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Appendix 3

Feedback from the Consultation Sessions for the possible Unification of the Archdiocese of Cardiff & Diocese of Menevia – General Themes

At each of the Open Listening Sessions minutes were taken and from these minutes we identified a number of clear themes. This appendix has collected the key observations from each session and listed them under these themes.

Administration:

- The pooling of resources, e.g. finance, safeguarding was seen as positive but centralisation of resources in Cardiff noted.
- Strength in unity was a theme that occurred a few times.
- More talents/skills available across a larger area and sharing of ideas were viewed as a positive.
- Money savings were seen as positive.
- Centralisation was seen as a potential worry.
- There was concern over role of Trustees in future “union” and possible job losses.

Geography:

- Collaboration across such a large area was seen as a challenge.
- The distance over two dioceses mentioned as was the amount of time it would take the Archbishop to travel around and the possible cost to the Archbishop’s health by spreading himself too thinly.
- The opportunity to share ideas and good practice was seen as important.
- Strength in numbers and sharing resources was mentioned a few times.
- The Welsh language was discussed a few times and needs to be considered as was loss of cultural identity.
- Rural communities were seen as a challenge – in both Herefordshire and Menevia. A related concern was the low numbers of youth in these areas.

- The need to look east to Herefordshire as well as west to Menevia was mentioned. Some people said that Herefordshire should be handled sensitively.
- The idea of Hereford being “always on periphery” was discussed (in Hereford) and the fact that the Deanery was seen as possibly becoming more important than Diocese.
- Wales disassociating itself from Hereford was mentioned, as was the idea of addressing Diocesan boundaries.

The Church:

- Some mentioned the idea of Church = local parish, whilst the Diocese was thought of negatively.
- Music in church liturgy needs to be developed.
- Should Wales be one Diocese? And Herefordshire?
- The appointment of an Auxiliary Bishop was discussed a few times and one group asked if this was the case, why unite? Others though were more positive.
- One group said that parishes were being supported by Indian Catholics and it was important to understand culture; we should also consider Mass in different languages.
- It was also mentioned that we should check the charisms of parishioners as others do all the work.

Communications:

- Social media and online information were seen as important coupled with the need to tell people about the channels used.
- Better parish communication was needed and there was concern over the dissemination of information.
- In one parish it was said that they would set up groups but failed at letting people know about them.
- Technology is important but so is personal contact. However, technology could be used more.
- Better use of communications was needed, particularly to attract youth. How about communication from grassroots up?
- Some thought that it was important to communicate at local level and between churches. Events were an example of this.

- Online Masses were positively received and one person became a Catholic because of them. Zoom meetings were seen as positive.
- We should shout about what we are doing as Catholics.

Parishes/Deaneries:

- Information and communication sharing between churches/parishes were seen as important. Reaching out to other parishes was also seen as important.
- The need for good administration was identified.
- Better use of communications at events was also highlighted.
- Amalgamation and sharing is hard on small parishes who can lose their identity (Newport was seen as example).
- Parish Advisory Council, Deanery, Diocesan Pastoral Councils were seen as essential - some do not have these.
- Parishioners often do not connect with other churches within a parish.
- Some voiced concern of Menevia losing out in terms of priests/head.
- How do we make churches more welcoming? This was mentioned quite a few times.
- A few groups mentioned missed opportunities to reach out/engage with those attending funerals, First Holy Communion, weddings, Christmas, etc. It was thought that Parish leaders needed training in engaging with people at these events. There was a feeling that the message to them was missing.
- Sharing of best practice between parishes was also mentioned a few times.
- Improvement of the liturgy was also mentioned.

Laity:

- Some people thought that more involvement of women would be beneficial in church structures and leadership.
- It was also felt that there was a need for the laity to get behind the Archbishop. The formation of laity was mentioned as was the need for more Deacons.
- Training, support and “mobilisation” of laity was mentioned and often linked to supporting priests.

- It was pointed out that the laity were more involved in other denominations (the theme of learning from other faiths was highlighted). Generally speaking, more involvement of all people was needed.
- The lack of involvement by some groups was seen as disappointing – diversity and age groups were not widely represented at all (not just in day-to-day activities but also at these Open Listening Sessions).

Priests/ Vocations:

- It was thought that we should promote vocations.
- The Archbishop was asked if clergy would have to cross current diocesan boundaries, whilst other wanted to know if there would be more work for priests.
- Some people expressed the opinion that priests needed to reach out especially to young people. Others thought that the church should be more open to opening doors to other groups.
- Practical and consistent considerations of clergy remuneration and care of priests who are sick and retired was needed.
- It was thought that it was important to explore what fraternity and priestly spirituality looks like in this new era.

Youth:

- We should reach out to the young, the lapsed and those with faith but who do not attend church.
- We should also listen to the young, who are often not 'in church'; maybe the church needs to change?
- We should engage with the over 13 age group.
- It was thought that 'Millennials' don't often join anything, not just church.
- Questions were raised about retaining youth, too, after they leave school.
- The youth council was seen as a strength.

Promoting Faith/ Evangelisation

- People thought that our faith needs revitalising, locally and nationally. The issue is that religion/faith seems unimportant to so many.
- It was felt that we need to discuss why people "lapse" and even why they join.
- The idea of knocking on doors like other faiths was stressed.

- People felt that some were Christian but didn't know where they belonged.
- Cradle Catholics were considered as poor at evangelisation; evangelicals are great at it (evangelicals and knocking on doors mentioned frequently).
- Some questioned how the "union" would help evangelisation?

Schools:

- Better structures were needed for linking parishes and schools, e.g. class Masses and greater visibility of the local parish needed in schools.
- Some said that greater collaboration was needed between head teachers and Parish Priests.
- We need to reach out more to schools and support them. This was seen as a great opportunity.
- Schools might be detached from parishes but opportunities existed to do more.
- The idea of students as role models was stressed.

Outward Facing/ Interfaith:

- Catholics need to reach out to non-believers at food banks, warm spaces, etc. This was mentioned quite a lot as a good initiative.
- Charity is often seen as the way to encourage people to come to faith.
- Cribs/window displays in high street were seen as an opportunity by one group.
- It was thought it was important to be seen in the community and we need to consider what can we do together in the community.
- Some thought we should promote church activities to local non-Catholics, be welcoming but not pressurising. This was mentioned quite often.