

St. Brendan's Parish, Muirhouse, Motherwell

The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church,

issued on 20th July 2020 by the Prefect within the Vatican Curia of the Congregation for the Clergy,

The Church's response to changes in society and culture have led to new ways of delivering pastoral care in parish communities – *allowing parishioners a greater opportunity, under the guidance of their priest [pastor], to offer their own particular gifts and strengths for the service of their church and the wider community.*

Pope Francis has encouraged us to seek new ways to proclaim the Gospel. The purpose of this document is to call parish communities, such as our community in Muirhouse, Motherwell, to see themselves as missionaries, going beyond their own boundaries in a spirit of collaboration and evangelisation

The Church and the world can be mutually enriched by respectfully meeting with each other. The [Roman Catholic] Church ***must now use its structures and customs in a new way – its role is the evangelisation of today's world, not the Church's own self-preservation.***

Parishes have always brought the Gospel to the people through the proclamation of the faith and the celebration of the Sacraments.

In today's world of increased mobility and digital culture, the old idea of the parish as a specific locality is being challenged. Nowadays, ***the personal relationships and territorial loyalty that were once fundamental to parish identity*** are less evident.

Many people attend a variety of churches according to need and convenience and may not even know the other members of the congregation. However, ***the Holy Spirit invites us to "renew the face of the Church"*** and we must embrace this opportunity.

We must rediscover "the vocation of the baptised as a disciple of Jesus Christ and a missionary of the Gospel". Pope Benedict XVI taught, "the parish is a beacon that radiates the light of the faith..... giving meaning and hope to the lives of individuals and families".

Pope Francis also reminds us, "the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelisers".

As well as the new experience of parish, ***we must consider the ministry of priests who are tasked with reading the signs of the times and being the most public face of an evangelising community.***

Many parishes are no longer the primary social gathering place of their parishioners. We must enthusiastically look for new ways to form a community.

If the Parish merely performs repetitive actions that have no impact on people's concrete lives, if it has no missionary drive, it will be met with indifference.

The new evangelisation reaches out to everyone in a personal way that they can understand. Nowadays, membership of the church is less about one's family history than it is about becoming part of a community where everyone works for the common good.

The Parish community is the human setting for the evangelising work of the Church, the place where Sacraments are celebrated and charity is exercised.

We need to find a way to renew traditional parish structures in the light of this mission, by finding new ways to understand and spread the Word of God.

Celebration of Holy Mass is central to building up the Parish community, and we also need to rediscover Christian initiation [Baptism] as a lifelong journey.

The Gospel is proclaimed by men and women who give credibility to what they say through the witness of their lives, and ***since evangelisation is closely linked to human relationships, a parish must bring people together and foster long-term personal relationships, thereby giving people a sense of belonging and being wanted.***

The parish is not a building but a specific community of the faithful, with the Parish Priest as the pastor. An evangelising parish reaches out to the People of God as a whole, is welcoming to all and particularly attentive to the poor.

Pope Francis defines the parish as "a community of communities.... the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God's word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration."

The parish community is made up of many people – led by the Parish Priest. ***Every one of these people has their own personal vocation and "charism" (spiritual gift). When offered in the service of the community, these roles complement each other in creating the church, the body of Christ.***

The parish community gathers to celebrate Mass and the Sacraments, to bear witness to faith in charity, and to reach out to the wider world with the message of salvation. ***It is "the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters. This presumes that the parish really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people, or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few. The call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented."***

