

St. Joseph's Parish Council Meeting
Held in St. Joseph's Church - 6th July, 2008

Chairman: Fr. Ross Thompson. Ten members attended.

Apologies - Liz Boyes and Margaret Dobson. The Meeting remembered Margaret's husband Keith in our prayers.

Fr. Ross welcomed Fr. John Lumley and Mrs. Jane Cook from the Diocesan Adult Formation Team, and the Committee, to the Meeting. Fr. Ross said a prayer to the Holy Spirit to aid our deliberations and then invited Fr. Lumley and Jane Cook to address the Meeting.

Fr. Lumley thanked Fr. Ross and the Council for inviting them to address the Meeting. They wanted to raise awareness of the need for adult formation and they were pleased to address the Parish Council, and hoped adult formation could be regularly on the agenda of the Parish Council. Changes envisaged were participation of all the faithful, not just at Mass, but in the life of the Church; asking people to not just participate in, but to take responsibility for, the life of the Parish. Who would have thought that lay people would be on Finance Committees or Parish Councils, or would be Eucharistic Ministers. We have come a long way. This move to bigger responsibility is what it is to be baptised in Church. Adult formation is a necessary part of being a disciple. The Handbook of short Courses is the first resource in starting refresher Courses. We want to encourage Parishes to use the Handbook with the Parish Priest. We want people to take a step forward and say "I am a Catholic and need to feed my faith and live it out in my daily life".

Jane & Fr. Lumley felt there was a lovely community feel to St. Joseph's Parish. We should be patient, if we get only a few people at first, that is fine. The personal invitation often inspires people to come and see what is going on. You are building something that is good. It is not a class, it is catechesis – sharing the faith. It has to be advertised imaginatively – described in such a way that people know that this is for everyone.

The Courses and explanation of Courses are listed in the Handbook, and offer Courses on all aspects of adult formation. Scripture is proving popular, there is a thirst to learn more about the Word of God. L11 –L14 for example are on working with people from Baptism to Confirmation. There are Courses on Spirituality – leaning new ways of praying, or, Pastoral Care – Parishes may want to equip people with listening skills. There are 15 sessions on Working with Catechists.

The Courses are for everyone For example – "The Home is a Holy Place" is for all age groups not just for younger families. If people with young children want to come it could be at a time to suit them, and perhaps other parishioners could look after the children – have children's activities. We do have people with that expertise in the Parish in the Liturgy Group for example. Some Courses are not in the handbook, such as Moral and Social Prison Chaplaincy, which are available on the Diocesan website. www.middlesbrough-diocese.irg.uk.

The Courses take place in which ever parish invites them to come. The Adult Faith Forum is on our door step. It could take place in our parish hall. Lyn Bradbury is St. Joseph's Parish Adult Formation Officer. She knows the other Parish's contacts, so what we organise in our Parish can be advertised to our neighbours - the other Parishes in the Deanery. This works well. The Parish who invites the Team would be responsible for the welcome, and the advertising in the Newsletters etc.

Booking time is very short for Courses that have been given before, but if something had to be prepared, it could take from four to six weeks. There are already a lot of Courses for autumn. There could be day or evening Courses, depending on what the Parish wants, and what age group it is intended for. Regarding block booking – ie. a varied programme to take place in Lent, Advent or Easter, the Parish Council could make a co-ordinated plan, advertising to the Deanery that the Parish offers these Courses.

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The cost would be about £30, to cover travel expenses and preparation time. It can be a Parish expense or donations could be made when people come in to the hall.

It was felt that we should plan rather than wait, and ask people what they would like to come to in particular. It has been found that people are more likely to come to one thing rather than committing themselves to a Course. More younger people than had been imagined come, and if you have one successful meeting then word of mouth would inspire others.

The Meeting was interested in many of the Courses – Scripture, Spirituality – Personal Prayer, and specific Ministries such as Ministry of the Word and Eucharistic Ministry which would be for anyone who was interested. Advertising for the Courses is left to the Parishes.

Everyone of course has barriers, some people are shy of anything new. The Parish Priest could help to put adult formation across, to explain what “formation” is. The personal invitation is usually best.

The Meeting was asked what they would like to do. Those mentioned were:

L 10 – Children's Liturgy of the Word

L 15 – “What an Honour” – Ministers of the Word

L 16 – “What a Privilege” – On going formation for Ministers of Holy Communion

SP1 – Teach us to Pray

P 4 - “Home is a Holy Place”

S 18 – Introducing St. Paul.

S 9 – Scripture in Advent/Christmas

All of these could be advertised to other Parishes. Dates would be discussed with Fr. Ross. The Meeting would decide at the next Meeting what to do.

Fr. Lumley closed our Meeting with a prayer to the Holy Spirit, that we would be his humble gentle people.

Date & Place of Next Meeting – First Sunday in September, 7th September, after 9.30 am. Mass in the Assembly area.