

DEWSBURY DEANERY

HOLY SPIRIT
Heckmondwike

ST AIDAN
Mirfield

ST JOSEPH
Batley Carr

ST MARY OF THE ANGELS
Batley

ST PATRICK
Birstall

ST PAUL
Cleckheaton

ST PAULINUS
Dewsbury

ST THOMAS MORE
Chickenley

7th March 2017

Dear parent, guardian and fellow parishioner,

RE: Dewsbury Deanery Reorganisation

The fact that you have received this letter, means that you are a parishioner in one of our parishes and have at least one child attending one or more of our Catholic Schools. This letter is to inform you of important changes that are currently taking place in the Dewsbury Deanery which will impact upon our parishes and also upon our schools.

In the Deanery, there are:	8 Parishes	5 Primary Schools
	1 High School	1 Hospital

These are currently served by 7 priests (1 being part-time).

As you may be aware, the number of priests in the diocese has fallen sharply over recent years, with more priests retiring than actually being ordained for the future. Due to this falling number of priests, we are having to reduce the number of priests in the area from 7 to 4. This will mean that parishes will have to be joined together in some way.

There is an on-going consultation taking place to see how this might be done. But, one issue which has come up time and time again, is how so few of the Catholic children/families who attend our schools actually come to church. Indeed in some cases, less than 1% of the Catholic children in a school actually attend church. This as you can imagine is not sustainable and will ultimately put our parishes and schools in jeopardy.

The older generation of parishioners are currently keeping our churches open. Unless the younger generation (those with children in our schools) now step up and get involved in the life of the church, the very existence of our parish churches will be under threat. This in turn will undermine the viability of our Catholic Schools. The two go together.

We do have committed parents and families who bring their children to church on a regular basis. We are very grateful for the efforts they make week in week out. I am sure they too are very busy. But they realise that both the church and the school are very important for their children. They are an example to us all, of parents/guardians who try as best they can, to live out their sacred vocation as parents of God's own children.

When you had your children baptised, you were asked by the priest in front of your families and friends:

“You have asked to have your child baptised. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him/her in the practice of the faith. It will now be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbour. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?”

To this question you all replied: Yes.

However it seems that although this promise was made on behalf of your children, many, indeed most have not honoured this promise. We see this week in week out with so few of our children actually coming to church.

The faith is still there we know. We see it when you wish to have your children baptised and when you want them to make their First Holy Communion. However, unless you start to attend church and support the life of the parish, there will be no church to get baptised in, there will be no church for the children to make their First Holy Communion. Sadly for the children, by the time they grow up and want to get married, there will be no church to get married in and by then, no Catholic Schools available for their children to attend.

This may sound somewhat stark. But ask yourself, how can the parishes and the parish schools survive if so many families will not support them? Your non-attendance at church will literally close them down. This would be a terrible shame because our parishes and our parish schools are something we are rightly very proud of as they do such wonderful work. But like everything, they need your support in order to survive.

The parish churches and the parish schools need all of our families and children to be involved in the life of the church. Indeed, the children are the future of our church. It is very true to say that the next generation of priests will come from the children of today. Ask yourselves, if the children are not going to church, where will our priests for tomorrow come from?

May we gently ask you to take stock and see how you could support your parish church. If you have been away for a long time, you are very welcome back. The church is better for your presence and the church needs you and indeed wants you to be part of our parish life. If you are unsure as to how to come back to church, feel free to speak to any of the Parish Priests. I know they will make you welcome and help you to feel at home in your parish church.

Quite literally, how you respond today, will have an effect upon what is available tomorrow, both for you and your children. Let us all play our part in continuing to build God’s Church and build upon the great work of our Catholic schools both for today and for the generations yet to come.

Thank you for your time and we hope and pray, to be with you at God’s Altar in church very soon.

With every good wish.

The Dewsbury Deanery Reorganisation Committee