



Auckland Diocesan Pastoral Council Newsletter

The Diocesan Pastoral Council met for the **200**th time on Saturday 18 November. Having met in various venues over the 50 years this meeting was at the Pompallier Diocesan Centre.

Catherine Ryan the Vicar for Education joined members in exploring Catholic schools. Having presented a snapshot of her role 'on behalf' of Bishop Steve, she introduced the Council to the members and work of the Catholic Education Services office.

As part of the conversation Catherine highlighted the results of surveys looking at the rationale for parents choosing or not choosing Catholic education. Reasons were often based on where a school was located and how that suited the life of the family as well as financial considerations. Catherine clarified that the only compulsory cost to a family at a Catholic school are attendance dues which whānau commit to at enrolment. The diocese does have a process of financial assistance and is working on establishment of a bursary that will provide ongoing attendance dues support for families.

The criteria and process of Preference of Enrolment was explored. Catherine reminded members that there are not classes of preference. "Preference is preference" No criteria is better than the other. As a parish priest Fr Lio was able to present the perspective of someone with authority to sign the certificates which enriched the conversation.

Communities were asked to report on parish/school engagement, best practice and challenges. These were used by groups of members, along with the information sheet from NZCEO **Some easy, practical ideas to foster parish-school relationships** to explore PARISH/FAITH COMMUNITIES and SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT. Suggestions brought forward were|

- Parish Council members promote Alpha programme through school.
- Promote weekday morning Mass to parents
- Clear understanding of parish role and school role (PPC & school Board)
- Create a warm family atmosphere between school staff, parents and parishioners
- Catholic Education Services (CES) do a presentation on preference of enrolment especially for PPCs and also Catherine Ryan's presentation on CES
- Teach doctrine. Live out Catholic values. Spiritual formation.
- Parishes with no schools initiate contact with parents of the schools where children go to
- Teachers in primary schools involved in sacramental classes, RCIA, even become Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist
- To have school/parish masses split by year groups rather than whole school followed by social gathering.

Celebrating 50 years

Following the meeting members joined the faith community of St Joseph's Takapuna for Mass at which Bishop Steve presided. Past members of the DPC were invited to join current members. Past and present 'DPCers' then adjourned to the parish hall for a celebratory dinner.

Between courses Pat Lythe who has been; delegate to the Diocesan Pastoral Council, its first woman chair - a role she held twice and executive secretary to the DPC for 27 years spoke on the history of the DPC in context of the Church since the Second Vatican Council and the presiding Bishops. It was an intriguing well received presentation.



Members past and present of the Diocesan Pastoral Council gather after Mass.

"Thank you for last night The whole thing was beautifully planned and celebrated in fitting style an important milestone in the life of the Church in Auckland. What a delight it was to hear the whole history from Pat Lythe."

ATTENDEE



A celebratory meal was shared.



What people are saying...

Ongoing workshops and formation were given to our community leaders to form and help them see their roles as a ministry instead of looking at it as a "job".

Report from ethnic community delegate

There is a deep faith in the parish communities ... Many of parish members engage with scripture on a daily basis, there is a good sense of community.

Parish report on findings from Church Life survey.

The school's DRS writes a reflection for the parish newsletter once a month, usually sharing the faith learning the students have focused on or how the school honours its special character
Parish report on school parish engagement

There are 16 Orders/Congregations of Religious Sisters including 2 enclosed orders in the diocese.

- Approximately 70% are in their 80's or older.
- Country of Origin is diverse: India, Honduras, Tonga, Samoa, Vietnam, Australia, Ireland, Tokelau, etc.

Report from Women Religious delegate.

Our school principal hosted the Deanery meeting in their Whānau Room and arranged a delicious morning tea priests.

Parish report.

Listening to the Diocese

Having spent time praying with and considering reports submitted from faith communities, members broke into spiritual conversation groups. Following the process of 'what I heard', 'what you heard' 'what are we hearing?' each group prepared a short oral report to present to Bishop Steve. Bishop Steve then facilitated a dialogue around matters arising.

Church Life Survey

- Some parishes choose not to participate.
- Survey showed that mass attenders are aging, female dominate numbers in Church, people say they are comfortable sharing their faith but are not willing to invite people to Mass or share their faith with strangers.
- Young people are finding Christ in other Church suggests that we are not engaging them in ways that build their relationship with Christ.
- Our challenge is that many people are cultural Catholics. Come to Mass on Sunday, participate in their own devotional practices but have lost missionary focus. We need to build understanding that **Sunday Mass is a highpoint not endpoint.**
- Results revealed that Catholics read the Bible least of all Christian communities. Challenge is to form contemporary models of basic cell communities where faith is shared around Scripture.
- "We should never be afraid of the questions of young people" (Pope Francis). How can we engage young people? We need to be imaginative perhaps through podcasting where young people get to ask the 'difficult' questions.

Parish School Engagement

- Relationships and partnerships between school and parish need to be collaborative and positive.
- There are a lot of opportunities for schools and parish to collaborate to build faith community. Some are neglected..

Re-shaping the diocese

- This is not going to happen quickly. Conversations will need to be held about reality. This means learning the art of spiritual conversation, listening to where the Spirit is leading us. The practice of **Spiritual Conversation** needs to be practiced and in place before changing of structures is considered.

DPC Meetings 2024

Date reports due to delegate

9 March | Reports due 27 February

22 June | Reports due 14 June.

17 August | Reports due 9 August.

2 November | Reports due 25 October.

