

Sefton North Coast Deanery Families of Parishes

Points raised by parishioners at the two Public Consultation Meetings (27th June and 4th July 2024) held at St Marie's and St John Stone's.

1. We need to be aware that the number of priests being ordained is falling dramatically, which means that in 10 years' time or less we will, without a doubt, have fewer priests operating within our deanery. This vital information needs to be communicated to all.
2. We have historically enjoyed a somewhat parochial culture, where each Parish operates as an 'island'. This is not sustainable going forward.
3. We need to invite the whole parish community to reflect and engage with a new ethos and identify those barriers to that process which need to be addressed.
4. We need to be a cooperative community and harness the ideology of 'we are stronger together'.
5. We need to widen our Parish boundary to the wider 'Family' boundary.
6. The priests are our beacons – they need to lead by example. Could they operate a rota whereby they say Mass in other Churches within the 'family' and become known to parishioners of other family churches. This would acclimatise Church communities to hearing Mass from neighbouring priests.
7. The Holy Spirit guides us in faith, faith spills into action, action is more effective as a team. We must widen our team outlook to the Family level. The Parish Administrators are instrumental in coordinating communication within Parishes. Parish Administrators should meet once a month to share good practice and streamline processes which could take place across our 'family'. (We could even use Venn diagrams and critical path analysis!).
8. Churches would not function without volunteers. Parish Administrators need to coordinate the sharing of the vital efforts of volunteers across the family now instead of across the parish – i.e. a health and safety coordinator/ or a maintenance rep for the 'family'.
9. There are a myriad of processes which parishes do which could be shared. Administrators and priests need to identify those activities which could operate at 'family' level.
10. Awareness of family websites
11. Dissemination of information across the family
12. A family bulletin and calendar available to all
13. Communication of upcoming social events across the family
14. A shared pilgrimage open to the family

15. The swapping of readers and Eucharistic Ministers across the family – perhaps when the priests say Mass at a different Church within the family.
16. Could the clergy share living accommodation and could some presbyteries be repurposed.
17. Churches with similar demographics (i.e. those with schools attached) could have cross-family links to share good practice – which in turn would allow our ‘family’ to look beyond even the ‘family’ level to the wider diocese level.
18. Perhaps we need to encapsulate in one sentence a common ideology/ identity suitable for our Catholic Church, within our community, here in Southport, moving forward.
19. Engaging young people is vital. Give teenagers opportunities to comment in the moral teaching of the Church and secular society and provide a forum to present Church teaching.
20. Why do young people flock to Taizé? What can we learn from this?
21. Use major occasions during the year to bring together and engage families and children – ‘flagship’ days, e.g., Mother’s Day, Passover, Harvest Supper, parish lunches & family days, work with SVP.
22. Provide more occasions for children to experience better relations between school and parish (this applies both to Catholic schools and our children in other schools).
23. Foster small groups to support the faith of individuals.
24. Consider how to support care home residents and those with dementia who need more social and church links.
25. Provide more post-sacramental support and accompaniment as well as review how we prepare people for sacraments.
26. Involve migrant groups.
27. Make an audit of the disability/special needs there are in our family of churches and both the current provision and how this could be developed further.
28. Hold a Family of Parishes joint Mass to highlight the life of Carlo Acutis, our Deanery patron.
29. Have a regular (monthly?) joint Family of Parishes newsletter to alert people to what is going on in other parishes so that they can choose to join in.
30. Work with other churches in our Family area, eg, to provide for young people with sporting/social activities and joint worship.
31. Jesus would today have used technology.

32. People of all ages need support and encouragement; maximise opportunities to enable people to learn how they could be involved and made aware of how to help others through our joint efforts.
33. Do helpers (eg catechists & others) have to be 'registered'?
34. Find ways to reach out to young people in non-Catholic schools.
35. What about needs of and learning from families with mixed Christian denominations (eg Anglican/Catholic & others).
36. Beware: the bigger a group gets, more likely that people on the outside feel more marginalised. Do we need to consider house groups to accompany each other?
37. Are we making as much as we could of the access that schools give us to families, children and young people?
38. Church has to stop being inward looking; over-emphasis on Mass attendance can be damaging; being a Christian is not just about this.
39. Needs of those who are housebound, in residential homes and needs of those with caring roles.
40. Find ways to give opportunities for everyone to become engaged.
41. Strengthen social community feeling – relationships the key.
42. Review how well we welcome people to church and at Masses.
43. Review our provision for Little Church. Mass & toddler groups.
44. Joint sacramental celebrations across Family of Parish and/or Deanery (eg confirmation).
45. Keep church open.
46. Hold perpetual adoration. Good Friday Walk of Witness. New Dawn. Joint pilgrimages (Walsingham, Lourdes, Holywell, Norwich).
47. Could priests swap pulpits sometimes so we become more familiar with each other's clergy and they become more familiar with other parishes?
48. Seek consent & allow time to discuss decisions before they are taken.
49. Don't just rely on the parish website or newsletter/bulletin for communication.
50. Consider making more use of our Cathedral as a resource.

51. How reduce some duties from parish priests to release them for more important connections with their parishioners.
52. Hold Family of Parishes barbecue. Manchester Ship Canal trip. Develop a walking group.
53. May procession. Youth Alpha. Film show in parish club. Coach trip for retreat.
54. Gather musicians together to develop our worship. Hold afternoon tea in our parish.
55. Invite parishioners from other parishes to join a parish social event/dance night.
56. Should money be held centrally or by individual parishes?
57. Cater for health & safety, especially for those with special needs.
58. Are we making enough of our ecumenical relationships and our duty to work ecumenically?
59. Could clergy live more closely together? Individual priests may feel isolated or uneasy in presbyteries.
60. Can we 'borrow' altar servers from neighbouring parishes if we have no local school?
61. Scouts & Guides – link with.
62. Eucharistic ministers visiting not enough.
63. Education of young children in the faith.
64. Working on Sundays an obstacles for some, plus many more distractions from faith events in people's lives.
65. Re-establish a Southport Catholic Society, meeting eg in a hotel, inviting outside speakers, to promote well informed thinking about issues from a Catholic perspective.
66. Identify and draw upon expertise of parishioners with expertise in change & project management; also identify and provide guidance for potential team leaders to build on good practice in parishes and then extending this across the Deanery or Family of Parishes.

John Sullivan, on behalf of the Deanery Synodal Council, 10th July 2024.