



The Newman Cluster of Churches

**Incorporating the parishes of St Margaret Mary, Perry Common, Christ the King,
Kingstanding and Our Lady of the Assumption, Maryvale**

**Report on the General Meeting of the Cluster held on 7th July 2024 at the St. John's Centre,
124 Warren Farm Road.**

In this special edition of the Supplement we are reporting on what was discussed at last week's meeting. We invite you to continue to think and pray about these matters and let us have your further thoughts before **17th August 2024**. The Clergy of the Cluster will be meeting on 31st August to review all comments received.

To remind you of the three matters on the agenda (details in last week's Supplement), they were:

1. *Redesign of our newsletters etc:*
2. *Programme of Cluster Masses:*
3. *Debrief from the Parish Summit held in Harrogate and sponsored by Divine Renovation and discussion of a proposal regarding reforming sacramental preparation*

Item 1

It was noted that an "at a glance" guide to what was going on week by week in the Cluster would be needed from the end of July. By then the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary would be leaving the Monastery at 99 Old Oscott Hill and so there would no longer be a place for weekday worship in Our Lady of the Assumption. Weekday Masses would be offered in the Convent of the Sisters Minor of St Francis, St Margaret Mary and Christ the King. It was also noted that CTK/OLAM produce an A4 double-sided newsletter three weeks out of four and an A3 folded newsletter once a month containing a Supplement concerning the Mission in OLAM and Cluster matters. In St Margaret Mary, there is an A5 newsletter which is primarily devoted to reproducing the liturgical texts of the Mass (they have no opportunity for using a PowerPoint) as well as notices.

The consensus after discussion was that in both St Margaret Mary and CTK/OLAM the Newsletter should be in A3 folded over/ A4 form every week. The front page should not only include all the Masses throughout the Cluster on the front page but also other events occurring during the week. That would enable the middle page to be used for liturgical texts, if required, or other items. The front page would be in the table format used by CTK/OLAM which means a new abbreviation: SMM for St Margaret Mary.

The members of the Parish Council from OLAM and other regular daily Mass attenders at the Monastery wished to express their appreciation for being able to use the chapel there for so long. They confirmed that they were happy to travel to St Margaret Mary and organise lifts for those that might need them.

Item 2

Deacon Gary explained that the thinking behind this schedule was primarily to protect our parish priests from being stretched too far by having to celebrate Masses which duplicate those in our sister Churches within the Cluster and which could be more worthily celebrated if congregations are combined. Where the date of the celebration fell on a weekday, the usual time for Weekday Masses had been retained. On 29th December, if the proposal is that the venue for the Mass be changed, the time has been retained and vice versa. This was aimed at being even-handed.

The consensus after discussion was that the schedule was broadly approved. There were numerous options in the schedule to say nothing of other masses in surrounding parishes. It would be important for plenty of notice to be given for the times of the Christmas Masses in particular including a much earlier production of the usual Christmas Card. There was a query about whether two Children's Masses on Christmas Eve were necessary. Deacon Gary said that this was due to the anticipated numbers at each which would not easily be accommodated in one building. However, we could review that after the event. The social opportunities would be a good evangelisation tool. We would need volunteers to help organise them. Finally, as regards the St Stephen's Day, it was hoped that every server in the Cluster would attend and be vested and seated in the Sanctuary even if they did not have a specific role to play.

Item 3

This item was given the most time for discussion. It was recognised to be a problem which had to be addressed. It was also recognised that it was a complex issue which would require lengthy consideration and much prayer. The consensus after discussion was that the experience of the catechists who prepare the children who are not one of the three Catholic primary schools is that having the parents sit in with the children is very positive. The feedback from the parents themselves is that they too learnt something. The parents have to make it a priority to come to Mass. We need to evangelise and energise them first. We know that in terms of the mission of the Church, many children come to Church just to get the sacrament "done". If by requiring more of the parents, they decline to participate, they will lose certificate of Catholic practice and so if they have not been evangelised themselves, their children would simply go to a non-Catholic secondary school. There would be value in catechising children and parents separately but in one larger venue. It is important that children learn how to pray from coming to Church. How do we make that happen? Signing it? That system does not help them understand why they are coming to Mass. Where's the disconnect? There was a common mind on adopting the principle of "when they are ready" to receive the sacraments. Likewise, greater involvement of the parish was highly desirable because not all RE teachers are practising Catholics. Query if we should pay lay catechists. Specific suggestions to remedy the disconnect: School Masses on a Sunday over the year – with the children taking the lead. Use the style of hymns they have at the Friday school Masses. Make the Hallow App more widely available. Perhaps catechism should occur within schools in an after-school club to show your commitment. We do not have the same relationship with the school to enable it to be used for parish activities. But directed time of teachers can accommodate after school clubs. It was emphasised that we are not discriminating. The focus is on exploring the faith. The journey of faith is a marathon not a sprint. We are talking about sensitive discernment of readiness. Children's lives are filled with so many other distractions. But for one hour it is vital that their spiritual lives refreshed. Finally it was observed that things must change which means that people must change.