

Blue Group Feedback from Saturday and Sunday. Newman Assembly.

i] The relationship between National Council and Circles

Various views ranging from Circles should be able to operate independently of Council, to acceptance of the status quo. "National level shouldn't be secondary"

There is a need to rebalance the contributions made by Circles and Council and more joint working needed.

Council's role is to give funds to Circles and Circles to "take it from there"

How profitable are Conferences? Is one conference a year enough?

ii] The Purpose and Role of the Newman Association

We need to change and the next ten years are very significant. What we seek to achieve is precious ie. informed lay people.

Debate took place about the rhetoric used... should we talk about an informed laity rather than an educated laity? Does the latter smack of elitism and may be appear off putting?

We exist to promote thought and discussion. Should we use the word intelligent rather than educated or informed laity? Thinking is important rather than just accepting doctrine. The rhetoric has to be right. We should not shy away from controversial issues but perhaps should refer to difficulties rather than controversies. We should address controversial issues. There is the question of the control of the Newman Association. We are a lay organisation. We are not about setting irregular doctrine we are discussing issues. We are not seeking novelty we are seeking understanding. We act in good faith. We need to make our faith authentic and relevant to our everyday lives what is wrong with that, set in the context of relationships with the hierarchy? Amongst lay organisations in the Church we are slightly different, we are independent and we need to promote this. We are all on the same side. But is the hierarchy ill at ease with us? We need to seek dialogue with the Bishops and we need a stronger voice within the Church. Could Council speak to Archbishop Vincent Nicholls? There is a tension between us and the hierarchy, but we are a real part of the structure of the Catholic Church. We want a stronger voice. The hierarchy doesn't really want a relationship with us, they are ill at ease with us, but we must speak up for our faith, which is our right. We need to recognise the importance of our relationship with the hierarchy, but is there a hint of a confrontational attitude on both sides?

iii] The future of the Newman Association and increasing membership.

Are we focusing on the right target group? We discuss trying to attract younger people but they tend not to be joiners. Also there is not a strong Christian/faith ethic necessarily in the universities today. Should we target the 40 plus age group? Given the age profile of our membership the next ten years are very significant and we have to change. Should we use social media more? Should we adapt business operating models to rebrand the Newman Association and make its image more fit for purpose for the 21st century? What is the Newman Association's unique selling point [USP] ...an educated laity? How do we market that? Where is our market place? Who is our target audience? What are we trying to sell...intellectual sharing? Should we use our funds to employ a

marketing/communications officer for a year? How do we enhance our presence/ raise our profile in the Church? Where should our focus be in a business sense? Whose needs are we trying to meet?

Conclusion. Broad acceptance in the Blue Group that we should adapt the language of a business operating model to use as a framework to look at the way the Newman Association operates with fresh eyes, and to set up a working group to do just that!

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