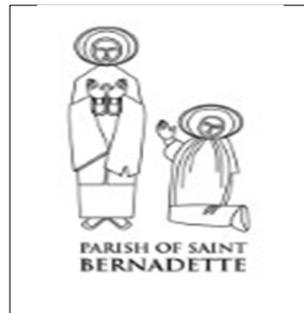


St. Bernadette's Parish Pastoral Council Annual Report 2015-2016



'A Parish Pastoral Council is a faith-filled leadership group through which priests and people work together as co-responsible partners in furthering the mission of Christ in their own parish.' (*Living Communion, Irish Episcopal Conference*)

Here in St. Bernadette's Parish, we are very fortunate to have an enthusiastic group of people in our Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) who work with Fr. Armstrong, in an advisory capacity, to further faith development. A prayerful atmosphere is crucial in all our meetings and we spend the opening period of each meeting in prayer, invoking the assistance of the Holy Spirit and listening to, and reflecting upon, a gospel reading and related homily.

The year began with many changes to Parish Pastoral Council personnel. Joining the PPC in June 2015 were Una Lynch, Gerry Steele, Eamon Foster, Marie Moriarty, Tony Macklin and Michael Doherty. After many years of dedicated service, Maureen McLaughlin, Vera Byrne, Santha McGrath and Moya Dolan decided to step down. Due to pressure of work, John McCaughan and Tony Macklin resigned during the year. We are extremely grateful for the commitments which all have shown to the parish during their time with the council.

At this point, the current membership of the PPC is as follows:

Very Reverend Paul Armstrong P.P. President of the Council

Joe McGinnity, Chairman

Una Lynch

Michael Goodall, Vice-Chairman

Gerry Steele

Michael Doherty, Secretary

Eamon Foster

Marie McIvor

Marie Moriarty

Principal Focus for the Year: Due to the sizeable change in membership it was strongly felt at the beginning of the year that we should concentrate on developing our knowledge of the theological basis, status and responsibilities of a parish pastoral council. The fact that St. Bernadette's Church would be undergoing restoration for many months seemed to lend logical support to this decision.

We saw our immediate task as renewal and enhancement of our understanding of the council's work, through which all members would be strengthened, individually and collectively, in their commitment to support our parish faith community. To achieve this aim, we decided on the study book from which the quotation above is taken, 'Living Communion, Vision and Practice for Parish Pastoral Councils in Ireland Today' produced by the Council for Pastoral Renewal and Adult Faith Development (Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference) and published by Veritas.

The following chapter headings and sub-sections will illustrate the direction and extent of our study:

Vision of Church Today

Church as Communion

The Parish Pastoral Council – Living Communion

The Mission and Context of the Parish

Mission

Parish, Pastoral Area and Diocese

Parish in Society

The Parish Pastoral Council

Definition

Canonical Basis for Parish Pastoral Councils

Ministry and Processes of the Parish Pastoral Council

Setting up a Parish Pastoral Council

Roles

The Consultative Process

Committees/Subgroups of the Parish Pastoral Council

Meetings

Continuity and Sustainability

Continuity and Sustainability

Review and Evaluation of the Council's Work

Formation and Support

Parishes in Transition

Parishes in Transition

Relationships with Other Bodies within the Parish and the Diocese

The Parish Pastoral Council, the Pastoral Area, the Diocese and the Wider Church

The Parish Pastoral Council and the Parish Finance Council

We consider that our main aim of increasing understanding was achieved over the course of the past year. Obviously, with such an extensive programme, it will be necessary to return to a number of these points again in the future. Nevertheless the council members now feel ready to draw up a programme of development for St. Bernadette's Parish. We intend to review our current constitution and mission statement as priorities in the coming year. Jim Deeds, Parish Development Officer with the Down and Connor Living Church Office, attended our last meeting of the year (7th June 2016), and gave very valuable advice on the direction our PPC should now take.

'Faith and Life': A number of members attended this Diocesan Convention in Our Lady and St. Patrick's College in September. Fr. Alan McGuckian, in his keynote speech, emphasised the need for the laity to take greater responsibility in passing on the faith at parish level.

Invited Speaker: In October, at a time when the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean was making daily headlines, members were delighted to welcome Sr. Anne Kilroy to our monthly meeting. In describing her work with assisting refugees in Belfast, Sr. Anne provided a most informative talk on 'Welcoming the Stranger'.

Communicating with Parishioners: We have included a very brief note of the main focus of our discussions each month in the parish weekly bulletin.

Annual Mass for the Sick: Due to the ongoing renovations in the church, those interested in attending were invited to join with Holy Rosary Parish in October last.

Lenten Programme: One of the highlights in the life of the parish in recent years has been our faith development programme presented in the weeks leading up to Easter. This year our programme was '**Mary: A Biblical Walk with the Blessed Mother**' which was ably led by members of the PPC, along with the willing assistance of Flo McGarrigle and Vera Byrne. We were delighted with the numbers who attended, having a nightly average of 48 over the 8 weeks. There was tremendous interest shown in this programme with great, and most enjoyable, participation in the lively discussions which followed the DVD presentations. The PPC is very grateful for the support given by our parishioners and friends and would hope to make this event an annual one in the life of our parish.

Conclusion: This is a very brief report on the work of our PPC during the last year. If any parishioner would like more information about our aims and objectives, or would like to make suggestions regarding our future work, please accept our warmest invitation to approach a member of the council.