Eco report for General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops Newsletter,

April 2022

In the Parish of St Anne, Shankill, Dublin 18, there has been a group (SAGE, Shankill Action for a Green Earth) formed in 2016 in response to the publication of Laudato Si.

Its aim is to raise awareness in the community of the urgency of addressing the problems of climate change with a particular focus on Climate Justice and the need to change our consumerist lifestyles.

The core of the group is Parish based but from its beginning it has included members from the two Church of Ireland Parishes and other civic groups in the area. Three founding members have experience of working in a missionary context (with Trocaire and VMM

(Volunteer Missionary Movement)).

Over the years its activities have included planting biodiversity borders in the church grounds, Lenten actions (tips for how to live more sustainably) and talks, liturgies celebrating the Season of Creation, hosting the Eco Congregation Ireland (ECI) climate candle. The parish has qualified for a gold award from ECI and is looking forward to it being presented by our Archbishop in the near future!

Meetings with politicians and local councillors have taken place at election times and good relations have been developed over the years. Some members are part of ‘Fridays For Future’ and pre-Covid used to demonstrate outside Dail Eireann on Fridays. Now they raise awareness with banners and posters locally on a weekly basis, supported by seasonal plants and seedlings, especially with items to interest the passing school children and their parents!

Work has also been undertaken by the parish to make the church more energy efficient with a new boiler, better lighting, draught-proofing and fans to circulate the hot air [from the roof space to the congregation!].

Over the years we have realised how very difficult it is to motivate people to alter their habits / lifestyles. The village has a very supportive monthly magazine which regularly prints articles from SAGE or advertises talks or activities. It is also important to have the interest and support of the Parish clergy and Pastoral Council to get the message across to the churchgoers.

Climate Justice is an issue that resonates with young people. Two members took part in the ‘Thumbprint  Programme’, organised by the Spiritans, a few years ago, making presentations on climate justice, chiefly in schools, with excellent material from Trocaire and CAFOD. Here the church can really be a cogent witness to this urgent global issue. Pope Francis has made the job easier with Laudato Si. The only sorrow is that for so many, priests included, it seems to be seen as an optional extra instead of a really vital underpinning of our lives as children of our living creator God.

How wonderfully effective the Church could be if she harnessed her members' energies to promote Climate Justice in its fullness. It is hoped that the steady witness of our parish will prepare the ground for acceptance of the more radical action which must surely come if the necessary targets to reduce Greenhouse gas emissions are to be met on time.