

THE NEXT STEPS

In order to help us obtain a clearer picture of the issues, focus groups will be arranged. A few of these groups will consist of those who very kindly indicated on their responses to the questionnaire that they would be willing to take part. However, it will not be possible to use everyone who kindly offered.

We will also form focus groups from those who did not complete a questionnaire, in particular those who no longer attend Mass and those aged below 35 years of age (very few of the latter completed questionnaires).

The result will help us appreciate how we view what it is to be a Catholic. This will then enable us to find suitable ways during the Year of Faith to deepen our understanding of our Faith so that we may celebrate it and live it with hope. Then, beyond the Year of Faith, we shall have a better picture of how to care for the parishes within our Pastoral Area.



PRAYER

Almighty God and Father,

We praise and thank You for all that is
being accomplished, by Your grace,
in the *Walking Humbly* process
through conversation and connections
in our Pastoral Areas.

As we lay before You all our hopes and plans,
may Your Holy Spirit, guide and direct us.

By the power of Your Spirit, may we grow
into truly thriving Catholic communities,
confidently and humbly proclaiming
the Good News of Your Son, Jesus Christ.

This we ask through
the same Christ, our Lord. Amen.



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NORTHAMPTON SOUTH & WEST PASTORAL AREA

The Catholic churches and schools of south and west Northampton, Aston-le-Walls, Daventry and Towcester

'OUR FAITH'—QUESTIONNAIRE FEEDBACK—INITIAL RESULTS

Recent Events

Over the last couple of years we have drawn together a groundplan as a strategy for the pastoral care of the parishes within our Pastoral Area. Before further implementations of the groundplan are made and before the groundplan itself is revised, it has been considered appropriate to examine how changes to Mass provision and the closure of churches within the Pastoral Area in recent years have affected parishioners and our understanding of what it is to be a Catholic in this part of the world. It is also important to understand how we see the Mass in relation to the parish community; how Mass compares to services of Word and Communion; how the rural and the urban interact.

In order to achieve these goals a questionnaire called 'Our Faith' was circulated to all the parishes within the Pastoral Area. The completed questionnaires have been collected and are presently being studied with the assistance of a team from Heythrop College of the University of London. The following initial results have been found.

As we embark upon the Year of Faith it is hoped that some of the issues raised will be explored more fully by us all together.



YEAR OF FAITH 2012
2013

THE INITIAL RESULTS

Those who Responded

- (a) There was a good response from all the parishes. In total there were 344 responses.
About 20% of all Mass-goers replied. This percentage is higher when seen in terms of the number of families.
- (b) 97% were over 35 years old. 3% were under 35 years old.
About 80% were over 50. 20% were under 50.
Just over 40% were aged between 65 and 79 years.
- (c) About 70% were women. 30% were men.
- (d) Just over 80% said they attend Mass on holydays of obligation.
About 30% said they regularly attend Mass on weekdays.

Sense of Belonging

- (a) About 30% identified themselves with their parish alone.
The remaining 70% also identified themselves with the wider Catholic family (the Pastoral Area, Diocese, Universal Church).
- (b) 75% gave priority to the Mass when asked what was it that gave them a sense of belonging to the church they attend (as opposed to the community, the priest, family history).
Just under 10% gave priority to the sense of community at Mass. The number who gave priority to the sense of community outside Mass was negligible.

Mass Changes

- (a) About 70% of those affected by changes in times of Mass still attend the same church.
About 30% of those affected by changes in times of Mass now attend another church in the Pastoral Area. Many of these cited convenience of Mass times as the reason.

Closed Churches

- (a) About 50% of those who indicated that they had been affected by the closure of a church said that they were immediately made welcome by their new church/parish. About 30% said that, after a period of time, they now feel accepted. The remaining 20% either had existing connections with the new church/parish or did not comment.

Transport

- (a) The vast majority attend Mass by car.
Very few use public transport.
- (b) Of those who walk to Mass, not many attend the available later evening Masses. Parishes with good nearby parking facilities have fewer people walking even short distances.
- (c) Just under 20% combine Mass with another activity.
The other activity is very often shopping. This is followed statistically by visiting family.

Word & Communion Services

- (a) People overwhelmingly saw a difference between the Mass and services of Word & Communion. However, they were not able to articulate or specify why. This includes Extra-Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

The Cathedral

- (a) About 65% of those who attend the Cathedral are from outside the Cathedral parish.
- (b) About 55% of those who responded to the questionnaire regard the Cathedral as their mother church.
- (c) About 25% had not thought about it being their mother church.
- (d) Of those who do not attend the Cathedral regularly, the figures in (b) & (c) do not seem to be affected by distance from the Cathedral.

Ecumenism

- (a) Overall ecumenical activity appears low.
- (b) However, the rural parishes have more links with the local village Church of England parish churches. For example, of those who responded, about 75% in the Aston-le-Walls parish and 50% in the Towcester and Daventry parishes sometimes attend local services. Over 50% at Aston-le-Walls and 25% at Towcester explained that they attend the local church because it is the focal point of their community.