

A REPORT ON THE MEETING OF ST LAWRENCE'S PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL HELD ON 12th MAY 2011

Much of the recent meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council was taken up with a number of concerns raised by parishioners through letters to the Chair.

The issue of **noise in church** was something that has been aired at the PPC before. In its consideration of this same matter in 2006, the PPC had discovered that there was even a website where you could nominate your parish for a "Noisy Parish Award"! However, this time the complaint centred on the extremely loud and disruptive chattering of adults before one of the Masses. The prayerful atmosphere that the Choir tried to engender before Mass was ruined by the social interaction that was taking place in the body of church. At times this reached such a pitch that those taking part did not always realise that Mass had started!

The **conduct of some young children** in church also came in for criticism. The PPC felt strongly that we should delight that so many young families came to Mass and that those who found them a distraction should perhaps sit nearer to the altar. Families should also be encouraged to sit where children could see what was going on and so better participate in the Mass. However, parents should also make sure that they didn't let the behaviour of their children disturb other worshippers and should perhaps use their common sense when considering whether to bring them to some of the very long services (for example during the Easter Triduum), which may not be suitable for young children.

Parishioners' **irreverent behaviour** during the distribution of Holy Communion at one of the Masses was also pointed out. At three out of our four weekend Masses parishioners come up in order, row by row, but at one of the Masses people all pile into the middle aisle rather than awaiting their turn, causing congestion and confusion as worshippers try to make their way down and make their way up through a crush. If you sitting at the back, please wait in the pew until the people at the front are back in their places – there is room at the Lord's Table for everybody!

Fr Chris added how much it hurt him to see people arriving for Mass late and leaving early – both at the weekend and increasingly during the week. This too showed a lack of respect for the Lord.

It was also pointed out that some Masses were always dominated by the same people taking up the gifts or distributing Communion. Whilst the contribution of these people was gratefully acknowledged, they were asked to politely consider inviting someone else to take their turn occasionally.

Parking was the other issue that was once again brought before the PPC. Since last July, new regulations had been brought in restricting weekend parking in the church grounds to allow the disabled to come to Mass without worrying that there would be nowhere for them to park. Parishioners had by and large responded well but there was still a small number - generally those who arrived slightly late - who felt entitled to park wherever they wanted, without any consideration for others. Parishioners who were not registered disabled but could not walk far, usually made sure that they arrived for Mass in good time to secure a parking space for themselves in the school car park. However, they had repeatedly found that they had been blocked in by other parishioners. Moreover, access for emergency services had also been blocked by parishioners' double and sometimes triple parking.

Parishioners are once again asked to park with care and consideration. If there is no space in the marked bays in the school car park, please park in one of the many free car parks only a minute or two's walk away.

Drivers are reminded that the parking bays along The Green belong to the residents and are not to be used by parishioners at any time.

Those who feel that our limited parking facilities ruin their Mass experience are encouraged to find a parish with better parking facilities.

Finally, the PPC extended it warmest congratulations to Martin Gill and Anthony D'Souza who had received Guild of St Stephen Silver Medals in recognition of their many years of faithful service as **Altar Servers** in this parish. They also expressed their thanks to Kiki Hocking who has for several years kept the albs beautifully clean and pressed. Kiki would like to retire from this role so we are looking for a new volunteer to take care of the Altar Servers' albs. If you can help, please have a word with Fr Chris.

Members of the PPC are: Graham Baker (Chair), Bridget Brinkley, Claire Cowdery, Chris Holland, Lie-Wah Johnson, Michelle Moore-Saxton, Patti Owen, Tanya Webster, Alice Danladi, Mervyn Rosario, Miles Hamlin, as well as Fr Chris, Sister Mary and the Parish Secretary.

Parish Annual General Meeting: The PPC's next meeting will be the Annual Parish Meeting on 14th July when the Parish Council will be able to report in more detail about its work and you will be able to raise your concerns directly. A Financial Report by the Chair of the Finance Committee, Miles Hamlin, will also be given. Please make a note of this date in your diary. All welcome!