

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+
