

# The Merging of St Hugh's & St Alban's Parishes

## *A little explanation & request from Fr David*

### What's the situation?

When I arrived in 2017, I was very much aware that both communities had, up until recently, four priests serving them along with the Church on Oakwood. To go to one priest with assistance from Fr Philip, a retired priest, in the first year was quite a change. Let's face it, we can't argue with the Holy Spirit, priests are a dying breed and so we need to explore new ways of living as a church community with a smaller input of priests. The Diocese of Nottingham (i.e. most of the East Midlands area) has, over the past 19 years, tried to work out what to do in the future and the latest exploration has been a 'Roadshow' of the senior leadership in the Diocese visiting each Deanery (the local collection of parishes in particular areas i.e. Derby) to try to explain what's going on and how best to support communities with fewer priests.

### What's the plan?

In short, the Diocesan plan is to merge most of the parishes into clusters to make them easier to manage for a reducing and ever aging number of priests who are called to look after parish communities alongside, deacons and parishioners. In Derby for instance, there are already clusters such as ours with St Hugh's, St Alban's & The Church on Oakwood along with our neighbours St Mary's, Mackworth and Allestree as two existing groups. The new groups will include Mickleover & St Joseph's coming together and English Martyrs & St George's as another cluster. Sadly, there are proposed closures such as Holy Spirit, in Sinfin, and other projects, such as the replacement church in Chellaston, that has been shelved at this time.

### How do these plans affect us?

Unless the existing proposals change (which we can never rule out), there won't be too much that we will see change if St Hugh's and St Alban's were to formally merge or more accurately canonically merge to use the Catholic Church's legal language. Ultimately, over a five-year period, we alternate weekday Masses between the communities, have a shared celebration of Holy Week, invite each other to our community events via a shared newsletter, a shared administration and share in Catechesis i.e. preparing folks for Baptism, First Holy Communion, Confirmation and being received into the Catholic Church. Over the past year we've also benefitted hugely from our Parish Pastoral Councils and Finance Teams working together collaboratively. We've done this together with some ups & downs, vast quantities of mistakes on my part but we are where we are today.

### Will there be any changes?

As far as I can work out, the one thing that you'll notice as different is the bank account in that one account will close and the other will become a joint account with

a new name as for example St Hugh's & St Alban's or St Alban's & St Hugh's or we may wish to choose a new name for our cluster, as has happened in other areas of our Diocese, to recommend to our Bishop. Each worship community will remain as St Hugh's & St Alban's and although The Church on Oakwood may not be part of the long-term future, which we and the Sunday Morning Worship Community have been discussing over the past few months - the Saturday evening Mass in Oakwood remains part of the plan in the short-term but may one day return to St Alban's.

## What will the merging of parishes not achieve?

In short, the merging of parishes whether informally or formally, will not change people's hearts. Does this statement ring true for you? "This is my parish and I want all the events and services to take place here – I'll only travel to the other place if necessary and even then, I'd probably prefer to go somewhere else." We're still in the early days of bringing communities together but my hope is that this opinion might evolve into something like; "I'll always prefer my own parish but I'm happy to celebrate in our fellow worshipping communities as I feel blessed that we actually have other communities so close when other parts of the world are not as fortunate."

## What are our next steps in merging our parishes?

There are two key next steps. Firstly, we are required to have a period of consultation within our communities and among the Derby Deanery parishes. This begins with your thoughts in the space below. The second step is to then approach The Council of Priests (a group made up of the senior leadership in the Diocese), either later this year or early in 2023, to formally request the Canonical merging of St Hugh's & St Alban's Parishes.

## What do you think about the merging of St Hugh's & St Alban's?

Jot down your thoughts in the box above & hand to a steward or give this to Fr David.