



## ON BEING MISSIONARY PARISHES WHAT IS THE LIFE OF A PARISH?

### QUOTATIONS

#### Scripture

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. All who believed were together and had all things in common.... (cf Acts 2:42-47).

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body... and all were made to drink of one Spirit... If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

#### Catechism of the Catholic Church

The parish ... teaches Christ's saving doctrine; it practices the charity of the Lord in good works and brotherly love (2179).

#### Pope Francis

The parish is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey.... If a parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, then it continues to be the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters (28).

I want a Church which is poor and for the poor (198).

None of us can think we are exempt from concern for the poor and for social justice (201).

Any Church community, if it thinks it can comfortably go its own way without creative concern and effective cooperation in helping the poor to live with dignity and reaching out to everyone, will risk breaking down. It will easily drift into a spiritual worldliness camouflaged by religious practices, unproductive meetings and empty talk (208).

*'The Joy of the Gospel' (Evangelii Gaudium)*

### COMMENTARY

Let us now look at the life of our parish in more detail. In the first chapter, we saw that the Eucharist provides the grace and spiritual energy we need, for it is both the source and the summit of all Christian life (*Dei Verbum* 1). In the Acts of the Apostles, we see that this has been the case since the very beginning of the Church's life.

As human beings, unique among living creatures, we have complex needs. These are described as physical, psychological and emotional, social, and spiritual. It is important to see that all these dimensions of our being, not only our spiritual side, have been redeemed in Christ and we can now live as a Christian in everything we do.

In a thriving parish, all our truly human needs are addressed. The **grace of the Sacraments** is there at all stages of life, from beginning to end. We strive to **practice the charity of the Lord** by caring for the weak and vulnerable, nourishing the hungry and thirsty, and clothing the naked, consoling those who mourn, visiting the sick, the lonely and the isolated, and all the other good works too numerous to mention. The launch this year of **Caritas Diocese of Shrewsbury** is to help support and develop so many initiatives of charity and for justice across the Diocese.

## WHAT IS THE LIFE OF A PARISH?

*Part three of four Parish Reflections and Discussions*

In his Pastoral Letter (Sunday 5 February 2017) Bishop Mark urged us all to participate in our Social Mission through Caritas Diocese of Shrewsbury:

*While Caritas will require professional expertise, it will always rely on a 'formation of the heart' so that our love for neighbour will come from a heartfelt concern for others and truly be a response to the dignity of every person. In this way, we will give witness to Christ.*

*A world of need stands around us, demanding this witness today. We must not be overwhelmed by the scale of the challenge. In her Christmas broadcast, Queen Elizabeth drew our attention to the Saint of Calcutta, Mother Teresa who said: "Not all of us can do great things, but we can all do small things with great love."*

In all these ways and more, people engage in **effective cooperation in helping the poor to live with dignity by reaching out to everyone**. Catholic associations and parish groups are part of the healthy life of our parish communities.

**As a community of communities**, there are many ways in which members of the parish come together. Here, both the social and the spiritual dimensions in us interact in such a way that our faith is enriched as our fellowship is deepened. Yet, the aim of the Church is not merely to be a kind of social club that brings people together. We also hunger for the truth of **Christ's saving teaching**, and the parish is a place where we can grow in faith and be strengthened in the spiritual life through prayer, catechesis and the Sacraments, above all, the Holy Eucharist. The parish and the diocese offer all these opportunities to grow in our life in Christ.

In a parish capable of **renewal and constant adaptivity**, people are invited and encouraged to play their part in the building up of a parish community, even if they personally cannot physically participate in everything.

Others may tell us that they don't feel the need to belong to a community but if our lived experience of our parish is that it is the **Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters**, we should always have the confidence to tell people that they are missed and their place is always there, waiting for them.

## DISCUSSIONS AND ACTIONS

- What are the ways in which we each participate in the life of the parish?
- How is our parish carrying out its mission to offer the Word of life by announcing the Gospel and explaining the Catholic faith? How could this be done more effectively?
- How does our parish carry out the mission of 'caritas,' of loving Christian service and witness to those in greatest need?
- Who are the forgotten people of our parish?

*In a time of silence, take a moment to ponder all of these things, and then make a personal decision:*

- Take a few minutes to make a personal decision arising out what has resonated with you from these reflections.
- Name one thing you could do together to transform your parish in this way.

*Pray together the prayer **Our Mission Together**.*