Nottingham Diocese Pilot Project

Run in partnership with the Home Mission Desk, Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales

Introduction

‘Crossing the Threshold’ is the name of a project of the Bishops’ Conference Department for Evangelisation and Catechesis, to support ministry and outreach to non churchgoing (lapsed) Catholics. It is coordinated nationally by the Bishops’ Home Mission Desk, in partnership with a national Core Group, which is made up of representatives from:

1. Alpha for Catholics
2. Archdiocese of Southwark
3. Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN)
4. Catholic Evangelisation Services (CaFE)
5. Department for Evangelisation and Catechesis,
6. Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales
7. Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
8. Diocese of Portsmouth
10. Landings UK
11. Maryvale Institute
12. National Board of Catholic Women (NBCW)
13. RCIA Network

The project has been initiated in response to the reality that at least two-thirds of the baptised Catholic community in England and Wales is non-churchgoing - approximately four million people. This makes a significant constituency of people who, in most cases, self-identify as Catholic but never or rarely attend Mass.

“I am delighted that Crossing the Threshold is being piloted in our Diocese because proclaiming the Good News is at the heart of the Church’s mission. Along with You are Living Stones, this project will benefit every parish in our Diocese, so thank you for participating. Be confident in faith and rooted in prayer. With every blessing, Rt Rev Malcolm McMahon OP Bishop of Nottingham”

--

“There is not a crisis in the Church but the Spirit is calling us to do something... We should get back to preaching the Gospel.”

Bishop Kieran Conry, Chair, Bishops’ Department for Evangelisation and Catechesis
Pilot Project Aims
The aims of this pilot project are for each participating parish to:

1. **Awareness** - have a heightened awareness of their unique calling and role in the new evangelisation

2. **Understanding** - deepen their understanding of the Church's teaching on the new evangelisation

3. **Core Group** - recruit a core group made up of ordained and lay members in each parish to help animate and coordinate parish evangelisation

4. **Prayer Team** - recruit a prayer team / intercessors to support the efforts of the core group and to pray for all the needs of the parish (e.g. involving the housebound and local religious houses)

5. **Equip** - participants to move forward with confidence to initiate ongoing evangelisation initiatives in the form of a mission plan.

6. **Outreach** - enable each parish to run two outreach seasons (e.g. Christmas and Easter)

Measurability

It is very difficult to measure the efficacy of any work of mission. Each person's journey of faith is unique and although someone might be invited to return to the practice of their faith one day, it could be that they eventually respond some months or years later. It is therefore important that all those involved have clear and realistic expectations reference the perceived success of given activities. Most groups reaching out to non churchgoing Catholics have expressed that one or two people may respond after a season or two of outreach. Whilst we hope that many people will respond, and we will aim for that, this area of ministry is unpredictable. The key thing that we're asked to be is faithful. Success or not is God's choosing and in His hands.

A measure of success in a given year might be that each pilot parish (the participating team) is able to articulate that some headway has been made in each of the stated aims (as listed on page 2, points 1 – 6), and that they have been given the means and confidence to build on what has been initiated.
What will the pilot look like in practice?
How will it be delivered?

One of the quickest ways to ‘kill’ enthusiasm is to ask people to attend too many meetings. It is proposed therefore, that after an initial period of introductions and formation, we invite people to do something as quickly as possible. It is in the doing that we learn – through trial and error – how to evangelise.

DRAFT IDEAS / ITINERARY ADAPTED ACCORDING TO THE PARISH

SEASON ONE:
INTRODUCTIONS, FORMATION AND PLANNING

Step One – Leaders Meet (March 2013)
Julia Palmer (JP) and Clare Ward (CW) to meet informally with the parish priest to introduce the project. They will be encouraged to think about who might be good to invite to join a parish core team.

Step Two – Appeal to the whole parish (start March after meeting with PPs)
Make a parish appeal at the Sunday Masses to introduce the project, asking for people to come forward to participate and attend a parish evening or day about mission. This will include an appeal for prayer intercessors. Where possible, everyone will be given a role of some kind in the pilot.

Step Three – Formation day (April)
JP and CW to offer a parish formation day about evangelisation. This should preferably be a day because more can be achieved in a 10am – 4pm session. It is important that those being sought as core team members are specifically invited to attend that day.
To emphasise how each person has been called and chosen, to also cover discipleship and evangelisation
Provisionally we are looking at offering one day for all involved in the pilot on Saturday 20th April 2013 in Nottingham, with coffee served from 10am for a 10.30am start.
Team commissioning by the Bishop – details to be confirmed.

Step Four – Fellowship, prayer and planning evenings x 2 or 3 (May / June)
Follow up evening with the core team members (hand picked 6 – 8 people if possible)
CW / JP to have done some research on the local area and to present that to them. To do an audit of ecumenical, council activities and identified possible ‘threshold’ points.
Participants to do an audit of existing parish activities
The aim of the evenings is to invite team members to identify priorities – e.g. one thing in the parish to welcome non churchgoers, one thing in the Catholic school (if there is one), one thing in the wider community – so three things actioned in twos and threes.
Plan to be agreed for the year and tasks assigned. Not too much – keep it achievable and realistic. E.g. church noticeboard revamp, agree to diarise Christmas and Easter outreach, website and newsletter revamp, agree seasons of activity and holiday time etc.

Meeting one = reflection about your mission landscape and listening skills
Meeting Two = what are our priorities for the year ahead, recognising your gifts and talents + planning (introduce the SMART plan as a support tool)
Meeting Three = revising and finalising the plan and giving out tasks

This could possibly be done in two meetings.

Meetings are to be no longer than 1hr or 1.30hrs. They should begin with a prayer.

Each core group member is to be partnered with another so that they can pray for each other. Everyone to know each other’s birthday dates.

Step Five – Doing time (May / June)
Actioning what has been agreed for season one – leaving people space to do what they’ve agreed to do and to recruit other helpers without feeling rushed and pressurised. This includes the prayer intercessors.

Step Six – Retreat, review and next steps afternoon (end of June)
Time for prayer, feedback about activities and thinking, discussion about gaps in formation and skills and support needed, looking ahead to Christmas.

Step Seven – Skills session (early July)
Specific formation on key skills given as articulated on the retreat afternoon.

Step Eight – Pre-summer celebration (mid-July)
For everyone involved in the parish including a presentation of what has been achieved in season one.

(7 meetings / confidence building and formation time between March – July)
The year will be punctuated by three seasons

SUMMER BREAK (MID-JULY – SECOND WEEK IN SEPTEMBER)

SEASON TWO – FELLOWSHIP, FORMATION AND OUTREACH

Step One – Fellowship, prayer and formation (mid-September)
To include a session on a core evangelisation skill – e.g. what is the basic Gospel message? Sharing your testimony…

Step Two – Fellowship, prayer and planning (late September)
Focus = planning for Christmas outreach and different elements (publicity, contact points, follow up in January)

Step Three – Presentation to the whole parish (early October)
At Masses sharing about the Christmas outreach and inviting everyone to get involved – publicity, prayer board. Appeal for extra helpers. Presentation done by members of the team in twos at each Mass

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2013 – DIOCESAN DAY
It is likely that a diocesan Crossing the Threshold day will be offered in the autumn. The pilot parishes could potentially tell their ‘story so far’ on the day in a workshop.

Step Four – End of the Year of Faith celebration (end of October)
With an evangelisation emphasis – PP to prep for the Masses – evangelisation team to have a role

Step Five – Fellowship, prayer and team check-in (early November)

Step Six – Advent outreach (end of Nov – Christmas)
All action points to be done, fliers sent out, welcomers at Mass, etc

Three meetings between September - December

CHRISTMAS BREAK – CHRISTMAS WEEK AND NEW YEAR

SEASON THREE – WELCOME AND OUTREACH

(To be decided – it may be that the group chooses not to do as bigger outreach at Easter in their first year to allow them to review and consolidate their Christmas efforts. They should be encouraged to do something for Easter; e.g. local newspaper advert.)

Step One – Welcome x 2 or 3 evenings (mid-January – early Feb)
Offer a welcome evening(s) for returners

*Possible running of KIT or Landings programme or similar as discerned earlier in the year during this period.

Step Two – possible outreach
Repeat of some of the activities done at Christmas but this time with an Easter focus – gearing up to inviting people to come to the Easter services. Maybe smaller scale than Christmas to allow for review time. At this juncture the group might split – some running the welcome back evenings for returners and some looking towards Easter outreach.

Step Three – Lenten formation and reflection
Evening for the team during Lent as requested

Step Four – Easter
Climax of outreach activities

Step Five – Post Easter Welcome 2 or 3 evenings (Mid-April – early May)
Offer a welcome evening(s) for returners or adopt and run a programme

Step Six – Fellowship, year review and planning for the year ahead – an afternoon or day (May / June)
JP/CW to offer an evaluation form to fill in
The group may want to look at a longer term plan – 3 years?

Step Seven – To present to the parish
Thank the parish from the pulpit. Prepare a summary sheet / booklet of the year to hand out to parishioners and for the national team to potentially use for the next steps. Invite the pilot parishes to serve as ambassadors, available to anyone across the country who wants to try doing the same, but enquiries filtered by JP and CW. To affirm that each pilot parish is serving the church locally, in the diocese and nationally.
Communicate to them ‘what next?’ and invite involvement.

Step Eight – Pilot celebration with the bishop (July)
All the parishes involved in the pilot to meet for lunch with the bishop to celebrate their contribution, share a short presentation and to affirm the future.

Possibly eight meetings between January – July

Useful Link: SMART Plans: http://topachievement.com/smart.html

Clare Ward, Home Mission Desk, February 2013
Images: © Mazur/catholicnews.org.uk; stwilfscoalville.blogspot.com; http://www.nottingham- diocese.org.uk/10_Parishes/DDirAll.html

6 Crossing the Threshold