

Saint Mary Magdalen's Open Forum Meeting held on Thursday 2nd December 2021 in the Garden Room.

The Forum had been advertised through the weekly Bulletins and on the parish website. Parishioners were asked to offer subjects for inclusion on the agenda and Father Paul had spoken about the Forum at Masses leading up to the event. The final agenda was made available to all on Sunday 28th November. This was Father Paul's first meeting with the parishioners of Saint Mary Magdalen's Church. This is a note of the points discussed.

Before getting into the agenda Chris Croker, Chair of the Finance Committee, spoke of our gratitude to Michael Long, who has done so much to keep the lines of communication open during these months of pandemic restriction. Michael was presented with a card and a 'bottle' as a token of our gratitude.

- 1 The meeting started at 7pm with a prayer and a warm welcome from Father Paul. There were 24 parishioners in attendance.
- 2 Father Paul spoke of the involvement of the laity to ensure that the parish functions at its best. He wants a broad collaborative and inclusive approach where everyone could feel welcome, wanted and valued. His preferred method of engagement is through Open Forum, propagated in advance with opportunity for all to add to the agenda. There were no voices raised in favour of any other methodology.
- 3 Synod 2023 was announced from Rome as an initiative from Pope Francis and ten questions have been set for each parish to consider. This process will be started in our parish in January. Results across the Diocese will be collated by the Bishop. He in turn will meet with the other Bishops and the collective view will be sent to Rome. Thus the views and thoughts of Catholics from around the world will be laid before the Pope for his consideration and reflection.
- 4 Discussion took place regarding the use of our Garden Room and the Hall. Opportunities to rent out the new room were already to hand and it was decided to postpone any such engagement at this time. This gives the chance to see what use we the parishioners might like to promote for the benefit of our own parish community. The Hall will continue to be rented out as now managed by Linis Dolby. We need to establish a wider group to manage the Hall processes. The physical state of our Hall was discussed and the financial value that it brings in each year was recognised. It was agreed that this asset would be protected and invested in, in future years.
- 5 There has been a drop in the number of willing hands available to support some of the basic functions within our church. There clearly needs to be a revival. Father Paul quoted Pope Francis as saying that the parish should be like a battleship and not a cruise liner. On the former everyone on board is ready to stand to action all of the time. In the latter the passengers are just there to enjoy themselves and make use of the facilities. Using this analogy Father Paul said that our Parish must become a community and not just a drop in centre where one turns up to avail of the sacraments and disappears again.
- 6 In regard to live streaming of the Mass on Sunday, Father Paul advised that at this time the Diocese is not keen on continuance. However he spoke of the real value that it presented to those who are housebound and would wish to remain as real members of our parish community. He spoke of us being community based Christians and suggests that without a parish home we become dysfunctional. We will withdraw for a few weeks from the current streaming and revisit the scenario in the new year. There was consideration to installing a permanent system that will allow us to stream at the touch of a technological button.
- 7 Father Paul discussed the general schedule of masses.
10am Mass on Monday Thursday Friday (No Saturday am mass)
7.30pm Mass on a Wednesday (Father Paul says 09:00 Mass at St Alban's school on Wednesday mornings)
6pm Mass Saturday evening

8am and 10am Masses on Sunday

There is no Mass on Tuesdays as that is Father Paul's only rest day for the week.

Christmas Masses will be as follows:

24 December 6pm vigil Mass aimed at Children and Families

24 December 8pm Christmas Mass

25 December 8am Christmas Mass

25 December 10am Christmas Mass

No carol service this year, as time for organising and planning is not in our favour. Next year we will be better prepared. Brief discussion took place at this point regarding involvement with the primary school. Father Paul assured the Forum that he has been a presence in the school since his arrival in our parish, and with his history of 17 years as a Teacher, that engagement is a real priority for his ministry.

8 Father Paul is keen to take our parish forward as a community but asked for our patience. He is still settling in and has been packing and unpacking moving furniture, cleaning and planning non-stop for the last few weeks. He is still getting to know us all and feeling his way into his new role. He asked for our support as a Christian Community as we take Saint Mary Magdalen's parish on the next phase of its spiritual journey.

9 The meeting was concluded at ten past eight with a final prayer.