

Report of Conversation Findings Gathering of Liturgy Groups

24 May, 2016



A cross section of people attended this evening, representing seventeen parishes. The seventy participants included liturgy group members (some of whom were also members of the Parish Pastoral Council), parish clergy and pastoral workers, individual members of liturgical ministries in some of the parishes, members of the Diocesan Commission for Liturgical Formation, together with Bishop Denis.

CONVERSATION 1: NAMING OUR REALITY

1) From your experience, what are the different things that a parish liturgy group does?

Co-ordination & Communication

- Organises the rotas for Eucharistic Ministers, Readers and other ministry groups, as well as providing readings for Readers, actively text messaging to include all groups and provide for better communication, liaising and communicating with the choir, trying to balance celebrations to accommodate where there are a number of churches in the parish, in one case, organising refreshments, e.g. after funerals, prepare the parish newsletter
- IN one case, parish council advises liturgy group on what they want
- Youth choir and youth Mass, Children's Liturgy of the Word

Sundays and seasons

- Keeping in tune with liturgical calendar and planning/ preparing Sunday and the liturgical seasons accordingly, this includes Lent / Holy Week/Easter, Advent / Christmas, Corpus Christi Procession, Advent Scripture sharing, getting people to have their feet washed (Holy Thursday), drafting Prayer of the Faithful, creating and operating PowerPoints

Sacred Space

- Co-ordinating and creating sacred spaces/ decoration to highlight the seasons, i.e. set up Lenten space, Resurrection garden, May altar, the flowers in church...



Occasional liturgies

- This included the organisation of Communion/Prayer services and leading people in prayer in the absence of clergy., Eucharistic Adoration, Rosary being led 3 times a week mentioned by one parish, Penitential Services and Celebration of All Souls in November, November liturgy Remembering the Dead, St Valentine's day, missing persons, bereavement Mass for babies, St. Patrick's Day, Parish Novena, Anniversary Masses and Month's Mind Masses, Cemetery Mass, outdoor Mass for a 'Holy Well' in the parish, service for Year of Mercy, blessing of Pets, Catholic Schools Week, Blessing of the Sick

Sacramental Preparation

- A group that plans for Masses for parents and children of First Holy Communion and assists in Sacramental programmes & Sunday School. One person was part of a Grandparent's Group who visit the First Communion Class in local school
- Some Churches have Mass only once a week; some Parishes have three churches

2) From your experience, what do you see as the key things to help the work of a liturgy group?

Working Methods as a group

- Regular Meetings that are prepared and characterised by being planned, having an agenda and being well organised, having someone in a leadership role
- Being organised as a team; encouraging teamwork and working in subgroups; delegating and sharing roles/ tasks within the group; including review and assessment of work
- Including prayerful reflection as part of how the group works
- Empowering the talents of individual members by consulting, affirming, sharing and listening to ideas

Internal skills and gifts

- Made up of pleasant and co-operative personalities, with ability to work as part of a team.
- A hospitable group within which there is good communication / collaboration / cooperation and support
- Involving all the talent of the group
- People with a common focus and goal working together, ample in number
- Having the variety of ministries represented in the group and nurturing links to other groups
- Tapping into the talents of the parish
- Working towards consensus among the group

On-going formation

- Resources, training and formation from the diocese – FDS & Liturgical Commission
- Courses and training, drawing on prepared material and resources



Internal Support

- Commitment of members to group and meetings
- Leadership from PP as well as the support and interests of the priests of the parish; priests need to be in tune with the group and the ideas of the group
- Support from the parish sacristan

External Support

- FDS & the Commission for Liturgical formation

3) What, if any, are the particular challenges you come across in carrying out your work as a liturgy group in the parish?

Relationships

- With parishioners/ congregation: trying to respect the faith and feelings of everyone, sometimes feeling a lack of support from the parish community, congregation can be indifferent or complain; introduction of change and fear of change; reaching out to those who are not regular Church attenders
- With priests: in some cases, a lack of support and interest from priests and a lack of communication
- Within the group: Sustaining life / new energy in the group; the presence on a group of a person who may stifle debate or dominate / strong personalities; handling the tension between new ideas versus a 'traditional approach' to liturgy; people who have been involved for years and have become entrenched; lack of teamwork; being unified as a group

Operating as a group

- Need to do more / better planning; not to be afraid to pushout the boat/ try something new or different
- Commitment to meetings and delegated tasks
- Dealing with routine / repetition; sameness
- Working around constraints, i.e. number of Sunday Masses
- Keeping alive a positive image of Church
- Communication with parish, i.e. sacristan, parish office...
- Being open to training / education as to why we do what we do
- Prioritising what the group will decide to do

Recruitment

- Recruiting replacements; attracting new people and generating interest in the group/ not seeing new people and new ideas as a threat
- Getting and encouraging parishioners to become involved, including young people, without always ending up asking the same people.

Other

- The new language of the Mass poses a challenge
- Future with less priests and less Masses



Summary Statements: Bringing it together...

- The role of the liturgy group is to create meaningful liturgy using all the talents and resources available that will impact on those on the margins; they are of value/ essential and enriching to a parish and give energy to those involved; they keep the ceremonies going in a parish
 - A liturgy works best with strong and supportive leadership, clear communication, and work according to sound principles. The team must have a common interest in enhancing liturgy in their parish while keeping an energy and sense of newness, creativity, and welcome in the Group. It is important to have good planning, team work and to review; groups are strengthened by sharing and listening and would benefit from using social media to promote their work. The groups must keep working despite obstacles
 - Liturgy groups need encouragement and support from the priest as well as commitment from the wider parish community in bringing liturgy alive. They should encourage the youth and get new people involved but not alienate the more committed people
 - It is of highest priority that people are educated in all aspects of Liturgy in preparation for the future as liturgy groups will have more responsibilities and will be more accountable in meeting the needs of their parishioners in Sunday worship
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CONVERSATION 2 LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

4) What are the hallmarks of how you would like to see liturgy celebrated in the coming years?

Building on and keeping alive the best of what is happening now the groups offered a vision for the celebration of the liturgy...

that is marked by

- joy, solemnity, a sense of community / welcome / gathering / belonging, connecting with the reality of people's lives, finding its highpoint in the Sunday celebration, leaving people with a feeling of joy and being uplifted

that involves

- the full participation of the community, young and old, families and those who are single, drawing in people who are currently not coming to Mass
- a diversity of ministers and ministries
- all the elements of liturgy – liturgy celebrated in all its fullness, appealing and engaging all the senses, creating the right liturgical space
- homilies that are meaningful and nourishing



that requires

- good preparation, with
- priests and liturgy groups working together, not just going through the motions
- sensitivity to the local situation, context and needs – a rural parish is not a town parish!
- a sharing and welcoming of new and creative ideas and more participation and involvement of people.

5) What do you think liturgy groups need from the parish/diocese?

Training & Resources

- Formation and training for new and existing groups; help to set up a group and prepare a mission statement
- On- going education and guidelines for liturgy groups; workshop days
- Sharing of what works well, ideas and practices among parishes and from diocese; a menu of ideas to build from; Motivation/opportunities to give ideas and encouragement
- Input and help with understanding the Word of God
- The continued provision of resources from FDS & the diocese

Fostering Local Support

- Good communication between priest and liturgy group; a priest needs to be part of the group; priests need to give support and encouragement; encourage more deacons; diocese needs to be impress on priests that people are enthusiastic and want to be involved
- Help with promoting good communications with the wider community

Particular to each group

- Have a good leader who is knowledgeable of liturgy
- An attitude of openness and encouragement to work and engage with new ideas
- A group that have a good mix of talents, age, ability, male and female
- Encourage people to share their talents
- Schedule regular meetings and constantly review work being done
- Constantly have an eye to recruitment; include and engage young people in the work of the liturgy group
- Listen to parishioners to ascertain and attend to their needs and the desires of their parishioners

6) What advice would you give to parishes who want to start a liturgy group?

Recruitment

- Go ahead! Do it!! Initially form a Liturgy Group from people already involved in other ministries; then extend an invitation for more people to get involved. Take small steps, gradually get more people involved



- Along with an open invitation, give a wider spectrum of people personal invitations as this will encourage more people to become involved if they feel they have been asked especially; have a ‘come and see’ meeting where people can learn more about what’s involved; in sourcing new members, look for talent, ability, mix of age, gender; when recruiting new liturgy groups, the invitation needs to be in layman rather than ‘churchy’ language
- Tap into other liturgy groups that are working well and invite a member of that group to come and speak to a parish; a priest/ experienced member to explain from the altar what is involved

Formation of group

- Provide a training course that includes training in liturgy but also help and training in teamwork
- Appoint a chairperson, perhaps rotating, and decide on number of years that the group will be in liturgy ministry.
- Ensure the Word of God is kept – not watered down
- When deciding what to do, be open to local needs & new ideas and if something doesn’t work out don’t despair

Summary Statements: Bringing it together...

- Good liturgy needs strong leadership, education, training, resources and an open and welcoming community to encourage more people to become involved, as well as the co-ordination of ministries and an openness to new ways of doing things – learning from what has worked well in other places.
- Since the liturgy is the source and summit of our faith, it is important that the group meet on a regular basis for their own spiritual nourishment, educate themselves, have good leadership, and call forth the gifts and talents of the people in the parish, being inclusive of all age groups, and all areas of the parish, so that on Sunday, when liturgy is celebrated in all its fullness, the people and priest together will have vibrant celebrations where they will leave the church with a song in their hearts. This requires striving to make the Sunday celebration appealing to all, welcoming and reaching out to youth and those who are not regular Church attenders.
- A liturgy group should foster greater participation of all the congregation, especially young people. Training and workshops and mentoring from other parishes with successful groups will help new groups to get going as they seek to create a sense of community, connect with people’s lives, to motivate, to encourage participation, to review, to explain what liturgy is about and to learn from existing groups.
- Liturgy Groups need encouragement and appreciation; the priests must be committed to having a liturgy group while the support and provision of resources from the diocese are extremely important in the development of a liturgy group.

