

CONSULTATION ON FAMILIES OF PARISHES

SPRING 2024

This leaflet is to help us listen, engage and contribute. What each of us says, thinks or feels really matters. It is in being attentive to this that we hope we will hear the path forward that God wants us to take; a synodal approach.

The following is the vision that emerged from the Synod of the Archdiocese of Liverpool in 2021:

“Christ is at the centre. Christ shares our humanity. He died and rose in love for all. He now shares his mission with all the baptised and he unites us to him and each other in the Mass.”

As we learn to make this vision real, we commit ourselves to:

- ❖ being immersed in the joys and hopes, griefs, and anxieties of humanity today;
- ❖ develop leadership that will attend to changing needs;
- ❖ embed synodality in every aspect of archdiocesan life; and
- ❖ be bold and creative in renewing local structures.

The Pastoral Plan of Advent 2021 presents this vision under the 6 areas of development.

We will look outwards, welcoming and accompanying one another.

We will honour the vocation of all the baptised and work and train collaboratively.

We will use our resources to better serve our mission.

We will embed synodality throughout the Church.

We will enable young people and young adults to flourish.

We acknowledge that for our communities and our parishes to flourish, our priests and deacons must flourish too.

Families of Parishes

At the heart of this vision is a commitment to create Families of Parishes. This will hopefully lead to brave decisions, which will

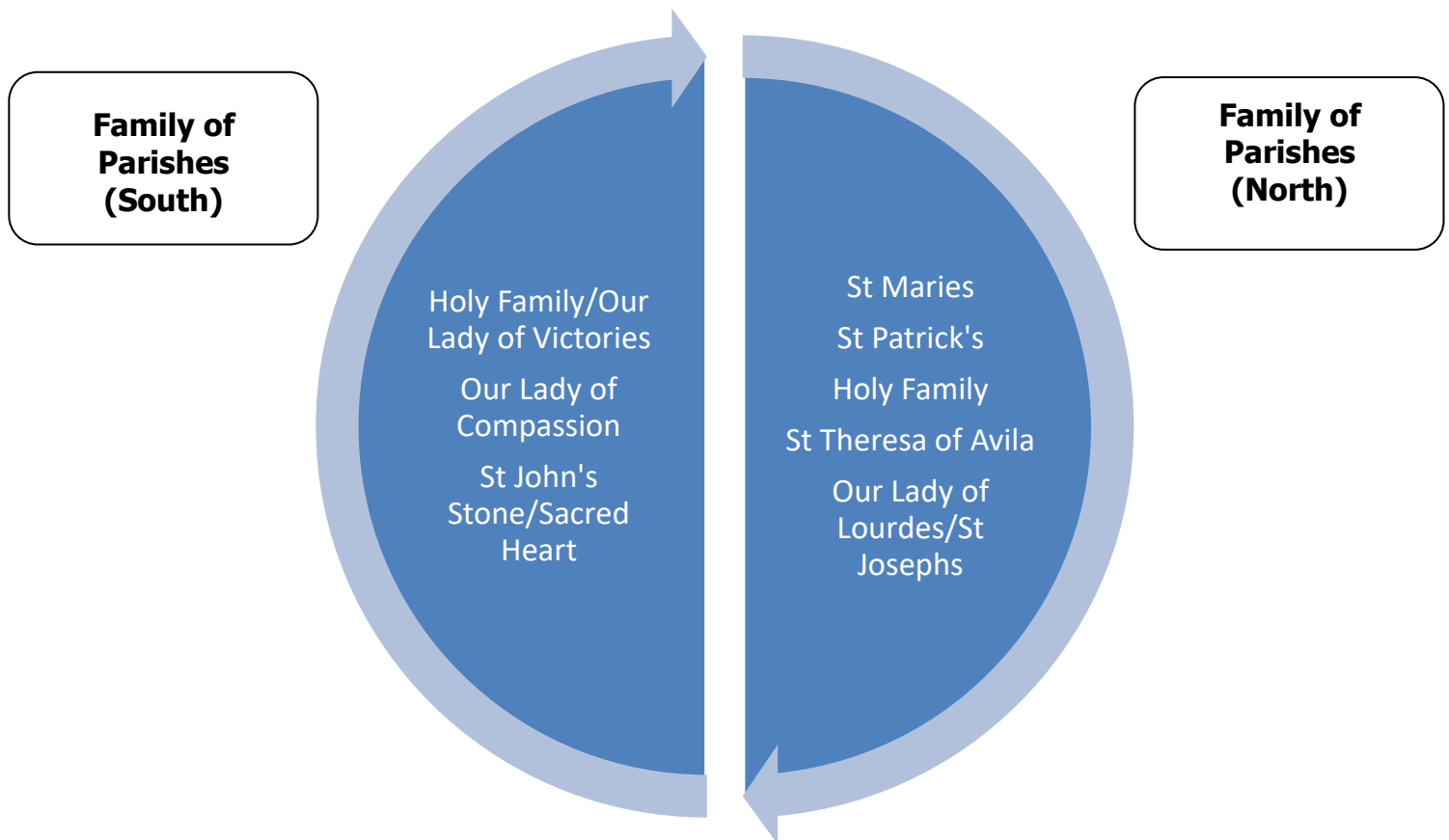
SEFTON COAST NORTH DEANERY SYNODAL COUNCIL

then free resources for evangelisation and for the work of the Church. It is not about church closure but about financial and pastoral realities.

Families of Parishes are groups of parishes sharing resources to do God's work. This includes having priests, deacons and lay people serving the Family of Parishes. This model will allow the priests, deacons, religious and laity associated with each parish to better share their gifts and talents with the whole Family of Parishes.

Our mission hasn't changed, but how we approach that mission must shift in response to our circumstances. We must move forward together synodally with greater collaboration and better stewardship of our resources.

After much consideration, the Archbishop has determined that we are to have 2 Families of Parishes for our Deanery:



❖ **How will this affect the lives of parishioners?**

Parishioners will become part of a larger faith family, working together and using resources in pursuit of our mission. They will still be part of their own parish communities.

They will worship alongside and work with other members of their new Family. They will be ministered to by clergy and lay people from all parishes in the Family and hopefully new initiatives across parish boundaries can emerge. They will share best practices and benefit from a renewed lay leadership managed through the Family structure.

❖ **Does this mean parishes may close, merge, or cluster?**

A Family of Parishes is not the same as a cluster or merged parish. It is a group of individual parishes led by an intentionally formed team (which will develop) to address and focus on the work of the local church.

Families of Parishes includes priests and deacons, with the support of paid lay pastoral workers and administrators, serving a Family of Parishes under a renewed ministry structure. This allows for greater collaboration and alignment for mission, better care of the faithful, and getting the best out of our resources.

❖ **What does this mean to the Deanery?**

The DSC and the clergy of the Deanery want to make it clear that having two Families of Parishes in no way hinders us being one Deanery. We should continue to enjoy the benefits of being part of a large Catholic community, always trying to find ways of us working together as a single unit. We want to share the resources of all our parishes for the good of the mission of Christ in the whole Deanery.

❖ **Preparing for the future**

In years to come the number of priests available will be greatly reduced. We also know the reality of the falling number who attend or volunteer in our parishes. We need a strategic and realistic look at how things will be in the future.

❖ **What happens next?**

The DSC wants to hear from you. The Archbishop has challenged us all to:

Build relationships and develop communications

- **What do you think?**
- **What practical steps can we take to establish and help develop our Family of Parishes**
- **What opportunities can be created?**

There will be two meetings for parishioners on:

St Marie's (Marian Centre) on 27 June 2024 at 19.30; and
St John's Stone (in the church) on 4 July 2024 at 19.30.

We want to listen to what you think. This leaflet will be discussed, and the comments made will go back to the June meeting of the DSC.

You can attend your local meeting; you can give a written contribution to your DSC Member or you can email your response to bcmmiller1@icloud.com.