Dear Fellow Parishioners, 30th October 2022

Much of what I am about to say might seem strange to you because we have, in many ways, a full and vibrant church here in Charminster and Castlepoint and, wow, if anyone came to Father Bernadine’s farewell party, you would know how well we come together to celebrate our community in Faith! You all also know how well we came together to raise £48,000.00 to repair our churches in the Shine Together Appeal and how we pulled together during COVID and have now bounced back into our churches following the pandemic.

Sadly, this is not the same everywhere and we need to urgently discuss as a Parish, the Ten-Year Mission Plan for the Diocese – “You Will be My Witnesses”, which was presented a couple of weeks ago and authored by Bishop Philip.

It’s a plan which asks us to consider some potentially significant changes in the way we worship locally. Bishop Philip calls this moment a Kairos moment – a New Testament word, meaning a time appointed by God for the accomplishment of a crucial action - a decisive moment for our Church.

In practice, he is talking about the future of our current Parish life as we know it, our buildings and structures, the way we come together and our potential merging with Corpus Christi Church to create a single Parish. The plan looks at how we might manage the broad diocesan challenge of falling clergy numbers. It, perhaps starkly, recognises that “Jesus never promised that the Church would not fail in this or that particular place.” He reminds us that historically in parts of the world where Christianity once flourished – such as parts of North Africa, it is now all but wiped out. He states, that “it is possible that in the decades ahead the Church, continuing its slow decline, could vanish from Britain”.

But this, it seems, is a useful first step and reality check for us as practicing Catholics. The Mission Plan has a hope of a growing evangelisation amongst us, keeping a focus on the Mass and Eucharist as the source and summit of our lives; supporting our clergy, the lay faithful and our youth in the creation of what he calls Missionary Communities which can build a Church beyond walls. It asks us to look at our stewardship of Creation, to communicate with all peoples and to build new pastoral structures in merged Parishes. Without any expectation of a “silver bullet” to problems of decline, Bishop Philip asks us to open our creativity to allow for growth. He writes: “We need the creativity that comes from being faithful to Christ and led by the Holy Spirit. We need the Creativity that comes from remaining absolutely faithful to our Catholic tradition, yet absolutely open to finding new ways of engaging with people today”.

He recognises that Evangelisation has two parts. There is that Evangelisation that goes out and shares the Word with others but there is also that evangelisation of self - our own life-long personal effort to grow closer to God and to have our own spiritual needs met in the life of the church. For, it is surely hard to spread God’s word from the church, when our owns needs might not be being met within it.

And so, as a Pastoral Council we wish to embark on an urgent journey in the Parish, of self-reflection around our own spiritual and community needs here. In so doing, we feel we will be better able to respond to Bishop Philip’s request for feedback on the draft Mission. As we must feedback in the next four weeks, we ask for your help now as we draw upon all the creativity, spirit and wisdom of this Parish.

**How can you help? We ask you to help us in four ways.**

1. Please read the draft mission plan – available on our Parish website and which was handed out after Mass a few weeks ago. Also available at <https://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/our-mission/planning/ten-year-plan/>
2. Please complete our simple questionnaire, about your own / your family’s spiritual needs as part of this community. Tell us what you want from your church. The questionnaire is available in both print and digital versions. Printed copies are available at the back of church; a link to the online questionnaire is available on the Parish website; in the newsletter, on our Facebook feed and through St Walburga’s newsletter. The questionnaire is anonymous.
3. In the next couple of weeks, we will make available discussion forums, where you can share any thoughts or concerns you have. We will send dates and reminders each week through the Newsletter and after mass.
4. We want to be able to contact you directly about Parish events, Parish life, Sacraments and Spiritual /Faith-based opportunities, as well as keep you informed of changes taking place as a result of this ten-year mission plan. Please take a Parish registration form from the back of the church, complete it and post it through the Presbytery door. Alternatively, we also have an online registration form, and again details are on our newsletter, website and Facebook feed.

As Bishop Philip said, this is a Kairos moment for our Churches, the Diocese of Portsmouth and The Catholic Church generally in the UK. Thank you for helping us create such a wonderful community in our two churches and for helping us, through these steps to work towards a joyful, fruitful and blessed next ten years.

Mark Henwood

Chair of the Pastoral Council

Parish of The Annunciation and St Edmund Campion, Bournemouth

Questionnaire:

1. What do you find most beneficial about your experience of life in our Parish and Diocese?
2. What would you like to see that you do not yet experience in our Parish and Diocese?
3. The plan suggests The Annunciation, St Edmund Campion and Corpus Christi may have to merge as Parishes. What thoughts do you have about this, including any alternate ideas?
4. Do you have any other comments or thoughts about the Ten-Year Mission Plan?