

HOLY CROSS CATFORD

PARISH COUNCIL REPORT FOR 2016

Family Life and Marriage

Rob Dunbar

The Jubilee Year of mercy (8th Dec 2015 – 20th Nov 2016) drew around 20 million pilgrims to Rome, Pope Francis concluding that people should never close ‘the door of reconciliation and pardon’ and calling for a ‘culture of mercy’ as ‘joy is the fruit of mercy’, mercy being ‘the beating heart of the Gospel’.

With regard to Family Life and Marriage, the most significant feature in the Church Year was ‘Amoris Laetitia’ (The Joy of Love), a post synodal apostolic exhortation by the Pope on love in the family. This was released on 9th April 2016. It is split into nine chapters, and rather than focusing on the perfect family, it speaks the language of experience and hope, acknowledging the complex reality of family life, reminding us that ‘No family drops down from heaven perfectly formed. Families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love’.

The Pope emphasises the importance of forgiveness, ‘God has no memory of sin, but only of us, each of us, who are his beloved children’.

The Pope has so far not replied to a letter from four Cardinals asking him to clarify aspects of Amoris Laetitia and its implications for the divorced and re-married receiving Communion.

Locally, Family Life and Marriage remains at the core of the Parish, as witnessed by the large numbers of baptisms and marriages over the last year. The next Family Life and Marriage presentation will be for the RCIA group in the New Year.

Mission Kath O’Sullivan

Catford SVP continues to provide advocacy, support and material help to people in the local area. Last year (15-16) we assisted 16 families/individuals, including homeless people, asylum seekers and older people. We are grateful for continued support from the Parish, school (especially our Mini Vinnies) and SVP Special Funds which enable us to carry out our work. This year we have welcomed two new members.

Our annual sponsored walk to raise awareness of Ahotokurom and funds was a nice walk in the sun from Greenwich Park back to Catford. It was a great way to connect with each other, the buffet lunch was a real treat and we raised £ 1,726. The money goes to the special needs unit in Ahotokurom, Ghana which helps disabled and disadvantaged children. Dr Mark Mantey came on behalf of Ahotokurom to thank us for our support and to speak at all the masses over a weekend. The retiring collections from these masses also went to the special needs unit.

To mark the Year of Mercy we walked again to visit some of our parish sick and housebound.

Pastoral report

Lesley Allen

The Diamond club were successful in attaining a local assembly grant to provide a holiday at home scheme during the school holidays August 2017 so are busy preparing.

A generous donation by a member who died this year has enabled the club to offer some extra projects such as arts and crafts, techy days, short story reading group, outings and helped those struggling to avail themselves of the chance to share some fun times. A great day out to Brighton took place in July and we took several families with children as well as the elderly.

The weekly seated zumba class led by one of our regular parishioners Joanne has been a huge success and approx 35 join in every Tuesday.

Several spiritual reflective days in lent and at advent have been well received by diamond club members.

Many community opportunities for older people have taken place including theatre outings, holidays, a intergenerational tea party with Holy cross school as well as many celebrations.

A successful anointing of the sick mass for approx 100 people was held in August and about 70 people came for afternoon tea afterwards.

A New Years lunch for the diamond club, vulnerable and housebound is arranged for early January following the success of last years which featured Tony Greens band playing a lovely selection of carols and songs.

To mark the official year of mercy a walk around the parish took place in October, visiting and praying with and for the sick the housebound and the many catechetical groups within the parish. 14 individuals and several nursing homes were visited. A very powerful experience for visitors and those being visited alike.

Holy cross have become part of the boroughs dementia friendly initiatives and several people have become dementia friends and one has become a dementia champion who will be delivering information sessions throughout the parish commencing with the UCM in January.

A committed team of Eucharistic ministers visit the sick and housebound with holy communion and with parish news helping to create a strong parish community.

The parish helps support the dying and the bereaved through their St Joseph ministry and a weekend of remembrance was held In November.

The Jack Petchey Achievement Award Scheme (3 awards per year)

Vicki De Mello

My name is Victoria D'Mello and my duty on the parish council is to run the Jack Petchey Award Scheme.

What is The Jack Petchey Achievement Award Scheme?

This Award enables our community to recognise, reward and celebrate the achievements of young people in our community, aged between 11-25 years, in a significant way. We have 3 awards per year (March, June and October). The parishioners are invited to nominate a young person in our community who has: overcome personal adversity, helped them or others, supported and encouraged others, grown in confidence and showed dedication. The nomination box (Blue box) and forms are kept at the back of the church (in the contact corner).

To date we have had 13 Achievement Award Winners who are:

Sebastien Santhiapillai, Dominic Sanderson, Jacintha Chen, Nicholas Wibberley, Kimberly Kong, Patrick O Sullivan, James Bruce-Quansah, Ejiro Okor, Alice Walsh, Aisling O'Hara, Tammuz Brown, Neshanth Uthayakumar, and Aaron D'Mello.

The youth of Holy Cross Parish have been able to enjoy a lot of events that they would not normally have been available to them, such as Christmas party, Aylesford youth festival all paid

for, paintballing, cinema outing, badminton, new altar servers gowns, football kit, and Thorpe park outing.

The scheme is clearly working well, but it would be a great help if some of our parishioners could make some nominations to help encourage the young people of our parish to continue with their duties and hopefully this will show them that we appreciate them, like have them involved in the parish and therefore encourage them to stay in the parish and continue their faith for years to come.

The Jack Petchey Foundation also has a Leader Award which has been designed for young people to thank and celebrate the adults who support them. Our young people have chosen to give this award to Judy Chen and Mr Green for their continued and dedicated service to the youth in the parish.

Catechesis and Formation. Ossie Folkes

Jesus said “Go therefore make disciples of all the nations, ...”This responsibility to spread the Good News applies to each and every member of our parish. Each one of us, is challenged to take this on this special task every day of our life.

We are blessed to have a good number of parishioners who give up their time and talent on behalf of the parish to offer formal catechesis - formation in our faith. There is always a welcome for any parishioner to join one of the groups below as a catechist, helper, welcomer or just to see if it is something you might be interested in. As Jesus said to ‘come and see’,

Baptism Preparation The infant baptism team support families take a fuller part in preparing their infant children for the sacrament of Baptism, (usually 2-3 sessions), (Catch-up sessions are run 1 - 2 a year for families with older children) The parish publicly welcomes new members into the community at the Sunday Mass and the family celebrate the rite of Baptism on Sundays after 11.30am Mass. The team is always ready to welcome new catechists.

Liturgy of the Word for Children At the 10am Mass there are two separate Liturgy of the Word sessions. At the start of the Mass, children from 4-7 are invited into the Sacristy, there is a rota of catechists who lead the Liturgy of the Word.(this group has been going for over 20 years.) Children up to 4 years old and their parents are invited into Hartley Hall where they too have a relevant Liturgy of the Word. Thanks to the three parents Marija Alison and Ed who have taken on the organization and smooth running of this group by welcoming pre-school children and their families and so have helped build up our parish community by helping children and parents to get to know one another.

The First Communion programme. The programme for children in Year 3 has a sessions each month. Catechists work with parents as well as children in their preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. Activities include prayer, reflection, craft, drama as well as learning about our faith. The team of Catechists are all very dedicated and talented. They have a strong tradition in giving the children a firm foundation in their growing faith. The catechists working with parents offer the an opportunity to question and grow in their own faith as they learn and share together.

Confirmation. In our Parish young people can request Confirmation from Year 9. There are two elements to their preparation, from September the young people take part in the Service Project whereby they experience the reality of being a disciple of Jesus and undertake a task within the parish such as reader, welcomer, server or a helper in a parish group. This experience helps them

understand the importance of action. After Christmas the formal sessions take place when the practical experiences will begin to make sense! Again we have a very dedicated team of catechists who work with our young people on behalf of the rest of the parish.

Readers and Special Ministers Formation for both groups has taken place within the parish over the last 12 months. The emphasis has been on developing personal spirituality and developing our understanding of serving one another. This is particularly pertinent when we are privileged to be able to take Holy Communion to the sick and housebound.

RCIA Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Adults wishing to become members of the Catholic Church undertake a journey in faith that includes scripture, prayer, talks, liturgies, but most of all experiencing a welcome into the worshipping community. The RCIA has been running for 25 years in Holy Cross and many parishioners have been or are involved as catechists, sponsors, godparents, welcomers, tea makers or just interested parishioners representing the parish community; in supporting those seeking entry into the church. The support the parish offers this group through prayer is greatly appreciated particularly during the Rites and scrutinies celebrated at Sunday Mass, culminating in the sacraments of initiation, Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil.

Stewardship

Over the last couple of years our parish has been exploring Stewardship. So what is it anyway, and are we any nearer to understanding what its all about? This simple definition may help us understand

“the grateful response a Christian Disciple who recognizes and receives God’s gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbour.”

So Holy Cross Parish Council, after prayer and discernment, preparation and planning encouraged our parish to begin the journey that will enable everyone in the parish to experience the rich spirituality offered by Stewardship.

Over the last two years opportunities have been created to let people experience a more meaningful relationship with God through Prayer. This past year we have invited parishioners to offer their talents within the parish and beyond and many parishioners are now undertaking active service for the benefit of others.

There are four themes that build up stewardship; **Prayer, Hospitality, Formation, Service.**

We are right to have **Prayer** at the centre of all that we do. So all activities in the parish will be based on prayer and our aim will be to help everyone grow in prayer.

Hospitality / Welcome is something we have a good tradition of at Holy Cross and it is all the more important that we continue to extend our Welcome to those within and beyond the parish. Formation is important in letting each one of us grow in our knowledge and love of the Lord. So wherever we can we will plan to offer **Formation** to different groups be they Readers, Special Ministers, Parents, Older people, young people, families, the bereaved; so that they can explore and learn more, experience more and so come to know and love the Lord.

Finally **Service or Action**. Last year, the Year of Mercy allowed us to look again at the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, and already there are a good number of individuals who try to live out their Christian vocation by serving others. This service can be undertaken from all sectors of the parish. In the school there many examples of the children getting involved, the Confirmation group actively experience service within parish organisations, Church cleaners, servers, readers, visitors, and SVP all play an active part in serving within the parish. Many, many older members of the parish serve by actively praying for individuals or groups working within the parish.

So as we continue our journey each of our parish groups will continue to encourage and further develop Prayer, Welcome/Hospitality, Formation and Service, across all that it undertakes.

Finally, Life is a GIFT, that is why we call now the Present!

Parish Statistics	1991	2016
Mass attendance	780	754
Baptisms	37	44
RCIA	6	9
Confirmations	27	23
Marriages	9	9