



HOPE IN THE FUTURE

Celebration of Parish Ministries



DIOCESE OF SALFORD

1st Sunday Advent 2017 Year B

From today's Second Reading (1 Cor 1:3-9)

I never stop thanking God for all the graces you have received through Jesus Christ. I thank him that you have been enriched in so many ways, especially in your teachers and preachers; the witness to Christ has indeed been strong among you so that you will not be without any of the gifts of the Spirit while you are waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed;...

I INTRODUCTION

On 4th October, the feast day of St Francis of Assisi, Bishop John launched a major initiative for the renewal of the Diocese of Salford. This initiative follows on from the diocesan consultation which provided a solid basis for re-structuring of parishes within the Diocese. Bishop John's hope, inspired by the teaching of Pope Francis, is that parishes will now be encouraged to develop a more missionary character.

A missionary parish will have a focus on evangelisation: deepening our relationship with Jesus Christ, and inviting others to get to know him and the Gospel message. A fuller description of a missionary parish is to be found in Bishop John's document, "Strengthening our Presence as Church: A Journey in Hope." This document, available on the diocesan website, outlines the direction in which we will be travelling together as a diocese over the coming years.

A first stage of this new development is that each parish is asked to recognise and celebrate all that is already taking place in terms of the three key words, "Welcome", "Engagement", and "Outreach". Already, we have parishioners, and parish groups, who are bringing the gospel to others in many different forms of service.

Today, we give thanks to God for all the ministries and activities which express our desire to be a people of service to the parish community and beyond. We will first of all bring forward an image of the Cross of San Damiano which has been given to each parish in the diocese to remind us of St Francis's commission to 'Rebuild my Church'. Representatives of different ministries will then be invited forward to place a symbol of their ministry around the image placed at the foot of the altar.

II SOME EXAMPLES OF PARISH MINISTRIES

1a Sunday Mass

Welcomers. Musicians and choirs. Readers and extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist. Sacristy helpers, flower arrangers, altar servers. Repository/bookshop. Children's liturgy.

1b. Sacramental preparation and the prayer-life of the parish

Baptism of infants, First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation preparation. Marriage preparation, Journey in Faith (RCIA), prayer groups, Mothers' Prayers. School: governors, teachers.

2. Building up the social dimension of the parish community, and those involved in finance and maintenance of the buildings.

Parish secretary, finance and fund-raising, collectors and counters.

Church cleaning, building maintenance.

Hospitality & welcoming, teas and coffees. Parish council, safe-guarding, youth group leader and youth representative, uniformed groups,

Older persons group, bereavement group, mums and tots, social club.

3. Connecting with the wider church or the local community.

CAFOD, Caritas, Justice and Peace, St Vincent de Paul, welcome of refugees, foodbanks.

Pro-Life. Union of Catholic Mothers, Legion of Mary, Catenians, Knights of Saint Columba.

Visiting: in the parish, hospital, or prison. Ecumenical outreach.

Communications: newsletter, website.

4. Parishioners

Representative(s) of the parishioners who are not part of a specific group.

They might carry a baptismal candle to represent our mission as a baptised person in the Church and the world.

III PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND BLESSING FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MISSIONARY PARISH

Priest: We give thanks that here in [Name of Parish] we have been blessed with the gifts of the Spirit, while waiting for the coming of God's Kingdom and the revealing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We are the work of God's hands, the clay moulded into vessels of God's grace. We offer thanksgiving and blessing for the countless ways in which, by lives of service and the generous commitment of our time and energy, we have sought to hasten the coming of the Lord by building His Kingdom here in [Name of Town or Area].

Please stand as we give thanks to God for our dedication to

In the following list, each Parish should adapt the specific mentions of ministries so that it reflects your own situation. As the list is read, you may wish representatives of each ministry to bring a symbol of their work up to be placed in the sanctuary (but not on the altar).

Reader: We give thanks that our Parish is a place where all are welcome to meet God and belong to this community. We bless all those who give their time and skills for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy: *[our readers and altar servers, ministers of communion and musicians, ushers and apparitors, flower arrangers, cleaners and sacristans, all who help in Children Liturgy of the Word, and our priest(s).]*

We give thanks that our Parish is a place where all are welcome to belong. We bless all those who give their time and skills to engage the whole community: *[all who offer hospitality or refreshments, those who run welcome groups for the elderly, the lonely, for parents and children, for asylum seekers and refugees, those who engage with our fellow Christians in our area, those who look after our buildings and institutions, including the Parish Council, our Safeguarding Reps, those who count the collection or administer finances.]*

We give thanks that our Parish is a place where we reach out to others, especially those in need. We bless all those who give their time and skills to help others: *[members of parish organisations, those who support CAFOD and Caritas or the Missions, those who visit hospitals, prisons and nursing homes, secretaries in school and Church, catechists and teachers, youth group leaders and all who reach beyond the walls of Church with the love of God.]*

Priest: **God our loving Father,**
We thank you for blessing our parish with all that we need to respond to our vocation to be a missionary community in our locality.
We thank you for all our parish members who, in response to your call, give of themselves so freely to enrich our parish life in the ways of love and service.
(May these symbols of ministry remind us of all that we do to welcome, engage, and reach out to others.)
We ask you now to pour out afresh the gifts of your Spirit upon each one of us that we may be inspired to serve you in new and creative ways as missionary disciples bringing your Light to the world.
We ask you, Father, to bless + us as we journey together in hope, through Christ our Lord.
AMEN.

INTERCESSIONS

Reader: Let us pray that the keeping of Advent may open our hearts to God's love, and awaken us to greater generosity in mission and service. *(pause)* Lord, in your mercy

All: Hear our prayer!

Reader: Let us pray that the light of Christ may penetrate the darkness of selfishness and sin. *(pause)* Lord, in your mercy

All: Hear our prayer!

Reader: Let us pray for all parish ministers and volunteers, that they may give witness to the coming of Christ by lives manifesting faith, hope and love. *(pause)* Lord, in your mercy

All: Hear our prayer!

Reader: Let us pray for all gathered here, that we may reach out with compassion and care to those in need. *(pause)* Lord, in your mercy ..

All: Hear our prayer!

Reader: For a moment in silence let us think of our own prayers and intentions.

**Priest: Ever-living God, you gather us together
as this Parish of [name of parish]
to carry the light of the Gospel to all people.
Bless us all. May your Spirit enlighten our minds,
as we work faithfully and humbly in your household,
awaiting with hope the return of the Master, Jesus, your Son,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.**

All: Amen.

Mass then continues as normal with the Presentation of Gifts.