

PASTORAL AREA BULLETIN

LEAVING SAFE HARBOURS: ANCHORS AWAY!

Despite the recent worry of many about the threat of Swine Flu and the current economic climate we find ourselves in, I hope all of us managed to get something of a holiday, or at least a break from our regular routine. My own summer break was centred on a hospital bed and an operating table with the weeks afterwards spend resting and recuperating - and my thanks to everyone who sent me their good wishes and prayers for a speedy recovery. Returning to the routine after a break should find us refreshed and renewed so that we can tackle things with fresh purpose and with a keen sense of vision. And, after this summer break, that's certainly what we'll be starting to do in our Pastoral Area.

First, there are changes in the priests of our Clergy Team. Father Bernard Eager (Lowton and Croft) has not been in the best of health for some time. After much reflection he has decided to retire from active ministry. He'll be moving only a few miles down the road to Rainford, so we can look forward to his frequent return on many occasions. (He'll be leading the PA Day Pilgrimage to Ladywell on the 12th of September). Not only for his work and dedication to the parish communities of Saint Catherine and Saint Lewis, but also for his work as my predecessor as Dean and Pastoral Area Leader, we owe him a massive debt of gratitude. On behalf of all of us, I wish him a long, fulfilling and restful retirement. Our second "leaver" is Father Tony Reynolds from Our Lady's at Bryn. Father Reynolds has asked to be released from the administrative burdens of being a Parish Priest (the dream of so many of us!) and is moving to join the Clergy Team of the Widnes Pastoral Area as an Assistant Priest. We will miss him greatly, but our loss will be Widnes' gain and the Catholic community there will be richly blessed through his continued ministry among them.

So it's two priests out - but also two priests in! Because from September we welcome into the Pastoral Area two new (and young!) priestly faces. Father Ron Johnson joins us to become Parish Priest of Lowton and Croft, also to establish close links with Golborne. Ordained priest in 2000, he has for the last four years been Parish Priest of Garston in Liverpool, having also served for a short time as Archdiocesan Vocations Director and having also seen active service in Iraq as a Chaplain to the Forces. The second new face is Father John Gorman who becomes Parish Priest at Bryn but looking to establish deeper ties with the Ashton and Haydock parishes over the coming years.

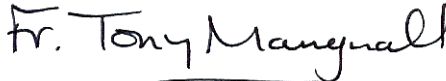
Father John was ordained priest in 1999 and this is his first appointment as a Parish Priest. Previously he has served as chaplain to Broadgreen Hospital and the Royal Liverpool University Hospital. Our two new priests are very, very welcome.

I don't wish to pour cold water on the good news, but the likelihood is that, due to the falling availability of priests, there will be no further new priestly appointments made to our Pastoral Area in the foreseeable future. As more of our priests leave for whatever reason, those of us who remain will take over their responsibilities - which means that from the nine priests we have now, we will go down to just four over the coming years. This will have implications on each parish. We will have to learn to share, to compromise and to work more closely together so that instead of thirteen separate parishes as we are at present, we will move to become four groups of linked parishes, with each "link" being served by just one priest. (Originally we had envisaged five links rather than four but this will not now be possible). Each parish will still retain its separate identity as a community, at least for a while, but will co-operate with the other three or four parishes in the link with regard to the ministry of a priest, the times of Mass, pastoral care, administration, communication, etc. To this end your representatives on the Pastoral Area Working Group (PAWG) have already begun to discuss and address these issues. They have been established into three sub-groups to look at the areas of liturgy, preparation for and the celebration of the sacraments, and the provision of pastoral care. In time the other areas of our life together as linked-parishes will be looked at. And in all this they will keep you who they represent informed and will listen to your practical concerns and positive ideas. You can expect to see more of them and to hear more from them in the coming months. The names of your representatives on the PAWG are given in this bulletin - try to put a face to the name of your representatives, if you don't know them already.

The heads of the Archdiocesan Departments for Evangelisation and Pastoral Formation have asked to meet with me in the coming weeks to see what pro-active help and support the Archdiocese can offer to our Pastoral Area as we move further out of our safe harbours and set sail to let our life in Christ be more clearly seen to shine in our neighbourhoods and to more actively lead others to come to know the Lord.

So it's "Anchors Away!" as we continue to open ourselves to be led by the Spirit of the Risen Lord, that He may melt us, mould us, fill us and use us to become who He calls us to be, the Body of Christ, here and now, in this place, at this time. These may be challenging times for all of us - but as a Catholic community, they're quite exciting too!

With every blessing to you and yours,



Pastoral Area Leader

THE PASTORAL AREA WORKING GROUP

From the PAWG Constitution:

The **Purpose of the PAWG** is to facilitate communication, consultation, dialogue and co-operation among the parishes and people of the Pastoral Area, to advise on matters relating to needs and resources within the Pastoral Area, to assist the Pastoral Area Leader in furthering the development of the Pastoral Area, to liaise between the Pastoral Area and the Archbishop and his delegates.

Membership of the PAWG shall consist of the Pastoral Area Leader and all Priests and deacons appointed to the Pastoral Area ex officio, three parishioners from each parish of the Pastoral Area, full-time Pastoral Workers within the Pastoral Area, two representatives of Catholic Secondary education within the Pastoral Area.

PARISH REPRESENTATIVES:

Ashton: Saint Oswald	Debbie Flanagan – Joan Wilde – Brian Wilde
Bryn: Our Lady	George Bennett – Julie Doherty – Anthony Johnston
Croft: Saint Lewis	Carole Firth – Denise Fletcher – Richard Grainger
Golborne: All Saints	Alan Cooper – <i>(Two Vacancies)</i>
Haydock: English Martyrs	June Helps – Gerard O’Donnell – Pat Steel
Hindley: Saint Benedict	Paul Holden – Matthew Hothersall - <i>(One Vacancy)</i>
Hindley Green: Sacred Heart	Cathy Lawton – Peter Weatherhead – <i>(One Vacancy)</i>
Lowton: Saint Catherine	Karen Harte – John Phillips – Frances Winstanley
Newton: Saint David	Alan Whitty – Eileen Swallow – Thomas Ward
Newton: Ss. Mary & John	Brian Dale – Terry Holleran – Beryl Simmons
Newton: Saint Patrick	Ted Burgess – Pat Smith – Gill Thompson
Platt Bridge: Holy Family	Chris Eccleston – Cecilia Hughes – Claire Togher
Stubshaw Cross: Saint Wilfrid	Mark Southworth – Liz Swift – <i>(One Vacancy)</i>
St. Edmund Arrowsmith High School, Ashton	– Mr. Mark Dumican, Deputy Headteacher
St. Aelred’s Technology College, Newton	– <i>Awaiting Appointment</i>

Father, we place into your hands our parish communities. In a world of rapid change keep us open to the inspiration of your Holy Spirit who will enable us to be your Body on earth, speaking your word to the world. Help us to move beyond defending what is ours to sharing with one another the gifts you have given to us. Enable our communities to be places where no one is forgotten, where your word is boldly proclaimed, where those who hunger and thirst for acceptance are nourished, and where your love is clearly seen. Give us the courage to change, the wisdom to listen, the humility to learn from one another and the gentleness to love. For without you we can do nothing. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FORTHCOMING PASTORAL AREA EVENTS

THE YEAR OF THE PRIEST

A member of our Pastoral Area community (**Adam Stewart from Holy Family, Platt Bridge**) leaves for Rome at the end of August to begin studies for the Priesthood at the Venerable English College. As part of our celebration of the "Year of the Priest" called by Pope Benedict, we will take the opportunity to show our support for him at a Mass celebrated at Saint Wilfrid's Church, Stubshaw Cross, Ashton-in-Makerfield on **Thursday the 28th of August at 7.00pm** with light refreshments served afterwards. Everyone welcome. Other young men beginning studies for the priesthood for the Archdiocese this year will also be present, as will members of the Archdiocesan Vocations Group.

Father Ron Johnson, the new Parish Priest of Lowton and Croft, will be arranging other events to celebrate the Year of the Priest in the coming months throughout the Pastoral Area.

PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY HAND OF ST. EDMUND ARROWSMITH

Sunday 30th August 2009 at Saint Oswald's Church, Ashton-in-Makerfield

Preacher - Fr. Godric Timney OSB Ep.Vic VF

Mass at 4.00pm with Blessing of the Sick and Veneration of the Holy Hand

Light refreshments served afterwards in the Canons' Hall

PILGRIMAGE TO OUR LADY'S SHRINE AT LADYWELL

Saturday 12th September 2009 led by Fr. Bernard Eager

Sprinkling Service at the Holy Well - Mass - Exposition - Praying of the Rosary

Coach Transport from Lowton (Tel. 01942 206030) and Platt Bridge (Tel. 01942 86610)

Tea and coffee provided but please bring a packed lunch with you

PASTORAL AREA DAY OF RECOLLECTION

Saturday 10th October 2009 from 10.00am to 4.00pm

at Holy Family Parish Hall, Tram Street, Platt Bridge.

Led by Fr. Chris Thomas and Mrs. Maureen Knight from the Irenaeus Family of Prayer.

Buffet Lunch provided

No charge - Donation only

Open to everyone in the Pastoral Area parishes.

Contact your PAWG parish representatives to reserve a place

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

Confirmation will be celebrated over the coming months in the Pastoral Area as follows:

Tuesday 13th October 2009

Saint Benedict's, Hindley at 7.00pm

Also Saint Catherine's, Lowton at 7.30pm

Wednesday 14th October 2009

Sacred Heart, Hindley Green at 7.00pm

Also Ss. Mary & John, Newton-le-Willows at 7.30pm

Monday 26th October 2009

English Martyrs, Haydock at 7.30pm

Tuesday 10th November 2009

Saint Oswald's, Ashton at 7.30pm

Sunday 29th November 2009

Holy Family, Platt Bridge at 11.30am

Young Catholics (Year 10 and above) who do not attend one of our Catholic High Schools, and any Catholic adults who have not been confirmed and who now wish to receive this sacrament on one of the above dates, are invited to contact the Parish Priest of the church concerned to make arrangements.