

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.