

Cathedral Deanery Newsletter

Lent 2023



In December 2022, Bishop Richard met with the clergy and lay representatives of our deanery parishes and schools to discuss the future of the Church in this part of the diocese, following the publication last year of the second edition of his Pastoral Plan, 'The Word Who is Life'. A report on what was said at that meeting, and what follows from it, are the focus of this issue of the Deanery Newsletter:

Since the first Pastoral Plan was written, Covid has had a major effect on many aspects of diocesan life. The income of some parishes was severely hit, while others with income mostly from Standing Orders, did not suffer in the same way. Some priests are not as well as they were. The pandemic sped up the process of structural change to parishes and deaneries that was envisaged in the first Pastoral Plan, and some changes that Bishop Richard had planned for 2030 will become a reality much sooner or, in some cases, have already happened.



We're at a point where we need to think about how we'll do our mission in the years ahead. We need to enable every baptised person to live their baptismal vocation.

Every baptised person has the right and obligation to proclaim the Gospel in their own setting.

What is the Church?

We need to move away from any thought that in some way the Church is a service provider, where people come to Mass and receive amazing grace from the Eucharist and then go away again. And away from expecting everything to be done by the priest or deacon. We are all in this together and we need to move into that mindset more clearly now.

Vocations

We have five men in the seminaries now, and they are doing well in their formation. However, we all grew up in a moment of history when there was a spike in clergy numbers: World Wars I and II caused a rise in priestly vocations. Also, years back, lots of priests came from Ireland: 15 a year in Southwark, for example, but this dropped to zero some time ago. The number of vocations in our own diocese has gone down but the real impact is from a decline in vocations in other parts of the world.

In future, the proportion of priests to people will be more like it was 100 years ago, when people had to travel a bit more. Sacraments will still be available but we need to be more agile.

What is the relevance of the deanery?

The Cathedral Deanery is all of our local parish communities together: Arundel; Bognor with Slindon; Chichester with Selsey, Witterings & Bosham; Petworth & Midhurst; Storrington.



The Cathedral Deanery is made up of five parishes with twelve churches, currently served by six priests.

In not many years, before 2030, this will reduce to two or possibly three priests.

That's going to require a real step change in the way we each live our Christian life.

We need to think about what a future with only two or three priests for the whole deanery will look like, and begin to prepare for it. First, we can ask ourselves: how often do the deanery Core Teams have conversations? How do our parishes cooperate? Do they share resources and skills? Some sharing does happen: Arundel and Storrington do Confirmation preparation together, for example, but we need to think in bigger terms than we are currently doing.

Mass provision in the future is going to change

As Pastoral Plan 2 spells out, it may be that Mass will not be celebrated every Sunday in some churches. That is already the case in Bognor Parish. For more churches in the future, it may simply not be physically possible. We will need to think about where and when Mass will be celebrated across the whole deanery, not just in each parish individually.

Can we have Services of the Word and Holy Communion instead of Mass?

We need the Mass, it is at the centre of our Christian lives and we have an obligation to attend Mass on Sunday. Although there will be a fewer celebrations of Mass in the years ahead, Word and Holy Communion Services are not the answer: they are only for emergencies, for example, if a priest is ill on a Sunday. Week after week is not an emergency situation.

What about access to the Sacraments?

We have a right to the Sacraments but we may have travel a little bit more to get to Mass. In this deanery, our distances are not that great. We'll have to envisage doing things in new ways.

What about the local community's life of prayer?

This is a good opportunity for us to learn about prayer: ways we can pray together that don't require a priest. Some are very fruitful, for example, the Rosary and the Liturgy of the Hours.

**Prayer is the heartbeat of the parish.
We need to discover new ways of praying together.**

Freeing up the clergy to focus on the core of their priesthood

If we ask the clergy how much time they spend on administration compared to sacramental preparation, prayer or visiting, the answer is scary. One of things we need to do, if there are fewer priests, is to release them to do what they're ordained to do, so they have the time to facilitate the sacramental life and care for sick and housebound parishioners, with lay members too.

Formation in Faith

We are used to 'dip in, dip out' formation: for Baptism, then First Communion, then Confirmation, then Marriage then... Baptism again, and so it goes on. However, for all the baptised fully to engage with the Mission of the Church, we need ongoing formation, as part of a life-long journey in faith. Evangelisation is one of the '3 pillars' from Pastoral Plan 1 and we need to keep growing in our own relationship with Christ so we can invite others into it. Our schools are at the forefront of our mission. In 1850, when the Catholic hierarchy was restored, the bishops were clear about building schools before churches: they recognised that school was a place of encounter, both for Catholic children and staff and for the non-Catholics in the school communities.

New ministries

Pastoral Plan 2 also looks at the 'stable ministries' of Lector, Acolyte, previously reserved to those preparing for ordination but now open to all the lay faithful, and at the new ministry of Catechist, instituted by Pope Francis in 2021. These stable ministries call for greater levels of engagement and responsibility than the existing roles that sometimes use the same titles, and will require significant discernment and formation. All three ministries will help to sustain the life of parishes when there are fewer priests available, with roles in leadership and teaching in the community.

**We're moving into a different age – not a bad one, just different.
How do we prepare for this?**

My dear friends and fellow pilgrims,

I hope that this season of Lent is proving fruitful for you – and if you are feeling frustrated that you haven't managed to use it well so far, don't give up! It's better to start late in seeking conversion of heart than not to start at all.

You will be able to read elsewhere in this issue about the meeting we (that is deanery clergy, laity from all our parishes, and representatives from our deanery schools) had with Bishop Richard late last year. I would completely understand if you are wondering what happens next: why hasn't the Dean (Fr Peter) done anything?

We have had some discussions at our clergy meetings, and will spend some more time on this at our overnight meeting after Easter. What we don't want to do is to arrange lots more meetings that don't have a clear purpose, and which become frustrating for those who attend. We are well aware that this is not an issue that the clergy can (or should) address alone, and we want to make use of the extensive expertise that exists among the lay faithful in our deanery.

So, we are working on this – if by the time the next Deanery Newsletter comes out I am saying exactly the same thing, and still nothing seems to have happened, you will have every right to call me to account!

So, please bear with us for now – the seed has been planted and is beginning to grow, even if, for now, the growth remains hidden.

In the meantime, have a Happy and Holy Lent.

Fr Peter Newsam

Dean

'It is time for pastors and laypeople to walk together, in every area of the Church's life, in every part of the world.

**The lay faithful are not "guests" in the Church,
they are at home,
so they are called to take care of their own home.**

The laity, and especially women,
need to be more valued in their human and spiritual skills
and gifts for the life of parishes and dioceses.'

Pope Francis, 18 February 2023

For all the latest news from the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, sign up for the weekly E-Bulletin newsletter, via the [Diocesan website](#).



Lent Reconciliation Opportunities in the Cathedral Deanery



'I ask you: have you ever thought that every time we go to the confessional, there is joy and celebration in heaven? It is beautiful ... and fills us with great hope, because there is no sin to which we have stooped from which, by the grace of God, we cannot rise up again.' Pope Francis, 2016

Sunday 12 th March	4pm	Joint Arundel & Storrington Reconciliation Service at Storrington
Saturday 25 th March	10am	Holy Hour & Confessions at Midhurst
Wednesday 29 th March	7pm	Reconciliation Service at Chichester
Saturday 1 st April	12pm	Holy Hour & Confessions at Petworth
Monday 3 rd April	7.30pm	Reconciliation Service at Bognor

Chrism Mass

Bishop Richard will celebrate the Chrism Mass, with many priests of the Diocese, on Wednesday 5th April at 6pm at Arundel Cathedral. All are welcome to attend.



During the Mass, our priests will renew the vows they made at their ordination, and the Bishop will consecrate the sacred Chrism and bless the Oil of Catechumens and the Oil of the Sick. The Oil of Chrism will be used over the next year for the anointing of the newly baptised and the signing of those to be confirmed; the Oil of Catechumens will prepare and dispose our catechumens for their baptism; and the Oil of the Sick will be used for the anointing of those who are ill.

If you would like to watch the livestream of the Mass, visit abdiocese.org.uk/livestream.

Deanery Confirmation: 14 May 2023

Please pray for the young people of our deanery who will be confirmed in Arundel Cathedral in May.

Singers: would you sing for this Mass?

Rehearsal at St Richard's, Chichester, Thursday 11 May at 7pm. Further details soon via Parish Priests or from chichester@abdiocese.org.uk.

Deanery Welcomers' Day

The Deanery is planning a time of formation for current welcomers and those who want to find out more about this ministry. It will be led by Margaret Fraher, Diocesan Inclusion Adviser, and is scheduled for 17th June. Watch this space for confirmation of the date, time and venue.

Feast of St Richard of Chichester



The people of the Deanery are warmly invited to Mass for the Feast of St Richard, celebrated in Chichester Cathedral on Thursday 15 June at 10.30am (a day early, this year).

Cathedral Deanery Parish Websites

Arundel: arundelcathedral.uk

Bognor with Slindon: bognorcatholicparish.co.uk

Chichester, Selsey, Bosham & Witterings:
saintsofsussex.com

Petworth & Midhurst: petworthcatholic.org

Storrington: ourladyofengland.parishportal.net

Looking for a new podcast?

Have a look around the [Ascension Presents](#) collection of podcasts.

From Fr Mike Schmitz's homilies, which may help you to reflect more deeply on the readings throughout Lent, to *All things Catholic* with Dr Edward Sri, and *Girlfriends* with Danielle Bean and her *Last Minute Ideas for Lent*, there is something for everyone.



 **ASCENSION**
The Faith Formation Leader