

St Columbkille's Rutherglen

Retreat for Parish Ministry Groups

Saturday 16th September 2017

"Strive to be worthy"

*Reflecting on the contribution of Parish Ministries to the
celebration of the Holy Eucharist*

INTRODUCTION

The Retreat began with a welcome from Michael McGrath, on behalf of Fr Pat who had been admitted to hospital overnight. Thanks were expressed to all who already contributed so much to the liturgical celebrations of the parish. The purpose of the morning's Retreat was to take some time for prayer and reflection on the Church's expectations of us in the roles which we are called to fulfil in various Ministries.

REFLECTION

Michael referred to the day being the feast of St Ninian who first brought the Gospel to Scotland in the 4th century. He also recalled the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Scotland on this same day in 2010. During his homily at Mass in Bellahouston Park, Pope Benedict had referred to St Ninian and St Columba as the first of the saints who had planted the seed of faith in our country. He also asked the gathering to recall all their forbears who had contributed to the tradition of passing on the faith to future generations. This included Bishops and priests but also teachers, parents and godparents. The Holy Father urged everyone to "strive to be worthy" of this great tradition.

Michael suggested that the phrase "Strive to be worthy" was useful to all involved in parish ministry as a reminder that we need to continue to develop the practice of our Ministry, to ensure that it reflects the significance and the sanctity of our liturgical celebrations.

A number of paragraphs from the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* were then considered to highlight the significance of the Mass and to underline the need for all those who assist the priest in his celebration of the Sacred Mystery to show reverence for the inherent dignity of the celebration.

5. For the celebration of the Eucharist is an action of the whole Church, and in it each one should carry out solely but completely that which pertains to him or her, in virtue of the rank of each within the People of God. . . For this people is the People of God, purchased by Christ's Blood, gathered together by the Lord, nourished by his word. It is a people called to bring to God the prayers of the entire human family, a people giving thanks in Christ for the mystery of salvation by offering his Sacrifice. Finally, it is a people made one by sharing in the Communion of Christ's Body and Blood.

17. It is therefore of the greatest importance that the celebration of the Mass – that is, the Lord's Supper – be so arranged that the sacred ministers and the faithful taking part in it, according to the proper state of each, may derive from it more abundantly those fruits for the sake of which Christ the Lord instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his Body and Blood and entrusted it to the Church, his beloved Bride, as the memorial of his Passion and Resurrection.

18. This will best be accomplished if . . . the entire celebration is planned in such a way that it leads to a conscious, active, and full participation of the faithful both in body and in mind, a participation burning with faith, hope, and charity, of the sort which is desired by the Church and demanded by the very nature of the celebration, and to which the Christian people have a right and duty by reason of their Baptism.

27. . . . For in the celebration of Mass, in which the Sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated, Christ is really present in the very liturgical assembly gathered in his name, in the person of the minister, in his word, and indeed substantially and continuously under the Eucharistic species.

Based on these paragraphs a number of particular points were highlighted:

- The Church has placed the Celebration of Mass at the centre of Christian life, for us both as individuals but also as members of a community who gather to celebrate Mysteries which, given their meaning, possess a sacred dignity in themselves.
- Those lay people who assist the Priest in the various Lay Ministries, by carrying out these liturgical functions with reverence, enrich the celebration of the sacred mysteries and encourage the full and active participation of the faithful.
- Passkeepers are able to offer a warm welcome to the gathering assembly and can show reverence for the dignity of the Liturgy in how they organize the collections.

- The Altar Servers display a calm, unhurried dignity in their preparation of the altar, in processions & throughout Mass.
- Those who prepare the Children's Liturgy can ensure that the activities, prayers and readings selected duly reflect the themes of the Mass and that the children are respectful in entrance and Offertory processions.
- The Music Ministry, in their choice of hymns and music settings which reflect the liturgical theme(s) perform a vital function in encouraging us enter more deeply into the liturgy. It is preferable that, especially on Sundays & Feast Days, the Responsorial Psalm and the Acclamation should be sung.
- Readers, when proclaiming the Word of God and the Prayers of Faithful, enable the congregation to respond with their hearts and their minds to what they hear. Pauses between readings and before the responses to prayers can ensure that moments of sacred silence are present during the celebration of Mass.
- All lay Ministers, especially the Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, by adopting dignified postures and in their movements on the sanctuary, show reverence to the Blessed Sacrament.

POINTS ARISING FROM DISCUSSION

1. All groups expressed an interest in participating in meetings at which training could be offered, if necessary, and matters particular to each Ministry could be discussed.
2. All groups also wished to see more volunteers being recruited to act as lay Ministers. An ongoing recruitment drive was suggested.
3. Readers agreed that their preparations ahead of Mass should include some study of the Scripture passages, their particular relevance to the liturgical sequence, their relation to previous weeks' readings, as well as technical matters such as pronunciation. They also wished to see some agreed policy in terms of pausing between prayers, approaches to the sanctuary etc.
4. Passkeepers wished to discuss the placing of both collections on the sanctuary. They felt that the timing of the 2nd collection and its placement on the sanctuary could be intrusive. They would be happy to see a rota of passkeepers for each Mass being published especially if more volunteers were recruited.

5. The Music Ministry group had spoken about how Pope Francis had recently encouraged the use of music at Mass to enable us to enter more deeply in the Sacred Mystery. Groups were urged to tap into the richness of the Church's musical tradition, especially when selecting Mass settings.
6. Altar Servers had discussed the importance of always being attentive to what the celebrant was doing and saying, and of being respectfully silent before and during Mass.
7. When reference was made to the Altar servers praying together just before Mass begins, it was suggested that this practice could be extended to all who are participating as Ministers. On Sundays the prayer would be shared at the back of church; at midweek Masses in the Sanctuary.
8. The Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist referred to a number of practical points which they wished to clarify:
 - a. distribution of Communion to the Choir
 - b. distribution of Communion to those with mobility difficulties
 - c. the availability of pyxes
 - d. notification of deaths in Care Homes.