

Having read the draft Parish Masterplan, I wish to express my dismay at what is happening to our Catholic Parish of Ivanhoe. I commend Wennie & Trish Van Lint's views and Annie O'Donnell's, already expressed on this issue.

Do we still not comprehend, that we don't have enough priests to service 2 parishes in our local area anymore! Aside from the dwindling and aging number of priests in the diocese, we also have reduced numbers of parishioners and aging congregations. It is not viable into the future to maintain two or three Churches, let alone have two priests to perform services in these Churches.

To truly experience a sense of 'Parish' we need one Mass Centre, where we celebrate Eucharist together filling one Church with what remains of the 3 Ivanhoe parishes as one community as soon as possible. This is the only realistic solution to our present and future situation.

As Chris Dixon said we have been considering this issue for 10 years now, meeting after meeting, and still we have not grasped the reality of the situation, it seems. Unless we are brave and decisive, we will inevitably lose everything. Perhaps that is happening already.

Are we so selfish that we can't see how stressed and overworked our priests are! Why do we expect so much of them, more than ever before. They no longer have housekeepers or assistant priests. All we seem to care about is maintaining the status quo, keeping what we have, regardless of the consequences to our clergy. Can't we make their lives easier, so they are able to concentrate solely on their pastoral, liturgical and sacramental duties. Surely that is what we most need from them, anyway.

Realistically, we must begin support and training for those lay parishioners interested in presiding over our faith community's gatherings for liturgical and prayer services in the future when we have even fewer priests. We must initiate a slow transition, so we have enough parishioners confident and ready to fill in when required. We need to prepare ourselves for the future, establish structures, in every way, financially and administratively as well.

Most of all, we have to find workable, reasoned solutions to the problems we face, taking into account the undeniable truth of the statistics available to us. We must not bury our heads in the sand pretending reality is not what it is. We cannot relive the past.

Why don't we realise what exciting times we live in, calling on the Holy Spirit for the courage and vision to create a blueprint for other Parishes to follow. I am reminded of the early Christian Church, where communities were small and resources limited, where people of faith worked together keeping in mind the Gospel teachings of Jesus. They forged ahead and the Holy Spirit helped them live out their faith. That is real Church and we now have the chance to achieve something like that. Let's not miss that opportunity!

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