

Synod 2003

Parish Gathering Report

<u>Report of</u>	St John's Wood – The Gap Parish
<u>Place</u>	St Peter Chanel Church
<u>Date</u>	27th February, 2002
<u>No. in Attendance</u>	24

The five most important strategies overall for the life of this Parish (St John's Wood – The Gap):

1. Provide more spiritual directors/companions across the diocese and within each parish. As priests are already very busy, training in the spiritual life and direction accredited by the Church should be provided to the laity. In the short term, parish priests could publicly affirm those in the parish with these gifts, and encourage parishioners to approach these people for assistance, pending formal accreditation of spiritual companion through the accredited training program.
2. We suggest that the Archdiocese put some of the obligation for nurturing priests onto the parish. A priest should have a group of people he can pray with, discuss the parish problems with, and socialise with. A group who can tell him to slow down, or go away for a break. A group who are concerned for him, who spends all his life in concern for others. Priests need emotional and spiritual support at the local level.
3. That lay people wishing to work in parish ministry undergo a discernment process (perhaps involving their parish priest), and that training and “qualification” for the role take into account the spiritual and pastoral formation of the person, as well as academic formation.

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4. The archdiocese develop a core team of youth leaders who are young enough to relate to other young people, but with enough maturity and experience to provide guidance.
 5. Our observation is that the vast majority of youth in year twelve including those in our Catholic Schools never go near their Parish Church. We suggest that committees be established with representation from High Schools and parishes to address this problem. Their efforts have to be integrated.

Issue 1: The Synod is charged with determining creative and effective ways of assisting the local Church to understand and value the spiritual treasure that the Church has to offer in today's world.

1. For all parishes to be encouraged to have an Adult Faith Education Coordinator, called forward and encouraged by the Parish Priest. This A.F.E.C. to be in contact with Adult Faith Education Services at Cath. Ed. and kept informed of resources available in the Archdiocese. Perhaps a start might be to promote participation in the Lenten Program.
2. For the Archdiocese to make available resources addressing key ethical issues (eg divorce/re-marriage, IVF/contraception, immigration/refugees, etc) that are suitable either for priests to use in homily preparation, or for group discussion.
3. The bishops make better use of lay expertise, in particular, the faculty at Australian Catholic University, when making statements on economic, political, medical, family issues, etc
4. Provide more education and encouragement to promote evangelisation across the diocese, to parishes, groups and individuals. Addressing such issues as what is it? How do you do it? What do you talk about? Where, When, and to Whom? Produce and/or suggest age? which people can use when sharing the faith, eg. films, articles, etc. Part of the strategy would include developing ways of identifying Catholics who are no longer part of a parish community and develop ways of reaching out to them.
5. Parishes with good ideas for community building be encouraged and enable to share these across the archdiocese, (perhaps a deanery newsletter with a short report from each parish).
6. The Church takes a stronger position nationally and internationally on justice issues.
7. "Catechesis of the Good Shepherd" promoted and spread to other parishes.

Issue 2: The Synod is charged with determining creative and effective ways of assisting the local Church to respond to the spiritual hunger of people today; including emerging believers, Catholics unconnected to a church community, and those who have no religious faith.

1. Provide more spiritual directors/companions across the diocese and within each parish. As priests are already very busy, training in the spiritual life and direction accredited by the Church should be provided to the laity. In the short term, parish priests could publicly affirm those in the parish with these gifts, and encourage parishioners to approach these people for assistance, pending formal accreditation of spiritual companion through the accredited training program.
2. Given the current ban on the use of the third right of reconciliation for parish celebration, we explore other options for communal celebration of the rite of reconciliation.
3. Encourage parishioners to bring friends to mass and ensure that they are welcomed warmly and properly farewelled.
4. To address spiritual hunger, have a commentator explain ritualistic procedures at events such as baptisms, funerals, first communions, etc. – when a number of non-Catholics or lapsed Catholics would be present.
5. Prayers of the faithful should address local and global issues more directly/personally. Guidelines are needed on how to write these.
6. Use the archdiocesan website to list all parishes and contact phone numbers and mass times; and eventually other diocesan, parish and church community ministries, services and resources.
7. Archdiocesan agencies work with other denominations to develop resources for use in ecumenical celebrations, eg, Christmas and Easter, etc.
8. Each parish have a directory listing parish groups, contact people, etc., and that these be available in each church (with a view to making this available through the archdiocesan website in the future).

9. Archdiocesan agencies provide short “blurbs” suitable for use in parish bulletins to make it easier for parishes to publicise events.

Issue 3: The Synod is charged with determining creative and effective ways of assisting the local Church to respond to, engage with, and animate the spiritual life of young people.

1. The archdiocese develop a core team of youth leaders who are young enough to relate to other young people, but with enough maturity and experience to provide guidance.
2. Our observation is that the vast majority of youth in year twelve including those in our Catholic Schools never go near their Parish Church. We suggest that committees be established with representation from High Schools and parishes to address this problem. Their efforts have to be integrated.
3. We need to be very aware of the interests (sport, the environment, social justice, music, socialising, etc.) and needs (exams, suicide prevention, drug awareness, etc.) of youth. We should be prepared to offer what meets these needs and caters to these interests, in the context of the fundamental message of Jesus Christ.
4. Our observation is that almost the only youth who come to Mass are those who are involved in liturgy. Involvement in the liturgy is particularly important for youth. In our parish, this could happen in all our weekend Masses, but particularly at the Sunday night Mass. It should be more flexible than the other three Masses. The homily at this Mass should be specially prepared and be addressed to teenagers. We should tell youth by word and deed that they are wanted and welcome.
5. To promote youth involvement in social justice issues as a means of encouraging their participation in the wider life of the Church. For example, especially encouraging parents to take the lead (March for Reconciliation, St. Vincent de Paul) as a positive example to their children.
6. Music is fundamental to youth ministry. We suggest that when recruiting the lay youth leaders mentioned above, we look to provide them with some training, and to develop skills in this area.

Issue 4: The Synod is charged with determining creative and effective ways of assisting the local Church to nurture the mission, ministry and vocation of the priests and people of the Archdiocese.

1. We suggest that the Archdiocese put some of the obligation for nurturing priests onto the parish. A priest should have a group of people he can pray with, discuss the parish problems with, and socialise with. A group who can tell him to slow down, or go away for a break. A group who are concerned for him, who spends all his life in concern for others. Priests need emotional and spiritual support at the local level.
2. That lay people wishing to work in parish ministry undergo a discernment process (perhaps involving their parish priest), and that training and “qualification” for the role take into account the spiritual and pastoral formation of the person, as well as academic formation.
3. More resources and training of liturgy teams. Training should be very practical and easy to understand, and not just for major feasts and seasons.
4. Challenge our diocese to address justice issues in regular Sunday liturgies, in special liturgies, in local action (eg. public billboards with a succinct social message), etc.
5. The diocese explore further ways to better communicate the message across the diocese, to parishioners and people outside the Church, such as internal methods within parishes and church facilities, eg. noticeboards and banners, externally to people outside the Church, use of the Internet, improved methods of communication between parishes and across the diocese.
6. We suggest the Archdiocese should make more use of the media, and help parishes make more use of the media at suburban level. For example, the day after the plane hi-jacks in the USA, the local media announced there would be a special Mass in St. Stephens at 12:30. This had the effect of reminding people that the Church has a role in our society, etc.
7. We suggest the Archdiocese encourage parishes to see as a specific role, headhunting. The parish should have some people who make it their business to approach parishioners personally to encourage them to join, enrol or participate.

8. That lay people working in paid parish ministry be “commissioned” by the Archdiocese as recognition of the ecclesial dimension of parish pastoral ministry.
9. Explore better ways of using the gifts and experience of former clergy and religious within the archdiocese.
10. Encourage work places to provide chaplaincy services (ecumenical), perhaps through providing training for interested employees.
11. Priests and deacons to be offered regular inservice training on preaching and teaching.
12. That once informed, the people of each parish be encouraged to present action strategies to the leadership of the Church, perhaps via Parish Pastoral Councils.
13. Use *The Catholic Leader* to resource liturgists with regular practical ideas, eg. Elizabeth Harrington's articles are very good, but suggestions for all Sunday liturgies throughout the year would be welcome.
14. Encourage priests to swap weekend masses with each other occasionally.