

St Mary's Parish Pastoral Council

Minutes of meeting Monday 12th Sept 2022

Present:

- Fr William Wright (Chair)

Appointed

- Vince McGurk
- Simon Stockdale
- Katie Bleasdale
- John Westmancoat
- Janet Holliday

Elected

- Catherine Foster (Support)
- Angela Smith (Outreach)
- Richard Martin (Formation)

Paul Coman (Secretary to PPC)

- **Apologies:** Sheila Lund (Interaction), Teresa Britton (Liturgy)

1. Opening Reading and Prayer

Led by Fr. William

2. Welcome to Janet onto the PPC

Fr William introduced Janet Holliday to other PPC members and welcomed her to her first meeting.

3. Apologies

As recorded above

4. Parish Priest introduction

Fr William explained that the main item for today's PPC was our lifelong 'sacramental Formation', which drew upon Vatican 2. Fr William highlighted two key teachings from Vatican 2 which were addressed in Pope Francis' recent letter.

- 1) We are called to 'full, conscious and active participation' in liturgical celebration; (Sacrosanctum Concilium 14)
- 2) We all share in the priesthood of Christ, offering the sacrifice of the Mass together (Lumen Gentium 10)

'full, conscious and active participation' in liturgical celebration

Fr William asked PPC members to consider both how far we should and could take 'full, conscious and active participation' in the liturgy. Our approach may fall anywhere on a spectrum from zero to 100%. Illustrative of 100% could be where the congregation raised hands with the priest and vocally joined in with the Eucharistic Prayer. However, it was important to consider the range of feelings and views within our Parish, so that any initiatives taken towards 'full, conscious and active participation' acknowledge where there may be reluctance to change. The motivation towards 'full, conscious and active participation' is to follow where the Spirit seems to be calling us through the Second Vatican Council, and to make for a more meaningful experience of the mass for everyone.

Fr William reflected that St Mary's had already made significant progress toward 'full, conscious and active participation'. Such progress had been facilitated partly by the 'in the round' configuration of St Mary's Church.

Fr William recognised two limitations which we need to bear in mind. Firstly, the priest must follow the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. This is not always prescriptive and so sometimes offers latitude for interpretation. For example, it permits the priest to face in the same direction as the congregation when praying to the Father the Collect (Opening Prayer).

A second important limitation was that we should take only those initiatives that we felt confident the Parish community would be happy to accept.

Fr William hoped that this contextual background would prove useful when discussing item 7 in today's agenda.

5. Approval of PPC 9th May (re-scheduled to 4th July) 2022 minutes

Two amendments to the minutes of the last meeting were agreed:

deletion of the word 'projected' prior to 'a new fire hymn' from item 2, bullet point 1, line 3;

insertion of the word 'conscious' to read 'full, conscious and active participation' in final line of item 2.

6. Actions / matters arising from the minutes of PPC 9th May (re-scheduled to 4th July) 2022 not itemised in the agenda

Item 5, bullet points 2, 3 & 4

Fr William explained that he was addressing the aspiration to improve engagement in the Mass of Year 5 and Year 6 children by spending time to practice spoken responses with them. The school hall was now being used, enabling projector and screen to support children's responses.

Item 5, bullet points 2, 3 & 4

Having considered the idea of a younger person undertaking one of the readings at Mass, Fr William felt it appropriate to continue with commissioned Ministers of the Word, for a number of reasons.

Additionally, Fr William felt that there may be other ways in which we could ensure a stronger feeling of participation in the celebration of the Mass (item 7 on today's agenda).

Item 5, bullet points 2, 3 & 4

Fr William had followed up the suggestion made at the PPC that a re-introducing the Offertory procession may generate greater engagement. The Health & Safety Officer had confirmed that arrangements could be made to ensure the Offertory procession was Covid secure. However, Fr William had since reflected that greater engagement across the whole congregation may be best achieved by inviting the congregation to make and share an appropriate gesture at the Offertory, rather than a small number of individuals processing.

A PPC member suggested that consideration could be given to differentiating between the 5.00pm and 6.00pm Sunday Masses that serve a predominantly adult congregation and the 10.00am Sunday Mass which, typically, has a higher proportion of children in the congregation. A PPC member suggested that perhaps a gesture could be invited from whole congregation at the 5.00pm and 6.00pm Masses, with an Offertory procession taking place within the 10.00am Mass.

Fr William expressed the view that any invitation to gesture may have greatest uptake if the 'size of gesture' was relatively small e.g. raising of the hand to a low level at the Offertory. In particular, Fr William was concerned to ensure teenagers were not made to feel unduly self-conscious. During discussion, a PC member reflected that it would also be wise to ensure that gestures were sufficiently visible to members of the congregation to reassure those responding to the invitation that their action was being replicated by others in the congregation.

On reflecting upon Fr William's observation that some parishioners may be reluctant to participate in gestures, a PPC member suggested that there may also be parishioners for whom school learning and years of practise had led to habitual actions within Mass, making change difficult even where they viewed initiatives positively. Fr William suggested that he could provide frequent and gentle reminders, placing emphasis on encouragement rather than instruction. This was welcomed by PPC members. A PPC member suggested that additional support for parishioners could be offered if prayers, responses and guidance on gestures were projected on the wall. Fr William appreciated that this idea had some merit, though indicated that, on balance, he felt personal reminders and explanation may be more effective and suitable.

One PPC member stressed the need to ensure visitors were not discomforted by a lack of awareness of new initiatives regarding actions and gestures. Fr William noted the importance of this and considered that it underlined the need to be both moderate in both degree and pace of change, and to support change by frequent explanation and reminders. A PPC member thought it important to acknowledge that engagement may take different forms. For example, some parishioners may be engaged by responding or praying silently. Fr William responded by observing that promotion of 'togetherness' within the Mass experience may need to be balanced by acceptance of some variation in parishioners' Mass actions. This was, perhaps, inevitable and it was unproblematic.

Fr William concluded the discussion by stating that the Offertory procession would not be brought back. Instead, the whole congregation would be encouraged to take part through an appropriate gesture.

ACTION: Fr William to explain to the congregation how the making and sharing of an appropriate gesture could enable everyone to participate more actively at the Offertory.

Finance Report (item 6)

Fr William reported that there had been instances of parishioners both having ideas for fund raising and wishing to be part of a team to implement their idea, yet not feeling comfortable to take on the 'co-ordinator' role. In these instances, he had attempted to secure a volunteer 'co-ordinator'. This approach had been successful in two relatively recent events, the Platinum Jubilee Tea and the Bed Race Café.

A PPC member thought the 'tick list' devised by Sheila Lund was very helpful in enabling volunteers to specify the nature of their potential contribution and so feel comfortable and confident.

Fr William reported that the suggestion of a Jazz Evening event required a 'co-ordinator' to move forward. A PPC member suggested he had contacts who may be able to help find a 'co-ordinator' and would make enquiries.

Synod 2021-3 (item 8)

Fr William made the PPC aware that his reflections had led him to think that some of those we think may feel 'marginalised' may, in fact, prefer to 'opt out' and take a positive view of this situation.

2nd bullet point – Fr William appreciated that some people may have left the Catholic Church because of its denial of Holy Communion to those who have been divorced. A PPC member reported that she was aware of instances of this happening and questioned the fairness of the Church's approach because it appeared to blame those who had been divorced against their wishes. A second PPC member stated that it was very difficult to reconcile the Church's current position with what he understood would be God's response to such a situation.

Fr William said that because the Parish had expressed its concern at the Synod consultation, this had been noted and would be forwarded to the Vatican.

Fr William explained that he was always willing to talk with parishioners affected by this issue. He also suggested that it may be helpful to form a number of volunteer 'counsellors' i.e. parishioners to whom those with concerns may choose to speak in the first instance and, perhaps, be subsequently referred to Fr William. PPC members thought that, as safeguarding issues could be involved, excellent training and an appropriate referral process would be essential.

7. Pope Francis on the Liturgy

Fr William asked Council to focus on specific directions (i.e. those numbered below) within the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)

GIRM 29 - readings to be 'listened to' by everyone

Fr William explained that this direction informed his emphasis upon the congregation 'listening' to the words of the readings within Mass, rather than 'reading' them.

A PPC member raised a concern regarding the audibility of the readings for some parishioners on some occasions. This may be due to some parishioners' hearing being less than acute, an issue with

the microphone used and/or the voice projection / accent of the reader. A second PPC member stated that there had been a persistent microphone issue within church since the current sound system had been installed, though acknowledged that livestream audibility was very good.

Fr William explained that Ministers of the Word were made aware of the importance of voice projection. He indicated he would give further thought as to whether the microphone could be made more clearly audible though adjustment of volume (perhaps by AV operators), or if purchase of a new microphone was necessary.

Fr William stressed that, though he encouraged the congregation to 'listen' to readings in church rather than silently read these, he quite understood and accepted that, for reasons of audibility or preference, some parishioners would wish to continue to silently read.

ACTION: Fr William to decide on most appropriate means of enhancing the effectiveness of the microphone used by Ministers of the Word.

GIRM 30 – The Eucharistic Prayer and the Orations are parts 'assigned to the priest'

Fr William explained that this 'direction' meant he could not, for example, invite the congregation's vocal participation within the Eucharistic Prayer. The 'direction' limited the congregation to participation in the Eucharistic Prayer by watching the gesture/s of the priest. Specifically, Fr William wished to reaffirm his invitation to the congregation to watch the whole action within the Eucharistic Prayer, Fr William cited Pope Francis' teaching that symbolic actions were there to be watched.

In discussion, several PPC members observed that, for older parishioners, watching the consecration within the Eucharistic Prayer meant moving away from teaching they had had when younger, where not watching the priest during the consecration was held to be a sign of reverence. This was, perhaps, one reason why some parishioners had not yet accepted Fr William's previous invitations to watch throughout, including the consecration. PPC members made suggestions as to how Fr William may support these parishioners in embracing a different approach. One PPC member suggested some parishioners may benefit from Fr William offering an explanation which referenced Pope Francis' teaching in order to offer reassurance as well as encouragement. It was suggested Fr William could offer gentle reminders over a period of weeks to those seeking to break long-established habit.

Fr William concluded that re-issuing his invitation / explanation across several consecutive weeks would be the most appropriate means of addressing the 'inertia' of habit.

GIRM 34 – The various dialogues between priest and people, and the acclamations made together, foster oneness in the whole assembly

Fr William illustrated this 'direction' by referring to many parishioners' making a gesture towards and holding eye contact with the priest when responding to 'The Lord be with you' by saying 'And with your spirit'. Again, he would continue to encourage this.

GIRM 42 – gestures must be conducive to making clear what we are doing

Fr William explained Pope Francis' teaching that the symbolic actions of the liturgy make clear what we are doing in the Mass. For example, Fr William saw no reason why parishioners should not raise their hands at the same point as the priest within the Eucharistic Prayer, illustrating symbolically that

we are offering ourselves as a sacrifice with Christ to the Father. However, Fr William felt that many parishioners would feel their making this gesture went further than was appropriate and beyond where they would feel comfortable. PPC members agreed, with one PPC member pointing out that some parishioners felt it remained important for there to maintain a distinction between priest and congregation. Fr William stated that encouraging the congregation to look at the actions of the Priest in the Eucharistic Prayer was, perhaps, more likely to gain wide support.

GIRM 42 (again) The direction regarding a 'common bodily posture'

This was discussed in relation to the Eucharistic Prayer. One PPC member interpreted this direction as offering latitude to stand rather than kneel during the Eucharistic Prayer. One PPC member argued that a greater number of parishioners would feel that standing was less physically demanding than kneeling. However, a PPC member thought that some parishioners may continue to kneel because they understood, perhaps from instruction received when children, that this was the most reverent posture to adopt. A PPC member suggested we proceed cautiously so that standing or kneeling during the Eucharistic Prayer did not become divisive, thereby unintentionally undermining the sense of togetherness we were seeking to enhance.

Fr William explained that 'general instruction' number 33 did appear to stipulate 'kneeling' rather than 'standing' during the Eucharistic Prayer, excepting cases where kneeling was not possible. In that situation, the instruction was to make bow when the priest genuflects after the consecration. Fr William asked for PPC views. Fr William explained that his recent invitation to parishioners to stand during the Eucharistic Prayer appeared to have pushed against this direction's boundary.

Several PPC members felt that standing during the Eucharistic Prayer, yet kneeling at the consecration, would create unhelpful noise and disruption. Another view was that a return to kneeling could create confusion.

Fr William acknowledged the need to both observe the 'direction' and take account of the importance of creating togetherness through a commonly accepted symbolic action. Therefore, he proposed to return to kneeling throughout the Eucharistic Prayer, though maintaining his invitation to watch the priest. He felt that the experiment of standing during the Eucharistic Prayer had perhaps by now served its underlying purpose because it had encouraged people to actively participate by watching the action at the altar.

8. School Report

Katie Bleasdale informed Council that there was a considerable number of children enrolling at St Mary's School. In response to a question from a PPC member, Katie indicated that some recent enrolments were children from Catholic families.

The school staff anticipated a section 48 inspection soon.

The school's intention that children play a leading role in collective worship had led to children being involved in planning prior to Mass and in having opportunity to practice Mass responses.

A PPC member asked about the reaction of non-Catholic children to attending Mass. Katie explained that the overwhelming majority engaged with Mass without any difficulty. In one instance, a child who had never been in a church was somewhat nervous about attending Mass and so had been shown

pictures of the church in advance of the visit, alongside explanation as to what to expect. This child subsequently attended Mass happily.

9. Inclusivity signage

Angela Smith talked to a hard copy of the most recent signage suggestions from Henshaws. Where possible, it used icons rather than words. This was seen as helpful to those with reading and / or language difficulties.

One PPC member asked whether use of colour, rather than only black and white, would make the signage more noticeable and effective. Angela replied that black and white was cheaper and, more importantly, Henshaws had advised that black and white offered greatest visual clarity and effectiveness. The Health & Safety Officer agreed, explaining that colours carry meaning in signage e.g. green is synonymous with a fire escape.

The value of use of icons over words was illustrated by the fact that use of icons rendered redundant the need to choose between potentially contentious or inappropriate terminology, such as whether to signal a 'disabled' or 'accessible' toilet.

Fr William requested that each Sunday Mass be given identical wording and prominence, distinction made only regarding each Mass starting time (Saturday 6pm, Sunday 10am, Sunday 5pm)

Angela asked if there was a PPC preference regarding icons using arrows or chevrons to signal directions. It was agreed that she take advice from Henshaws.

11. Reminder of dates

Monday 7th November 2022

Monday 20th Feb 2023

Monday 8th May 2023

Proposed date

Monday 11th September 2023

12. Glory be

The meeting closed with a prayer.