

St. John XXIII Parish, Geneva

Parish Pastoral Council Report for the period November 2017 to June 2018

We live in an age of technology. An age where advancement is often marked by speed and quantity versus depth and genuinity. We have so much knowledge today which streams into our smartphones every minute and yet because of the sheer quantity of data, we do not make the time to digest what it is we take in. We do not take the time to be discerning in who we listen to and we do not make the time to take our eyes off the feed of information to look to a higher plane to find what it means to be human.

As Christians, we must look up to the heavens but we cannot ignore this stream and rapidly moving world. We live in this world and therefore must take part in it and engage it. Christ calls us and others as his disciples. We must approach others here and now. We must see the world for what it is and use the tools that it gives us and see them as an opportunity to reach others, to communicate and share the wisdom that comes to us with our engagement with Christ's Holy Church, his Word and the teaching of our Magisterium and the Tradition.

We, as Parishioners at St. John XXIII, must make our way in this environment and learn to navigate the waters charting our way between getting lost in the deluge of data and working within the world in which we live -- sifting out what is good and using it for the glory of God.

As sons and daughters, we know who we are and we are obligated to share what we have found with others. People who have not received this gift find themselves lonely. To be sure, they are often surrounded by hundreds of virtual friends on Facebook and other social media yet they feel isolated and base their worth on what the world tells them versus what Christ teaches us as God's beloved children.

God's message to us is spread by relationships. It is spread by people getting to know each other and to learn the truth of Christ that we carry within us. It is spread by people watching how we lead our lives, how we carry our sufferings and how we find the joy in each and every moment from the multitude of

blessings that He rains down on us every day. We pray that every member of St. John XXIII Parish reaches out to build bridges between members of our community through personal relationships and in ministry. We also pray that our existing ministries continue to thrive and pass down and build up new leaders in our community.

In November 2017, Father Paul dissolved the Parish Pastoral Council under Canon law to reform it to address the concerns and complexities of St. John XXIII Parish. Our new (smaller) group currently consists of eight members from a variety of backgrounds and ministries. The current members are Father Paul C. Friel (Pastor), Marlene Antoulas (Secretary), Steven Claffey, Sarah Edejer, Sharon Ledermann (Chair), Desiree Narvaez, Homer Narvaez (Representative to the PAC) and Giovanna Titus.

We have met three times as a group in December 2017, February 2018 and again in June 2018. It is our intention to meet every two months in an advisory capacity to aid Father Paul and his pastoral ministry of John XXIII between the months of September and June. Whereas in the past, all ministries have attended the PPC meetings, future meetings will be more focused on supporting and challenging different groups across the parish to build up our community and answer God's call to us.

Our parish is a vibrant community with ministries welcoming people in, feeding them and integrating them into the body of Christ. Every week, our Sacristens, Eucharistic ministers, Lectors, Flowers and Environment, Ushers and Greeters, and Alter Servers prepare the mass and welcome hundreds to our parish — some from far away. These ministries are the backbone of the parish and deserve our gratitude. The Music Ministry also shares in this service as it leads an integral part of the liturgy. Our musicians and choirs usher the community into a place of praise and worship inviting the presence of God into the liturgical experience by lifting up every member's voice.

We are blessed in this parish to welcome women from all walks of life every Thursday to the Walking with Purpose group. Every week between October and May, women are fed from the scripture and encouraged to share their testimonies, and by their testimony, themselves. This group builds relationships amongst parishioners that cross cultural, socio-economic and generational lines in

the search for truth about God and what He teaches us and from our knowledge of God — truth about ourselves.

Similarly, a new ministry has begun this year under the title “Theology on Tap” welcoming priests from Geneva and Fribourg to speak to attendees about various theological subjects while enjoying a Friday evening pint and a snack in good company. These evenings accompany our Days of Recollection started last year by Father Paul.

We thank all of these clergy who have given of their time and resources to support these very important events to enrich our knowledge of scripture and teaching of the church. We also thank the various visiting priests who have served mass on Sundays and during the week from Geneva, Fribourg and the Ecumenical Center in Bossey. Every one has gifted us with their wisdom and presence bringing their specific gifts to our mass celebrations.

We also thank members of the Care and Concern ministries for their service and hard work last year. We think specifically of the Soup Kitchen team who have walked among the less fortunate in Geneva -- thus serving Christ Himself. We acknowledge their courage to move out of their comfort zones to where the need is greatest. We also thank the members of the Stephen Ministry and the Bethany group for their service to those who need a listening ear.

Our Laudato Si Community has recently been renamed the Justice, Peace and Integrity to Creation group or JPIC-LSC. Based on a foundation of their faith and spirituality, the JPIC asks themselves not what the community can do for them, but what they can do for the community. They have chosen a life of service and commitment to simple living and to serving those with the most need in their community. In the spirit of Pope Francis’ encyclical, they are the voice calling for a simpler and uncomplicated way of life and for us to realign ourselves to the basic truths that we live in an interconnected community built on our relationships to each other and to our environment.

Finally, a note about our future. Our Catechism and Youth Ministries led by Jane Gannon, Emily Toole and Sarah Edejer continue to thrive in our parish. Last year, 365 children were enrolled in classes from Preschool to Confirmation with 51

adult volunteers and 4 student assistants. 39 children received their first Holy Communion and 48 students are moving through the confirmation classes.

Father Richard once said that going to Church is a habit that is best taught from the beginning. If children are brought to mass on a regular basis by their parents and are engaged in the mass then they will continue to do so throughout their lives. The children and youth masses are therefore very important to the engagement of our kids in the liturgy. Last year, 5 children's masses were held and the youth held a mass once a month on Saturday evenings. These efforts are made on a voluntary basis by our catechists and we would like to especially thank their efforts and energy to make these special moments possible for the children.

To all the office staff, volunteers and parishioners, we would like to give you our heartfelt gratitude for all of your efforts, dedication and faith in our Lord, in St. John XXIII Parish and in us. We pray that we have been able to serve you faithfully over these past months and that we may open our hearts and our intellect to discern the path forward that the Lord places before us.