

## **Chairman's Report 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020 of the Parish Pastoral council of St Helen's & St Margaret's**

We continue to find ourselves in ever changing times. Last December's election may seem to have answered the Brexit question but many other considerations and uncertainties remain both near at home and in the wider world. Pope Francis reminds us that life does not remain still and in relation to our way of life, there exists a need for us spiritually and materially to assess how we live our lives and their impact on the earth and its resources. He continues to emphasize the importance of the inclusivity of the church and the need for Christians to not only love God but also love God through their fellow man. There is no room for elite Christians who see others as unworthy.

I recall hearing Cardinal Vincent Nichols speaking recently on Radio 4's Sunday programme, commenting on the Pope's meeting with the Amazonian Bishops. Many spectators thought that the outcome of the Synod might indicate a direction for the wider church in relation to Women and Married priests. The Cardinal implied that the issue in relation to women and the Church was not really discussed, giving the impression it was not going to be for some time to come. In relation to married 'worthy men' he indicated that the door was still open, but at this moment in time was not likely to be realised beyond the more remote regions of South America.

With the beginning of Lent literally on our doorstep, it acts as a timely reminder that closer to home we too will shortly gain a degree more clarity with how things may move forward in our own diocese of Brentwood. Bishop Alan will, after Easter share his views on the parish partnership plans submitted at the end of December 2019. This is an area that will increasingly influence how we progress as a parish.

At the time of writing Fr. Emile is still on his much needed break. I am sure you will all join me in hoping that he has enjoyed taking a little time for himself and returns to us refreshed and with batteries recharged. I know Fr. Emile does not particularly like the winter months and he will happily be welcoming, along with us the brighter, warmer longer days of spring.

As a parish we continue to be grateful to those who give generously of their time in supporting our community both spiritually and financially. We are amongst the smallest parishes of the dioceses and like the clergy, our demographics are stacked towards the older end of the age spectrum, but we still manage to be surprisingly active. This said, we need to be realistic and recognize that there are times when it is necessary for us to adjust the cut of our cloth. To this end it has been decided not to continue with the Parish Funday. On behalf of everybody I would like to heartily thank Chris Beith for all that he has done in coordinating and running the event for so many years.

*B.C.Sainbury*