

Batley Torchlight Procession

Beckets responded to the Bishop's call to attend the 60th anniversary of the Batley Torchlight procession on a cool and blustery autumnal evening.



The event was well attended as always but pilgrims had difficulty keeping their candles alight.

Having taken part in the Lourdes torchlight procession it was touching to do the same thing but in Batley.

The power of over two thousand Catholics processing through the streets of a Northern town with banners and candles was not lost on the locals who stood on verandas and even came out of pubs to watch.



Monday October 3rd was the day chosen to hold the Torchlight procession in Batley this year. As people from across the Diocese and beyond gathered outside the Town Hall it started to look as if all the good weather that everyone had enjoyed had come to an end and the rain was about to come down. Fortunately this did not happen though a few light showers blew through. As usual as well as the local people of Batley there were also buses from across the Diocese and even from Rochdale. They were joined by civic dignitaries, the local MP and Bishop Roche, who led the service.

Fr John Berry, a local Batley boy himself, preached the homily, which he opened by telling everyone he had first been at the procession with his mother who was then pregnant with him. He went on to talk about the role of women as mothers and what a special place Mary played in the scheme of things as the Mother of Jesus. He reminded everyone that Fr Gallon had established the procession - some 60 years ago to pray for peace and it was through Mary that those prayers for peace were directed. As the Bishop started the Rosary the congregation of at least 1,000 moved out to make their way to St Mary's church. Not all of course could get into the church but those that didn't stood outside as the Bishop concluded the evening with Benediction.

Catholic Partnership news

On Wednesday 5th October Catholic Heads and chairs of Governors met at St Joseph's Moorthorpe to discuss the building and premises needs of Catholic schools across the district.

Each school submits a 'bid' on a proforma and then the respective needs are assessed by the group under the brokerage of Kevin Anderson from the Diocese.

As a result a priority order is determined but as always it is dependent on funds made available by the government.

Beckets submitted a number of schemes and two were prioritised; total refurbishment and modernisation of staff and student facilities as well as an extension to the dining room. We would have to part fund these ourselves and, as such, I would urge you, if you haven't done so already to make a gift aid donation to the school.

I attach the standard letter.

My commitment is to improve facilities to benefit all our children. Since I have been Head donated money has always been spent on this and will always be spent on this.

Governors School Building Development Fund

Dear Parent/carer,

As a voluntary aided school, 90% of all building works are funded by Government Grants. By law the remaining 10% is an obligatory expense to Catholic Schools. The funding is not allowed to come from the school's main budget, leaving it to be raised by other means. If we cannot find our 10% the 90% government funding to which we are entitled will be lost.

We would ask each family to please consider a minimum donation of £25.00 per family to the Governors School Building Development Fund.

Last year we refurbished the reception area, hall and dining room, had a purpose built dance studio and fitness room built as well as painting the whole school throughout.

In the summer we completed a second phase of improvements beginning with modernising classroom and corridor lighting, refurbishing and re-equipping two ICT rooms, Business Studies, Technology and Music, Art and Food Technology.

This year, in the third phase, we aim to modernise all the toilet facilities in College as well as extending the dining room.

We can achieve all this if our parents contribute the equivalent of **50p** a week.

If all parents contributed 50p a week this would raise £19,890 in a year which, in turn, would help us potentially realise a massive £198, 900 from the Department for Education.

You can donate in a number of ways:

- By single cheque for the whole year or standing order ½ yearly or ¼ yearly. Cheques payable to 'Diocese of Leeds, at St Thomas à Becket Governors Fund'.
- A bankers order form is attached if you would prefer to pay by standing order.
- If you already pay by standing order please check that it is active/up to date.

You can also help us to raise further funds if you are a taxpayer and complete a GIFT AID DECLARATION. At no additional cost to you this will raise an additional 28p per £1. A GAD form is enclosed for you to complete.

Many thanks if you have already contributed and thank you in anticipation of your support.

John Rooney

Headteacher on behalf of the College Governors.

Catholic Voluntary Multi-academy Trusts

Bishop Arthur's statement

ACADEMY STATUS

The Catholic Church in England and Wales has a long tradition of excellence and service in education through its provision of Catholic schools and colleges. We have benefitted greatly from the statutory entitlements granted through Voluntary Aided status and have always sought to work in partnership with Local Authorities to meet the needs of parents and pupils. In light of this I have given great consideration to the issue of academy status.

As a Diocese we seek to fulfil our Catholic mission in education by striving to provide what is in the best interests of pupils in our Catholic schools. The question of schools converting to academy status is important and complex. It deserves serious and thorough investigation and reflection.

In considering this matter it has been important for me to listen to the views of those involved in running schools in our Diocese and I am grateful to all those who have shared their thoughts with me. I have also sought extensive consultation and advice from a wide ranges of sources, not least the *Diocesan Council for Education*

(with its headteacher and governor representatives), the *Diocesan Trustee*, and the *Catholic Education Service for England and Wales* (CESEW).

In assessing the situation so far the Diocese of Leeds has taken a measured and careful approach in order that any hasty and possibly ill-judged decision might be avoided. Diocesan officers have also kept a close eye on national developments and benefitted from the experience of colleagues in other Dioceses.

As your Bishop, with ultimate responsibility for Catholic education in our Diocese, it is now clear to me that it is important to give a strong lead with respect to academies and the positive opportunities they may provide. Accordingly, in the light of discussion and guidance, I have decided that, *in principle*, it is permissible for the Diocese to consider conversion to academy status for our schools. The important questions that now follow are where, whether, and when it might be prudent and responsible for this decision to be implemented. In this, I would like to make it absolutely clear that we are not seeking to compel any schools to become an academy.

The agreement *in principle* does not mean any automatic granting of permission for conversion to academy status. Any schools seeking academy status will need to pursue a thorough application process which assures and clearly demonstrates to Diocesan authorities the benefits of academy status with respect to a number of key issues. These would certainly include:

- How will the mission of the Catholic Church in education be strengthened through conversion to academy status?
- How will the Catholic ethos and identity of the school be enhanced through academy status?
- Have parents and staff been consulted and how have they responded?
- How will the schools work in partnership with others?
- Have the schools the capacity to take on the additional responsibilities that academy status will bring?
- Are the governors supportive of such a move?

If a school is able to satisfactorily address the key issues then it may be granted conditional consent in order that further detailed work might be undertaken. Only when this process has been completed, and all the requirements met, could final permission for conversion to an academy be granted.

Academy status offers the potential to strengthen and develop further the Catholic Church's mission in education. It may well serve to enhance the bonds of partnership currently in existence. It will certainly provoke greater reflection within and between schools about how they might collaborate more effectively. The decision *in principle* that the academy discussion can now be addressed by schools enables the possibilities to be explored. In times of change, and even uncertainty, we must always remain faithful to our mission in education, ensuring that provision in our Diocese continues to be mutually supportive in the context of a Diocesan family of schools committed to the common good in education.

+Arthur Roche
Bishop of Leeds
4 October 2011

Becket's Response

As Headteacher my first duty carry out the wishes of our Bishop and maintain and promote Catholic education in its vital role in promoting the Mission of the Church.

As such, I and a working party of volunteer governors, have begun the process of examining a Mission Plan. This focuses on key questions relating to Catholic education, its relationship with families and parishes and how closer partnership working will affect this.

I detail below the process we, as a Catholic partnership, have agreed.

1. Thursday 22 September Initial meeting takes place. Remit and process clarified. An examination of the key issues relating to Catholic Education in the Mission of the Church.

The Mission Plan

2. Between Friday 23rd September and Friday 21st October individual working parties consider further questions and solutions relating to this. Questions for whole group may determined.

October half-term

3. Thursday November 3rd whole group meets again at 6.30pm St Wilfrid's to consider questions and next steps.

The Business Plan

4. Between Friday November 4th and Friday November 18th individual wp's consider further details.

5. Final scheduled meeting of the whole group takes place Monday 21 November at 6.30pm at St Thomas a Becket's.

Final clarification of any issues. Open discussion takes place about the three possible recommendations.

- on balance there are clear advantages and the governing body has the capacity to take on academy status now, so let's consult stakeholders (If this is the recommendation the working party should draft a consultation document for GB to approve).
- on balance the advantages outweigh the disadvantages but the governing body is not yet ready to take on extra responsibility and will need to be strengthened in the following ways....
- On balance there are insufficient advantages - and significant disadvantages - to justify continued interest

6. Individual working party makes recommendation to FGB.

7. FGB Meeting takes place before end of autumn term.

Advance notice and reminders

Parent Focus Group at 5.30pm on Wednesday 19th October

Year Eleven parents evening (1) Thursday 20th October

College closes to students on Thursday 20th October at 2.55pm



John Rooney Headteacher