



A Priest's appreciation of his parish 10 years on suggests the synodal value of similar feedback 1-year in to post - and on leaving

Parish websites rarely show any annual or other review by the parish priest, his appointed finance or optional pastoral committee or groups. Yet they can form part of the easy-access archive for present, past or future parishioners, visitors or others. A personal eye-view can be valuable – especially when it's prepared for the laity rather than a bishop.

The review below came by e-mail to Hugh Gibbons. Spontaneously, the priest sent his appreciation as a gift in case it might help with another project. NB1 It's biased to the happy side of things: listing strengths but not opportunities for improvement. But it does reflect what parishioners might welcome knowing, and be a reminder that a priest is only one transient part of the parish history. The benefits would be a courtesy for present and past parishioners, a help for an incoming priest, and a gift to help make parishioners feel good about themselves, their parish, and the Church.

NB2 The reference to the effort to respect everyone within the community, not least in relation to communication and transparent decision making – topics which are seen as signs of authentic synodalism in 2022 parish reports, diocesan and national syntheses, and Vatican Synod documents.

NB3 Short reviews like this should not be a major burden, with help from informed parishioners. They might be a valuable perspective one year after the priest's arrival, and on leaving the parish.

Having reviewed 15 years of ordained ministry I have good reason to regard my time at St X to be most

precious. For reasons best known to the Almighty, the community there best demonstrated, for me at least, what it means to witness God at work. With gratitude, pride and inspiration I recall:

- how the School and parish became visibly one community seeking active and innovative ways to genuinely represent the unity of Christ to the wider community.
- the pastoral ministry teams visiting the sick and housebound and how the community generally took seriously the call to reach out to those in most need.
- the fostering of ministerial vocations - how the parish was deemed to be appropriate placement for training purposes and two parishioners offering themselves for ordination, as priest and deacon.
- the heroic efforts to support the work of CAFOD and other NGOs to promote the agenda of people in the developing world.
- the parties in the presbytery where dangerously high numbers of people crammed into the presbytery following the big feasts of the year to enjoy each other's company over a glass or two.
- the huge youth club which took pride in the way it reached out -with what little we seemed to have - to the young people of the locality regardless of background.
- the visionary leadership offered by the Pastoral Council and Fabric & Finance group who tirelessly served the community with time, energy and skill to support the wider vocational work of the parish.
- the genuine effort to respect everyone within the community, not least in relation to communication and transparent decision making.
- the catechetical work that, thanks be to God, generated well over a dozen adults being received and or baptized and/or confirmed in just one year.
- the ever increasing folk choir with its uplifting improvisation and wide cross section of membership along with the choir offering a complementary repertoire for the more solemn occasions.
- how the financial health of the parish dramatically increased to support and make credible the bold ambitions to undertake even more Kingdom building work in the local area.
- how the parish supported those who were experiencing relationship difficulties
- the strength of our ecumenical relationships, not least with the local Anglican, Baptist and other churches.
- How the parish came together during periods of time without a priest; not least the incredible way members of the community gave time, energy and money to renovate the presbytery in order to welcome the next priest.