

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's 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+.
