

Saint John XXIII Parish, Geneva Parish Pastoral Council Report for the period June 2016 to June 2017

As a parish, we are very privileged both in terms of where we are and the diverse make-up of our parish community. This gives a richness to our parish which is especially important at a time when there are many trends in the world towards exclusion and selfishness, and a turning away from God's message of mercy, peace and openness to others. As a microcosm of the international community, and based on values rooted in Christ, we have the potential to support the good work carried out by many in "international Geneva", and also to partake in and influence efforts to build a better and more inclusive world, through Catholic faith and action. These efforts are reflected in pastoral work carried out within the parish and outreach to the world beyond.

The pastoral year which is coming to an end has again been rich in the many activities led by ministries and parish groups. The PPC has continued to meet about every two months in support of these activities, and has regularly received reports from the various groups and ministry leaders, including the Religious Education Coordinator, the Music and Choir ministries, Care & Concern (which includes the Soup Kitchen, Bethany Group and Stephen Ministry) and Couples for Christ, as well as updates on ongoing activities from the Laudato Si Community, and the parish's Youth Coordinator.

Meanwhile, across the parish, other ministries also continue to be very active. To give a few among many examples, these include: "Scripture from Scratch", the Marriage Preparation Program, the Young Catholics, Walking with Purpose, the Welcome Ministry, the Joachim and Anna lunches, and the Kairos program. These are in addition to all the ministries that support our worship, such as the Sacristans, Eucharistic ministers, Lectors, Flowers & Environment, Ushers and Greeters, and Altar Servers. Our thanks go to all involved in these and all the other ministries and parish groups for your commitment and great work.

In terms of events and new initiatives, the following are of note: A project on the history of the parish and updating the parish archives was started in mid-2016; also in 2016, the Hospitality Ministry changed the format of the "Time & Talent" survey to a "Hello & Goodbye" event, which has worked well; a Spanish social evening was held in September, and was a great success, as was the Parish Advent dinner in December. For the second time in the life of the parish, a Passion Play was put on in the period leading up to Easter, involving many parishioners of all ages and drawing on their talents and gifts. The Laudato Si Community held a Sharing Event in January, which was well-attended and ecumenical, with participants from other Christian churches in the Geneva area; and this spring they have also introduced a creative competition for the youth and children of the parish, to encourage a "culture of care", a timely initiative when care of our planet and of each other is so necessary. And following the visit to Krakow last summer for the World Youth Day, a walking pilgrimage for the youth of the parish is planned this summer to Taizé.

Two good and well-attended parish retreats were held on Saturdays during the year, both given by Dominican friars studying at Fribourg, which is proving to be a good source of spiritual nourishment for parishioners. The first one, held in October, was given by Fr. Jojie Padilla and focused on the Rosary. The second, in Lent this year, was given by Fr. Cadejan Cuddy with an emphasis on mercy and the opportunity to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation on an individual basis, and was a reminder of its importance in our Catholic faith.

In terms of the sacraments, the RCIA programme has been very active again this year, with a number of candidates receiving the sacraments at the Easter vigil. In addition, there has been a conscious encouragement of the Sacrament of Reconciliation on an individual basis, rather than through penitential services, especially in Advent and Lent. The mass times on Christmas Eve were modified, following an initial experiment in 2015, and this seems to have worked well in terms of attendance and the availability of choirs to support the worship.

Meanwhile, Fr Paul has held meetings with the Music ministries, to encourage coordination of music across the different parish choirs and music groups, and to look into the challenges and needs of these important ministries.

This year has also, of course, seen a change in the pastoral team, with the retirement of Fr Richard de Lord after 10 years of dedicated service to the parish of St John XXIII, and the official appointment of Fr. Paul Friel as our new pastor. To cater for the fact that the parish now has one pastor, Fr. Paul is drawing on other clergy based in Switzerland (in Geneva or in Fribourg, or at the World Council of Churches and ecumenical retreat centre at Bossey) to support the parish's liturgy and other activities. This approach provides a variety of pastoral approaches and caters to the different cultures present in the parish community. On behalf of the PPC we would like to thank Fr. Paul and our other pastors for their leadership and support of the parish. We realise that this is a large and in some ways challenging parish, due to its many nationalities and the geographical spread of the parish community. This is also of course a strength of the parish, as I mention above, but it does require openness of spirit and sensitivity to the many and varied needs, so we thank the pastors for all their support.

We would also like to record our thanks for to the parish staff for all their wonderful and dedicated work throughout the year. We would particularly like to thank Tess Baarde, who gives of herself to the parish with ceaseless devotion. Despite her serious illness, her main concern from her hospital bed in recent weeks has been to make the annual Parish Kermesse a success. We remember Tess in our prayers, and wish her a full and speedy recovery.

To all the pastoral team, the ministries and parish groups and all members of the parish, we wish a restful and restorative summer, and energy for the challenges and opportunities of the next pastoral year.