

Diocesan Assembly Theme 5 The Welcoming Community

Reflecting on this topic, what would a parish or diocese living the joy of the Gospel be like?

1. Outreach
2. Connect with other churches - be together
3. clarification of canon law
4. An outlook of mission rather than maintenance
5. Welcome all - a welcoming community. Language more re-contextualised - to meet the needs of today. Listen with understanding.
6. Celebration of good deeds / actions
7. Help available. Prayer and faith evident. Social groups to get to know each other and help where needed.
8. Teaching of the Catholic Church - core beliefs - in schools
9. Use gifts of helpers - clear readers / music selection
10. Proclamation of the Word a focus. Appealing and meaningful liturgy / utilising resources (human too)
11. Priest talks with children – sacraments. Young people engaged in Mass
12. Know people by name - use of name at Communion (by priest)
13. A warm connection b/n students and Bishop through Mass (on campus in our secondary schools)
14. Active listening and expression of faith in a practical way - translating into reality of helping those in need. People are welcome because they are people - Principles of Catholic Social Teaching - dignity of the human person, not because they live on the margins but just because they are people - we are all people.
15. How do our parishes be both mission and communion - welcome ALL. We are the church. A smile is the prettiest thing you can wear - always remember to be welcoming.
16. I am a better person for having attended Church, I take on the messages of the Gospels, the challenge to live my life better, embracing human frailties.
17. Love is the basis of everything - reach out to those so that they can experience the love and joy of the Gospels. Spread the joy by talking to people -take little steps to make people welcome, sit closer to the centre; welcome people to sit next to you. Keep trying!
18. church is a lifelong learning; keep learning. church is a whole community, old and young. Restore hope to young people, invite others to a delicious banquet, conflicting when gay all of you are one welcoming community, glory of god. if new member come they want to belong - we have to allow them to belong ,in Africa have a group who work on new members , smile ,meaning you are welcome not just fake smile- actually belonging to the community, preach gospel at all times and if necessary use words. , may not use words but preaching the gospel , previous generation of parents didn't use words did action - three children in a pram sleeping with children at lake - actions not words, gave food instead of imposing new obligations share , is it too hard for people to come back , ...What would it be like ? welcoming committee newcomers able to settle down in the parish and community, need to follow up, prayers personal invitation ...welcoming community for children and for priests need to ask for welcoming with children check, pastoral workers could ... need more formation so every parishioner can be an intentional Catholics, reaching out to resting Catholics, programs like alpha can share can recommit could have further recommitment programs.
19. The dilemma of the gay community where it is clearly stated in the gospel that we should be welcoming. It is not our role to judge. Some people have difficulty with this. Looking at

things form a different point of view. We need to be inclusive of everyone. Communication (Come and see what we do, you are welcome)

20. Go back to the Gospels and love everyone. We need to transfer the message of the gospels. It is important to put our faith in action ie (St. Vinnies) it is had to do it with words it is about action. Registering for new people and then someone at the office will call them. Have the right people at the door so that they can welcome everyone. We are all part of the same world, recognising others faith. The issue of welcoming is very important. Is it the size of the parish that determines how welcoming a parish is? Make an extra effort to welcome people. Have courage to open up and make friends. Restoring hope and no judgement and a parish should be loving. Father begins mass by turning to someone and introduce yourself. To accompany those who are disillusioned. The priest asks if there are any new people and formally welcomes them and gives them a gift. We need to show happiness and keeping them there.
21. How do we continue to keep the joy? Have Welcome Days or Morning Teas - HOSPITALITY IS SO IMPORTANT. Special Ministers are all in the front of the church. Have a roster or someone who is the welcomer, they can set the tone for the whole experience. We need to go out and build relationships / social outreach. Reaching out to the marginalised - Focus on the CST - we have a responsibility to enact this. We need to hear about it. We need to be conscious of the gospel we will come to an acceptance of self then we can offer ourselves to others. We all struggle with our faith and it is important to have support of our parish. Have a support/mentor person for those who are marginalised. Using the CST of Vinnies and Catholic Care to help the marginalised.
22. Have strong Catholic presence out in the community such as protesting or marching for the environment.
23. Embrace others from different cultures and other religions. All would be welcome to participate in the Eucharist including gay, divorced and anyone not currently entitled. Everyone is loved by God. Why do we put so many obstacles in the way of full participation? Welcome all - the disadvantaged and the homeless, divorced, disabled. The quote from St Francis is the way forward by living the Gospel.
24. Communicating with others at masses by reaching out - offering to pray for others. In order to help others, a strong, healthy prayer life is essential - supports for living in a right disposition. The scripture brought to mind the song ""Come to the Water.""
25. Everyone friendly and approachable to touch the lives of others. Why do we distinguish between people in the church? - we should treat everyone as equal. Newcomers are as entitled as long term parishioners. No issue on status - everyone valued.
26. The institutional hierarchy is a blocker to change. Women in ordained ministry needs to be looked at. As women play such a role it is important to recognise this with ordination.
27. Reaching out to Catholics who are resting by catholic marriage outside of the church if required. Our church community needs to be made up of a range of ages - Married life should not be denied to priests.
28. A parish reflecting the joy of the Gospel will be a radical parish, which would recognise Jesus in themselves and in others.
29. A parish which speaks the language of love will/is inclusive, will stop judging others and learns to listen with the heart. The parish that portrays a healing church that accepts blame for its wrong doings and shows signs of reconciliation. A church that is not institutional but one that reaches out and carries Christ "outside" of Church.
30. "outside" of Mass. A parish/ church that resonates with a wider community as a place of welcome, a place of support and a place of refuge. the first point of contact when you are in need/ new to the country/ when you feel the need to belong. The church doors .. not just in its literal sense...always left open and shows signs of welcome. Every person has a welcome smile and acknowledgement of everyone coming into church

31. celebrates the differences between each of us. Actively seeks to form community with those who have challenges, are new, have specific needs (disability, victims of crime, mental health challenges)
32. parish/diocese are actually getting out and getting involved in the messiness of life
33. is joyful - radiate the love shared and gifted. Working with the marginalized - particularly those who are divorced/remarried, gay etc.
34. actively listens rather than talks (ascertain where the other is at in order to respond positively/joyfully to that person) - the encounter is vital as this allows the spark of the HS to work within both. Affirms and encourages those who come into the church community (and in outreach from the church), genuinely invitational - but has to be tailored and continuing and from an honest commitment to the value of the other.
35. parish or diocese focuses on those things where people are meeting the traditions and practices but not on the one - we can't change. Speak our faith, be prepared to speak our belief - not apologetic. Continue to support and spread the cultural experiences of Catholic traditions of our diverse members, active missionary disciples
36. know the names of the person next to you (frame around how to do that)
37. ensuring that we have a celebratory approach to those coming for sacramental engagement (baptism, First Holy Eucharist etc) ensure church and people within are child friendly.
38. strong welcoming group who engage with those arriving, introduce selves being.
39. prepared to go further than the very basics - ""Welcomers - perhaps have formation so broaden"" - how DO we reach out to those on the margins, how do we find them, how to we actually reach out to offer the invitation? How do we live the joy of the gospel of those who wish to be part of the church but have an impediment?
40. Practise don't preach. Allow everyone to experience Jesus. Our knowledge is immense however we are discontent to facts.
41. Multiple perspectives but people to be reminded the hurt it is causing. To create healthy church everybody should be accepted. Can't change the past. change from inside. We need to step up and reach out to know the community. To bring back the community through our schools and parish. Church teaching doesn't usually agree with it. (Listen to each other) We are holy warriors we need to strengthen our faith to act.
42. Jesus' example calls us to radical inclusion. We are one. Our actions should say this. If necessary, our words should support this. We are all one in Christ, a multi-cultural people. Pope Francis: we need to include the excluded. There is a universal call to holiness. We are all called to be children of God; we can choose to be.
43. Signs of a welcoming parish should be loving, caring, sharing. Our Parish is our family. We need to be patient, joyful with them. We can't be a true witness to Jesus if we don't put the Gospel into practice in our home.
44. We need to be merciful, and start from where they are. Notice if people arrive and welcome them. Encourage everyone to do this, not just 'greeters'. Name tags. Introducing ourselves to those sitting near us at the start of Mass. There can be a tension between community and silent prayer before Mass. A cuppa and chat after Mass helps to build community. It is good if the priests recognize and greet individuals and connect with them. Can be 'surrogate grandparents' to others' grandchildren at Church.
45. The whole Parish can provide ideas which will help build community. Priests can welcome parents during Masses at the school; this can help build links between disconnected families and the Parish. We can welcome people who are in 'irregular' relationships such as same sex couples. People with mental health problems can be attracted to the church; it can be difficult to support them. We start with 'where they are at', to help them feel God's peace. Welcome everyone, include everyone, a smile doesn't cost anything.
46. People's spiritualities are different; we all need to be welcoming to those who see things differently from us. Parish priests need to play a role of welcoming and including different

- people. Smiling makes a difference. When people attend e.g. funerals we have an opportunity of reconnecting with them, of letting them know that we are welcoming. Inviting people to stay back for cuppa and morning tea after Mass helps. Making sure that people across a diverse range in the community feel welcomed and involved - eg choir.
47. Training can enable people to be better at building community. Maybe during the homily, the congregation might be encouraged and helped with how to do this. "Pew-swapping": get people to sit in different places to mix and meet others. A range of social activities helps e.g. a special dinner for the Parish Feast Day to bring people together, Multicultural dinner - invite people from all the different nationalities to bring food and dress in national costumes, maybe on Australia Day; Men's breakfast - women's 'long lunch'; Parish lunches every 3rd Sunday, the community go to the local RSL or similar venue. Diversity of choirs and music groups. Giving kids a job: offertory procession, the collection, serving. Make sure that older parishioners still feel included and valued; acknowledge milestone birthdays, getting young kids e.g. 4 year olds visiting nursing homes.
 48. Some issues which push people away: (testimony of someone who has just come back to the church) Did not understand the difference between Catholics and protestants (thought it was only Mother Mary) - therefore important to explain, people who were trying to trying to get me back into the Catholic Church - do not argue to be right/ put forward solutions and let people decide, people do not think before we speak - most people are not listening, STILL MAN approach - listen to the person and then try to reframe the argument back to them to show you have listened.... and then say what you want to them. SMILE and welcome people even if you don't know them and stay back and chat with people -be interested. Meet people where they are and don't expect people to come to where you are, go out of your comfort zone- don't self -glorify, all for the glory of God. St. Francis prayer - important to live by it - that is living the joy of the gospel
 49. Hospitality - understand that only by God's grace that I don't deserve to be here but only by God's grace.... therefore, the person whom I am about to serve- how I can build this bridge to them. keeping my thoughts aside and starting from where they are. What can we do to help people who are divorced or gay - Christ coming to Zacchaeus - Christ's acceptance of him transforms him. How can we give God's love and mercy where they are? What about people who are in pre-marital relationships... and yet they cast stones on others.... it is not a particular sin but the bigger sin of disobeying God and making other things Gods... If we love somebody ... we don't let them run off a cliff... how do we speak to people who are running off a cliff? How we do really love without judging? how would a parish love a person but not the sin..... how would this parish look like....
 50. It takes a village to teach a child - the entire community is teaching /loving people to love each other- not just the family's role.
 51. Education is so important to teach people the beauty of the Catholic faith- the importance of Love- and understanding God's Trinitarian love flowing through a couple.... and therefore we are all called to be chaste/celibate - whether we are married/single or gay... Helping people understand what the church teachings are will help people to be less judgemental and more open and welcoming to explain the Church's teachings to all
 52. Spirited Church outreach
 53. Maintenance is also important especially for the larger Parishes. Importance of understanding the groups within our society. Welcoming and loving. Keeping Christ at the forefront. Recognise differences as a strength