

What has prompted this exercise?

Bishop Alan began a diocesan-wide period of discernment which is still on-going and is focused on renewal and restructuring. The need for restructuring is based on an anticipated reduction in the number of clergy in the years ahead. With fewer priests, priests and people will need to find new ways of working together. Obviously, parishes have always been dependent on the people of the parish doing their bit, often behind the scenes, and that is not going to change; in the future, however, we will need more people who are willing to taking on responsibility to oversee aspects of parish life. More positively, the Bishop has a vision for renewal which sees lay people engaging with their faith and the life of the church with a stronger sense of purpose.

During Lent, as a parish, we set about renewing our understanding and appreciation of the great gift that is the Eucharist. During Eastertide, the focus has turned to our response; how we show our gratitude for this gift. The Eucharist is the 'source and summit' of our faith (Vatican II), which is why our discernment needs to be grounded in appreciation for the Eucharist. Everything we do as a parish community is in some way related to the Eucharist; either directly, or indirectly insofar as it helps build up a community which has the Eucharist at its heart.

What is 'discernment'?

Discernment is a word which Pope Francis frequently uses. It describes a process of prayerfully seeking God's will for us; first we need to **listen** to God with great attentiveness to the different ways he might be trying to communicate with us; through prayer, through scripture, through other people, and through the apparent coincidences of our daily lives. Then we must **discern** his will by engaging in a conversation – with God, with ourselves, with other people (family members, other parishioners) – to understand what God is really asking of us. Then we must **act**, putting our trust in the Lord.

Haven't we done this sort of thing before? What about the Parish Census?

This kind of process is ongoing; it may be in fact that we decide to go through this 'pledge' process every year, just as we encourage everyone to review their financial commitment to the parish on a regular basis. The 2016 Parish Census certainly did identify some people who are now involved in new ways, but if you were overlooked please accept our apologies. The priority with the Parish Census was to create a new and up-to-date database of parishioners. Also, the tick boxes on the census form (which is also used for new parishioners) only identified a few specific areas of parish life, whereas this process is designed to be freer and lead to a much deeper discernment on the part of everyone at St Teresa's.

What will happen to the Pledge Cards?

You are asked to put your Pledge Card in the Offertory basket at Mass on Pentecost Sunday or Trinity Sunday. This is not just a convenient way of collecting them in: it is meant to signify that the offering of our time, energy and talents is an important way of contributing to the life of this parish, *alongside* our financial support, and therefore both are offered to the Lord.

Fr Matthew will go through the Pledge Cards with others, and either make contact with individuals directly or pass them on to those who organise different areas of parish life for

them to make contact. Please be aware that this will all take time and though every offer is appreciated we won't necessarily be in a position to take it up right away. Some roles need training, and others may need DBS checks. Discernment has to be a two-way process and it may be that a particular role won't be suitable, in which case we will explore other ways of getting involved. Some roles may be new for the parish, especially if you suggest something that isn't on the list (which, by the way, is fine!), and will need further planning and discussion before we can get started. Therefore, we ask you to be patient as well as generous.

Isn't it better just to ask people face-to-face?

It is true that many people respond better to a personal request than a general one. There is, in fact, nothing to stop those currently involved in particular areas of parish life approaching others and encouraging them to get involved. The problem with relying on this method is that we might overlook people with a great deal to offer. We also need to look at this in a different way: we are not just trying to fill gaps, but lead everyone in a process of prayerful discernment, so that every single member of St Teresa's parish finds something they can do. And flattering though it is to be asked to do something, ultimately, we are doing this for the Lord and for each other.

What if I am too busy to do anything?

People naturally have different amounts of time to give to the parish, just as they have different financial resources from which to contribute. Everyone is asked to give this prayerful thought and, as with monetary giving, to give generously but not more than they can genuinely afford to give when taking account of other commitments. On the Pledge Card you are asked to indicate whether you feel able to offer a daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly level of commitment. Some roles don't require much extra time at all, beyond committing to be at one of the weekend Masses. At the other end of the spectrum those with plenty of free time may feel able to give a great deal of time to the parish.

What about things I'm already doing?

Part of this exercise is about recognising the many ways people already serve the parish, and it is hoped that you will be happy to continue doing what you are doing. If so, please use the Pledge Card as a sign of your ongoing commitment to this important work. Of course, no one can carry on for ever, and it will be wonderful to have identified a new generation of loyal parishioners able to learn what needs to be done and eventually take on new responsibilities within the parish. Please be assured, no one is being side-lined or taken for granted in this process!

What if I am physically unable to take on any roles in the parish?

If there is something you would like to do, it may be we can find a different way of working that makes it possible for you. However, even if you can't physically get to church, you still have a very significant contribution to make to our parish, through the ministry of prayer. Pope Benedict has given us a very clear lead in this regard! We should never underestimate the value of those who support the mission of the church through prayer. The Pope's monthly prayer intentions, the clergy and seminarians listed in the Diocesan Directory, the sick listed in the Newsletter, and those preparing for the sacraments are all ways of making this offering of prayer more focused and specific.

What can YOU do for this Parish?

Some ways you might be able to contribute to the life of this parish:

Preparation

Church cleaning

Altar linens

Flowers

Sacristy

Liturgical

Choir & Music

Reading

Car park stewarding

Welcoming

Serving

Extraordinary Ministers of
Holy Communion

Catechesis & Formation

First Holy Communion

Confirmation

Baptism preparation

Marriage preparation

Families and young people

Adult Faith Formation

Parish groups

Legion of Mary

Mothers Prayers

Charismatic Prayer Group

Knights of St Columba

Catholic Women's League

Administration

Counting/banking money

Gift Aid Administration

Accounts

Finance Committee

Newsletter

Website & Social media

Safeguarding

Other

Parish Council

Social events

Gardening

Maintenance

Intercessory Prayer