



## **Catholic Parish of Ivanhoe**

**In response to parishioner concerns about the proposed changes to the Catholic Parish of Ivanhoe, the Parish Leadership Group has prepared the following Questions and Answers for parishioner information.**

### ***1 Why do we have to change from what we have now?***

Five factors have contributed to these changes:

- i. In 2005 the new Catholic Parish of Ivanhoe established a Parish Mission and Vision (see the attached Mission Statement). Without change the Parish will be unable to implement that Mission. Our values as the Catholic Community of Ivanhoe require us to do things differently and to embrace the social changes around us for the benefit of the next generation of the Catholic Community of Ivanhoe.
- ii. There is a declining number of Priests available for Parish ministry. Our Parish has been fortunate to have both a Parish Priest and a Priest in Residence. This is not likely to continue into the future. It is likely that a full time Parish Priest for the Parish will not be sustainable beyond the next 5 years. The Deanery is currently examining better ways to share Priestly services throughout the Parishes of the Deanery, that is not every Parish would have its own Parish Priest.
- iii. The number of active Parishioners is declining and the Mass attendances have also fallen. We have under 10% of Catholics in the Parish attending Mass regularly. Most of our regular attendees are elderly. To arrest this decline the Parish has an obligation to seek out new strategies to enliven the Parish community which will attract the next generation to the Church.
- iv. The Parish financial situation is precarious. We are unable to do the essential work of a Parish as we lack adequate funding. We should be active in the community with a Pastoral Associate and youth, young adult, young married and aged persons programs. We should also be protecting our assets but our financial situation does not enable us to undertake the necessary maintenance program. We have a need to improve the amenity and welcoming facilities across the churches and we are unable to afford these works.
- v. We determined some time ago that we wanted to be masters of our own destiny, developing a collaborative leadership model with our Parish Priest as we faced the changes before us. The alternative to us having input to the changes is for us to do nothing and await the decisions from the Archdiocese. These will surely come as the number of active Priests falls and the Parish becomes financial unsustainable.

### ***2 Should these changes have been the subject of ‘a vote of all Parishioners’?***

The Parish has a Leadership Group drawn from across the wider Parish community, which has accepted the responsibility to lead this Parish into the future. The Leadership Group is open to all parishioners and has representatives from the three Church communities. Nominations for the Leadership Group were called for at the beginning of this year. Nominations did not exceed the positions and no elections were necessary. The tenure is two years with half elected annually. Half the Group is open for re-election as of February 2008 when all parishioners will again be eligible to nominate. The Leadership Group has consulted widely on the issues before the Parish and considered the positions put to it verbally and in writing. Putting all the issues to be dealt with to a vote will not change the need for decisions to be made and action to be taken.

### ***3 Why must we have one Mass Centre?***

The Parish of Ivanhoe is one Parish and it is appropriate for the Parish to assemble and pray as one. The declining number of Mass-goers and their increasing age, as well as the very limited pool of volunteer parishioners to support Sunday liturgies has necessitated the ‘one Mass Centre’ decision. The Leadership Group believes that by consolidating Masses in the one Church we can focus our efforts and build the involvement of a wide range of individuals and harness the strength of numbers to foster the growth of the Parish.

A single strong liturgical team at the one church will give the Parish a much better capability to make the liturgy alive and relevant for the whole Parish community rather than pockets of the Parish.

The amenity of the churches requires improvement with heating, ventilation and a modern audio/visual system. It is not financially possible, or sensible given our limited numbers at each of the current churches to undertake the upgrade at all three.

#### **4      *Are there alternatives to the proposed “one Mass Centre” and the proposed Mass times?***

The Leadership Group unanimously agreed to the establishment of a single Mass Centre for Sunday Masses after considerable discussion and consideration. There is no proposal to change this decision.

Following representations from Parishioners, it is proposed to change the Mass times from those published on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September with the Weekend Masses as follows:

St Bernadette’s Church	6.30pm (Saturday evening)
Mary Immaculate Church	<b>9.00 am</b>
Mother of God Church	<b>10.30 am</b>
Mary Immaculate Church	5.00pm

The date for the new Mass times to be introduced is the 1<sup>st</sup> of December, 2007 - the First Sunday of Advent. As from the Feast of Pentecost 2008 (11 May 2008) all weekend Masses will be at Mary Immaculate Church at the above times.

#### **5      *Why is the Mary Immaculate Church nominated as the Parish Mass Centre?***

Mary Immaculate Church is nominated as the ‘One Mass Centre’ because it is central to the Parish, has a prominent position, good size, and the potential adaptability for multipurpose usage at the rear of the site. Its location in the main street of Ivanhoe makes a strong statement about the presence of a Catholic community in the area.

#### **6      *Is there enough parking at the Mary Immaculate Church?***

There is adequate parking for the Saturday and Sunday Masses at Mary Immaculate Church at present. However as the Parish grows and all the Masses are at the one church, parking may become an issue. The Leadership Group is engaging an architect to advise on all matters relevant to the refurbishment of the Mary Immaculate church and following advice, will consider the options for parking. There is ample street parking and parking behind the Ivanhoe shops near to the Church.

#### **7      *What is planned for the schools in future?***

There are no current plans to make changes to the schools. The formation of children in the faith is a key mission of the Parish and is strongly supported by the Parish Leadership Group.

A change will be made to the income received by the schools from the Parish, details of this are yet to be finalised. In the past, the primary schools were major beneficiaries of the Parish financial support. In times gone by the Parish community and the school communities were indistinguishable but there has been a trend over the past decade where these communities operate in an increasingly separate way. This ‘separateness’ has revealed different financial priorities for the different communities. The level of financial support from the school community towards the Parish is negligible as there are very few school families that are also members of the Parish “Thanksgiving” program. The current level of Parish financial support to the schools is to be reviewed in light of direct Parish financial needs and the current level of support is likely to reduce to nil over the medium term. The Leadership Group will ensure the Parish is in a sound financial position to support capital improvements to the schools, when necessary, in response to educational requirements.

Any changes that might be proposed in future will be subject to the policies and requirements of the Catholic Education Office as well as the school Education Boards/Committees and the Parish.

## **8      *What does it cost to run the Parish?***

The current income and expenditure figures were distributed at the meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September and copies are available if requested. To operate the Parish effectively, having a Pastoral Associate, Parish Manager, running active community programs, paying the priest, managing the parish, paying Diocesan levies and maintaining the assets, the costs are currently of the following order:

Salaries/on costs	\$200,000
Church costs	\$20,000
Cleaning	\$15,000
Office/Admin	\$35,000
Bank Charges	\$1,000
Levies	\$30,000
Insurance	\$35,000
Repairs and Maintenance	\$200,000

Total annual costs are currently of the order of \$536,000. Each year these costs increase.

In addition, there is a considerable maintenance debt that will have to be addressed as a ‘once off’ cost, to bring the assets up to standard so that ongoing maintenance can sustain the asset. Further, improvements to the amenity of the Mass Centre will require capital funds.

## **9      *Why were there no detailed financial options put to the meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 2007?***

A summary of the overall position of the Parish finances was provided at the meeting. The Leadership Group considers that this is sufficient to demonstrate the serious situation we have before us. Financial Statements have been distributed to parishioners over the past several years. The last statement distributed was January 2007.

The details of income and expenditure and the relationship these to our assets are being developed and reviewed at present by the Parish Finance Committee. This is proving to be complex as some of the costs and incomes relate to matters long established, when the three church communities were separate Parishes operating in a completely separate way. The Leadership Group accepts that it is essential that the true financial position be determined as soon as possible. The overall Parish financial status will influence our decision-making in respect of the long term viability of the Parish assets.

## **10     *What properties are to be sold?***

The Leadership Group has proposed selling the house in Wilfred Road (the Mother of God Presbytery) to provide a source of funds to support a range of Parish developments including: improvement of the one Mass Centre; employment of a Pastoral Associate; employment of Parish Manager; support the establishment of a range of other Parish building initiatives such as music liturgy, youth liturgy and children’s liturgy support teams. There are no current plans to dispose of any other assets. However, in the next three months, the Leadership Group is analysing the assets held by the Parish to establish a master-plan, and decide which assets should be maintained for the long term future of the Parish.

The Parish Leadership Group fully understands the seriousness of decisions regarding disposal of Parish assets. The Leadership Group is acutely aware of its responsibility to the Parish to act as a steward of these assets and will seek to retain all assets to ensure the Parish has the financial capability to adequately maintain them.

## **11     *Does the Parish get the revenue from the sale of property?***

All property is owned by the Roman Catholic Property Trusts Corporation for the Diocese of Melbourne and the Trust provides valuation and management services to Parishes. Fixed levies are payable to the Archdiocese by the Parish in the event of disposal of Trust assets. The Parish Leadership Group and the Diocese will negotiate arrangements regarding these matters and apply the funds from the sale of assets to Parish development.

**12 *What is the future of the Korean community at St Bernadette's church?***

The Korean Catholic Community located at St Bernadette's Church is currently represented on the Parish Leadership Group by Francis In. The Leadership Group will consult with the Korean Community about their future plans. Their current intent is to develop their community at the St Bernadette Church

**13 *Will the names of the churches be retained in future?***

Whilst the Leadership Group has not formally considered this matter, there has been consideration that the new single community should meet under a new name, to reflect the new and unified Parish identity. If the Catholic Parish of Ivanhoe should be renamed it would be logical that the Church of Mary Immaculate may change its name. Name changes for the other churches would not be considered necessary in this context.

**14 *With Mass celebrated at the Mary Immaculate church on Sundays, what will happen to the Mother of God and St Bernadette's Churches?***

The churches at Mother of God and St Bernadette's are the formal links between the schools and the Parish community and as such it is essential that the relationship be retained for as long as possible into the future. Both these churches will be used for celebration of Mass for the school children on weekdays and for general weekday Masses, as well as being available for funerals. However, in the longer term, the revenue must be available to maintain these assets. A situation that enables the churches to be used by the schools as well as generating income to support their maintenance and/or contribute to Parish income is essential. The Leadership Group will work to this objective.

**15 *With Sunday Masses all at Mary Immaculate Church it will be more difficult to get to Mass for some parishioners – will there be any assistance?***

The Leadership Group acknowledges that for some parishioners there may be practical transport issues that will make it difficult for them to easily travel to Mass. This issue will be overcome with the support of other parishioners who will be asked to contribute to a 'roster' to collect parishioners who would otherwise be unable to get to the church. Such cooperation and generosity should be the hallmark of any Christian community – the Leadership Group is sure that we will have no difficulty in making these arrangements for those in need.

**Conclusion**

Fathers John, Len and the Leadership Group have all committed themselves to work towards the fulfilment of our Parish Mission. Our priority is the development of the Parish to support our parishioners - active, passive, old, young, Mass attendees or not. To do this we must address both our Parish's spiritual and corporal needs. Our assessment is that it is more efficient and cost-effective administering and coordinating one centre rather than three. The cost savings from this will be directed to strengthening and developing the community of the Catholic Parish of Ivanhoe. We will increase the range of services to a wider range of parishioners. Having a single Mass Centre will itself strengthen the sense of community and make it easier to arrange and provide a wider range of services across all age groups. Communications across the Parish will be greatly improved. With the Spirit working with us and your support, collectively these benefits will help breathe new life into our Parish.

For more information or discussion about any of the above please do not hesitate to contact the Parish Leadership Group Executive, Maria McGarvie 9497 1415, Pat Kelly or Chris Dixon.

Our Parish website has the full set of papers delivered to parishioners on Monday 3 September 2007 available for download: **[www.ivanhoeparish.com.au](http://www.ivanhoeparish.com.au)**