the influence of The Evil in our church/faith
- Catholic education, Integrated education – disabled child, went to integrated school, did get good preparation for communion and confirmation but, who in Catholic church educates it's disabled People of God? Causes anger.

**Relationship**

- Issue of relevancy in church, church does not reflect people's life
- Church should support people's spirituality
- Scandals – sin of abuse and cover-up. Bishops need to be truly penitent – make things happen, empower the People of God, not pious statements
- As a single person it is hard to find your niche – but I love this parish and do feel included and part of it, and valued.
- Having a Catholic identity and feeling you belong, you have to make the effort yourself to be a part of the Church