

Parish AGM 2012

Report from Parish Priest

This year I will have been 37 years ordained priest and on 1st September I will have been 12 years in the parish. The document on the priesthood from the 2nd Vatican Council makes clear that the priest is Shepherd, Teacher and Sanctifier. When I was inducted as parish priest I was asked to preach Christ, to gather together the people of God for prayer and sustain them as they go forth to carry out the mission of the Church to the world, to care for the people by celebrating with them the sacraments and to promote justice and peace among all peoples and to share the good news with all who are persecuted, marginalized and underprivileged in society and to sustain and guide the people along the way to unity with all Christians. But the people of the parish were also asked if they too would take on these commitments and thus work with the priests of the parish. In Canon Law it says that with the collaboration of the faithful parish priest is to make every effort to bring the Gospel message to those also have given up religious practice or who do not profess the true faith.

I would like to thank all those who are part of Our Lady Immaculate Parish family for all the time they have given so willingly within the parish.

The Mass, the Eucharist or the Liturgy is the source and summit of our life. Well done to our musicians and singers at the 9am Mass and the 11am Mass. Since September we have been getting used to the third edition of the Roman Missal. The challenge for us now is to learn to sing the new memorial acclamations and those parts of the Mass that have a new translation such as the Gloria and the Sanctus. We are blessed with a good group of servers ably helped by Jacques and Greg and some senior servers. We have yet to crack the problem of a proper care of albs. Care of the church building expresses a care for the living stones. Thanks to all who clean the church and do work in the sacristy. Rosemary and her team do a wonderful job with the floral decorations. We have a good number of children that come to the Children's liturgy of the Word. Our thanks go to Elspeth and her team. Although some parishes no longer have communion under both kinds, it is important to remember that the General Instruction on the Roman missal says that Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it is distributed under both kinds. For in this form the sign of the Eucharistic banquet is more clearly evident and clear expression is given to the divine will by which the new and eternal Covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord, as also the relationship between the Eucharistic Banquet in the Father's kingdom. For this to be possible at OLI it is important that we have committed lay people as Eucharistic ministers. More volunteers are needed for this important ministry. Over the past year we have had some young people as readers of Mass. We are still looking for more readers especially at 6 o'clock Mass on Sunday night.

Over the past year the OLI Care group has been has been visiting the elderly and those who are unable to get to Mass.

I would like to thank Andrew, Judy and Laurie for their work in leading our Youth group which seems to be going from strength to strength. The ongoing formation in faith of our young people and of adults is extremely important. I would like to thank all those who are catechists for 1st Communion and Reconciliation, and for confirmation, and those who help prepare parents who are having their children baptised. I am pleased that adult formation in the faith is underway through the Catholicism DVD course.

What do I see is the challenges that face us in the coming year?

An obvious challenge for us is bringing the Gospel message to those who have given up religious practice. We could call them resting Catholics, inactive Catholics, or the lapsed. How do we reach these people? In 2008 we had a parish mission. We did try to visit many people and encourage

them to come to the various services provided by the mission team. I am not sure how successful this event was. I am aware that many families who have had their children prepare for 1st Holy Communion and have come to have their supplementary form signed for secondary school are no longer coming to mass regularly. What should we do?

What calls for our attention this coming year?

As you know the **Year of Faith** begins this October, which is the 50th anniversary of the opening of the 2nd Vatican Council. With his Apostolic Letter of October 11, 2011, *Porta Fidei*. Pope Benedict XVI declared that a "Year of Faith" will begin on October 11, 2012 and conclude on November 24, 2013. October 11, 2012, the first day of the Year of Faith, is the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) and also the twentieth anniversary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. During the Year of Faith, Catholics are asked to study and reflect on the documents of Vatican II and the catechism so that they may deepen their knowledge of the faith. The Year of Faith is an opportunity for Catholics to experience a conversion – to turn back to Jesus and enter into a deeper relationship with him. The "door of faith" is opened at one's baptism, but during this year Catholics are called to open it again, walk through it and rediscover and renew their relationship with Christ and his Church.

This is also the year when we have the **Olympics and Paralympics** in the UK. You have already most probably heard about 100 days of peace. We are asked to pray and work for peace 50 days before the event and 50 days after the event. As part of this our parish will have the Pax Christi icon. It will be displayed in our church for a week from 20th October before it returns to St George's Cathedral for the final week and then it will be handed over to the Brazilian community. I do hope that we will be able to use this opportunity to pray for peace and think of creative ways to proclaim peace. Hopefully the Justice and Peace group will be in the forefront at this special time.

Next year is the **50th anniversary of the consecration of our church**. This took place on 31 May 1963. Since it would be contradictory to consecrate to the service of God a mortgage-burdened building, the rite of consecration or dedication of a church is carried out only if the building is debt-free. When our church building was consecrated it was anointed with oil and the 12 crosses you see around the walls of the church mark the place where the oil was smeared on the wall. Archbishop Peter Smith has kindly accepted an invitation to come and celebrate Mass next year on this date which is the feast of the Visitation of Our Lady. When we celebrated the golden jubilee of the opening of the church 5 years ago we had a parish mission, a flower festival, the pilgrimage to Lourdes and printed a special anniversary calendar. What shall we do to mark the special occasion next year?

In the past year our church has been used by the Catholic Korean community who has now moved to a church, which they purchased in Sutton. We are also very blessed to have as part of a parish family those of the Syro Malabar Rite from Southern India. They celebrate Mass in their own Rite once a month. Their prayerfulness and enthusiasm are a great example to us.

The diocesan newspaper "The Pilgrim" appeared this year. Although we were asked to charge 50p it is available free to parishioners. Please take a copy of this publication from the back of the church, and let Fr Arbo or myself know what you think of it.

Our links with Our Lady immaculate School are very important and we try to model a partnership between home, school and parish. This year the school have been giving copies of The Wednesday Word for children to take home to families so together they can reflect on the Sunday readings. We are trying to provide copies of the Wednesday Word for parishioners.

We are privileged and fortunate to have Father Arbo as assistant priest and I wish to thank him for all he does for the people of the parish. I would also like to thank deacon Al Callan for his unstinting work with the support of his wife Trudy, and our parish Administrator Elaine Intranova for all she does to help the smooth running of the parish.

Canon Anthony Charlton