

The Pastoral Plan & The New Worthing Parish

(Newsletter note)

As a deanery of Worthing we are not unique in becoming a single parish, it is all part of our Diocese Pastoral Plan. Here's more detail on the plan. Bishop Richard issued his third Pastoral Plan for the Diocese, in January 2024, appointing Canon Kieron O'Brien as the Episcopal Vicar for Pastoral Planning. Canon Kieron explored the progress of the Plan: "Over the past 17 months, across the Diocese, our eleven former deaneries have started the process of becoming eleven new parishes, served by a team of clergy, who — while retaining their particular connection to a specific community — will be working more closely with each other than before.

Recently a meeting of the priests and deacons of the Worthing Deanery met with Canon Kieron O'Brien and Deacon Nick St John who have been working with with us to guide us towards becoming a 'New Parish'. Each of these new parishes is at a different stage, with the pace of change tailored to local circumstances, but it is hoped that by the end of the year (2026) all eleven new parishes will be formally established. Worthing is the last deanery to follow this path.

The Worthing Deanery covers a large and irregular area and so there is a need to create 'clusters'; groups of communities within a smaller geographical area, who will work more closely together to organise tasks such as preparation for each of the sacraments, the upkeep of buildings, the maintenance of Health and Safety and Safeguarding.

It must be recognised that the major reason for re-organisation is spiritual renewal for each and every one of us. We each have our own special gifts and these will be needed for a successful parish. The Clergy Team will run the parish and they will work with the Leadership Team, a small group composed of some clergy and some laity. This group will be driving the vision and will take some time to appoint and to start working together as a team.

This new model will hopefully facilitate some economies of scale and sharing of resources. However, if we see this purely as a structural change to enable greater efficiency, we will be missing the whole point of the Pastoral Plan. To this end, we need to return to three key words: Vision, Mission and Synodality.

“It is essential that the leadership (clergy and laity) in our new parishes can unite around a shared vision of what the Catholic Church, in this time and place, can look like, and feel like. Bishop Richard shares his vision for the Diocese in the opening pages of the Pastoral Plan; that is a good place to start, but the vision also needs to set the direction of travel locally, so that the Parish can be truly mission focused...This can only be achieved in a spirit of synodality, which is ‘church speak ’for ‘walking together and accompanying each other in faith. ’ Key to this are conversations in the Spirit (which can be one-to-one or in small groups) whereby we listen deeply to each other, to discover what is in our hearts for our new parishes.”