

# St Joseph's Parish, 12 Goodwood Road, Leicester LE5 6SG

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Dear People,

Thank you for your generous response to last week's parish newsletter. Early donations have given us a very good start. You have raised question and there are some other issues to consider:

- 1) It is our responsibility to maintain in good condition our churches (one of which is a listed building with repair work having to follow guidelines), hall, house, car park. We must raise the money.
- 2) We are soon to become a pastoral area with Sacred Heart and Our Lady's and there will be just two priests – all part of Leicester's reorganising in line with the rest of the diocese. One or more of the five churches in the parishes will be closed and one of the presbyteries not needed; but we cannot wait, we must attend to the repairs.
- 3) Bishop Egan of Portsmouth has led the way in re-organising parishes into pastoral areas, re-structuring 90 parishes into 24 pastoral areas. He recently spoke at the Liverpool synodal process. He asked delegates to consider that when Liverpool had 250,000 people attending mass they had one priest for every 210 people; they now have 40,000 attending mass and one priest for every 235 people: about the same ratio. People must accept that the problem to be resolved is too many churches and much lower income. The people are the church, not the buildings, and we should be open to going to a different church building whilst continuing to be church.
- 4) In 1962 the Nottingham diocese had 72,000 people at mass and 112 priests, 1 priest for every 642 people; and in 1992 there were 37,000 at mass and 112 priests: 1 priest for 330 people. (The figures are from a 1992 diocesan meeting.) In 2019 we had just less than 30,000 people and 90 priests, 1 for every 330. Like Liverpool, our problem is having and maintaining many more churches than we need and on a lower income.
- 5) Some years ago a priest in Nottingham suggested closing several local churches, buying a plot of land on the edge of the city and building a church and a large car park there. The idea was rejected but it was worth suggesting. Suppose we looked at the possibility of selling our three churches (all in good positions) and building a church at the Sainsburys supermarket site? Their huge car park would be ours to use, our people would be their customers, their café our rendezvous, and Sainsburys is not far from our 5 present churches. We could expect St Sainsburys (or even Saintsburys) to become a Leicester joke – but we would be bringing the Gospel to the marketplace. In Birstall such an arrangement between the church and the local supermarket has worked well for over 30 years. (We would be able to transfer our organ to a new church and bring our beautiful windows).
- 6) Car parking is a huge problem. Our churches were built when relatively few people had cars. With fewer celebrations of mass, inevitably, there will be larger numbers of people and therefore much larger numbers of cars. Is it fair to burden the streets around our churches, making them giant car parks? No church can afford the outlay for sufficient onsite car parking. We did consider the cost of making the front of St Joseph's church a car park around 2008 but the cost was prohibitive, even then: over £60,000. The present attractive paving cannot take the weight of turning and parking vehicles and the lawn and paving the other side would need substantial levelling work.
- 7) Would you make a loan to the diocese with the assurance of being repaid within a short time from the proceeds of the sale of our sadly becoming-surplus churches?

- 8) Shall we offer to the diocese the suggestion that our lovely Rosary church could be sold? It is now in use only for an hour and a half each week. Can we justify the expense of heating, lighting, rates, and maintenance, etc., for one and half hours per week? The sale of the Rosary Church might cover all the work needing to be done at St Joseph's and, probably, even at the other two churches – if all three remain open.
- 9) Crowdfunding has been suggested - to allow people who have loved and are still in contact with the parish to contribute. People who were married here, for example; people who live abroad but still feel they belong and visit our website and read our parish newsletter. We know we have many subscribers to our parish newsletter, website and streaming of mass and services around the world.
- 10) The simplest solution is donations, isn't it. Will you make one?
- 11) We shall ask the diocese at the meeting of the Building and Sites committee to grant St Josephs a loan, with the assurance of our repaying it soon by donations, loans, sale of church(es), house(s).
- 12) We shall use the money for the new roof, the hall heating system and the church tower where damp and the danger of loose tiles makes it necessary for us to act soon.

The parish has carefully looked after all that is here, budgeting and maintaining and trying to foresee; it is just that three major considerations, roof/heating/tower have come together. We as a parish must reassure the diocese we are interested and committed enough to solve the problems. We accept that all income belongs to the diocese and all debts to the parishes – how else could the diocese cope? Its only income is from the parishes.

P.S. At present St Joseph's has £24,000.

Fr John - Weekend of 7/8 March 2020

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For information - Fr John's letter to the parish in 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2020 newsletter.

Dear People,

Everything hurts: the roofs on our two churches and the parish hall, the rain-damaged organ, leaks, and the parish bank balance.

At the Rosary church, the recent wind-damaged church roof is being repaired (*March update: completed*).

St Joseph's church is 52 years old and wear and tear of 52 winters and summers is evident. Insurance will cover the £6,428 water damage to the organ, once the church roof has been repaired, but the diocese tells us that the buildings' costs are for the parish to face - the maintenance of buildings that all of us know in looking after our houses and property.

In addition to replacing the aluminium roof there are other leakage problems. Have you noticed that there are no church drain pipes at St Joseph's? They are inside the church pillars. That's the design. The drain near Our Lady's Altar is blocked and we have no way to get at it - that is why the area is cordoned off at present. There is also the tower . . . Difficult.

We receive many compliments about how active and welcoming is the parish community - our hall, coffee shop, kitchens, liturgy room, parish library, shops, offices, in constant use throughout the week, each bringing income and resources that benefit the parish. But the heating system is old and now worn out, needing to be replaced, and some painting and decorating is necessary.

I came to the parish in February 2001. In happy and challenging years we have raised £95,000 to refurbish the parish hall, repaid the Watermead Apostolate the £40,000 it borrowed to renovate the old stable, fitted new heating and sound systems in the two churches, added security cameras, arranged daily recording and streaming of services, raised more than £50,000 for the Diocesan Priests' Retirement Fund and covered the costs of maintaining and running churches, hall, house, plus insurance, utilities, wages - all on an income of approximately £65,000 per annum.

You can appreciate there has been great generosity of parishioners in time and money over the years and careful financial budgeting to do all this and still maintain a reserve, of between £40,000 and £60,000, which was with the diocese to help other parishes. At present we have about £16,000 (*£24,000 - see update in above letter*), because of already necessary repairs to the lower ring of St Joseph's church roof.

Now we need to raise the money to face these new costs, approximately £75,000 for the new metal roof at St Joseph's and the heating system for the hall. We have informed the diocese and been asked "How is the parish proposing to pay for the work?" We must accept that the diocese has many parishes and churches to consider, holds all spare money to help where needed, but asks parishes to accept debts as their own. What and how shall we do?

God bless and guide us,