

OVERVIEW OF PARISH LIFE AND LITURGY

What Is the Parish?

Although given separate entries in the 'Archdiocesan Directory', the life of the Catholic Church in the parish of Kenilworth is organised as a single unit. This relates to liturgy, school life, finance, administration and parish staffing.

The parish weekly bulletin describes it as:

'The Catholic Parish of Kenilworth, served by the churches of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Augustine of England.'

The present parish priest believes that this was the intention of the Archdiocese of Birmingham when the parishes came together with the retirement of Father Collins in 1988. The two church buildings with their particular beauty and individual history, testify to the ethos of the two parishes which now operate as one. In the liturgy and life of the present parish of Kenilworth, elements of the two previous parishes mix and combine for the benefit of today's parishioners.

Where is the Parish?

The Parish comprises a tiny fragment of the City of Coventry at Gibbet Hill, part of the site of the University of Warwick, some of Westwood Heath, and Burton Green.

It covers the whole of Kenilworth, the National Agricultural Centre and part of the village of Stoneleigh and the villages of Ashow, Leek Wootton and Hill Wootton.

The parish priest is fortunate in having the services of the Director of the Permanent Diaconate residing in the parish.

How does the parish come together?

The focus of the life of the parish is through the gathering of the people of God for Sunday mass.

From the celebration of mass – the word proclaimed and preached and the sacrifice of the Lord recalled and renewed, the people of God are enabled to proclaim the gospel in the circumstances of their daily lives.

Kenilworth is in an area of the diocese that is richly blessed with buildings for catholic worship.

There is then, inevitably, a great degree of coming and going at mass as people 'choose with their steering wheel' where they will worship on any particular Sunday according to the weekend' social calendar.

There is, however, a core congregation which meets to celebrate mass.

Mass Times

Saturday Vigil Mass 5.30pm St. Francis' Church

Sunday 8.00am St. Augustine's Church

9.30am St Francis' Church

11.15am St Francis' Church

In the days of two parishes, and indeed more recently when numbers of priests in the parish and elsewhere were more plentiful, the number of masses was greater at St Austin's

What are the masses like?

The present pattern of masses reflects the past history of the two parishes, distilled into the contemporary arrangement. The more traditional elements of liturgy in the restrained beauty of the tiny St Austin's and the more contemporary worship in the old St. Francis' Church Rooms now find a home in the pattern of worship and prayer in the two churches serving the united parish.

The numbers attending mass may be found in the Archdiocesan Directory

5.30pm . Saturday. Sung mass with four hymns, usually accompanied by the organ. Very few servers at this mass so limited ceremonial. Readers and Eucharistic ministers used by rota.

8.00am Sunday. Mass at St. Austin's without music except on Christmas Day and Easter Sunday when hymns are sung. Very few servers. Readers and Eucharistic ministers used by rota.

9.30am Sunday. Probably our best attended mass with a good number of families present drawn by the Children's Liturgy which is organised by male and female parishioners with parental helpers. The children are sent out at the time of the introduction to mass and they return with the presentation of the offertory gifts. At this time they present their work to the Lord and the congregation.

On two Sundays a month this is a mass with music led by two complementary music groups. The ordinary of the mass is sung to various settings and hymns and modern worship songs enhance the liturgy.

It is at this mass that our enrolments for First Eucharist and Confirmation take place and at which our parish school, St. Augustine's, is regularly involved in the liturgy – reading, leading bidding prayers and at the offertory.

The old day chapel is often used at this mass as a soundproofed facility when the decibel level of our very young parishioners is too high.

Tea, coffee and squash are available in the parish centre following this mass. This is organised on a rota basis as is the Reading and Eucharistic ministry at mass.

11.15am Sunday. When serving numbers permit, this is a Sung Mass with hymns and full ceremonial with incense. However, the number of times when this is possible is very limited. Readers and Eucharistic Ministers are used by rota. There is a small group of singers.

There are about 50 readers and 40 Eucharistic Ministers. Of the latter about 8 are prepared to take communion to the sick in their homes and in nursing homes. This is a ministry much valued by those visited and by the parish priest.

What else happens?

Mass is celebrated daily on five days of the week at St. Francis' Church and once a week at St. Austin's. The masses are at different times to enable people to be present at mass according to their work or family commitments. Eucharistic Ministers offer services of the Word and Holy Communion in the absence a priest.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available morning and evening on Saturday and at any time by arrangement. During Advent and Lent the Sacrament is celebrated in common with priests present for individual confession. **General Absolution is not available in this parish as a general rule.**

Baptisms and Marriages take place after preparation which is usually undertaken by the parish priest. Baptisms are sometimes celebrated at mass but more usually at either church on a Sunday. Preaching and pastoral care on such occasions can be a most useful tool in the mission of the parish

St Austin's is particularly viewed as a pleasant marriage setting. A fact which can sometimes bring difficult pastoral situations!

From time to time Benediction is given after the recitation of the Rosary or Holy Hour. Twice a week in Lent the Way of the Cross is meditated, once in each church.

From time to time Study groups are arranged either on an ecumenical basis or with members from the parish only attending. Sadly there is no RCIA group in the parish but CAFÉ been used.

The parish is part of Churches Together in Kenilworth and Leek Wootton and joint worship and Good Friday Walk of Witness are part of the yearly programme. The parish priest, together with other local clergy, leads prayers at the meetings of Kenilworth Town Council.

What about links with the school?

We are fortunate in having good links with St Augustine's. The distance from St Francis' Church means that the day to day use of a church building involves the use of St. Austin's which is next door. The use of St. Francis' Church is for larger school occasions.

Most of our young people are prepared for the sacraments of First Reconciliation and Eucharist and Confirmation through the school. This is seen, however, as involving parish and home. To that end the parish priest organises at school a meeting each term with the candidates' parents and there are enrolment masses and other celebrations at church as part of the programme.

Work from school is regularly displayed in Church and the Headteacher and members of staff are regularly at Sunday mass even though most live outside the parish.

Parishioners are often found as helpers in school with reading and other associated classroom activities. The parish priest and other Foundation Governors try to visit the school as invited and also for other less formal occasions

Crackley Hall School, also found within the parish, is visited by the parish priest for mass in the oratory Chapel and for the whole school. He also visits for assembly and to visit the Headteacher and staff.

Schools from the wider non-Catholic community are visitors to both churches as part of their school curriculum. This enables them to have a flavour of a catholic place of worship and to appreciate the artefacts. It is also a useful tool for evangelisation as so often few have visited churches of any sort for worship.

What about other links?

Each year the parish is encouraged to look further afield by embracing three parish charities. The parish council approves such projects that may be at the suggestion of the parish priest or any member of the parish family. It becomes the subject for private prayer and intercession at mass. Furthermore parishioners are encouraged to raise funds which are then passed on to the particular project at the end of the year.

These projects are in addition to those given regular support by our parish groups and those missionary objectives proposed by the Archdiocese.

The parish is twinned with the parish of St. Gilles in Bourg La Reine near Paris.