

South Edinburgh Cluster

Reflections on 'The Joy of the Gospel'

(Pope Francis: Apostolic Exhortation)

November 2014 to November 2015

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Session 1

15th November 2014

Introduction to the Joy of the
Gospel

Joy of the Gospel – Saturday Morning Sessions
Session 1: Saturday 15th November 2014
Feedback from Group Work

All of the questions the groups discussed were based on the Introduction to the Joy of the Gospel, pages 9-18 (of the full text).

1. What does it mean to you to "give your heart to Christ"?

Group 1

The group found this a difficult question. To give your heart to Christ, the group felt, is such a personal experience and to try to express a personal experience isn't easy. And this isn't just because we are catholic and Scottish! It is difficult because words in themselves are inadequate to express a profound spiritual experience.

Having acknowledged that, this is what the group shared:

- By attempting to put Christ first, which doesn't always come naturally – we try to do this by being rooted in prayer.
- We give our hearts to God by being fully human – this was expressed beautifully in paragraph 8: *"We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being."*
- We can step back at the end of each day and reflect on, review when we have lived that generosity of Spirit which helps us to become fully human.
- We discover that we are closer to Christ when we put others before ourselves (we usually discover this in hindsight rather than in advance or at the time of doing it).

Group 4

- We want to live our life in the way God wants from us.
- We need to do our best, not do just enough, but our very best.
- We turn to God in difficult times, but then God goes on the back-burner. We keep on the cycle of returning, but God is always there to welcome us.
- To give our hearts to Christ, now is the right time, this very minute.
- We can't imagine what it would be like to not have God in our hearts. God has always been there, so it is difficult to think of a moment when we have actively given our hearts to Christ. But it is often in the very small things that we do for other people.

2. How and when do you do that (give your heart to Christ)?

Group 1

- When we step back and reflect.
- By giving thanks for all God's gifts.
- By giving thanks that we have been called forward into that generosity of Spirit that Pope Francis talks about in *Evangelii Gaudium*.
- Through discernment and self-awareness – this comes out of reflection about who we are now in our pilgrimage towards becoming closer to Christ, becoming fully human.

Group 4

- We do it every day, in our daily lives, trying to live in the way God wants. This is very often hard.
- In being with family and friends, experiencing their love, sharing in other people's joy and happiness and comforting them in their sadness.
- In being asked by people of other faiths, and of no faith, to pray for them.
- In illness: one of the group spoke about the powerful feeling '*..that people are praying for me, that God is right there with me through those people.*' This was a most fantastic experience throughout the illness.
- At work and in all aspects of life – this is often challenging, especially with difficult people. It is sometimes hard to be tolerant and kind to them – God pricks at us to do better.

3. In the Gospels we learn that knowing Jesus leads to happiness. In what practical ways do we experience that in our lives?

Group 2

- The Gospels can be complex and challenging. Good skills in the delivery of the Gospel message are very important and we are really lucky that we have got that in our Cluster.
- Interpretation of the Gospel is valuable – it helps us to take away the message and focus on it in our lives.
- We are grateful for who we have delivering the Gospel and homily to us each week.
- You might hear a phrase that you can take on board and use during the week in your everyday life.
- We are now more focused on the positive and the good in our everyday lives and bringing it to the here and now. In the past taking pleasure and comfort wasn't always felt allowed.

- We experience God in our lives not just through the Gospels, but sometimes in a prayer or a hymn – it can be a line or a verse that just grabs us at that time and leaves us feeling not alone and remembering that God is always with us.

Group 5

- Being involved in other people's lives gives us that happiness.
- By giving and sharing our time with others. If somebody asks you to do something and you can't really be bothered, but you go and do it because that is what the calling of Jesus is – to give yourself to others. And when you've done it, you feel so much better and happier.
- Listening to others.
- Respecting others.
- Accepting that God loves us, no matter what we do.
- By not being judgemental
- By the example of others.

4. How does that happiness of knowing Jesus sit alongside the difficult times we all endure in our lives?

Group 2

- In the group we shared about difficult experiences we have had.
- One person shared how the hymn "Be not afraid, I go before you always" really resounded with them. It helped the person to realise that they weren't alone even if they felt alone two minutes before.
- The 'Footsteps' prayer was given to somebody at a critical time in their life. They read it properly for the first time, word for word – it assured the person that they were not alone and are never alone.
- In difficult times for the church, and at other times, you have to defend why you are practising your faith and coming along to church. There are times when it would be easier to walk away because there are too many obstacles and too much going on and it is harder to stay; but you do stay because there is something stronger pulling us - Jesus/God.
- We are never going to be alone - because even if we have forgotten, God is right beside us.

Group 5

The group found the question difficult to answer.

- The power of prayer helps. At difficult times we felt that we were more focused in our prayer than we perhaps are at other times (when we might go off on tangents). There is a trust that God will see us through the difficult times.

- Knowing Jesus gives us the ability to be in a situation we think we can't handle or have no control over. Knowing that God is there, helps to see us through.
- The group had difficulty with the word 'happiness'. It implies self-awareness, an implication that there was a kind of joy to that. Whereas in difficult times we don't feel that way.
- If we are with somebody in a difficult time, the focus is on the other person so we felt that words like peace, hope and comfort were maybe more appropriate words than happiness in that situation.
- Just knowing Jesus is there in our lives helps us along in difficult times.

5. What would you say to someone who asked you how Jesus really matters in your life?

Group 3

"I couldn't live my life without the values my faith has given me". It's like the navigator in days before electronics and GPS, who uses the sun and stars to establish where he is and where he is headed. Sometimes it's clear and all "plain sailing", but there are times mostly when it is stormy, when you can't see the sun or stars, but you know they are still there.

It's the small things in life, as simple as the mother's prayer that says I hope the rain holds off till I get home so I can get the washing in. Amazing story told by Mary about how she as a young girl had asked for a sign as to whether she should be a nun. It wasn't to be, but she passed the story on to her son and when he was experiencing a tough time at the seminary he challenged the Spirit to confirm his vocation by providing cigarettes before he smoked his last. He was lying on his bed while on a silent retreat, when all of a sudden a pack of cigarettes dropped onto his chest. The hairs were up on the back of his neck. He looked round, went into the corridor, but no one about. He later found out his pal had been looking to get change for the pay phone, and had bought cigarettes to get the change and chucked them into the room as he knew it was silent retreat.

Group 6

- We would explain that we try to stop and listen to Jesus – this can lead to letting Jesus have his way.
- It is important to be attentive to Jesus – this is linked to the idea of giving attention to people.
- Realising that Jesus is there when we need something.
- We can't live without Jesus – he is in and through everything.
- Jesus gives meaning to our lives, even though we sometimes forget he is there.
- Jesus is closer than the air you breathe.

6. If you had the chance to choose someone to talk about this, who would you choose and why? (You need not provide actual names if you prefer)

Group 3

The people of this parish, as initially we need to build up confidence to be evangelists, and by sharing with each other we can prepare. It helps us to understand how blessed we are in this parish / cluster with the great resources and stories that we have to share.

Group 6

- The group talked about the idea behind this question. The idea is: how do we communicate Jesus.
- You go to the people and you gather with them where they are.
- The importance of good example.
- A relationship with Jesus can at times be hard to explain.
- The fact that we have different life experiences is important. We have different experiences of faith and this can lead to respect to and for other people.
- Sometimes it can be very helpful to have a person to whom we can go to share spiritual matters and spiritual experiences with – such a person may be called a spiritual director. These people are out there, but it is not widely known. It is something lay people are perhaps not aware of.
- Are we passing on the faith to the youth? Do we have a custom of formation of young people? Is there ongoing formation? There is a view that formation stops after a while for our young people.

Session 2

17th January 2015

Chapter One:

The Church's Missionary
Transformation

Joy of the Gospel – Saturday Morning Sessions
Session 2: Saturday 17th January 2015
Feedback from Group Work

All of the questions the groups discussed were based on the Chapter One - The Church's Missionary Transformation, pages 19-32 (of the full text).

1. A Church which goes forth (paragraphs 20-24)

When the right moment arises in our relationships with others, Pope Francis is asking us to speak about how a commitment to life a life of love fills our lives with meaning.

Try to think of an example of a time when you did this in the past, or a time when you could have, but didn't.

Group 1

- It is how we live and not what we say.

Group 2

- Acceptance of ourselves being chosen by God, rather than choosing to be in faith.
- God lives in us and this should be reflected in our everyday lives when people encounter us.
- A deeper faith.
- Not being so hard on ourselves.

Group 3

- Our group was more focused on paragraph 22, the unpredictable power of God's word, and the "unruly freedom" that it has.
- We liked paragraph 21 – sowing the seed and moving on – and we felt there was a call to be more accepting of those who seek God rather than have passed an exam.
- In paragraph 24 we spoke about the community being concerned with the fruit and not being impatient with the weeds.

Group 5

- Evangelising - responding to the need of others; speaking perhaps, giving example, without self-consciously doing so; friendship (or relationship) comes first.
- When we move beyond our comfort zone, the conversation can arise and can feel positive afterwards - e.g. visits as part of parish outreach; incidents in the street; travellers.
- Need to be wise – e.g. choose when to go alone.

Group 6

- Be yourself.
- Radiate God.
- Example; perhaps (even) speaking.

2. Pastoral activity and conversion (paragraphs 25-33)

Pope Francis speaks about the parish as having the potential to be the Church living in the midst of the homes of her daughters and sons. This is based on an assumption that the parish is in contact with the homes and lives of its people.

How well do we do that here in South Edinburgh? How could we do this better?

Group 1

- Invite the local community into a big breakfast - advertise it in the local shops (Tesco, Scotmid, etc) and leaflet the area.

Group 2

- The fact that we are here today discussing this document shows that we, as a parish, are moving in the correct/right direction.
- More opportunity encouraged to involve the community as a 'whole'.

Group 3

- This feels almost rebellious, and if it was written by a member of the laity or a priest in fairly recent times, we felt they would have been at risk of being "drummed out of the brownies".
- There is a strong set of principles here, perhaps even a manifesto for reorganisation in our Archdiocese at this time.
- In terms of this question, there is a good connection between the Parish and our active Parishioners, but does it go far enough? Could we do more to visit those who are alone or who see no one from one Sunday Mass to the next? We are a welcoming Parish, but again, perhaps by having a Parish Register and seeking out new members we could do more to make people feel at home.
- We value the coffee after Mass as this is a great way of getting closer to our fellow Parishioners and it is pleasing to see that this is a growing trend.
- Evangelisation is often described as being about going out, but there is another Evangelisation, where we act as a magnet and draw new members towards us.

Group 5

- SVDP – in response to a request.
- St Catherine’s parishioners care for each other; show concern as if parishioners were family. This is more than we have known in other parishes we have been in.
- We see the following:
 - A lot of lonely and elderly people, many of whom are reliant on others.
 - Poverty (financial) – we do have local credit union and food bank and homeless initiatives.
 - Hospital visiting.
- Perhaps we could have:
 - Team(s) committed to visiting and supporting, so that it is sustainable.
 - Grow the SVDP (or that type of outreach under any other banner).
 - Something like Glasgow’s Poverty Truth Commission with SEECAT.

Group 6

- Welcoming people who come to church.
- Taking the initiative – saying “hello”.
- All you can do at times is say “hello”; but we should not be(come) complacent and we should be aware of each other – who is standing/sitting next to me.
- Create something that draws people in.

3. From the heart of the Gospel (paragraphs 34-39)

In these paragraphs Pope Francis reflects on the importance of focusing on what is at the heart of the Gospel, the good news.

If you were asked to choose three things that were at the very heart of the Gospel message what would they be?

Group 1

- Mercy, love, compassion.
- God’s love is for **all**.
- We are not alone – the Spirit is with us and in us.

Group 2

- Source of love, experiencing:
 - Mercy
 - Charity
 - Forgiveness
- Communicating these key themes in any homily – important skills are required for this.

Group 3

- We liked the section stating that Christian morality is not a form of stoicism. God responds to love. It's all about love, but love of self is important in this context, as that provides the confidence and well-being to love God and others.
- Mercy and compassion as well as joy were the main elements we felt were at the heart of the Gospel.

Group 5

- Love of God.
- Love of ourselves
- Love of neighbour/others.

Or

- We do not walk alone (paragraph 33).
- Be open to transformation by Christ.
- Be open to life and others (compassion, mercy, justice).

Or

- Forgiveness.
- Loved by God.
- Love I have.

Group 6

- God loves me.
- We need God
- Pope Francis' prayer in paragraph 3 of the book is truly wonderful: *Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you. Save me once again, Lord, take me once more into your redeeming embrace.*
- God's love is unconditional.
- God is a compassionate, forgiving God.
- God's love brings me forgiveness – and makes me more able to forgive others, perhaps.

4. A mission embodied within human limits (paragraphs 40-45)

Pope Francis speaks about how the way we understand and communicate the joy of the Gospel message needs to be open to finding new ways of understanding and communicating.

Can you think of an example of how the church has adapted its understanding and way of communicating and a way in which it still needs to adapt?

Group 1

- By accepting women as fully equal in the church.
- By accepting our fully ordained, wonderful priests back into ministry.

Group 5

- The following needs to adapt:
 - The new mass text has a poor, narrow expression of theology. The end of paragraph 40 demands that we have freedom to have better liturgy (revised expression of church structure – local variations needed).
 - Listening!
- We see adaptation in:
 - How to engage with other religions.
 - Francis' church without walls.
 - We are being asked our opinion.
 - More open criticism of Rome while being faithful.
 - Priests being seen as human (tended to be on another plane)!

5. A mother with an open heart (paragraphs 46-49)

Pope Francis speaks about a Church whose doors are open, a church that goes out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity. He speaks of ways in which we can keep the doors open. How can we:

- *better become "...a place for everyone"*
- *reach out to "... the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked"?"*

Group 1

- By going out, above all, to the poor, the sick, those usually despised and over-looked and those who cannot repay.
- It is a challenge!
- By taking risks, sometimes getting it wrong, getting hurt for the sake of the Gospel.

Group 2

- Who is our judge?
- Who should we be following?
- Keeping our doors open – means encouraging, including all people.
- Church shouldn't be dismissive of people with differing circumstances.

Group 3

- This again seemed an astonishing commentary. We have to state "without mincing words, that there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor".
- If we take that alongside the Eucharist not being a prize for the perfect, but rather, nourishment and healing for the weak (or the poor – when poor means those who lack rather than just those who lack money), we have an entirely different view of how the Sacraments should be made available.
- This seems to be a healing Church, one very different from the judging Church we have seen. A church "bruised and hurting and dirty".
- We are now being called to look at how we build the Kingdom now, rather than rehearse for it or "earn" it in the future. What a powerful entreaty that is.

Group 6

- Firstly, we are consoled when we meet Jesus. Then we feel whole and accepted (and excited); then we can go do; then we can "reach out".
- The model need not be perfect before we decide to get on with it. This allows us to make a start.

Session 3

21st February 2015

Chapter Two:

Amid the Crisis of Communal Commitment

Joy of the Gospel – Saturday Morning Sessions

Session 3: Saturday 21st February 2015

Feedback from Group Work

Both the questions the groups discussed were based on the Chapter Two – Amid the Crisis of Communal Commitment, paragraphs 50-109 (pages 34-60) in the full text

1. In paragraphs 52-75 Pope Francis speaks about some of the “challenges of today’s world”. Later in the chapter he invites “communities to complete and enrich [his] perspectives on the basis of their awareness of the challenges facing them and their neighbours”.

What do you think is the most serious challenge we face today?

Group 1+

- A materialistic, consumer oriented, money focused society impinging on us individually and as a community.
- The dichotomy of both poverty and wealth.
- Gratitude for what we have - how we use what we have and how we express our appreciation of what we have.
- Simply expressed love and equality in every circumstance.

Group 3+

The group had a more general discussion than that indicated by the question. The points raised included:

- The commandment like appeal for greater equality and inclusion.
- We discussed that some people only wish to attend Mass as opposed to do more, but acknowledged that we were being called to be much more.
- We spoke about the human need for relationships and community and how the Church is serving that need.
- We discussed what Evangelisation means, as it is the golden thread that runs through JOTG. We recognised it was so much more than trying to convert people to be Catholics – it is living the Gospel. That can be direct evangelisation where we share the Word but also indirect, where we are changed from being in this community and its how that change impacts the wider world that is the indirect form.
- We also need to find ways to be relevant and not too much in our minds. Tying up the Word with practical action, indeed doing more to share what we have.

Group 4+

- Islamic radicalisation frightens us.
- The call to deepen our faith is a response to a personal call.
- Being part of the change in the Diocese; being open to it?
- New ways of being church.
- Not living in isolation is so important.
- We need each other; we need community.
- We need solitary, individual prayer.
- It must be difficult in employment not to toe the party line, even if the party line is contrary to Christian values.

2. In paragraphs 76-107 Pope Francis talks about the “temptations faced by pastoral workers”.

In the context of our Archdiocese, which of these do you think are the greatest barriers to the missionary renewal in the church that Francis hopes for?

Group 1+

- We have been abandoned and neglected pastorally as a diocese.
- We are and have been living with the consequences of a lack of pastoral leadership in this diocese for the past 25+years.
- This means that the pastoral formation of the laity has partially taken place but the fruits of that have not been put to use.
- Therefore we are limping along.... What a waste!
- Another problem in our diocese is that we, the laity, or Gospel centred priests have not been listened to.
- There has been a pretence of consultation but no action taken as result of the consultation e.g. “Now is the favourable time”
- There is a need for prayerful discernment and accountability.
- If we focus on bricks and mortar, we lose our vision and die.
- We are a vibrant worshipping caring community
- We need a place to gather together and Leo (our shepherd) is considering closing churches down.
- We will have Mass in a mobile van if our church building is taken from us.
- Does Leo want that?
- Or we will use the building of one of our neighbour SEECAT churches,
- We will refuse to let our worshipping community be torn apart!

Group 3+

- Keep it practical as well as spiritual
- Incarnate was a key word for us – God need to be lived and real and seen in the faces of those around us
- The genius of Women, the role of Youth and the Elderly – there were important things to say about all of these.
- Be careful we don't pick the bits we like and use them to throw rocks at the Archbishop. We have been chided to void warring between ourselves.
- We discussed the lack of opportunities for lay people and how the pope has set a challenge to clergy and people alike around this

Group 4+

- What happens if what we do does not work?
- Lay people need to be helped to be confident.
- Women priests?
- The lay people are not presently being allowed to fulfil their present place.
- Being seen to go to Mass! This can be an important witness.
- We need more confidence (paragraph 85).
- The revolution of tenderness (paragraph 88).
- Learning to find Jesus in the face of others – if we judge we may not love (paragraph 91)
- Lay people are in the vast majority (paragraph 102).
- Mary is more important than bishops (paragraph 104).

Please note that due to a range of other commitments there were fewer participants than normal. For this reason we combined into three rather than the usual six groups, hence the groups are referred to as Group 1+, Group 3+ and Group 4+.

Session 4

21st March 2015

Chapter Three:

The Proclamation of the Gospel

Joy of the Gospel – Saturday Morning Sessions

Session 4: Saturday 21st March 2015

Feedback from Group Work

The four questions the groups discussed were based on the Chapter Three – The Proclamation of the Gospel, paragraphs 110-175 (pages 62-90) in the full text.

Each group was asked to select two of the four questions. For this reason there may only be a response from one group to a particular question.

1. Pope Francis says that all the People of God are missionary disciples because, if Jesus really is good news, how can we stop talking about him to others?
 - What are the characteristics of a “missionary disciple” in our cluster?
 - Among these, what are the things we need to work on?

Group 1+

What are the characteristics of a “missionary disciple” in our cluster?

- We talked about involvement/ taking an active part in Church Life:
 - In the ministries of the church ... Readers, Eucharistic ministers, Childrens liturgy, Welcomers ... etc, etc.
 - Being interested in faith development by taking part in ... Faith journey sessions, Vatican II sessions, Joy of Gospel sessions, etc.
 - Being involved in SEECAT Lent groups, week prayer for Christian Unity Groups, Holy Week Ecumenical services, J & P etc, etc.
- Being a caring and loving person/community both inside and outside of the church: "see these Christians how they love one another".

Among these, what are the things we need to work on?

- We thought that there is lots of room for improvement in our care for our immediate neighbours who live very close to (yet outside) our cluster churches.
- It has been suggested once before that we could have a "Big breakfast" or something similar at St Catherine's and invite our "outside" neighbours in for a cup of coffee and/or a bacon roll. It would be like having an "Open House" or "Open Church" and welcoming in our local community, monthly, bi monthly?

Group 6+

What are the characteristics of a “missionary disciple” in our cluster?

- How do I reach out to others, especially when I do not “like” them?
- Honouring the differences in others.
- Unity does not equal uniformity.
- Seeing and bringing out the Christ in others.

- Being human: many people are human but don't believe in God.
- Being aware of God's Spirit in me.
- Acknowledging that God works in us.
- Praying while we speak to others.
- Valuing people.
- Being affirmed makes us feel good.
- Being aware of the roles of others, from the less to the important.
- Saying thank you to the bus driver.
- Being positive in the face of negativity from others retains my integrity.

Among these, what are the things we need to work on?

- How much are we engaging with others in our area?
- Or, do we only engage with those who come on our terms?
- The importance of the presence of a community be it in a church or a school.

2. Francis speaks about the importance of ongoing formation and maturation for each and every person. He is clear that this isn't primarily or exclusively about doctrinal formation – it is about experiencing and responding to God's love.

How can I, and how can we, best help our communities to grow and develop individually and as communities?

Group 6+

- This question is key for the ongoing development of our community.
- Catechesis? What is it? It involves:
 - Developing our faith.
 - Sharing what Sunday's Gospel means for us, for me (this was an initiative that petered out in the past).
- Seeing God in all things.
- The importance of talking with each other about God.
- Sometimes small groups may not have an outward focus.
- Building friendship with people first.
- Being confident enough to start something up.
- Lectures can help.
- These groups today.
- Reading the Scriptures.
- The Holy Spirit is here now. We know he is here because Danny Friel said so last time we met!!
- We need to listen to Him.
- Having the courage to offer something to each other – taking that first step. Perhaps as a community that is where we are now.

- Joining more with other communities.
- The 'doing something' comes from an intuition:
 - You throw out the desire and see what happens.
 - The first step is a spark (a spark ignites something).
- The power of St Joseph, the quiet man.
- Supporting existing groups perhaps.
- Taking a little step.
- Knowing when to move on, especially when something isn't working.
- At St Catherine's we really have something going.

3. A person giving a homily should have:

- A love of God through prayer and meditation
- A love of parishioners through personal experience and pastoral ministry
- An ability to use these twin spotlights to throw light on the readings.

How true is this? Does that person need to be ordained?

Group 1+

- Yes ... a person does need to have a love of God through prayer and meditation.
- Yes ... a person does need to have a love of parishioners/community/people through personal experience and pastoral ministry.
- How well does the preacher need to know their parishioners/community?
 - The preacher (Homily Giver) needs to know what the people are experiencing in their lives. ("Smell the sheep" as Francis puts it.)
 - We thought that it was important to know what it is to be a parishioner.
 - We discussed the fact that preachers often preach away from their own communities where they may not have an in depth knowledge of the people they are preaching to and we felt that was OK from time to time, but that it is better for the regular preachers to have an in-depth knowledge of the local community.
- We talked about the possibility of a shared homily
 - A few different people in the congregation responding in a couple of sentences to the Gospel of the day, sharing our lived experiences.
 - The spirit lives and moves in each and every one of us.
 - The shared homily would need to have a facilitator.
- We believe that the homily can be done by a lay person provided they are given training/formation/guidance.

Group 3+

- A sermon is much more than words. It requires good preparation – GB Shaw (though perhaps originally Pascal) – “I am sorry I wrote such a long letter, as I didn’t have time to write a short one” – it’s about connecting God through the Word, the preacher and community.
 - It’s not one directional. How many times have we felt that preacher is speaking to us directly “how did he know that about me – why is he saying these things to me?” Surely that is us moving towards the Word, responding by making it about us, and owning it. It is dynamic and interactive, it causes a reaction.
 - We spoke a lot about the importance of prayer and reflection and the importance that they have in everyday life for all of us. Whether ordained or not, the preacher must have a personal relationship with Christ. We spoke about personal piety and the importance that this has in many peoples’ lives.
 - If we are to have un-ordained preachers then preachers need formation, but so too does the congregation to get used to what they will have previously perceived as being a priest’s role.
 - We liked chapter 151 where we are called, not to be flawless, but to grow in Christ. The essence being that the preacher must know that “God loves him, that Jesus Christ saved him, and that his love will always have the last word.
 - Additionally we recognised the role of the Spirit who places on the lips of the preacher the words he could not find himself.
4. [What specifically have you read which has chimed with your thoughts on “proclaiming the gospel”? Come prepared to share this with your group.](#)

Group 3+

- We spoke about the importance of sharing faith in many ways, not always verbal. We need people to protect the sheep from the wolves. Monica spoke about the active concerns in Tanzania around attempts by Muslim and Lutheran groups to sway their young people.
- We talked about the importance of Joy in Church, something that seemed to be lacking for centuries, but that is being rediscovered. We can attract rather than repel with our message.
- We should be bold enough to discuss new signs and symbols and in this regard we saw the Holy Week services in this area, the Good Friday ecumenical service, the walk of the Cross and the Stations of the Cross as being great examples in our midst of innovation. We hoped for new ways in the future, perhaps involving married clergy and in time women priests.
- We really felt strongly that the Pope is of the people and when he speaks he speaks it is from personal experience of love of his flock rather than from dogma or some form of academic perspective.

- Lastly we discussed how important it is to be skilled as a listener – it is something we may need to be trained in as there is more to it than simply hearing.

Please note that due to a range of other commitments there were fewer participants than normal. For this reason we combined into three rather than the usual six groups, hence the groups are referred to as Group 1+, Group 3+ and Group 6+.

Session 5

16th May 2015

Comparing the vision of Pope Francis with Archbishop Cushley's plans

- When you compare the vision set out by Pope Francis in the third chapter of Joy of the Gospel with the plans set out in the documents Archbishop Cushley has issued, what do you think the main similarities are?
- When you compare the vision set out by Pope Francis in the third chapter of Joy of the Gospel with the plans set out in the documents Archbishop Cushley has issued, what do you think the main differences are?
- Do the differences between vision set out by Pope Francis in the third chapter of Joy of the Gospel and the plans set out in the documents Archbishop Cushley has issued matter?

Joy of the Gospel – Saturday Morning Sessions

Session 5: Saturday 16th May 2015

Feedback from Group Work

The format for this session was different to the usual format. This was because a lot had happened in our Archdiocese since we had last met on 21 March.

- *On Palm Sunday, 29 March 2015, Archbishop Cushley set out what he plans to do in the Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh in a pastoral letter entitled 'We Have Found the Messiah'.*
- *On Good Shepherd Sunday, the Archbishop issued a pastoral letter on vocations to the priesthood and a pamphlet 'Come and See'.*

We agreed that it would be good to pause and take some time to reflect further on the third chapter of Joy of the Gospel and the various documents Archbishop Cushley has issued.

1. *When you compare the vision set out by Pope Francis in the third chapter of Joy of the Gospel with the plans set out in the documents Archbishop Cushley has issued, what do you think the main **similarities** are?*

Group 1+

- Both are rooted in Christ.
- Both have a positive shared mission between the clergy and laity (but this is contradicted elsewhere in *We have found the Messiah*)
- However, it was difficult to find many similarities. Even those that we can detect take us down a different path in *We have found the Messiah* (it wants to take us back to an exclusive catholic church that the group don't recognise).
- The group noted that *We have found the Messiah* was difficult to read, in contrast to how readable *Joy of the Gospel* is.

Group 2+

- Things have to be different.
- There needs to be change.

Group 4+

- The similarities passed the group by – they are not there.
- Only similarity we can detect is that the word church is applied to the people of God by Francis and Archbishop Cushley. However, and this is crucial, Archbishop Cushley qualifies it by saying the people of God are church when they are assembled for divine liturgy. In qualifying it, Archbishop Cushley destroys the main thrust of what is truly meant by the people of God.

- The group felt that we have a set of documents issued by an Archbishop Cushley who is looking at things purely from a clerical point of view. He appears to have tunnel-vision – he can only see his priests and how he can use them. One consequence of his tunnel-vision is that if there are too many parishes, he wants to get rid of them – the parishes are not important. We could end up with half the number of parishes - he doesn't recognise that communities are all-important.

Group 5+

- While both documents speak about joy, it is a magnanimous joy at the heart of Francis' document while in Archbishop Cushley's it is confined joy.
- Change is needed.
- Need to be prophets.

2. When you compare the vision set out by Pope Francis in the third chapter of Joy of the Gospel with the plans set out in the documents Archbishop Cushley has issued, what do you think the main **differences** are?

Group 1+

- Archbishop Cushley belief: No priest, no Eucharist, no Church, no evangelisation.
- Francis, in *Joy of the Gospel* engages with us and tunes in to what people think, feel and believe – it rooted in the love of God.
- Archbishop Cushley, by contrast, does not engage with the people in his documents – they are his own interpretation and are not in touch with what our community is or thinks.
- The group have a message they wish to attach to *We have found the Messiah*: return to sender!

Group 2+

- *Joy of the Gospel* speaks about a much broader manifesto for what it means to have faith and for that faith to grow in the 21st century. It is an expansive document that doesn't just look at what we need to do. It contains some soul-searching and acknowledges what we have got a lot wrong in the past.
- In contrast, *We have found the Messiah* starts with a solution and then marshals arguments in behind it that essentially say: this is why I think this is the right answer. However, there is no analysis in *We have found the Messiah* regarding how we got to where we are at. It takes the approach - 'a big boy did it and ran away'. Nobody takes accountability for where we are at the present time. It fails to acknowledge that other things, in addition to how we organise our parishes, need to be different.

- The really disappointing thing is that *We have found the Messiah* talks about bigger parishes and how they could become an engine for growth, but doesn't recognise what a parish actually is as a community and what Archbishop Cushley's plans, if implemented, would do to those communities.
- Some parishes/churches didn't exist 60-70 years ago. However, the community existed before the church was built. The community built the church. The people came together and said we recognise ourselves as a catholic community in this part of Edinburgh and we feel strongly enough about that to build a parish, build a church. *We have found the Messiah* is effectively saying we are going to sweep all of that away, without acknowledging what it means to be a community. In very sharp contrast, *Joy of the Gospel* is full of what it means to be a community and suggests how we can become an even better community
- In *We have found the Messiah* there is real risk that we marginalise whole sections of our communities. Not everybody will be able to get to one of the mega-parishes Archbishop Cushley proposes establishing. There will inevitably be an element of self-selection regarding who can go to the new mega-parishes. What happens to the people who will be left behind left behind, for example, those who don't have car and can't get to the new parishes?
- How do we start to change the mentality regarding the most important thing being to get to mass on a Sunday, so that the most important thing becomes being with your community? Hence, if there is mass every four weeks or so, it is mass every four weeks or so. There is a huge effort required to encourage other people to think in this way – i.e. because this isn't where people are starting from.
- There is no recognition in *We have found the Messiah* regarding people who will be marginalised by the changes Archbishop Cushley proposes.

Group 4+

- *Joy of the Gospel* is a joyful, optimistic, bright document. It is something you feel benefit for having read it.
- Archbishop Cushley's documents are pessimistic and look at the gloomy side of things.
- *Joy of the Gospel* abounds with sentences and phrases which seem to run contradictory to what Archbishop Cushley is saying. Here are two examples:
 - In paragraph 113: "This people which God has chosen and called is the Church. Jesus did not tell the apostles to form an exclusive and elite group."
 - In paragraph 120: "...it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelisation to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients."
- There are other major differences:

- *Joy of the Gospel* is a post Vatican II document; Archbishop Cushley's documents smack of pre-Vatican II and propose a moving back to how things were.
- Archbishop Cushley's statement: no priest, no Eucharist, no Church no evangelisation. This is wrong, it is bad theology!
- An itinerant priesthood might be the answer – the priest moving around the individual parishes, as opposed to having the parishes move into one central parish.

Group 5+

- Archbishop Cushley confines the growth of church to priests; Francis includes everybody.
- Archbishop Cushley constricts; Francis expands and includes all.
- Archbishop Cushley states: no priest no Eucharist no Church no evangelisation.
- Francis, in paragraph 131 speaks about the Holy Spirit being the source of diversity. He sees diversity as gift, not as something to confine us. He says that the entire people of God proclaims the Gospel
- In paragraph 119, Francis says: "God furnishes the totality of the faithful with an instinct of faith – *sensus fidei* – which helps them to discern what is truly of God." In contrast Archbishop Cushley doesn't seem to want to draw on the *sensus fidei*.
- The differences between Francis' vision and Archbishop Cushley's plans are summed up by following:
 - The cautious vision of Archbishop Cushley hampered by his Roman experience.
 - A confident Pope Francis freed by his 'smelling the sheep'.

3. **Do the differences** between vision set out by Pope Francis in the third chapter of *Joy of the Gospel* and the plans set out in the documents Archbishop Cushley has issued **matter**?

Group 1+

- Yes, the differences matter.
- *Joy of the Gospel* includes **all** people unconditionally. Francis' vision continues to allow us to flourish with our various experiences, gifts and talents. We are left with the feeling that we truly live the joy of the Gospel.
- We are proud and inspired by Francis' vision – it makes us feel alive.
- Archbishop Cushley's documents, in contrast, want to reign us back in, control us. His documents cause us to feel embarrassed – *We have found the Messiah* doesn't reflect who we are as Catholics and we wouldn't want to let any non catholic friends see it.

- Archbishop Cushley is trying to get Jesus to go back into the tabernacle and not be alive in the hearts of people.
- We are the church and we need to speak from our heart, freely without fear - we need to have input into the Archbishop's documents.
- We have always had the Messiah, we have seen the light - we don't want to go back to the darkness.
- We would like to get Archbishop Cushley to come and share with us.

Group 2+

- Yes it matters – we all have to live with the outcome of whatever is decided.
- The future of this cluster is probably different to most parishes across the archdiocese. We need to acknowledge that.
- If *Joy of the Gospel* didn't exist, we would still have who we are as a community in South East Edinburgh and what we are growing to become to fall back on.
- The frustration is that *Joy of the Gospel* has come along and said there is a really positive opportunistic future – perhaps in a sense it would enable other people to see and experience some of the opportunities we have.
- *We have found the Messiah* not only puts *Joy of the Gospel* off the agenda, but it challenges it and threatens what we have here in our community because it is a very different model of church.
- The threat is real - it is not only about disregarding *Joy of the Gospel* – it undermines what we have tried to be in this cluster.

Group 4+

- Yes, the differences matter.
- The church would lose lots of members if Archbishop Cushley's plan is implemented.
- Not everybody would be attracted to belonging to a cold, super-parish.
- For countless people, the important thing is belonging to a community.
- If we belonged to a super-parish, we would see people on a Sunday when we went to that part of town, but we wouldn't know who they were individually – there would be no community spirit.
- The creation of super-parishes would have a particular impact on children, the future of our church. The children are currently known and loved in the parish and know the adults.
- We would lose adults and children if we moved to super-parishes.
- There are communities that manage without a priest and they could be models for the future:
 - St Gregory's operate as a community and a parish without having a resident priest – they are one example of what is possible.
 - The catholic community in Pathhead is a different type of example of a faith community that exists and grows without a priest.

- *Joy of the Gospel* keeps saying we are **all** missionary disciples - in contrast, Archbishop Cushley emphasises the clergy.

Group 5+

- The differences do matter.
- Francis' document and Archbishop Cushley's documents evoke very different feelings and responses in us:
 - Francis' *Joy of the Gospel* is encouraging.
 - Archbishop Cushley's documents desire to lead us to compliance rather than response. This is illustrated by the quotation from Philippians in his document: "Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation in which you shine in the world like stars."
- These two visions lead to two very different experiences of church:
 - the Sunday church (Archbishop Cushley)
 - The everyday church of the heart where we take the Lord with us wherever we go (Francis).
- Here is a quote from a hymn one of the group heard recently that is in tune with Francis' vision of church:

The Church is wherever God's people are praising.
Knowing they're wanted and loved by their Lord.
The Church is wherever Christ's followers are trying
To live and to share the good news of God
- When Jesus was with us in human form, he challenged the rules of the church of the Pharisees – he caused havoc, turned things upside down. He was a scandal to the institution. We experience God and the Spirit, we have a freedom, the freedom of the Spirit; whereas, perhaps rules don't give us that freedom, but maybe make some people feel safe and secure. In our Diocese there will be some people who are happy with what Archbishop Cushley is proposing – not everybody will be thinking as we are. There are different visions of the church and different desires in the way people want to be church.

To facilitate the discussion and sharing we combined the groups into four, hence the groups are referred to as Group 1+, Group 2+, Group 4+ and Group 5+.

Session 6

13th June 2015

Chapter Four:

The Social Dimension of Evangelisation

- Communal and Social Repercussions of the Kerygma
- The Inclusion of the Poor in Society

Joy of the Gospel – Saturday Morning Sessions

Session 6: Saturday 13th June 2015

Feedback from Group Work

The questions the groups discussed were based on the first two sections of Chapter Four – The Social Dimension of Evangelisation, paragraphs 176-216 (pages 93-109) in full text.

1. Communal and Social Repercussions of the Kerygma

- a. Can you recall a couple of actions of Jesus which reflect the social impact of his message?

Group 1+

- Jesus treated everybody equally, no matter who they were or where they came from.
- Jesus was always inclusive.
- The widow's mite. She trusted that giving her last, she would not be left alone. She trusted God would be there for her.
- Giving doesn't always mean giving money – it could mean giving our time or a smile in the street.
- The labourer in the field with the last to be hired being paid the same as the first. The labourer who had been there since early in the morning had agreed to his wages; the employer **chose** to be generous and give those hired last the same wage. It might appear unfair from a human perspective.

Group 3+

- He ate with the tax collectors.
- The woman at the well.
- The healing of Bartimaeus who was blind.
- With Mary and Martha; and Mary anointed his feet with Nard. Why was this not sold and the money given to the poor. Christ was showing that for there to be generosity, there needs to be generosity in receiving as well as in giving.

Group 4+

- The stoning of the woman.
- Zacchaeus in the tree.
- The poor widow's mite.
- Healing the leper.
- Eating with tax collectors and sinners.

Group 5+

- Jesus passed over social boundaries all the time in order to save people.
- Jesus' purpose/outlook was to give people freedom.
- After the resurrection, Jesus did not go back to Pilate or Caiaphas. He was changed within his personality and his state - he continually went back to the small group of women and men he had built up.
- God does not force - he invites.
- The Samaritan woman at the well - Jesus did not ask or tell her to become a Jew. He only asked her to go and sin no more.
- Crossing boundaries can be difficult. For example, the Edinburgh person who said he had never met his neighbour because he had never been introduced - Jesus would have broken through that barrier, he would have overcome it. A boundary can be a personal bondage

b. What specific actions/events might we take which would make real the social dimension of the gospel?

Group 1+

- Giving our time and listening are actions we can all try to do. For example, just asking somebody how they are might elicit a response of "I'm fine"; however, if you were to sit and spend time with that person, she or he might not be as fine as they are making out.
- Accept everybody, irrespective of what their background is.
- Love one another; treat one another as we would like to be treated.
- Respect everybody.

Group 3+

- By putting the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount into practice.
- We spoke about passkeepers who watched out for who was new in Church and welcomed them and importantly for who wasn't there and may need to be visited.
- "Behold how these Christians love one another".

Group 4+

- The group found this question difficult.
- The social dimension is about the poor and oppressed, inclusion and not judging.
- The group are finding it difficult to watch the news about our country refusing to accept the large numbers of immigrants escaping grinding poverty and oppression.

- There have always been immigrants over many years - many have feared and refused to accept them.
- It seems to be the majority that have this fear – but is that true, is it the majority?
- It may be that those expressing the fears are more vocal.
- We perhaps need to be more vocal with our views.
- A couple of people in the group have heard about 'Edinburgh Churches for Sanctuary' and will try to find out more about their work.
- The group also spoke about the production of food and clothes in countries where they are produced in sweatshops, etc.
 - We can make choices and avoid buying these products – not shop for the cheap bargains and offers.
 - Sanctions do work. Just think about South Africa - we didn't buy their wine.
- We don't have the grinding poverty that exists in South America and experienced by Francis, but we do have spiritual poverty.
- We should accept the invitation from the Syro-Malabar community.

Group 5+

- The group felt that their discussion of this question prompted further questions rather than giving any answers.
- With regard to the current economic crisis in Greece and the positions of the Greek and German governments, the group wondered if the Greek and German people have been asked their views?
- Giving back to people what belongs to them, especially the poor nations perhaps?
- Greed and power are at the root of so much misery and tension.
- Being tuned into those around us – the group felt this is very important and summarises a lot of what they want to say. Instead of looking straight ahead, we need to learn to tune in to those around us. To do that, we need to take notice of our neighbour.

2. The Inclusion of the Poor in Society

In paragraph 198 Pope Francis says: *"This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us."*

What practical steps could we take here in South East Edinburgh to bring the Church to the poor and the poor to the Church?

Group 1+

- The group wanted to set their feedback in the following context:
 - We all good human beings and that needs to be recognised and exploited.
 - A lot of what we have shared this morning has been about our inner motivation and attitude.
 - We have to be like Jesus, we have to be counter-cultural – that is what Jesus was in his preaching and his actions
- Being poor isn't always about money – it is also about health, loneliness, self-worth, etc. We are all poor in some way.
- If the Vatican sold *some* of its treasures, it could maybe alleviate the needs and poverty in some places in the world.
- Make the church more appropriate for the time and the world it is in now. This would involve:
 - A reduction in the hierarchy.
 - More involvement of the laity in decision-making – the church should become more circular rather than top-down.
 - Becoming more inclusive, using females and males and their talents.
- In priestly formation, are our priests being trained to adapt according to the parish and the people they are sent to shepherd; or, are they being trained to follow what their local bishop wants them to do, and they are not encouraged to listen to what Francis is asking.

Group 3+

- Paragraph 199 seems to be the key passage as we are called not just to give to the poor, but to love them, as this will lead to selfless giving as gifts given through love rather than obligation.
- The new proposals for the Archdiocese are not well aligned to the needs of those who cannot travel or are able to get to Mass in some place further from their Parish.
- We need to learn to be communities and to receive from within, just as Jesus with Mary and Martha we need to learn to accept the gifts of those among us in their particular Ministries rather than always relying on our priests.

Group 4+

- We can support food-banks but they are a sticking plaster, not the solution.
- Beggars: we mourn the demise of the ARC when we could give vouchers and be sure they could be exchanged for food. Could this be resurrected via a charity already providing food for people in poverty?
- The under-claiming of benefits is an issue, especially for older people. Could we find someone in the parish who could give advice to parishioners?
- The poverty of loneliness is a problem for the elderly. Could we start a group that would visit the lonely? This would be a positive thing to do.
- Visitation in the parish: could we divide the parish into areas and visit, give newsletters/leaflets and invite people to come and join us? Could the Parish Council organise this?
- We have a wealth of resources in our retired and older parishioners. Could this energy be used to help younger members of the community, supporting and mentoring? Mentoring has already been suggested by a member of the parish council.

Group 5+

With regard to 'bringing the Church to the poor':

- Seeing the goodness in others and blessing it, enjoying it and being part of it.
- The food-bank – should we do more about it here in our parish?
- Red tape can make a difficult matter worse.
- Our motive in doing anything is so important, as is the way that we do it.

With regard to 'brining the poor to the Church':

- Perhaps issue an invitation (like the invitation today form Liberton Kirk to the wider community)
- A knitting group brought in people many of whom did not have a Church connection.
- There is already a lot happening – can we become part of things that are already out there?
- Does love, or an act of love, require something to make it valid?

To facilitate the discussion and sharing we combined the groups into four, hence the groups are referred to as Group 1+, Group 3+, Group 4+ and Group 5+.

Session 7

3rd October 2015

Chapter Four:

The Social Dimension of Evangelisation

- The Common God and Peace in Society
- Social Dialogue as a Contribution to Peace

Joy of the Gospel – Saturday Morning Sessions

Session 7: Saturday 3rd October 2015

Feedback from Group Work

The questions the groups discussed were based on the third and fourth sections of Chapter Four – The Social Dimension of Evangelisation, paragraphs 217-258 (pages 109-123) in full text.

1. *The question that each group answered was set in the following context: In the light of what Francis has written in the second half of this fourth chapter of Joy of the Gospel, we would like you to reflect on and compare what has happened in our Cluster of parishes over the past 18 years and what has happened in our Diocese over the past 15 months.*

Group 1+

One of the principles set out in the fourth chapter is about needing to think long term and not be pressurised by the perceived need for immediate results.

How has that principle been operative in what has happened in our Cluster and what has happened in the Diocese?

Cluster

- We are already in our Cluster. We need a priest, but compared to where other parishes are at, we think we are doing alright.
- We felt that at the beginning, when the Cluster was being thought about and established, there was vision by Fr Mike.
- In a sense we have already come through a lot of pain together in the three parishes. We have taken the pain, already experienced the pain.
- The Cluster is now established and we move freely around the three parishes.
- We suspect that the Cluster, as a model, is looked at by others because it is a successful model
- As well as having the Cluster established and operating smoothly, we also have SEECAT. It is used for outreach. It is a very important part of things in this area.

Diocese

- We felt that when the archbishop put forward his letter and the plans were announced, there was panic at the beginning.
- We talked about what happened when the letter was coming out:
 - We came to the view that it was slightly odd that the archbishop never met us before the letter arrived - visitation would have helped.
 - Perhaps if he had come and spoken to us, we would have been aware that the archbishop had a difficult job to do, a difficult role to fulfil, but

- we would have understood it better – because we would have met him.
- We also felt we may have had sympathy for him in the job he is trying to do.
 - If he had visited we would have felt more treated as adults.

Group 3+

One of the principles set out in the fourth chapter is that while it is a positive thing to have good ideas, we need to put them into practice. The Word comes with an invitation and an RSVP.

How has that principle been operative in what has happened in our Cluster and what has happened in the Diocese?

The group struggled with some of words and concepts in this question. They concentrated on practical things – putting the gospel into action

Cluster:

- Practical manifestations of outreach in our cluster, parishioners helping with.
 - Fair Trade stalls
 - Jericho House
 - St Catherine’s convent homeless outreach
 - Blythwood food bank
 - SVdP
 - SEECAT Justice & Peace
 - Services at Ellens Glen House and Liberton Hospital
 - Cameron Toll chaplaincy
 - Visiting the sick and housebound
 - Involvement in Romania and Tanzania
 - Financial and spiritual support for crises – e.g. Philippines

Diocese

- The group felt that they have a lack of knowledge about what is going on at Diocesan level, but are aware of:
 - Priests going to serve abroad – El Salvador, Mexico
 - Caritas – 6th year pupils
 - Anthony’s Youth Ministry
 - Safeguarding
 - Catechesis
 - SPRED – people with learning difficulties.
 - Lifeline
 - SCIAF

- SPUC

Group 4+

One of the principles set out in the fourth chapter is that the whole is greater than the parts. However the whole doesn't exist without effective parts.

(Francis says the model for this is not a sphere but a polyhedron e.g. a diamond with many facets).

How has that principal been operative in what has happened in our Cluster and what has happened in the Diocese?

- The diocese is the whole. The Cluster and parishes are the parts. If the parts are not effective, the whole will not be.
- Pope Francis encourages variety – everybody has their place and is welcome. But we can't say anything goes – because we are restrained by the global.
- Eighteen years ago our parishes were individual, now we are a Cluster. Much discussion took place and **everyone** changed – e.g. **all** mass times changed. This change took place through collaboration.
- In the Diocese over the past 18 months there have been many suggestions and statements made without any consultation and with little information being provided. This has led to rumours and we feel we are all at sea.
- The Diocese must pay attention to the local parish and Cluster – but this does not seem to be happening. The Diocese seems to want to turn us into a museum, doing the same thing in large groups for eternity, with the parishes losing identity and never changing – in fact, going backwards. The feeling is that we are being dragged backwards.
- Life as a community should not mean losing identity, but receiving new insights to growth. The model is not a sphere which has no greater parts. It is a polyhedron which reflects facets of all its parts. We are the facets of the diocese, the sum total of the common good.
- There is a place for everybody. We all have the right to our individuality and to be open to exploring new ways and keep our feet and the feet of the Diocese on the ground.

2. To what extent am I active in dialogue with and outreach to people of other faiths, other Christian traditions and people of no faith?

Do I consider this outreach to be an option or a requirement?

Group 1+

- There is a lot of contact with other Christian traditions and a lot of that happens through SEECAT – e.g. SEECAT meetings; Liberton hospital; Good Friday service; carol singing at Cameron Toll.
- With regard to contact with people of other faiths, we didn't have much to say about that.
- If you are in a car you don't have the same physical contact with people as when walking about. If you are walking you can say good morning – that is very different to passing by enclosed in a car.
- One of the group shared that they persisted in saying good morning to a man through thick and thin – but never getting any response. One day a little light shone and the man grunted back a reply – this led to the conclusion that he was alive!
- There is a real value in something as simple as persistence in saying good morning, irrespective of faith.
- We all have friends who don't believe in God. So many people are good but do not have faith, are not attracted to faith. We all know very good people who have no faith – they are our friends.
- Outreach is a requirement – the group was very clear about this; it is not an option. Jesus said that and prayed this – it is good to be reminded about this.
- The group acknowledged that sometimes speaking out is not easy.

Group 3+

- It is much more about how you live your life than what you say – this is the nub of it.
- We come into contact with people all the time.
- A little story helps to sum up what the group feel:

St Francis's vocation was to establish monasteries and communities. He would establish one community and then move on to the next one.

Francis was told that one of the communities he established wasn't doing very well.

A messenger came to tell him that things were really bad. He ignored it for a while. But then another messenger came to say it was really, really, really bad in this particular community.

Francis decided that he must do something about it. When he was talking about it, he turned to his friend and said that if he thought things were so bad in that community when he got there he might even have to speak!

Group 4+

- Our own Cluster is an active member of SEECAT, all members of which are from Christian faiths.
- The group doesn't know of anybody involved with people from Jewish or Muslim traditions.
- We are involved in:
 - SEECAT
 - One World Groups
 - Local badminton and walking groups - these include people of all faiths and none and there is often talk about church at them.
 - Ecumenical retreats.
- Two member of the group shared that they visited different local kirks for their Sunday services. These visits resulted in reciprocal visits to their own church.
- It comes down to how people see you living your faith – is that faith real or is it just words
- Outreach - involvement in charities and helping neighbours of all faiths and none.

To facilitate the discussion and sharing we combined the groups into three, hence the groups are referred to as Group 1+, Group 3+ and Group 4+

Session 8

7th November 2015

Chapter Five:

Spirit-Filled Evangelisers

Joy of the Gospel – Saturday Morning Sessions

Session 8: Saturday 7th November 2015

Feedback from Group Work

The questions the groups discussed were based on Chapter Five – Spirit-Filled Evangelisers, paragraphs 259 to 288 (pages 127 to 142) in full text.

1. What difference does knowing Jesus and hearing his Word in the Scriptures make in my life?

How does this help and encourage me to share the 'good news' with others?

Group 1+

- It gives us hope and it keeps us aware.
- It is the difference between BEING ALIVE rather than just living.
- It makes us concerned about others and their problems (but acknowledge that non-believers will do the very same).
- We share because we know we cannot help it.
- This document is full of the Holy Spirit – the group came to the conclusion that, as adults, we have become more aware of the Holy Spirit rather than the Holy Ghost
- Sometimes you say something and wonder "where did that come from?" – you surprise yourself. A very good suggestion was put forward – "would you like me to come and pray with you?" Where did that come from?
- The group shared about a wonderful book/film – 'Heaven is for real.'

Group 2+

- The group enjoyed the open and accessible language of Joy of the Gospel. They contrasted this with the Vatican II documents, where we frequently referred to the Bill Huebsch text to help understand. Many of us have this time relied solely on the original text.
- The section on "razed land" (paragraph 276) made the group think of a post-apocalyptic landscape, much like that seen in the Australian Bush after a bushfire. All that remains is cinder and ash, and yet after rain (the Spirit), in a short time new life appears and there is a renewal that shows that God and life are always present. The "treasure in earthen vessels" is a beautiful description of the presence of God in all things.
- Francis describes many of the pitfalls that will see us not evangelizing. He talks about how we can make excuses, we can fall way. But we should return to the Spirit to be re-energised.
- By making the life of even one person better, our lives are justified and worthwhile.

- Francis finally writes about the importance of Mary. Jesus' last act on earth was to offer his mother to us. Mary as an evangeliser may not appear the most obvious example in comparison to Paul or some of the heroic martyr evangelisers. But by offering us the beautiful example of a mother who takes care of her child, we see evangelisation in its simplest and most accessible fashion. We can evangelise in simple every day actions. We should also look to those at the margins, but there are many margins, margins of mental health, infirmity, prejudice as well as poverty.

Group 5+

- The group felt that the question presupposes the very existence of gift of faith.
 - What would life be like without our faith? When we live without faith, life has an inky blackness to it. Faith gives our lives substance – it is like an anchor.
 - One of the group shared the following thought: I can't do anything by myself – I need others, I need community and the community is the church. The group felt that this is the theme of this chapter – we need each other; we can do little on our own.
 - The question is founded on having a relationship with Jesus. Do I have a relationship with him? Do I just talk about it, or do I have a relationship with Jesus?
 - The group explored the notion of 'falling in love' with Jesus – like any relationship in life you have to work at it. Jesus keeps calling us. He is demanding and that never changes. He takes us where we would rather not go.
- The group felt that there is a difference between knowing Jesus and hearing his Word, but didn't explore this difference.
- Lifting our eyes and seeing Jesus in our prayer/meditation can be a very moving experience.
- Jesus helps us to know we are sinners, but at the same time helps us to know we are loved. Knowing this we can go out to meet others, but, very importantly **without** judgement.
- We evangelise others not only by our words but also by our presence and the acknowledgement of our brokenness – e.g. meeting poor people and having respect for them.
- Dealing with respect for people at margins of life. There are times when we will sow and others will reap.
- Jesus did not go after rich young man – He asked him to sell everything and follow me. The young man couldn't and he went away. Jesus didn't run after him, he let him go. Jesus was not about numbers (when he died there was almost no one there).
- We are poor (poverty of spirit) but we can be unaware of our poverty and this can be a problem. Jesus helps us to recognise our poverty.
- If people look for thanks that can be a problem because often we don't get it.

2. How does the passion Francis expresses in these excerpts about sharing our lives with others and generously giving of ourselves make me feel?

What am I going to do about it?

Group 1+

- When the group were talking about how we *feel* when we give ourselves do things for other people, we realised that sometimes when we do something for others, we do it grudgingly. However, once you do it, it makes you feel good about yourself.
- While we do think that we do give ourselves, paragraph 274 challenges us to think about where we use our talents and gifts for the best.
- Working in groups with others of like mind helps us to keep focused and make the right choices.
- One of group shared a story about a man with difficulties who lived beside her family – his mother had had a fall before his birth and that had affected his mind. He went to her family's house each day, just as she was getting the dinner ready – and she thought to herself: "Oh, here's Eddie again!" She remembered a book she had read that said that an interruption in your day is God calling. This helped her realise that Eddie was God in person interrupting her day. This made her welcome Eddie into her home and share time and food with him. It made us think that if we did that with everybody, what a welcome people would receive.
- Another person in the group shared that Gypsies came round to her family house and her mother invited them in. She always said that they don't choose the way they live and somebody has to help them. Her attitude was very much that whoever comes to your door, you welcome them and give what you can.
- If we took Francis at his word, we would have a passion for the Word and be filled with the Holy Spirit and do marvellous things.

Group 2+

- The group had some nervousness about the question. This is because what we believe Francis is doing and what the Gospel does is to draw us, not drive us, into living more deeply. So when we respond to somebody it is a spontaneous response, not from a sense of obligation or because of what piety demands. Our response is natural. It expresses a developed sense of our selves. It is therefore a response of integrity because we are different to what we were.
- The group looked briefly at an example: responding to people who are marginalised. In looking at this, there was an acknowledgement that within us there are aspects of our own lives where we need to connect with ourselves. People can be marginalised in many ways, not just the obvious ways like homelessness and poverty.
- There are times to have the courage to act and the need to grow in awareness.

- The group we identified three attitudes we would wish to have to try to live more deeply out of this document
 - Openness to God and renewed encounter with Christ
 - Delight in being alive and the desire to live more deeply.
 - Continuing attitude of discernment: we grow in awareness and response to our circumstances. That response might be in small steps and then discern the next step.

What am I going to do about it?

- The group thought about whether the question should be 'What am **I** ...' or 'What are **we** ...' and concluded that the joy grows especially when we respond as 'we' rather than 'I'.
- We have a community that can be welcoming and outward-looking – doing things together is an inherently more stable way of making a difference in the world.
 - The meeting we had in St Catherine's on October 4th illustrated this, when we were looking at how we, as a community, can help people who are refugees coming into the area.
- Joy is not something we seek it is something that happens when we respond to the Gospel **together**.
 - Maybe it is what is seen in us rather than a quality that we seek.

Group 5+

- Being ourselves is important – this leads to an authenticity.
- Getting on the road and not getting stuck (keeping our focus) is important. It is about getting on with job you think you ought to do.
- We have a choice in life to be bothered about others, or not.
 - Do I bother about other people or not?
- We can beat ourselves up, but that's not a good idea, and we can overdo that at times.
- We know we should pray more – it helps, perhaps, to remember that prayer can be a simple act of gazing at something beautiful.
- Paragraph 270 in the document speaks about the power of tenderness. Knowing Jesus is being alive and feeling alive – that is what he brings.
- Seeing the faces of people at communion is a very moving human experience and a privilege.
- The contemplative life helps us to remember the importance of the link between prayer and action.
- Prayer is an a priori requirement before we speak or act – otherwise we may be like a gong booming or a cymbal clashing.
- Paragraph 262 talks about the need to cultivate an interior space. The group felt that this is very important.
- Spending time with our friend is important. Our friend is Jesus himself and it is important for us to talk to him.

What am I going to do about it?

- Seeking Jesus more would be a good place to start.
- One of the group shared that apostleship can be imparting skills to other people – this is because our skills and gifts are given to us by God.

To facilitate the discussion and sharing we combined the groups into three, hence the groups are referred to as Group 1+, Group 2+ and Group 5+
