

# 1-SETTING UP A GROUP



St Margaret of Scotland parish began its work to promote racial and cultural inclusion following an invitation by Fr Anthony Uche, our Parish Administrator, to Canon Victor Darlington, Episcopal Vicar and Chair of the Archdiocese of Southwark's Commission for Promoting Racial and Cultural Inclusion. Fr Anthony invited Canon Victor to visit the parish and to preach the homily at Sunday morning Mass. In the course of his homily Canon Victor invited interested parishioners to hand in their names after Mass. Those who did so then established a parish Racial and Cultural Inclusion group with guidance from Canon Victor.

Recommended steps for a parish wishing to do the same are:

***Begin with a talk to the parish about the importance of racial and cultural inclusion and ask those interested to give their names to a co-ordinator:***

Parishes in the Archdiocese of Southwark can invite Canon Victor Darlington to preach a homily or or to give a talk in the parish. Parishes in other dioceses can potentially use a number of other approaches. An earlier initiative to promote racial justice at Our Lady of Fatima parish, White City, began with a homily on the importance of racial justice by the parish priest, Fr Richard Nesbitt. The response of members of the congregation led to meetings of parishioners and Fr Richard to discuss these issues and experiences of racism. These meetings led to initiatives to promote racial inclusion in the parish.

One option might be to invite a speaker from another parish (such as St Margaret's) which has experience of promoting racial and cultural inclusion. If possible, the initial talk should be to the whole parish at Sunday Mass. If a talk is arranged on a separate occasion, there is a risk that some potential members of a group would be unavailable for the meeting and would not be prompted to volunteer to be involved. An initial homily or talk during Mass also helps to make it clear that the work of the subsequently established group has the support, blessing and encouragement of the parish.



***Ensure that the group is multi-racial and, if possible, that it includes people in key positions who can make things happen in the parish***

The membership of the group should be multi-racial. This is essential given the nature of the initiative and it also helps to ensure that it has credibility with all sections of the parish community. It is desirable to include some people in key positions who can make things happen in the parish. This might include the parish priest, Sacristan, liturgy co-ordinator, social events co-ordinator or key members of the Parish Pastoral Council. However, the most important consideration is that all members of the group must be committed to and convinced of the importance of combatting racism and promoting racial and cultural inclusion

***Draw up a list of key areas for the group to explore***

At its first meeting the group at St Margaret's drew up an initial list of areas to explore. This was based on the report "Rooting Out Racism" produced by Our Lady of Fatima parish, White City, with some additional items suggested by group members. The group agreed to:

- Make regular announcements at every Sunday Mass welcoming newcomers to the parish, inviting them to stay for refreshments after Mass and asking existing parishioners to make new arrivals welcome.
- Display a notice at the Church entrance saying "Welcome" in many different languages.
- Increase the diversity of images in the church by obtaining additional pictures of Black and Asian saints.
- Display a gallery of images of Our Lady's apparitions in different parts of the world where she has appeared with features, skin colouring and dress appropriate to the local population.
- Obtain cards (e.g. prayer cards, Easter cards and Christmas cards) and Repository items featuring a range of racially diverse images.
- Feature a regular Saint of the Month in the parish Newsletter, ensuring that in the course of the year saints from a range of different countries and ethnic groups are featured.
- Increase the diversity of Readers, Eucharistic Ministers and those presenting Sunday morning announcements, so that they were more visibly reflective of the parish community.
- Ensure that Bidding Prayers regularly include prayers for communities in different parts of the world (including, but not restricted to, those affected by emergency situations).
- Follow the parish's annual multi-cultural celebration on Pentecost Sunday with individual Masses featuring prayer and worship by particular national and ethnic groups.
- Ensure that parishioners are aware that the parish's safeguarding procedures include procedures to support and protect any parishioners who experience racial abuse or discrimination.

# 2 - WELCOME ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEW PARISHIONERS



Parishioners at St Margaret's who have arrived in the parish in recent years have emphasised the importance of the welcome which they received in determining their decision to make our parish their spiritual home rather than to go elsewhere. Experiences of being greeted, welcomed, invited to refreshments and engaged by other parishioners in conversation were more likely to encourage new arrivals to return. Conversely, experiences of being ignored after Mass, while long standing parishioners engaged in conversation with their existing friends, were more likely to dissuade new arrivals from returning and to make them more likely to seek a friendlier church.

Recommended steps include:

## **INITIATE WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS WELCOMING NEW PARISHIONERS**

At St Margaret's we have initiated regular announcements as part of the notices at every Sunday Mass welcoming new parishioners, asking them to make themselves known to our priest and Welcomers, asking them to take a copy of our Welcome booklet and inviting them to join us for tea and coffee after Mass. These weekly announcements also ask existing parishioners who see someone new to the parish to approach them and make them welcome.

## **INSTALL A WELCOME NOTICE IN A RANGE OF LANGUAGES**

At St Margaret's we placed two Welcome Notices in a range of languages in our church porch. These are on either side of a carving of Our Lady which faces worshippers as they enter the church. Another local parish has installed such a notice on the external wall near the steps which lead up to the main entrance to the church.

Any other parish wanting to display such a notice is welcome to use the same design as the one at St Margaret's. A version with the St Margaret's logo removed can be sent to other parishes on request.

[See illustration of Welcome Notice on page 9]



## PRODUCE A WELCOME BOOKLET

St Margaret's has produced a booklet with details of all the groups, ministries, worship and activities in the parish. This covers times of Masses and Adoration, activities for young people, the Children's Liturgy, choirs, Bible Study and prayer groups, the 180 Club (a regular fund-raising draw), ecumenical activity, social and fund-raising events, the Repository, home and hospital visits, the RCIA process, the Sacraments, altar servers, the Racial and Cultural Inclusion group, safeguarding procedures, facilities for disabled access, parish finances and local Catholic schools. The booklet includes contact names for the organisers of the various ministries and activities in the parish.

Parishes can also consider producing a separate leaflet specifically aimed at those newly arrived in the UK, containing information about local support agencies and facilities in the local area.

## WELCOME NEW ARRIVALS BY NAME IN THE PARISH NEWSLETTER

Another way of making newly arrived parishioners feel part of the parish is to welcome them by name with their permission in the parish Newsletter. This can be facilitated by establishing a system whereby the Parish Secretary notifies the Newsletter editor each time a new parishioner completes a registration form.

## HOLD WELCOMING SESSIONS FOR NEWLY ARRIVED PARISHIONERS

A further way of welcoming new parishioners is to hold regular sessions – for example, these could be held twice a year for those who have joined the parish in the previous six months. These sessions can include presentations about the worship and activities in the parish; provide an opportunity for new arrivals to talk about themselves and their families; and enable new parishioners to ask questions, seek advice and share their early impressions of the parish.



ST MARGARET'S WELCOME NOTICE

# **A Prayer for Racial Justice**

God of justice, in your wisdom you create all people in your image, without exception.

Through your goodness, open our eyes to see the dignity, beauty and worth of every human being.

Open our minds to understand that all your children are brothers and sisters in the same human family.

Open our eyes to repent of racist attitudes, behaviours and speech which demean others.

Open our ears to hear the cries of those wounded by racial discrimination, and their passionate appeals for change.

Strengthen our resolve to make amends for past injustices and to right the wrongs of history.

And fill us with courage that we might seek to heal wounds, build bridges, forgive and be forgiven, and establish peace and equality for all in our communities.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen