

Sefton North Coast Deanery Families of Parishes

A report on two *Public Consultation Meetings* (27th June and 4th July 2024) held at St Marie's and St John Stone's.

Forty-four people attended the first and thirty seven people the second of these meetings, which were held to consult parishioners in the north and the south of the Deanery about ways to collaborate by sharing resources and talents in order to serve the mission of the Church in our area. The meetings were framed in prayer, scripture, silence and hymns. We were being asked to help each other to discern God's will for how our parishes could work together by strengthening our communication, building relationships, widening participation and enhancing our provision of faith formation, outreach and service to the people in our area. The Chairperson of the Deanery Synodal Council (DSC), Ben Miller, outlined the role of the DSC, introduced the members and explained what progress had been made so far in identifying and addressing some initial priorities (these included adult faith formation, youth and outreach to those in need). He explained the way the Deanery had been sub-divided into two Families of Parishes: one from the north of the Deanery (covering Holy Family, St Marie's and St Patrick's in Southport, together with Birkdale parishes, St Teresa's, St Joseph's and Our Lady of Lourdes); one from the south of the Deanery (including Sacred Heart & St John Stone in Ainsdale and Woodvale, Our Lady of Compassion in Formby, and Our Lady of Victories in Hightown along with Holy Family in Ince Blundell). He also shared three suggestions from the DSC about possible projects for collaboration. These related to (i) holding a Deanery or Families of Parishes musical event to bring church musicians together, (ii) planning a pilgrimage for either the Deanery or a Family of Parishes, and (iii) a task group to strengthen the partnership between home, parish and local Catholic secondary schools. Participants were invited to respond to these suggestions and to add their own, preferably by also offering assistance in bringing them to fruition. A helpful map of the Deanery, indicating the location of all parishes, was provided, as was a poster with details of three autumn Deanery events in support of adult faith formation. An explanation was given of how to conduct the small group conversations in a manner that facilitates the nature and purpose of synodality and people were asked to respond to two questions: What practical steps can we take to establish and help develop our Family of Parishes? What opportunities can be created?

Very many suggestions for developing cooperation between parishes were put forward: too many to summarise in a brief report. A separate complete list of **all** points raised in the group conversations and plenary session has been sent to each parish in the Deanery. We will need a follow-up meeting in the autumn to consult further and to build on the steps taken so far. It will be important, if the suggestions are to be put into action, that people step up to offer help in leading or supporting the various initiatives or areas for development. The Deanery Synodal Council give thanks to everyone who took part in the meetings, in any capacity, those behind the scenes setting out tables or providing refreshments, or sorting out equipment – and for all the responses and suggestions put forward.

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