

ST CEDDS PARISH GOODMAYES

Output from Parish Meeting 11th February 2018

Parish Comment on the Proposed
Diocesan Restructuring

February 2018

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Executive Summary

Over the months following the consultation exercise, it has hitherto proved difficult to engage with the parish on the relevant issues of renewal and restructuring. However, the publication of the First Formal Proposal in Advent 2017 has given impetus to the parish and has resulted in a much more representative input from the parishioners.

It is recognised that our incumbent priests as Missionaries of La Salette are responsible directly to their Provincial and as such, although holding personal opinions on this, cannot directly engage in this process. The resulting output from the meeting is therefore representative of the Parishioners of St Cedd and those worshipping in the parish. It does not, however, include the input from the Polish Chaplaincy.

The report contains contemporaneous minutes from the meeting and the output of the individual smaller working groups. These have been subsequently presented under three headings, comments on the First Formal Proposal and counter proposal, other suggested actions and other concerns.

In general, the suggestion to link with St Theresa's Parish and serve this from St Cedds met with agreement. It was suggested that contact be made with St Theresa's to seek their overall opinion. It is noted that under the previous administration (Bishop McMahon) this move had been suggested some years ago and as such is already embedded in the minds of parishioners from both parishes.

The overall suggestion to create a pastoral area does have some merit but this will need careful consideration as to roles and responsibilities.

There were still a number of concerns, some of which are within the remit of the parish and others requiring much higher involvement (i.e. engagement with the Polish Chaplaincy).

Phil Butcher

Minutes of St Cedds meeting 11th February 2018

Present at meeting:

Fr Slawek - Parish priest

Fr Marek – Assistant priest

Phil Butcher (**PB**) – Steward of the Gospel

91 parishioners

Meeting opened with a prayer said by Fr Slawek followed by PB talking very briefly of the reasons we are gathered today.

Main reasons being:

- the future projection of priests will probably be reduced by 50% ,
- the diocese led by Bishop Alan Williams intends to renew and restructure to address the shortfall , decisions will be made in November
- a second proposal has been made by Canon Martin O'Connor of St Bedes parish to create a pastoral area with a plan to relocate St Cedds priests to St Peter and Paul, St Theresa and St Bedes priests to remain in their respective parishes and St John the Baptist to be served by St Peter and Paul.

PB asked the parishioners to address the question, how best can we serve our parish? All were provided with the relevant statistics relating to the adjacent and nearby parishes.

Parishioners got into groups made their suggestions on paper which was collected as part of evidence for a formal report as feedback to the diocese.

PB encouraged parishioners to read the 2 booklets on the church website, which gives more detail. Booklets are, 'Working Together to Evangelise Our Diocese' which were issued in Summer 2017 and Advent 2017. The latter contains the first formal proposals. (http://www.saintcedd.co.uk/Working-Together_Advent_2017.pdf)

Questions and Responses

- About the Polish chaplaincy and whether they would be involved?
PB explained, that they operate separately although they are part of the parish. As historically they have been there since the Second World War.
- Whether we could have another proposal to the existing ones made and whether our objections would be heard?
PB explained he will take our proposals to the meeting in the form of a report which he will compile
- An overview of the bishop's proposal
PB explained as it's a very lengthy document it would be advisable for everyone to read this on the parish website
- What happens next after we share our thoughts?
PB invited the parishioners to share their thoughts and even their questions about the changes affecting our parish in an email to him or the priests, so that he can present them at the next meeting with the priests and Stewards of the Gospel to introduce our ideas and get our questions answered.
- Have decisions already been made, will we really be heard?
Fr Slawek replied, ' no decisions have been made. The Bishop will make the ultimate decision. Fr Slawek reported there would be a Deanery meeting for pastoral priests only on the 22nd February from the above named churches. Decisions will be made in November and by 2030 the process will end. Restructuring will involve selling property.
Fr Slawek clarified that the La Salette priests are members of the Religious congregation and accountable to the Provincial and the Bishop. Therefore, they go where they are told to go and have no voice and no borders. Fr Slawek expressed his desire to serve St Cedds.
- Approaching the nuns for support and for their ideas.
Fr Slawek was concerned about their capabilities as some are aged. No nuns were present at the meeting today. Maybe PB can address this.
- Recruitment of priests from abroad to fill the shortage.
- We should support the Bishop and his proposals.

A request was made to ask Mother Mary to help us with this problem and a suggestion made to Fr Slawek to do a 9 day novena either at the start or the end of mass for the next 9 masses.

PB closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their attendance and contribution and asked everyone to continue to pray for the future of the community and the diocese and said he will put all our ideas into a report.

Fr Slawek ended the meeting with a short prayer and blessing.

Minutes recorded by- Erica Figueira
Checked by – Fr Slawek and Phil Butcher

Compilation of comments made.

Section one. – Comment on the First Formal Proposal regarding St Cedds.

There were indications that the parish agrees with and accepts the overall formal proposal to link with St Theresa's parish. It similarly did not agree with the outline counter proposal presented from St Bede parish.

This is for the following reasons:-

- We currently cater well for the two major hospitals in the parish boundary and the priests are supported by a team of lay ministers.
- Proposed linkages between St Theresa's and St Cedds and SS Peter and Pauls and St John the Baptist has much merit and seem to be more productive and less disruptive than other options.
- Although not directly in the parish boundary we also cater for two large schools (one primary and one secondary). This means providing chaplaincy support and also hosting the large masses. It is recognised that for many attending St Aidans and Palmer Catholic Academy, St Cedds is the choice for First Holy Communion and Confirmation. It is noted that St Cedds has a capacity of over 800

and is the largest Catholic Church building in the area, thus catering for the large school masses and other events..

- Mass frequency at St Cedds is good both Sundays and during the week although this could be adapted to ensure coverage in conjunction with other parishes. St Cedds is well served by bus routes 86 (which passes directly by the church) and also the 364 (which serves the route from central Ilford and Dagenham and passes nearby). It is also within walking distance of Seven Kings and Goodmayes TFL stations.
- We have a large number of baptisms in comparison to other parishes (noting that this also included the Polish Chaplaincy).
- St Cedds has a thriving Youth Group which attracts young people from across the wider area. This has developed excellent links with the wider community and young people from other faiths.
- There is a Social Club which similarly attracts people from the wider area and communities. When moving to a Limited Company, its aims and objectives are to foster community and fellowship.
- There is a strong support team within the parish.
- We have a thriving, priest led and laity supported, series of programmes for Baptism, First Holy Communion, RCIA and Confirmation. In addition, we have a strong and developed community of groups (e.g. Legion of Mary, Rosary and Prayer Groups, Lenten Catechetical Sessions) which reach out to the local community. In addition we have also developed good links with other Christian Churches in the local area and, for example, share ‘Stations of the Cross’ during Lent and work within the local ecumenical groups.
- We would like to investigate the possibility of further utilising the resources of the religious communities within our parish (Communities of Religious Sisters) to work within and for the parish.
- Due to its location and facilities we aspire to become a hub from which Evangelisation and pastoral development within the Diocese are promoted to the wider area. Through this we aspire to establish a network in the diocese which makes it possible for the reduced number of priests to function optimally.

Section two. Other suggested actions.

It is recognised that there will be a reduced number of priests serving the diocese in the future. A number of proposals were put forward to ameliorate this situation.

- Recruitment of priests from other areas/countries. Whilst it is recognised that there can be some cultural differences and the difficulty with visas, it is worth further exploring bringing in priests from other countries.
- Explore the possibility of permanent Deacons and encouraging vocations to this. Whilst this is a long term plan and it is recognised that there are certain priestly functions that a Deacon could not perform, it would go some way to relieving the current priests to fulfil their calling as priests.
- A deeper re-think and coordinated approach to mass times to avoid duplication. This would also develop a much more structured approach to better use of limited resources. It is recognised that Mass times are sometimes duplicated in nearby parishes and a rethink of times and the appropriate introduction of Eucharistic Celebrations could better serve the people.
- Detail the work that our priests currently do (hospital chaplaincy, schools support, cover for other priests, other extra-curricular work e.g. administration, odd-jobs etc. etc.). From this develop a plan where some of the 'extra duties' could be conducted by suitable persons or a team and may involve centralisation of some of these activities. This could include secretarial support, church and halls maintenance etc.
- Better use of our Parish Halls and Facilities which could lend itself to a Pastoral Area Base. We have significant rooms and facilities which could serve a wider area. As previously stated the church is also served well by public transport. Need to develop wider Community Links.
- Formation of a Pastoral Team which can cover St Cedds and other Parishes in the area during periods of absence. This may also include the introduction (as is already common practice in other areas) of Eucharistic Celebrations which can be led by suitably

appointed lay persons. In previous times Pastoral Assistants have also been appointed to similarly support both clergy and community in a number of areas.

- We have a large number of young people wishing to serve at the Altar. This is a good indication of young people involvement in the parish and could possibly be a way of developing vocations.
- Whilst we recognise the wonderful support that the La Salette Missions already give to the Diocese and the fact that the issue of vocations is also felt in other countries, we hope that more La Salette Priests could be encouraged to make the step to England and particularly to our Diocese.
- There are already recognised linkages with other parishes (St Cedds and Theresa's, SS Peter and Pauls and St John the Baptist) which should be developed further.
- The local area is one of both diversity and decreased Christian Population. It is important to maintain 'beacon' parishes which will further develop evangelisation possibilities. We believe that St Cedds is and should remain a 'beacon' parish.
- Deeper and further involvement of families within the parish. It is recognised that family life needs support and that the unique linkage between home, school and parish needs to be developed as much as possible.
- There is a strong opinion that the current situation whereby the Polish Chaplaincy works in parallel to the Diocese needs to be urgently addressed. To many it is inconceivable that they operate separately to the parish although baptisms and marriages are all recorded as being at St Cedds Parish. Whilst recognising that this is a very long standing issue and is beyond the remit of individual parish involvement, there was strong feeling that now is the time to bring the Polish chaplaincy into the diocese and there was even a suggestion that they could move to St Theresa's Parish and serve both communities from there. It is strongly suggested that this be thoroughly explored as they do not seem to have been involved in the process thus far.
- We recognise that Religious Communities (including the Missionaries of La Salette) are directly responsible to their Provincial or equivalent. Any change in the existing arrangements

and agreements would need to be firstly discussed and agreed between the local Ordinary and the Provincial or equivalent.

- Whatever changes are eventually discussed and agreed the need to maintain 'community' is paramount. It takes a long time to develop a community but significantly less time to lose it.
- Develop a stronger approach to 'courses' and catechetical programmes, maybe on a pastoral or deanery basis for people to further develop their faith journey.
- Develop our existing Youth Group to host 'youth mass' for the local and wider area. Dealing with current issues affecting our young people.
- To ensure that families and those with special needs are especially welcomed into our parish.

Section Three Other Concerns

- Centralisation of priests may be counterproductive to the development of vocations to the Priesthood and the pastoral care of the souls in a specific parish. Priests and people are in a delicate and symbiotic relationship and it is important that we know who our priest is, particularly in times of family or other crisis. We do not envisage that a 'call centre' approach to pastoral ministry is particularly helpful in this.
- There are strong concerns that finances – particularly the value of the real estate – is driving this programme and that this could override any other proposals that we put forward.
- There were calls for 'female priests'. There was also a call for existing priests to be allowed to marry. It is recognised that this is beyond the remit of this group and we continue to pray for all vocations to be responded to.

Phil Butcher
Steward of the Gospel
St Cedds Goodmayes