

Caritas beginnings



Fr Dominic Howarth, episcopal vicar for pastoral formation, talked about developments in Caritas Brentwood, a strand of the renewal and restructuring proposals. “The purpose of Caritas is to go to the edge, to welcome people if and however they arrive at church.” He discussed what it meant to be ‘the least of my brothers and sisters’ today and gave examples that included trafficked human slaves, travellers, gipsy and Roma, the homeless, those suffering from HIV/Aids and children who were suffering abuse, bereavement and domestic violence. “The Church is working with these groups, and the challenge for us is: are there any groups we would find it difficult to work with or pray for?”

A recent meeting with organisations working with these and other groups had been very successful, he said. “They were delighted to join in because they often feel at the fringes of the Church.” He said Caritas had no model to impose so, drawing on the wisdom of the organisations, it was agreed that it would be useful to produce:

- a website to match volunteers with opportunities;
- occasional training sessions on common issues;
- development of a unique element – an emphasis on the inter-generational.

Fr Dominic pointed out that many Justice and Peace groups are led by the over 60s but the young are also passionate about social justice (one had commented that he would like to join the parish J&P group but was too young). “I wanted to facilitate a conversation to bring the generations

together, to encourage people to talent-spot individuals in their late teens and early 20s and bring them into an inter-generational conversation. It was the beginning of a journey and it felt energising.”

To read more go to <http://www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/news/caritas-brentwood-aims-build-inter-generational-strength/>