

A Heart for Mission

Evangelisation teams, potential teams and Bible Timeline Leaders gathered from all over the Diocese by specific invitation to follow up the Proclaim '15 initiative for an Evangelisation Day on Saturday 4th February at St Mary Magdalene Church, Stony Stratford.



The day was led by Alex Heath and members of the Diocesan Evangelisation Team. We began with Mass in the Church after which we heard a reading from Luke 4:16-21, which showed us the need to being open to the Holy Spirit's anointing when we evangelise.



Maria Heath, a Pastoral Worker in the diocese, gave a talk on evangelising in our everyday life. She used Moses as an example as one who was called by God but did not want to go and made excuses. But God said he would be with him, and if we step in out in faith the Holy Spirit will be with us to guide and inspire us.

We discussed amongst ourselves what our excuses were! Maria pointed out that we are qualified because of our baptism, that we do not need to know it everything before we begin, and that we all have a story to share of what Jesus has done for us. Maria made the point that many Catholics can be uncomfortable speaking about their faith in God, but that our faith is not a private affair. She gave very practical examples from her own life on how to speak to others about our faith. She encouraged us to ask people, when the opportunity arises, simple questions prompting people to think about God.

The afternoon was focused on practical ideas from parishes in the diocese and ways to go forward in our own parish. It was stressed whatever we do we must discuss and have the approval of our parish priest.

Teresa Carvalho talked about her new role at the Home Mission Desk, which is to support and resource evangelisation. Kevin Drew from Luton spoke about how his parish had set up an evangelisation team after the Proclaim '15 Conference in July 2015 and some of the initiatives they had undertaken since.

We heard from High Wycombe about the 'Try Praying ' initiative. This is a simple resource for churches or anyone who wants to share their faith. A simple booklet is read and passed on. It has been very successful in towns and cities where churches of different denominations have together used it and paid for banners on buses and outside churches with the logo trypraying. (www.trypraying.co.uk)



Jean Merriman from Sacred Heart Parish in Northampton spoke of how they put on, with other Christian churches, a 'flash mob' in the shopping centre at Christmas. They acted out the Nativity and carols were sung, many joined in, and baubles were given out with invites to a Christmas Carol Service. Also, they ran a free gift wrapping service to highlight the truth that Jesus is the free gift of God to us all.

We also heard Sr. Dympna from Bedford who shared about the Bible Timeline Groups they have been running very successfully, and how this has grown.

Bernie Garfitt from Burnham, Slough shared how she is using 'Landings' in her parish, having experienced the course herself. It is a listening and sharing programme, which offers returning Catholics a safe environment to reflect upon, explore and grow their faith. It promotes fellowship in Christ and a sense of belonging.

The day ended with scripture and prayer to go out and share the Good News.

Two of us who attended from Towcester and returned full of renewed enthusiasm and ideas of what we can implement in our parish and in our everyday life. It was good to share with others and encouraging hearing what was going on around the diocese.

'We will go out to share the light of Christ'!