

I'm delighted to be you this morning. The Presentation Sisters have a long tradition here in Buxton, we first came here in 1898 and were here for over a hundred years until the closure of the convent in 2004 which was a sad day for us. Some of you will know many of the sisters who have lived and worked here. Mindful that we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us I'm very grateful to them for their presence here and all they accomplished. I'm also thankful for our Presentation Associates here in the Parish who continue to companion us and for their generosity over the years especially in supporting our mission in Zambia.

My name is Mary and along with Sr Susan who unfortunately is unable to be here this morning, we live in Shirebrook, in the presbytery alongside St Joseph's Church and the school. Two years ago, we became part of the St Philips Parish in Mansfield – along with the churches in Warsop and Bolsover, so 4 churches or 4 Parish Communities now make up the wider Parish which is served by two Priests. Such re-organisation has and is, on-going across the Diocese, so as we begin to reflect on your new journey we do this mindful of the wider church that we're part of and needless to say mindful of the current situation in our world not least the disruption, uncertainty and anxiety due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

All of us have had to cope with and adapt to so many changes this year and I'm sure for some of you this re-organization, is just another thing we have to deal with. We know that change is part of life and some changes are easier to cope with than others. With the clocks going back last night we are moving into the longer darker evenings which many people dread. The cycles of nature have much to teach us about change and it was interesting how many of us have sought refuge in our gardens or in nature during these past few months. Each season has its own beauty and all around us the vibrant colours of autumn remind us of the richness and abundance of life. We have three magnificent lime trees at the bottom of our garden that are shedding their leaves so you can imagine the lawn - either as a mess or as a beautiful carpet of fallen leaves. As the trees lose their fulness they also let more light into the garden and we can now see the life beyond our garden. The mystery of life, death and new life is embedded in nature, in the changing of the seasons and is also reflected in the liturgical seasons of the Churches year.

One of the fears we faced when the four churches came together in our area was that as a small Parish community, we would be swallowed up and lose our identity. Each Parish

community has its own life, sense of community and belonging and whilst you don't want to lose that, we also have to guard against becoming too insular, too set in our ways ...with the attitude*we have always done it like this*. It's certainly not easy but as we have embraced this journey we have found new ways to ensure there is space for each community to be listened to, and to develop both separately and together.

In his recent encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of community, of kindness, of hospitality not only to the stranger but hospitality to viewpoints and beliefs that are different to our own, to encounter people with respect, accepting who and where they are without losing our own identity. In some ways this could well be a good description of what we find in a parish community.

Pope Francis also writes... *No one can face life in isolation... We need a community that supports and helps us, in which we can help one another to keep looking ahead.*

A Parish is a living structure and we are all being stretched to expand the boundaries, to look beyond ourselves, to learn from each other, to work together for the common good, to build community and to foster communion.

In the Gospel we are reminded of the call to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves. These two commandments are the foundation for living our lives as Christians.

Remember the lawyer who asks Jesus ...and who is my neighbour...Jesus replied with the story of the Good Samaritan- as recounted in the gospel of Luke and is a story we're all very familiar with. In his encyclical Pope Francis uses the story of the Good Samaritan to expand our notion of who is my neighbour - which makes for challenging reading at times.

In light of all of this, we invite you as the Parish Communities of Chapel and Buxton to engage in a process called – Our Hopes for our Journey Together. Since we cannot meet together in groups, we have prepared some questions for you, we invite you to reflect on them and to send your written responses to us. Having gathered your wisdom, we will reflect together with the Parish Pastoral Councils and with Fr Gerry and then prepare a report for you in December. All of this information is written on the sheets that you will be given at the end of Mass. Our hope is that by sharing your experiences, your wisdom as well as your

hopes and dreams, it will help to give more direction and focus for the journey that lies ahead. So we ask you to take them with you, if you know someone who is not at Mass could you take an extra one and drop in into them.

Respond to as many questions as you wish. You can post the responses to us – address is given on the response sheet, email them or you bring your response sheet next week to Mass and there will be a box to collect them. We look forward to receiving your responses.

On behalf of Sr Susan and myself we pray that as a faith community you will embrace the reality of this new journey with hope, courage and trust.

God bless you all and thank you for listening.