

A short road to perfection. St John Henry Newman (27th September 1856)

“It is the saying of holy men that, if we wish to be perfect, we have nothing more to do than to perform the ordinary duties of the day well. A short road to perfection—short, not because easy, but because pertinent and intelligible. There are no short ways to perfection, but there are sure ones. I think this is an instruction which may be of great practical use to persons like ourselves. It is easy to have vague ideas what perfection is, which serve well enough to talk about, when we do not intend to aim at it; but as soon as a person really desires and sets about seeking it himself, he is dissatisfied with anything but what is tangible and clear, and constitutes some sort of direction towards the practice of it.

We must bear in mind what is meant by perfection. It does not mean any extraordinary service, anything out of the way, or especially heroic – not all have the opportunity of heroic acts, of sufferings – but it means what the word perfection ordinarily means. By perfect we mean that which has no flaw in it, that which is complete, that which is consistent, that which is sound – we mean the opposite to imperfect. As we know well what imperfection in religious service means, we know by the contrast what is meant by perfection. He, then, is perfect who does the work of the day perfectly, and we need not go beyond this to seek for perfection. You need not go out of the round of the day.

I insist on this because I think it will simplify our views, and fix our exertions on a definite aim. If you ask me what you are to do in order to be perfect, I say, first – Do not lie in bed beyond the due time of rising; give your first thoughts to God; make a good visit to the Blessed Sacrament; say the Angelus devoutly; eat and drink to God’s glory; say the Rosary well; be recollected; keep out bad thoughts; make your evening meditation well; examine yourself daily; go to bed in good time, and you are already perfect”.

*From the Parish Priest’s Desk.....Important Parish information.
Apologies as this has been rather hastily put together, so forgive the roughness.*

Dear Faithful,

The beautiful Easter Liturgy makes us ask God for a continued, ongoing youthfulness of spirit and that we be full of joy because we have been restored in glory as adopted sons of God through the paschal mystery – youth and joy; strength and courage; hope and love; faith.

Jesus’ resurrection has a profound effect on the very existence of all things – in their very being. Past, present and future now come together in an eternal present that unites all of creation in Him. All things have become one in Christ, restored, reborn, reinvigorated. Heaven and earth have become joined. There is no more fear, that has given way to peace.

But this also means that everything is connected; everyone is responsible for everyone and every thing: “For all is like an ocean, all flows and connects; touch it in one place and it echoes at the other end of the world.” —Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*. This is something that physics itself is realising.

This is rooted in the mystery of God – which is a mystery of relationship. Therefore, our dignity lies in our relationship with God through Christ. This paschal mystery is at the heart of our faith as we hear in Peter’s sermon. This has been made know to us.

Bishop Patrick is commissioning us to now journey towards being in essence a missionary parish – indeed one could say that that is what is meant by “parish.” But this first means we have to have had an encounter with the Risen Christ and experience the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in order to be filled with the zeal of God so that we cannot contain our need to pass this on to others. This journey opened last Thursday with a deanery adoration here at St Mary’s and will be followed up by our own visitation by Canon Eddy Jarosz on the weekend of the 9th/10th May.

As a parish we shall be expected to present to the Bishop a brief plan for our journey – where we are now; where we would like to be in the future. This also comes at a time when a number of things are coming together which will have a impact on this.



As you are aware, I am now Parish Priest of Woodhall Spa – Fr John O’Donnell kindly remaining resident in his retirement to assist with masses etc. But the Bishop has also asked me to become the next parish priest of Skegness and Spilsby in the late Summer when Fr George Woodall retires. This means a considerable area to cover. However, at the end of May/June, I shall be having an assistant priest to help. I like to think of this area as the Wolds and Coast. So we are presently planning and preparing for this cluster of parishes – there being no immediate plans to amalgamate – to work in a more unified way.

The Bishop has given permission, therefore, for a common plan for mission across the area when it would be difficult for each parish to have its own plan, personnel and resources to carry this out individually.

Boston although larger than the other two parishes – for various reasons – suffers from some of the same problems: the difficult of getting people involved; financial difficulties; people’s commitment to be involved in what goes on in the parish and the deanery.

This new situation means that we have to prioritise what we can manage to offer people whilst ensuring that all have an experience of what it means to be a parishioner. But what we should remember is that although certain things should be in place, there will naturally occur an organic growth as the journey continues.

But the following I consider to be **essential** to this:

- 1) People have the opportunity to encounter the Lord.
- 2) That each parishioner has available a simple program, manageable in their busy lives, of holiness. Supported by materials, days of retreat and further education and good communication. (This is what the Bishop terms discipleship learning to be a follower of Christ.)
- 3) The sacraments are readily available and understood
- 4) People are able to understand what it means to be missionary and to be able to carry this out.
- 5) We grow in our understanding of community, modelled on Chapter 2:42 of the Acts of the Apostles - teaching, fellowship, the Eucharist and prayer.

In order to make this cohesive and again based on the Acts of the Apostles, we need the glue of the domestic church to tie this together. Small groups of parishioners making up a **parish cenacle** in their local area. This will require further discussion and information but I see this as vital and again something which the Diocese is very supportive of.



I think that this is manageable, not only that, but I do think that this is what we are being called to. Of course there are hurdles and difficulties and most importantly, it is something that has to be embraced by people freely. However, with the size of the area, I see no other way of organising things.

Timing: April – consolidating the practical aspects of this; the nuts and bolts that need to be in place. May and June – consultation, presentation in more detail, aiming for a program in place for the Autumn.

Up until now, we have tried to get volunteers; appeals have been made, people have been directly asked etc but we remain under-staffed and despite the generosity of many, under-funded. So during this period of preparation, we shall be seeking to find out what people need/desire whilst at the same time giving them a simple choice: to volunteer a few hours; or to increase their contribution to the parish to fund areas that we need if we don’t have volunteers; or for those who are unable to do either through age, commitments, difficulties -to pray.

But to be a parishioner will mean to be involved. “Parishioner” can also have a wider sense – whilst not being of the Latin Rite, nevertheless benefitting from the parish here; e.g. weekly masses.

Easter showed Deacon Martyn, myself and others that we were running threadbare; thanks be to God, people seemed to have had a good spiritual experience at the liturgies. But we cannot continue to operate like this. We need to start reforming various areas.

We also have to realise that in many ways Saint Mary’s is a very different parish to a few years ago. For example, attendance at weekly masses or major feast days is almost entirely made up of those from abroad. At the most recent retreat, those attending from the parish were an African family, a lady from Kerala and a lady from Poland.

But this is also a good opportunity to once again thank those who hold the parish together and whose work is often unseen and therefore, often unnoticed. Also, those who so generously contribute financially to the parish and who have supported the Mission Appeal.

Change is a difficult thing and also, overseeing transition requires great prudence and charity. We have to learn to be understanding of other’s views. Above all we must remember that important concept: “The Common Good.” At the same time, change is necessary, if an organism is to survive. In Chinese, the word crisis also means opportunity. So let us entrust all this to Mary, the Mother of God and surrender it into her hands. God Bless, Fr Dominic.

