

St Benedict's Parish, Stratton-on-the-Fosse, Somerset

Survey

There were 55 responses as follows:

- Saturday 5pm Mass – 6 responses
- Sunday 9.00 Mass – 11 responses
- Sunday 11.00 Mass – 22 responses
- Sunday 6pm Mass – 16 responses

1. What are we doing well as a parish?

The answers to this were generally, but not always, positive. The negative answers were very general, such as 'not a lot'. Other answers were more specific. There were clear themes referred to by several answers. For example:

- a) The provision of Masses at different times.
- b) Good array of socials.
- c) Lots of comment on bringing people together and a sense of community and friendliness.
- d) Bringing the merged churches together as one Parish is making progress – but there is still much to be done. Some said it still does not feel like an integrated parish. One suggested the creation of a 'joint' project for the Parish.

Some things specific to certain Masses emerged as common themes.

- a) Tea and coffee after 11.00 Mass helped people to get to know each other.
- b) Singing and music at 11.00 Mass.

ACTION 1: The PPC needs to explore ways of better integrating the Parish. Currently ex-Holy Ghost parishioners who attend 11.00 Mass dominate representation on the PPC. (5 out of 7) We need to get representatives from other Masses.

2a. How well does the Parish communicate what it does to parishioners?

The improved notice boards were well liked. Also, the consensus was that parishioners liked the newsletter but that too many people did not read it. Suggestions for improvement included:

- a) Put Parish information on the front and theological information at the end.
- b) It looks too much like a Downside newsletter rather than a Parish newsletter.
- c) Make it larger with more information.
- d) Send it by e-mail – this was mentioned by many respondents.

Suggestions for improvements included

- a) There is a need for better information about the Parish on the internet. Specifically a Parish web-site was mentioned by several.
- b) Many suggested that the priests should make more announcements about Parish activities at the end of Mass.
- c) Some said they did not know what the PPC was doing and that minutes were not published.
- d) Several pointed out that nothing had been heard about the last survey.
- e) One suggested that occasionally Parish groups could give a brief verbal update on what they were doing at the end of Mass

ACTION 2: Review the format of the newsletter with Fr Anselm and begin to send it by e-

mail to those who want it.

ACTION 3: Priests to announce events at the end of Mass.

ACTION 4: To continue to explore how to best use the internet to advertise the Parish.

ACTION 5: To ensure that PPC minutes go up on the board in timely fashion and that the newsletter tells the Parish when this happens.

ACTION 6: To ensure that the PPC tells the Parish about the survey and what has happened as a result.

2b. How well does the Parish communicate what it does to the community at large?

The consensus was that this not done well. Suggestions included:

- a) Send newsletter out to other churches and organisations.
- b) Have a quarterly Parish Magazine.
- c) More articles in the press about what is happening in the Parish. Get those who organise activities to write articles.
- d) Again, the importance of information on the internet was raised – specifically incorrect information.
- e) Several mentioned a lack of Catholic presence in the Community (MSN / Radstock).
- f) One said we should work hard with Churches Together.

ACTION 7: To send out the newsletter more widely.

ACTION 8: To explore the idea of a quarterly magazine giving feedback on what has been happening in the Parish and advertising future events.

ACTION 9: To explore articles for the press (and the magazine / newsletter) being written by people involved in Parish activities (CAFOD, Foodbank, etc)

ACTION 10: To give greater prominence to what Churches Together is doing.

3a. Which Mass do you attend and why?

Convenience was the most common answer to this. Others attended 9.00 or 11.00 because they liked the music. Others attended 11.00 because they have children. Many said that they attended the Mass time that used to be at their old church. The answers confirm what was said to Question 1 – that there is a good range of Masses and times.

3b. Are there aspects of this Mass which could be improved?

There were some simple suggestions in answer to this. Most common were:

- a) The priest should say a welcome to visitors and newcomers at the start of the Mass.
- b) A priest should always be available for confession at the advertised times.
- c) The priest should always be at the back porch to speak to parishioners as they leave.
- d) The homily could often be more relevant to everyday life and young people. This was mentioned by several people (and as an answer to Question 5 about young people).
- e) People do not like it when the Mass sheet is not adhered to.
- f) More of a fuss should be made of the children after their liturgy. Ask them what they've learnt etc. (This also came up in answer to Question 5).
- g) We need to recruit more Servers, Readers and Eucharistic Ministers.

ACTION 11: To discuss with the clergy which of the above suggestions can be

implemented.

4. Do we make newcomers welcome? How could we improve on this?

There was a clear split here. Responses from the 11.00 Mass felt that this was done, albeit with some things which could be improved. Responses from the other Masses felt that this was something that this was done informally and not very well. Suggestions for improvement included:

- a) The priest should welcome newcomers at each at each Mass.
- b) Have a sign in big letters in the porch like 'We welcome you today'
- c) Several parishioners should have the job of welcoming people as they come in to Mass and speaking to newcomers at the end of Mass.
- d) Coffee /tea after Mass – priest should announce this and ask visitors and newcomers to feel welcome to take part.
- e) Would be good to know of newcomers in our village. Putting newcomers in touch with existing parishioners.
- f) Priest to announce forthcoming events and invite newcomers and visitors to attend events.

ACTION 12: To organise a team of greeters for each Mass. This team to take details of newcomers so that parishioners living nearby can make them welcome.

ACTION 13: To explore providing coffee / tea after each Mass so people can meet.

ACTION 14: To provide and display a welcome banner in the Porch

5. What could we do to encourage young people to keep coming to church?

Most responses recognised this was difficult. Suggestions included:

- a) The priest making more of the children's liturgy – including them when they come out by asking what they have learnt. This helps address youngest children.
- b) Making the homily more relevant to young people. Something they can understand and relate to.
- c) Organise activities for young people - social events, discussion groups, youth club, retreats, a strong Jesus Youth team, sending young people to Catholic Youth events. etc
- d) Have a youth officer to look at this.
- e) Priest to speak to young people as they leave Mass.
- f) Have more young people acting as servers, readers etc.
- g) Ask young parishioners what they want.

ACTION 15: To set up a youth development group, which would include young people, to identify and implement activities to attract and retain young parishioners.

ACTION 16: To assist the youth development group by surveying the ideas of young parishioners.

6. What could we do to bring more people into the Church?

Again, respondents recognised the difficulty here. Many referred to the lack of physical presence in Midsomer Norton and Radstock. Other suggestions were:

- a) Advertise Mass times in the local paper (eg Peasedown Church).
- b) Improve presence in local and social media by writing about what we do.
- c) Organise more events for the wider community.
- d) Keep the web-site up-to-date.
- e) Make it more welcoming.

ACTIONS: These are covered by Actions under Question 2b.

7. What else could we do better to strengthen the life of the parish?

Several responses wrote about the need for clearer leadership from the clergy – clear in the sense of having a single Parish Priest or a more hierarchical structure so that the Parish knows who provides the vision and direction for the Parish.

- a) Have more social events which are advertised better (see Action 3)
- b) Parish still trying to come together. Integration is work in progress.
- c) Home visits to the housebound and sick.
- d) Family groups. Prayer groups.
- e) Improve the Hall to make it suitable for more events.
- f) Strengthen the teams supporting Mass (Sacristans, Eucharistic Ministers, Readers, Servers) and get them working across Masses – co-ordinated by PPC.
- g) More Fairtrade.
- h) More courses to help those struggling to be better followers or teach ways to develop their faith.
- i) Invite people to give their e-mail addresses so they can be better informed.
- j) Have a priest to speak to before each Mass. Hear confession.

ACTION 17: To look at the Pastoral work undertaken in the Parish and take steps to strengthen and broaden it.

ACTION 18: To improve the facilities and condition of the Parish Hall. This is already underway.

ACTION 19: To explore strengthening the teams that support Mass (see e. above).

ACTION 20: To provide more courses about faith. This is underway with the Sycamore course and *Lectio Divina*.

8. Is there anything we could learn from other churches?

- a) More outreach.
- b) We could designate several liaison parishioners to work with nearby parishes. This is probably already done with Churches Together and just needs better communication to the Parish.
- c) Train lay missionary disciples.
- d) Regular catechism of the children.
- e) Properly look at what other Parishes do. Two responses suggested parishes to look at (Our Lady Queen of Heaven at Frimley; St Matthews, Ballyfermot).

9. Is there anything else you wish to add?

Some answers were things beyond the Parish – allow priests to marry for example. I have excluded these. Also, many of the answers replicated responses to other questions. One or two actually added something different. These were:

- a) Tell us in advance which priest is going to be taking Mass. It shouldn't be a secret.
- b) Have a Mass in St Benedict's on Good Friday and Christmas Eve. This was mentioned in several replies.
- c) Put QR code on the newsletter (I don't know what this is!).
- d) Have an open discussion about where the Parish wants to be in 5-10 years' time.