

**Briefing by Owen Sweeney, Chairman of the Parish Council
at all Masses w/e 14/15 June 2008**

Thank you, Father....as you know, I'm obliged to speak briefly a couple of times a year.

We had a well-attended Parish AGM in late April. As well as reports on Finance, Maintenance Liturgy, Catechesis, our Primary School, Eucharistic and Reader; Ministries, Pastoral Care and Ministry of the Sick, and Father Doug's round up, we enjoyed a thought-provoking presentation by a friend of our Parish, Trudi Kilcullen.

It was entitled "God's Unfinished Business – 50 years of Rainham Catholic Church". It was a 'bit picture' look, from pre-history through the Abrahamic religion, right up to the relative speck, in time and place, of our parish, teasing out its ethos and values from those attending. And how, watched over and guided by the Holy Spirit, this generation in Rainham has a responsibility to continue, and hand over, that work and worship to the next. Trudi commented particularly on our willingness to look outwards as evidential by our support for Ahotokrom in Ghana.

In more practical terms, the AGM noted the maintenance and improvements at both St. Peter's and St. Thomas's which have continued throughout the year. Our main Parish 50th Jubilee project, the completed new Parish Centre, represents a major investment of over £50,000. Our thanks go to Jim Durkan who helped Father Doug with so much of the planning and management, to our builders, and Sarah Back for the revised on-going administration. Jill and Rod O'Neil were instrumental in getting the project started, following up with their fund-raising lunches to add to the cake stalls at St. Peter, the hilarious Quiz Niite and Youth Club, Union of Catholic mothers and Knights of St. Columba activities. We all need their fund-raising efforts, donations, etc to continue – please support the upcoming Jubilee Concert on 29 June – as this is a big financial commitment.

More widely, it isn't possible to recognise on your behalf everyone who helps with Parish matters – though Father Doug had a fair go at it in his Corpus Christi homily the other week- but we are so fortunate to have such an effective and committed leadership team of Deacon Alan, Josie Boxall and Pauline Green now joined by Jim Durkan too.

In no particular order, one or two requests arose from the AGM:-

- St Thomas of Canterbury School governors would welcome parishioners to come along to the Thursday coffee morning (good cakes!) held monthly at the school.
- Children's liturgy leaders and the Catechesis team would appreciate more helpers.
- New Gift Aid declarations (at no personal cost to current tax-payers) would help Parish funds because our income from that source will reduce owing to recent tax changes.

- Helpers for the Parish 50th Jubilee celebrations, on the 6th July would be most welcome, to carry out some light general duties as well as enjoying the day itself.

For newer members of the Parish, we welcome you. Please make use of the Parish Directory, our weekly newsletter, our magazine and our excellent website (which is about to be upgraded by Valerie). Please say if there are unusual needs and also consider offering your talent for the benefit of our Parish community and beyond.

Finally, with so much going on in the Parish, it is clear it is happening because of the spiritual guidance, leadership, energy and creative thinking of Father Doug. We are blessed. It was a delight for everyone to join him and his guests in celebrating his Silver Jubilee as a priest last November.