

St. Anne's, St. Austin's & St. Patrick's Parishes, Stafford
19th / 20th September 2020

Dear Parishioners of our Three Parishes,

We thank you for the many responses to our joint letter last weekend. The majority were very positive and understandably a few had some reservations. That is understandable. Change is not always easy. **We hope the following notes will help us all to see the bigger picture and look beyond our present individual concerns.**

We do not see change to weekend Mass times as an end in itself. We see it as part of our mission to promote and develop Catholic Stafford. It is also part of Archbishop Bernard's wish for all people of the Archdiocese to reflect on our baptismal calling to be Missionary Disciples of the Lord. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 and Lockdown it has not been possible to arrange meetings to discuss these matters, but the process is ongoing.

As part of that process it is proposed to reduce the number of Deaneries in the Archdiocese. This means Deaneries having more Parishes. It is proposed to make the present Parishes of Great Haywood, Stone, Eccleshall, Swynnerton, Uttoxeter and the three Stafford Parishes part of an enlarged North Staffs Deanery.

According to present available details this Proposed Deanery has:

36 Churches formed into 21 Parishes / Clusters

19 Diocesan Priests and 7 Priests belonging to Religious Orders

59 Weekend Masses of which 19 are Saturday Lunchtime / Vigil Masses, 36 are Sunday a.m. Masses and 5 are Sunday p.m. Masses.

As our three parishes form a natural unit and we are proposing to place them under the patronage of a saint or some spiritual theme, e.g. Blessed Robert Sutton, Blessed William Howard, The Holy Family, Holy Spirit etc. This will take some time to discuss and reflect on with you. It will enable each Parish to maintain its individual identity while working closely together and supporting one another. This is already happening in places like Leamington and Wolverhampton. In the meantime we can work towards producing a joint newsletter and website.

Another consideration to bear in mind is the **Priest Profile of the Archdiocese:**

34 Priests are under the age of 50

44 are aged between 50 and 60 years

54 are aged between 60 and 70 years

16 are aged between 70 and 75 years

7 are active over 75 years

As we share these facts with you, we commit our proposals to your prayers and the guidance of the Holy Spirit and as promised last weekend to review them with you at the end of the year.

Fr. Bob Devaney

Fr. Michael Neylon