



# World Meeting of Families 2018

## Holy Family Working Group Report



A Working Group was established in July 2017 to generate ideas and organise events and liturgies as part of the parish local preparation for the World Meeting of Families 21<sup>st</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> August 2018, as well as to arrange travel to Dublin for parishioners attending the Papal Mass on 26<sup>th</sup> August.

Members: Fr Paul Strain, Bernard McGuinness (Chair), Elaine McEntee (secretary), Bernadette Cunningham, Ann D'Arcy, Aideen D'Arcy, Brendan Dowd, Pauline Dowd, Bronach McGuinness, Pat McGuinness

A wide and varied programme of events was organised and took place throughout the year in the lead up to the WMOF18 and it is hoped that some of these initiatives can be developed and continued as a legacy of the World Meeting of Families.

### Prayer/Liturgical Events:

- The official WMOF18 family prayer was included in the bulletin and recited at the concluding rites of all weekend Masses.
- The parish hosted the WMOF18 icon as part of its journey around Ireland and it was on view in Holy Family Church for private and public prayer from 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> October 2017. Several school groups made visits and parishioners had the opportunity to place their intentions in the petition box. A short prayer service took place on both evenings.
- A family prayer service took place monthly on Sundays from October through to August, with various themes including:
  - Blessing of Toys – January
  - Teachers – February
  - Caring Professions – March
  - Pro-life – April
  - Exams – May
  - Corpus Christi (commissioning of Extraordinary Eucharistic Ministers) – June
  - Creation – July
  - WMOF18 logo – August
- A Grace Before and After Meals prayer card was specially designed and produced. These were distributed at Masses on the First Sunday of Advent as a form of liturgical New Year resolution to encourage family prayer.
- Bambinelli Sunday (Third Sunday in Advent) - parishioners were invited to bring the baby Jesus figures from their cribs at home to be blessed at all Masses and were encouraged to take their figurine home in a special favour bag provided, to be the first present opened on Christmas Day.
- Christmas Masses – 600 WMOF18 icon prayer cards provided by WMOF18 were distributed.

- St. Patrick's Day - entertainment with traditional music, hospitality with Irish stew and themed colouring sheets for children were provided after 11am Mass in Holy Family Church.
- Easter Masses - 600 holy water bottles and home blessing cards were distributed.
- Youth Mass 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2018 - all parish youth groups and their families (scouts, cubs, beavers, guides, briginis, cygnets, Holy Family Youth Centre, GIFT programme and PJP11 award students) were invited and actively participated in Sunday Mass at 12 noon in Holy Family Church. Refreshments were provided and the event was well attended with good representation from the various groups. The parish Scout unit have since requested the reinstatement of regular Mass parades (one per term).
- Exam Prayer Partners initiative – students were encouraged to write their names on prayer intention cards at weekend Masses on 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> May which were then displayed on dedicated noticeboards in both churches. Exam prayer cards were also distributed. At the following weekend Masses, and subsequent daily Masses, parishioners were invited to take a card from the display board and pray for their named student every day until the end of the exam season in June. Remaining cards were placed in the Adoration Chapel.
- May Altar initiative - a notice was placed in the bulletin and announcements made from the altar reminding parishioners of the May Altar tradition and encouraging them to share photographs of their May altars on social media. Information sheets adapted from the WMOF18 resource, including Marian prayers, were also made available in both churches.
- Feast of Corpus Christi (Ice Cream Sunday) – parish First Communicants were invited to come to Sunday Masses in Holy Family Church wearing their communion outfits. Masses were well attended and refreshments including ice cream were provided.
- The WMOF18 Pray-A-Thon initiative was high-lighted in the bulletin and resources printed and made available in both churches.
- The WMOF18 opening Mass for the North Belfast Pastoral Community was celebrated in Holy Family Church on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2018 and was very well-attended by both clergy and parishioners from the area. All the Pastoral Community parishes were represented through participation in the Liturgy of the Word and the Offertory Procession. Candles bearing the WMOF18 logo were distributed to the congregation and brought forward individually to be lit from the WMOF18 candle for the Prayers of Intercession. Refreshments were served afterwards.

### **Fringe programme:**

A programme of *fringe* activities was undertaken to complement the Prayer / Liturgical programme to address current social issues and aimed at reaching out to a wider group of people who may not regularly attend the Church. Events undertaken included:

- Trocaire Art and Poetry Exhibition – An Emotional Journey:  
An exhibition of art by Marjorie Lavelle Pain, complemented by poetry composed by Trocaire staff exploring gender based violence at home and abroad was launched in

Holy Family Church Gathering Space on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2017 and viewed by many over the subsequent 6 days.

- Mothers' Day Celebration – "At our Table" event 11<sup>th</sup> March 2018  
Food from Syria, Ethiopia and Kenya as well as Mothers' Day treats were served after all weekend Masses. Promotional bookmarks were distributed to encourage participation in the Trocaire Romero Award as well as to focus attention on issues of food security in the countries highlighted. £400 and a 210kg donation of food and non-food items to the Food Bank were also raised at the event to address local needs. Very positive feedback was received from parishioners and the proposal for regular periodic contributions to the Food Bank from the parish has been referred to the Society of St Vincent de Paul as the organisation best placed to explore and coordinate this.
- Care Fair – 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> April 2018  
Fifteen organisations who provide support, advice and information to people who may be suffering from issues in relation to alcohol and substance misuse, the trauma of suicide and self-harm participated in this event in Holy Family Church Gathering Space. Refreshments were served after all Masses to encourage engagement and the event was widely supported. Parishioners also came as an expression of solidarity and to chat with organisations to offer encouragement and in some cases to volunteer their services.
- Octopals  
Around 20 people responded to a notice in the bulletin to participate in the scheme to knit hats and Octopals for premature babies. The scheme is being undertaken on an individual basis rather than in a group setting.
- Laudato Tree Project – Great Green Wall  
In Ireland the Society of African Missions is spear-heading this project to plant one million trees as part of the re-greening of the *Sahel*, located just below the Sahara Desert and one of Africa's most parched regions where lives and livelihoods are being lost due to increasing drought and soil erosion. The project is an initiative of the African nations and will be rolled out by various parishes, schools and community groups around Ireland. When completed, the Great Green Wall will span 8000km crossing 13 countries. Ireland will be participating in the region of Southern Burkina Faso and Northern Ghana. To highlight our proposed participation in this initiative, a tree was planted in the garden of Holy Family presbytery after the WMOF18 opening Mass on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2018.
- Lough Derg Day Retreat – 20<sup>th</sup> May 2018  
The retreat programme focused on preparation for the WMOF18.
- Syrian Project  
As an act of solidarity with the people of Syria and in collaboration with Sister Annie Demerjian of Aid to the Church in Need, the parish hoped to sponsor the Khoukaz from Aleppo to attend the WMOF18 in Dublin. A collection was held over the weekend of 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> August to raise funds to help meet travel and subsistence expenses. Unfortunately the family's visa application was unsuccessful and they were unable to travel to Ireland. Our objective will be realised by donating the amount raised to assist the work of Sister Annie Demerjian in supporting elderly people and families who have been affected by the war and destruction in Aleppo.

## Other Events/Initiatives:

- The weekly bulletin included a countdown indicating the number of days until the opening of WMOF18, as well as dedicated space for announcements relating to WMOF18.
- Pope Francis' Thought for Today was uploaded onto the parish Facebook page.
- Dedicated noticeboards in both churches were regularly updated with information concerning initiatives and events relating to WMOF18.
- Parish Poetry and Art competition - entries for poems or pictures on the theme: 'My Family, My Parish' were invited from children P1 to Year 8. The response was overwhelming with over 1000 entries received. All entries were gathered into files for viewing and the winning entries were displayed on the noticeboards. Prizes were awarded at the December family prayer service.
- WMOF18 themed cards, provided by WMOF18 office, for newly married couples and the newly baptised were issued to parishioners celebrating those sacraments throughout the year. The Welcoming Group are working on a parish commemorative card for baptism and it is hoped that something similar could be produced for couples celebrating marriage.
- Amoris cubes were purchased by the parish for each primary school class and the GIFT programme. The WMOF18 office also provided cubes for every First Communicant.
- WMOF18 themes were incorporated into the parish GIFT programme.
- Family New Year's Resolutions sheets were downloaded from [www.amoris.ie](http://www.amoris.ie) and made available in each church, to encourage families to make New Year's resolutions together.
- An interdenominational discussion evening "Let's Talk Family" took place on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2018 in Holy Family Church Gathering Space with input from six key speakers from various backgrounds to explore what it means to experience our local community as family. Invitations were extended to the local Christian churches.
- Newington Day Centre Family Fun Day took place on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2018 and was a successful collaborative event between the parish and the Day Centre.
- Parishioners were invited to walk to Mass on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2018.
- A local family were allocated tickets to represent the parish at the Festival of Families in Croke Park, Dublin on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2018.
- Travel arrangements and attendance at the Papal Mass in Dublin on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> August 2018 was organised for around 300 parishioners from the North Belfast Pastoral Community.
- The Newington Day Centre in conjunction with the welcoming and hospitality teams organised a lunch and broadcast of the Papal Mass on 26<sup>th</sup> August in Blessed Trinity College which around 120 people attended.

## Legacy Recommendations

### **Liturgy Committee:**

1. **Bambinelli Sunday**  
A sub-group has been formed to continue the initiative this year, with plans to have 600 favour bags for baby Jesus figures available for distribution.
2. **Blessing of Toys**  
As part of the celebration of the Feast of the Holy Family this year, the Blessing of Toys will be incorporated into the weekend Masses of 29<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup> December 2018 and perhaps could become an annual event. Hospitality will be provided at the Sunday Masses in Holy Family Church.
3. **Annual Youth Mass**  
A second Mass to celebrate the parish youth groups has been provisionally arranged for Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at 12 noon in Holy Family Church and could become an annual event. Pauline Dowd and Elaine McEntee can help coordinate this with the relevant youth group leaders as required.
4. **Easter water and home blessing card**  
The sub-group will coordinate this initiative for Easter 2019. 1200 holy water bottles will be required to allow distribution at all Easter Masses and to the sick and housebound.
5. **Prayer partners for examinations candidates**  
Although overall a success, some amendments will be required to enhance and refine the initiative and minimise confusion. Advance planning and perhaps the production of a prayer pack might help to streamline the process.
6. **May Altar initiative**  
This could continue to be promoted through a bulletin notice and announcements from the altar. The May Altar information sheet is available for printing and distribution.
7. **Corpus Christi**  
The Feast of Corpus Christi will be celebrated on 23<sup>rd</sup> June next year, with the parish First Communion taking place on 11<sup>th</sup> May and 18<sup>th</sup> May, therefore Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2019 might be considered as an alternative date to invite First Communicants to Mass in their communion outfits. The hospitality team can provide refreshments and ice-cream (Ice Cream Sunday).
8. **Pro-life**  
Speakers on this theme could be invited to weekend Masses.
9. **Walk to Mass week**  
As uptake was limited, consideration could be given to linking this with another theme e.g. creation/care for the environment/harvest to enhance the initiative.

## **Pastoral Council:**

1. Pastoral Community  
As the North Pastoral Community WMOF18 opening Mass was a great success and viewed very positively, consideration could be given to celebrating future events as a pastoral community.
2. Interdenominational discussion  
Following on from the "Let's Talk Family" discussion evening, this theme could be developed in the future, perhaps in conjunction with the Four Bridges and Four Corners initiatives.
3. St. Patrick's Day  
Hospitality after Mass in Holy Family Gathering Space will be continued, but consideration could also be given to organising an evening celebration in the parish centre.
4. Communication  
The promotion of the parish Facebook page could be enhanced by e.g. announcements from the altar, a competition to like and share, etc. The use of a parish app might also be considered to improve communication with parishioners.
5. Care Fair  
Similar events on various themes including Addiction, Dementia/Mental Health issues, Suicide Awareness, Benefits, etc. could be held annually/bi-annually to offer information and support on current social issues.
6. Syrian Project  
Recommendation that the money raised to support the Khoukaz family's attendance at WMOF18 should be sent directly to Sister Annie Demerjian to assist with her community work undertaken in conjunction with Aid for the Church in Need. Consideration given to a medium/long term partnership could be established in solidarity with the people of this war torn region.
7. Laudato Tree Project – Great Green Wall  
Remaining issues to be resolved include: funding, location of planting, implementation plan, scope and role of participants, role of schools, parish groups etc.
8. Lough Derg Retreat  
Annual (August)
9. Family Fun Day  
Consideration could be given to organising a parish family fun day