

Chaplaincy of the Holy Spirit, Costa Blanca

ASSISTANT CHAPLAIN'S REPORT: CHAPLAINCY APCM: 16th April 2024

I have pastoral responsibility for the congregations at Gandía, Calpe and La Fustera – a responsibility which would not be possible without the assistance of Fr Robin, who will for ever be known as the BOGOF: (Buy One Get One Free!) We are also blessed with the ministries of Fr Chris Cowell and Fr Mike Clark, as well as our Readers, Stephen Carden and Tony Cook (when in Spain), and now also Diana Pringle. It was a joy to celebrate with Diana on February 1st when she was admitted as a Reader by Bishop David at our annual Archdeaconry Synod in Calpe.

The biggest pastoral change for us in the last year has been the relocation of our Gandía congregation from the Ducal Palace in Gandía to the chapel of the Franciscan Hospice in Palma de Gandía. The change over – when it did happen – occurred while Fr Robin and I were away. But the transition was ably managed by Trina and Jilly, assisted by friends and other members. We now enjoy the wonderful hospitality of the Franciscan Brothers. Everything is supplied for our Sunday needs – and often pastries as well after the Service!

Christmas and Easter Services were well attended (especially considering that Christmas Day fell on a Monday!) – and I was particularly encouraged by the attendance at the Easter Vigil at La Fustera.

The Easter Sunday Barbeque and Blessing of Animals at the SCAN animal shelter in El Vergel was postponed because of bad weather but took place on Easter Monday in glorious sunshine. Fr Robin and I again blessed the cats and dogs in the shelter, along with those brought to the barbeque (N.B. not FOR the barbeque!) together with a contingent of motorcyclists who had just completed a charity ride on behalf of the shelter. More than 100 supporters attended the Barbeque and Blessing. Sadly, I did not get to ride one of the Harley Davidsons!

It is with sadness that I report that our link with the 'Righteous Remnant' of the Chaplaincy which used to be at Costa Azahar has now come to an end. Brenda Beech and her husband, Les, used to host a Eucharist at their home which Fr Robin and I used to celebrate – usually while on our way north to Sitges. Sadly Les died in the UK last year and Brenda will not be returning to Spain.

I intimated at last year's APCM that my current License has no expiry date – but that I do!

I have now reached my 'three-score-years and ten' (in February 2024,) and health issues during the past few months have made me realise I must now seriously think about retiring 'proper'. Much prayer and planning are needed...

One of my responsibilities since the retirement of Fr Marcus has been to organize the Service Rota for the Chaplaincy, ensuring that sacramental cover is provided throughout our seven worship centres each Sunday. As well as the clergy mentioned above, who assist in my areas of responsibility, we also have the ministries of the Revd Ken Cavanagh, and - during some summer months – Fr Richard Horner. These ministries are greatly appreciated and valued, but recent health issues – and even car mechanical breakdowns! – have highlighted how little room there is for maneuver at times. We have now lost the sacramental ministry of Fr Peter Morrell who, due to health reasons, has not renewed his PTO. He still plans to visit their holiday home when able, so we have not said 'good bye' to him. We are greatly blessed with the additional Reader ministry of Diana Pringle, whose services of Holy Communion by Extension are already having a positive impact on our shared ministry.

As I write this Report we have recently passed the 4-year 'anniversary' since our Chaplaincy – and the rest of the world! - went into lockdown, and Church Services were suspended. On that first Sunday of lockdown (Lent 3 2020) no one really knew what to do, but by Mothering Sunday (Lent 4) we had learned new technologies, such as Facebook and YouTube. But certainly no one – least of all us! - had any idea that we would still be live-streaming 4 years later...

Yours in His Service

Fr Rodney Middleton
Assistant Chaplain

(and *Fr Robin Pettitt*: BOGOF)