

CDA Chair's Report

Welcome to the 34th Annual General Meeting of the Catholic Deaf Association at the Nugent Care Society, Edge Lane, Liverpool, the European City of Culture for 2008.

I would like to ask you all to stand for one minute's silence to remember our families, friends and members of the CDA who have died during the past year.

Since the last AGM CDA has been active in various parts of the country. Cardiff had the official opening of their new Centre by Archbishop Smith on 27th September 2007. The Deaf community are overjoyed with their new centre. Our congratulations to Cardiff and Mary Chisholm and her team for their hard work. I would like to add that the team are all volunteers and work hard for the catholic Deaf community in Wales.

Conferences

The South East CDA regional conference was held in Chigwell on June 7th. There was a good attendance with people travelling from, Northampton, Arundel and Brighton, Westminster and Brentwood. The theme of the conference was 'Finding the treasure within'. The regional conferences are proving to be very popular with our members. Newcastle Diocese will have their Conference on 27th September. North West region didn't have a conference this year but had a Retreat on the 26th March at Loyola Hall. The theme of the retreat was 'We are the Easter People'.

The National Conference in 2009 from October 9th to 11th is being held in Salford Diocese at the Last Drop Hotel in Bolton. The theme of the conference is 'Walk with Me'. We ask all our Heads of Service to encourage their members to book as quickly as possible. Please be aware of the change in date from Easter to October. Booking forms can be downloaded from CDA Website.

CDA website

A new website has been set up by Fr Peter McDonough. Some of our members had complained that the website wasn't interesting enough. Fr Peter has worked hard to improve the website but he does need our support and that means sending news or information about various activities that will be of interest to our members.

CDA Deaf Awareness Week. 11th –18th May

As our members know the CDA has for many years tried to create a Prayer Book in Sign Language for our Deaf children. At last, thanks to the generosity of a lady called Louise Johnson it has been made possible. On Sunday 11th May at Hollywood House 'A Child's Book of Signed Prayers' was launched. Cath Smith who is well known nationally for her Sign Language dictionaries and other books that promote Sign Language has designed the book. Fr Austin Tomaney from Newcastle along with Cath Smith was invited to Manchester to launch the book. Fr Tomaney knew the late Louise Johnson well and it was through him that we were lucky enough to be given funding to produce the book. The book is a lovely book and I ask *all* our members to purchase a copy. Please help to make the Prayer book a success. It is a good way of raising Deaf Awareness in your area. If you don't have a copy you can buy one or two today after the AGM.

Walsingham

The annual pilgrimage to Walsingham was on the 17th May. Again numbers were slightly down on previous years and this is disappointing as it is the National Pilgrimage for CDA and we do need to continue with this pilgrimage. Perhaps as some people have suggested it would be better to go for a weekend, Friday or Saturday to Sunday making it easier for people who have a long distance to travel. If you feel this would help please let us know your views. Next years pilgrimage will be on Saturday 16th May 2009.

The International Catholic Foundation for the service of Deaf People

The International Catholic Foundation organised a conference in Rome June 25th – 26th 2008. Over 1100 deaf people from all over the world gathered in Rome for the conference. It was a wonderful experience especially when in the general audience with Pope Benedict he spoke to the Deaf Community in his homily. Archbishop Patrick Kelly celebrated Mass in St Peter's. It was wonderful to see the Deaf choirs from various parts of the world that had been chosen to sign the hymn in their own language. Wonderful too to see so many Deaf people coming together to share their faith. Some of us were there for a week and it was a good week. So congratulations to the ICF.

CDA Membership

CDA membership is falling. Fifteen years ago there were 400 members now we have only 235, what is happening to our members? It would be very sad for the Catholic Deaf community if CDA were to cease to exist. We have a responsibility to support our association. At times it seems there is a North/South divide and that is not good. Our members have complained that the AGM is always in the North but that is not correct. Last year it was Stockport, the year before Wrexham, next year Cardiff, the year after Newcastle. We wait to be invited to any area to hold the AGM and will happily travel to wherever we are invited. We do however need to think very seriously about how we can improve membership of the CDA. If we wish to pass on our faith to future generations of deaf people we must be prepared to work for it and not just expect other people to do our work.

I would like on the members behalf to thanks our Heads of Service and volunteers for the support they give to the catholic deaf community. A special thanks to the many priests throughout the country who have given up their time to learn Sign Language and to sign the Mass for us. Often this is very difficult for our priests as they now run the parishes on their own and to give up their time to support us the deaf community deserves thanks from us.

Thanks also to Sr Maura for her work in the difficult job as Treasurer of CDA.

Thanks to Fr Peter McDonough for his work as Secretary of CDA.

A special thanks to all our members who have travelled here today to support CDA.

Not forgetting our interpreters who give of their time freely at all our meetings.

And finally thanks to the European city of Culture 2008 for hosting the AGM.

God bless you all, have a safe journey home.

Eileen Hosie, Chair of Catholic Deaf Association.