

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 para 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 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+.