Dear Parishioner

The background to the Living our Faith (LoF) Appeal is that our previous Bishop Crispian noticed 5 years ago that Finances within the Diocese were short in 3 areas, namely Clergy Training and support, lay formation and renewing facilities, and thus he commenced the appeal . This was a carefully staged rolling 5 year plan with slow roll out throughout the diocese. Over recent years we have seen many references to LoF in Portsmouth People the diocesan news magazine.

When Fr Danny was appointed here he was specifically asked (well told more like) by Bishop Philip to get cracking with the scheme, but it was considered inappropriate to commence the appeal last year, after all Fr Danny had only just arrived and of course early on he was seriously ill, so we deferred the launch until now.

So, what is the money for? Bishop Crispian wanted to raise £9 million throughout the diocese, with 40 % for clergy support & training, 40 % lay formation and 20% for renewing facilities. To make the scheme attractive to parishes, 25% of all monies collected are returned to the Parish for local needs.

We are painting the outside of our site, we need to resurface the car park, we have refreshed the hall, all requiring considerable cash. We will gain significantly from this programme.

But what does that mean ?

We all know of Fr Benjamin`s ordination in the summer of 2013, he has finished his studies and is now serving the community of Basingstoke . It costs £25,000 each year to cover the training of our priests, and we did not have that kind of money available at the Diocese . Don’t forget that Fr Benjamin was studying for 7 years, at £25,000 each year . We are blessed to have 10 men in various stages of training for the priesthood.

Also there is the training for our Deacons. You will have seen Fr Danny asking for people to come forward if that Ministry had appeal, and whilst it does not cost anything like the same as for a Priest, there is still a significant cost . We have 6 men in training and 4, well let`s call them new recruits, selected this summer .

The final element of this part of the fund is Clergy ongoing formation. Canon law (that is our law of the church rather than civil law) calls for priests to continue with their own formation throughout their priestly lives, so there remains on-going training costs plus , the costs for priests to take a sabbatical . There is irony in that those priests who need to take a break are least likely to ask for one!

Turning to the second leg of the fund, for ongoing lay formation. There is now money available to train our catechists, those who run our programmes for First Holy Communion and Confirmation, parish missions. As the Evangelisation message from Pope Francis and fully endorsed by + Philip and Fr Danny develops traction, more Lay people than ever are being brought together to get our message over. There has never been any money available to help with the costs in training our people to help their Ministries within Parish life, but now with Larger Pastoral areas, priests sharing within their own pastoral areas, and communities combining their expertise, Lay people can add so much to our Parish.

The third fund is renewing facilities and this is a sort of general building fund to rebuild a church hall, replace the sound system, etc, when poorer communities cannot manage such large cash needs.

So that was why the appeal was set up. With roughly 90 parishes in our Diocese we are one of the last 10 remaining. We need to just get on with the appeal.

The Diocese selected an amount to be raised by each parish, calculated by reference to mass counts and income levels – in other words big, wealthy parishes were set bigger targets than poor small parishes. Our allotted amount is £165,000 , over a 5 year period. This is not a one off collection, but a prolonged appeal whereby we need regular bankers’ orders to be set up, and with as many as possible committing to the gift aid scheme where we gain a further 25% tax rebate from the HMRC.

We are not expecting everybody to commit to £100 per month, but nor are we going to reach our target if everybody signs up for a tenner a month.

Thus far the Diocese has received over 6400 pledges, with the average gift being £2035, which with a 25% tax element and divided by 5 years means an average monthly payment of £27. We will have some parishioners who can pay more and some who can only pay a modest amount.

The total of £165,000 looks daunting, but I have looked at 2 similar sized parishes with similar targets and each oversubscribed by a significant amount, with 200 and 173 separate gifts respectively. That is the number of families that we really do expect to join us on this journey.

We want to be successful especially as any monies raised over the target go 80% back to the parish, and we know that Fr Danny has all sorts of ideas to improve the site for our community.

In this pack you have background information, frequently asked questions, the latest bulletin from the diocese, as well as a donor registration form and a bankers order and my own details as contact point. Please read it, and let us have back your signed paperwork in due course in the coloured envelope provided. This is strictly confidential, only the Diocesan coordinator and myself will know individual commitments.

We have two people already signed up. Guess which two!

There will be a progress report each week.

This is a big ask, on top of your current support for the parish, but we are expected to finance our parish and our diocese, and I am confident the target is achievable, so I ask , on behalf of Fr Danny, the PPC and Finance Committee for your support . Thank you.

Best regards

Peter Hancock
Chair of Finance Committee

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