

SEFTON COAST SOUTH DEANERY

CONSULTATION ON FAMILIES OF PARISHES

The word "synod" means "journeying together". What each one says, thinks or feels is very important. It is in being attentive to this that we believe we will hear the path forward that God wants us to take. (This is Synodality). This leaflet is to help us listen and discern.

Preparing for the future

We have been talking for some time about 'becoming the church God wants us to be'.

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.
- Be bold and creative in renewing local structures.

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

1. A church that accompanies people through life.
2. Becoming a Church that honours the vocation of all the baptised, working and training collaboratively.
3. Becoming a Church where synodality is embedded.
4. Use our resources to better serve our mission.
5. We will enable young people and young adults to flourish. and our parishes to flourish.
6. Become a Church that cares for our priests and deacons.

At the heart of this vision is a commitment to create **Families of Parishes**.

The Deanery Synodal Council (DSC):

Since September 2022 representatives from each of the parishes in our Deanery have been meeting to discuss how we can implement this vision and what our Families of Parishes could look like. We want now to hear what you think as we shape the future.

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 discussion at the DSC meetings, we are suggesting 3 families of Parishes for our Deanery

1. The North End Family

St. William of York, Thornton; St Mary's, Little Crosby; St Joseph Blundellsands; St Helen, Crosby.

2. The Central Family

Oscar Romeo Parish (Two Churches, St. Edmund's, Waterloo and Star of the Sea, Seaforth); SS Peter and Paul, Crosby. (With specialised ministries: St Thomas of Canterbury Church, Waterloo - now Irenaeus)

3. The South End Family

St James, Bootle; St Monica and St Richard Bootle; St Francis de Sales, Walton.

The DSC (and the Deanery clergy) want to say that, although we are committed to creating three Families of Parishes, we should always try to find ways of us working together as a single, deanery unit when possible. We want to share the resources of all our parishes for the good of the mission of Christ in the whole Deanery.

How will this affect the lives of parishioners?

It is envisaged that Parishioners will become part of a larger faith family, working together and using resources in pursuit of our mission. We will still be part of our own parish communities unless our own discernment suggests otherwise. We will worship alongside and work with other members of our new Family. We will be ministered to by clergy and lay people from all parishes in the Family and hopefully new initiatives across parish boundaries can emerge. We 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. The Families of Parishes includes priests and deacons, with the support of 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 do you think?**
- **Can you see the advantages of working in this way?**
- **What opportunities can be created?**
- **Can you think of a better suggestion?**

In March of this year Archbishop Malcolm described some of the challenges we are likely to face in years to come. We know that 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.

As part of the implementation of the Pastoral Plan, our Deanery Synodal Council has been tasked with identifying 'Families of Parishes' and would like to invite all Catholics to pray and reflect on what these 'Families' might do better together to move forward into that 'church of the future' envisioned by our synod; a truly Synodal church focused on the mission of making disciples of all people, saving souls and building God's kingdom in our towns, the church God wants us to be.

- **What opportunities would this closer working present?**
- **What are the problems you foresee? How might these be avoided or overcome?**
- **What part is God asking you to play in this church of the future?**

What happens next?

There will be a meeting for parishioners early in the new year.

We want to listen to what you think. This leaflet will be discussed, and the comments made will go back to the next meeting of the DSC as we prepare to suggest our Families of Parishes.....

You can attend your local meeting; you can give a written contribution to your DSC Member, or you can email your response to stjames.bootle@rcaol.org.uk