

PARISH OF ST. ANTHONY AND ST MARK

Parish Priest: Fr. Stephen Reilly



Parish Council Outputs 14th November 2023

Fr Stephen reflected on the vision that was developed over 2019-20, the value that it has for pastoral planning, the need to build on it and to take further action towards bringing it even more alive. He stressed the importance of continuity through changes of parish priest, and his enthusiasm for recent initiatives e.g. foodbank, children's Masses, tutoring, and Bible study.

In looking at the 2019/20 vision, Fr Stephen noted that Jesus asked us to do three things:

- “Do this in memory of me” – through celebrating the Eucharist
- “Love the Lord thy God and your neighbour as yourself”
- “Go and make disciples of the nations”

He agrees with the Vision that our central pastoral aim as a parish should be to “go out and make disciples”. We need to consider what is central and what is peripheral to this core vision, and so from the many excellent and broad aims of the vision, there is a need to prioritise.

Fr Stephen commented on the three priority areas outlined in the 2019/20 vision:

- **Community Building:** Fr Stephen been pleasantly surprised since the joining together of the two parishes into our current parish he feels that we are indeed one community. This is a huge tribute to everyone.
- **Outreach to the Wider Community:** In prioritising “making disciples” (also called evangelisation), one key attitude is to continually look at our parish from an outsider's point of view e.g., visitors, returning Catholics or all those who are unchurched in our local community. As Pope Francis has warned us, we can become closed-in and self-referential without even realising, and this can make us spiritually sick. We need to think about outreach to the wider community – does the local community know who we are; what we do; what we stand for; would you feel confident asking a friend to come to the parish?
- **Faith and Worship:** evangelisation and outreach will also involve us giving priority to Sunday and asking how high quality what we offer is: the welcome, hospitality, the buildings, parking, the music, sermon etc. One noticeable challenge is that we have very few children, and families with children, attending Mass: helping parents and children to become disciples of Jesus could develop into our central pastoral aim for the years ahead.

1 Glancing back - What we have achieved through a period of significant turmoil and change.

The parishioners present discussed the numerous things that have been started, achieved or significantly developed since 2019/20, and which have specifically contributed to reaching the pastoral Vision outlined at that point:

A sense of “one Parish” across two churches	Social media presence greatly increased
TV screens and streaming services	Foodbank
Sacramental preparation e.g. Baptism	Tutoring
Children's masses	Autism masses
Coffee / Cuppa clubs	RCIA

Ministers of Welcome	Bulletin improvement
Community Choir	Theatre trips
Gardening club	Justice & Peace activity
Pilgrimages	Improvement of the Stalls
Hall improvements	Merging two SVDP conferences
Bible classes	Book club
After-school club	Wider fabric improvements
Sound system	Uniform banks

There was general agreement that this was impressive and indicated the energy in the Parish and the willingness of people to get involved.

2 Gazing forward – What are the opportunities to make a greater, and wider difference?

While recognising that there will be some need for prioritisation, the parishioners explored what could be done to work further towards the Vision, including more outward looking approaches:

Involve children and young adults.	Parish youth group.
A directory of Parish life.	Reach young families.
Parish membership list.	Closer links with schools.
Children's involvement at masses.	Partner with other local Christian churches.
Circulate the bulletin through the schools .	Transport to church.
Engagement and access for single people of all ages	Improve contact with the housebound and elderly
Find out where lapsed parishioners are – and why.	Everyone to engage with new people at Mass – talk to them!
Improve disabled access.	House prayer groups.
Change our seats at Mass!	Summer breakfast club.
Get people more engaged in wider Church initiatives e.g. Synod and Wellspring	Build the impact of the good stuff that's happening.
Use current activities as an opportunity to evangelise.	Parish Christmas card circulated across our communities.

Fr Stephen welcomed what had been done on the night and the enthusiasm in the Parish. He suggested that some structural changes might be needed to take pastoral planning forward effectively, e.g. a 'Sunday Experience' Group; an Evangelisation and Outreach Team. He also said that he would circulate these outputs quickly and then come back with his reflections.