



St Vincent
de Paul Society

England and Wales

Turning Concern into Action

SVP Celebrating Later Life

Parish of St. John Mary Vianney, Leeds

What is it?

Celebrating Later Life is a monthly event provided by the SVP Conference of the parish of St. Jeanne Mary Vianney in Moortown, Leeds.

It takes place on the last Thursday of every month throughout the year and is only cancelled if that Thursday coincides with a major religious festival, say at Christmas or Easter.

The event provides an opportunity for older people of the parish to meet together for midday Mass in the church of The Immaculate Heart of Mary, followed by lunch in the parish hall next to the church. The event is free, but there is a box for donations in the hall.

Inclusivity is encouraged particularly for those suffering from dementia or physical disabilities and their carers.

What happens?

Mass is held at 12pm and starts with a hymn that will be familiar to the older age group attending. During the Mass the priest performs the Anointing with Holy Oil for those that wish to receive it, all of whom are seated together at the front of the church.

After the Mass, which takes 25 to 30 minutes, people go across to the hall next door for lunch.

During the colder months, usually around November to March, we provide a warming bowl of soup and homemade cakes and pastries.

Easter marks a change in menu, when we provide a selection of homemade sandwiches, cakes and delicacies instead of soup.

During the lunch we provide a variety of entertainments that could be from a singalong to individual musicians to a choral group. Quite often the guests just enjoy the opportunity to chat together. There is always a free raffle at the end.

How do we promote the event?

There is a poster put up each month in both churches of the parish confirming the date. A notice appears every week in the parish bulletin giving the date that month, and the Mass is itemised in the weekly mass times in the parish bulletin.

Reliability, regularity and familiarity with word of mouth is the most effective means of encouragement and promotion. As a result, attendance has grown steadily. We currently cater for approximately forty guests.

The main focus is for members of the parish. Leeds Irish Health and Homes make a considerable contribution and often bring along some of their clients. We may consider widening the audience further in the future but for now, our resources are fully engaged in the event being mainly parish based.

The positives

For the SVP, this is core to our mission to tackle poverty in all its forms and the poverty of isolation, particularly highlighted by the pandemic, is now more prevalent than ever.

For the guests, the spiritual uplift of the Mass and the anointing is a special enrichment for many who attend. The buzz of the socialising at the lunch is a joy to listen to.

For the volunteers there are opportunities to provide transport to the event, help out in the kitchen and serving, donate homemade food, raffle prizes, provide entertainment, engage in conversation with the guests.

A special mention should go here to the SVP's Mini Vinnies of the local Primary School who, when time allows come across to the hall and mix and chat with our guests and on occasion will sing for them.

I am available to discuss with anyone interested in holding a similar event.

Andrew Winfield

SVP President & Treasurer

Parish of St. Jeanne Mary Vianne