

Report of the Diocesan Council of Laity held in the Church of Our Lady of the
Annunciation Poringland on Saturday 8th November 2008

A list of attendees and apologies is included as Annex 1.

Bishop Michael welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with a prayer

Minutes of the last meeting: It was moved, seconded and approved nem con that the report of the May 2008 meeting be signed as a true account of the meeting.

Matters Arising: With respect to developments in the area of Marriage and Family Life since the last meeting, Bishop Michael referred to the fact that Mary Clark had been appointed Diocesan Co-ordinator with a remit to concentrate on three areas as follows

- 1 – Marriage Care
- 2 – Parenting Courses
- 3 – Support for Families with Special Needs

At the May meeting, Mary Mustoe-Arthur had recorded details of the key issues raised in the working groups and feedback sessions, and it was requested that this information, together with any other relevant information, be sent out with the reports to all representatives.

It was also reported from Holy Family Church, Brantham that they had tried to focus more on celebrations and make them very special occasions.

Reference was made to the booklet and DVD ‘The Spiritual Needs of Older People’. It was mentioned that the ‘take up’ in parishes had been minimal and few if any parishes had used it. Bishop Michael stressed its importance. Copies had been made in Newmarket and issued to parish groups, but to date there was no indication if they were being used.

Developing Spirituality and Prayer: Bishop Michael opened the topic by saying that of all the subjects discussed by the Council, this was one of the most important. Drawing attention to the notes from the Diocesan Pastoral Plan which had been distributed, he made the following observations,

- As a community we are trying to get across the idea of developing a personal – not private – relationship with God.
- In the Old and New Testaments, the relationship between God and the human race is described as a marriage. We are the ‘Bride of Christ’ and God wants a love relationship with us.
- Jesus, the divine bridegroom, calls us friends and companions. He is the Vine, we are his branches. God wants an intimate family relationship with us.
- God has extraordinary love for us; we need to learn how to respond.

- The Diocesan Pastoral Plan refers to the 'Martha and Mary' syndrome. Do we make time for God; do we make enough 'Sabbath' time?
- We need to re-familiarise ourselves with the ideas and guidance in the Plan
- Bishop Michael revealed that his parish visitations had alerted him to the fact that there are some wonderful things being achieved in the parishes already. The challenge is to deepen and further develop those initiatives in prayer and spiritual practices which have already been established, and to extend them into parishes which may not be so far advanced: 'Mass leads to Mission, and Worship leads to Witness'.
- At this point the meeting divided into Deanery groups to discuss the topic prior to re-gathering as a Council for a feedback and comments session.

At 12.45pm Bishop Michael led a short service of prayer before lunch. The meeting reconvened at 2.00pm and Bishop Michael commented at length on a number of ideas from the Deanery groups, comments that will form the basis of his report for distribution and discussion in parishes.

Date of Next Meeting: 2nd May 2009

Topic for next meeting: 2009 is the 5th anniversary of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan and the Plan now needs to be reviewed and revised. We need to ask ourselves: What have we done and what do we need to do? What now about the double diocesan twinning with Cambodia and the Holy Land? Bishop Michael is to provide a document early in the New Year, which will form the basis for a parish review, comments from which will form the basis for the May Council Meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 3.00pm