

THE WORD WHO IS LIFE CONSULTATION MEETING

TUESDAY 30th JANUARY 2018

SUMMARY REPORT

“What has come into being in Him was life, and the life was the light of all people”

1 John 1: 3-4

INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the discussion and points made at the parish meetings held on Tuesday 30th January 2018.

PRESENTATION

Fr. Terry Martin presented details of Bishop Richard’s consultation *“The Word Who Is Life”* about the future organisation of Arundel and Brighton Diocese, together with the results of the parish survey conducted in December 2017. Two meetings were held on the same day, one at 2pm attended by 41 people and another at 7.30pm attended by 35 people.

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

Fr. Terry posed three questions to the meetings. A summary of themes identified is given below.

3.1 What do we value about our faith? (8 themes, 18 responses)

- Access to the church and Sacraments (5 responses)
- Community and social interaction (3)
- Gives meaning to life (2)
- Personal piety (2)
- Gives strength (2)
- Gives discipline to life (2)
- Personal relationship with Jesus Christ and Our Lady (1)
- Continuity of faith (1)

The people valued physical access to the church and, with that, access to the Sacraments. The responses mirrored the December 2017 survey in wishing to be part of a developing church community and having opportunities for social interaction. There was a strong feeling that Catholic faith gave sense and direction to life; this was a recurring theme in the discussion, perhaps not reflected so strongly in the responses. The people are the Church and the Church is the visible body of Christ was an oft repeated comment.

3.2 What challenges do I face about practising my faith? (14 themes, 27 responses)

- Secular society and intolerance of religion (7 responses)
- Lack of youth interest in the Church (5)
- Need more education on Catholic teaching for life guidance (3)
- Time pressures and the challenges of daily life (2)
- Lack of new church members (1)
- Dryness of prayer (1)
- Population not used to or receptive to evangelisation (1)
- Do not know how to evangelise (1)

- More knowledge of the Sacraments as opposed to the Mass (1)
- Spiritual direction (1)
- Limited participation in small groups (1)
- More Catholic community support (1)
- Differing social attitudes to religion to those overseas congregants are used to (1)
- Laity leave matters to the priest (1)

The people saw religious intolerance in a hostile secular society as the greatest challenge to expressing their faith. They identified a need for formation and education as some felt they did not possess the skills to evangelise in the way set out in Bishop Richard's plan. The pressures of modern life often bore down on the people and limited opportunities for participation in church life outside the Mass.

3.3 What would help you better meet these challenges? (14 themes, 26 responses)

- Formation, faith education and groups (9 responses)
- More emphasis on church community and social interaction (3)
- Small groups (2)
- Youth activities (2)
- Taizé pilgrimage or visit of brothers to the parish for the youth (1)
- Retreats and formation (1)
- Youth activities at diocesan level (1)
- Real communication (1)
- Challenge secular society (1)
- Help with spiritual growth (1)
- Facilitate personal holiness (1)
- Increased exposure to the Sacraments (1)
- Embedding the role of the laity as set out by Vatican II with training and education (1)
- Split the temporal role of parish administration from the spiritual role of the priest (1)

The responses demonstrated once again a craving for community, a community that provides an opportunity to share the faith with like-minded people, as opposed to a community having to constantly justify itself in a hostile secular environment. The laity must be prepared to play a greater role in all aspects of parish life. The people also want formation and education to support this building-up of the "*community of God*".

NB: The responses include two sent by e-mail.

CONCLUSION

This report will form part of the parish presentation at the Worthing Deanery meeting with Bishop Richard on Friday 16th February 2018.

*Bryan Robinson
February 2018*