

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dear Parishioners and Friends who visit our Parish Website,

The annual Mass count is underway. Having started to count the number of people attending Mass last weekend, we will continue to note the attendance numbers for the next three weeks. We will then know whether there has been an increase or decline in our congregation. It is important on the occasion of these annual reviews to give thanks for all those who, Sunday after Sunday, attend Mass here. And for most of them it is more than just the fulfilment of the third commandment: they are present to the community in so many other ways than just sitting in the pews on the sabbath day. Many of them turn up to daily Mass, come to parish events, attend the Advent and Lent Courses, and are here on the church premises to catechise our young, to clean the church, to polish silver and iron vestments, to manage our finances and count the weekly collection. And for all of this we are grateful, to God for drawing them to the church and to them for the many ways in which they support and strengthen the community.

Between the Mass count of 2017 and 2018 there was an increase of ten. Without anticipating the average calculated in mid-October, while it would be wonderful were last year's average maintained, it is realistic to expect that a fall-off in attendance numbers might occur. A variety of reasons may apply. Just as when we are organising a birthday party or a wedding, we tend to focus on those who have not turned up and take those who have for granted. And indeed there is a risk of overlooking not only the presence of the 390+ who are at South View Avenue over an average weekend while regretting the absence of the 20 who were here last year and seem to have vanished, but also of forgetting about the many ways in which they contribute to our parish life during the Sunday liturgy itself but also in so many other ways, just as I have listed above.

But what of those who have taken leave of us since last year? Should we pursue them if they can be identified? Should we review our way of doing things so as to prevent any haemorrhaging of our community? My view is that we must respect the liberty, the freedom of choice and the integrity of those who feel they can no longer come to Sunday Mass. As to those of us who remain, we are best to remain faithful to our traditions, both ecclesial and local, we are best to retain the practices we have become used to – orthodoxy in what we profess, proclaim and believe & orthopraxis, observing the liturgical and other disciplinary provisions the Church has laid down – so that those who do cross the threshold of our church building recognise that this is a vibrant, alert community where the Christian faith is lived and celebrated in the Catholic tradition and which is always open and welcoming to anyone who comes here searching for the things of God.

Father Patrick