

Vocation and space

Searching for the Lord

St. Ursula:



In a unique way, the St. Ursula parish of Delft embodies Jesus' presence in the Church and in the world. It's not just about the various parish communities in different parts of the city, the congregations and religious orders which formerly found a home within the parish, the social diversity, and the international connections. First and foremost, it's about the various ways in which the St. Ursula parish responds daily to Jesus' call to be Church – in celebrating the liturgy, making diaconal assistance available, and giving catechesis.

For generations, the love and the face of the Lord have been lived and transmitted. We, too, want to pass on and build on His presence, on behalf of the countless generations that will succeed us. This requires us to let things go and build anew, to make choices, and above all: to know where the Lord resides, so that we will not be taken aback by circumstances, but make personal decisions about what deserves to be passed on.

Searching for the Lord together requires unity in diversity. We want to achieve this by affirming and reinforcing each other's unique qualities, characteristics and differences, so that we will grow in confidence, curiosity and mutual connection. Currently, the Ursula parish consists of four communities: the Francis & Clare community, the Sacrament Church community, the Adelbert community, and the Maria van Jesse community. Although every community has the dignity of being a full image of Jesus' presence, there are different charisms between the four communities.

Francis & Clare:

The Francis & Clare community searches for the Lord in simplicity, to support and protect each other through self-emptying and renunciation. Important sources of inspiration for this community are, of course, St. Francis and St. Clare. The thoughts and attitudes of St. Francis and St. Clare have long been lived and proclaimed in a powerful and inspiring way by the resident Franciscans, such as Fr. Ben Bolmer. The vivacity of the Francis & Clare community can be recognized in the singing of the choir and the whole assembly, the commitment to ecumenism, the international community, the youth residence, the theme-oriented prayer meetings (Taizé, Franciscan celebrations), the pragmatic approach of the community, the donations and revenues, the volunteers or the diaconal projects (together with the Protestant Church).



Sacrament Church:

The Sacrament Church community follows the Lord in living together, with mercy, care, and a great mutual involvement. For a long time, the Sacrament Church community has been inspired by the resident priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, such as Fr. Willemsen. This priestly congregation had an important connecting role in pastoral care, education, and catechesis.

The living spirit of the Sacrament Church can be discerned in the choral singing, its regional function for the faithful in Delfgauw, the visiting Antillian community, the resident Dominican sisters, the support of foreign missionary work (Gambia), ecumenism, and the thematic prayer meetings.



Adelbert:

The Adelbert community searches for the Lord in 'God's tent', where His presence is experienced in a silent yet homely atmosphere, simplicity and diversity. A source of inspiration for the Adelbert community is the vocation of the lay faithful, as well as the different forms of liturgical renewal, indicated by the Council Fathers during Vatican II and implemented by Fr. Sul and various Jesuit fathers involved in the community.

The living community of the Adelbert Church is recognizable in its singing assembly, thematic prayer meetings, the sign of peace, the enriched Word & Communion liturgies, the number of volunteers, the donations, the diaconal ministry, the food bank, the self-conscious attitude of the community and its appeal to people from varying ethnic backgrounds.

Maria van Jesse:

The Maria van Jesse community searches for the Lord in worship, adoration and proclamation. Source of inspiration for the Maria van Jesse is its long tradition of local worship and adoration: from the Marian miracle in 1327 to the more recent Catholic emancipation from 1853 and the construction of the current neo-Gothic church, which has a prominent presence both because of its central location and because of its majestic appearance.

The living spirit of the Maria van Jesse community becomes visible in the liturgical variety of Latin, Dutch and English Masses, the international choir, the visiting hours for tourists, the annual silent procession, the number of volunteers, the Jessehof, the opportunity for confession, the organ, the various choirs and the musical cultivation, as well as the daily access to the church office.



Vocation and space:



Laatste Avondmaal. Dirk Bouts 1464-1468 Leuven

Every age has its own challenges and blessings. The blessings of our time are unmistakably the great wealth and freedom we have been given. The challenges consist in the decreasing involvement of parishioners, leading to fewer financial resources, fewer priests and volunteers, and to the termination of what could once be taken for granted. Within the Ursula parish, too, we experience the lack of the presence of religious communities, and the dwindling commitment of parishioners. Especially the age category of 30-50, but to some extent also younger people, are missed. In consequence, there is less knowledge and experience for us to draw on, fewer skills available in the communities described above. At the same time, however, the changing world around us offers more space and a lot more opportunities for connection. This increase is at the root of a widely felt need for more personal contact and a new desire for anchor points. The tension between, on the one hand, the decreasing personal and financial assets, and on the other hand, the increasing opportunities for connection, forces us to make clear and discerning choices, which respond to the growing desire to see the Lord face to face.

As the parish board, we have noticed in our conversations with parish groups that the Ursula parish has an increasingly urgent demand for vision and clarity. People sympathize with the need for making choices. Delaying these choices would lead to scarcity, poverty and missing out on new opportunities, at the very moment when hope and perspective are most desired. On the other hand, there is also fear of being left behind or lost. This has happened more than once in the past. The parish board is painfully conscious of this. The suffering this has caused, and the fear which this suffering still feeds, continue to be felt by many parishioners and former parishioners.

For this reason, the parish board has accepted the task to request renewal in our parish communities, in order to strengthen our vocation and our space. This means letting go and investing.

Letting go requires a strong commitment to renounce the idea of self-sufficiency. This applies to everyone in the parish who would rather be left in peace within his/her own community, or who is prepared to visit or support only his/her own church building, or who insists on financial expenses when it is clear that the financial means are lacking. The Ursula parish will need to let go, as a whole and in all its parts, of what can no longer be maintained through lack of means, before it succumbs to scarcity and poverty.

Investing requires a strong commitment to respond to the desire and the call of believers and non-believers alike to see the Lord face to face. For this reason, we must transmit our riches and diversity,

- acting from the core of those values which wealth and freedom serve,
- merciful towards each other,
- towards all people of good will,
- within the living tradition of the Church,

as Jesus has taught us to do. Within the Ursula parish these gifts are richly present; the charisms of the four communities testify to that. But only by growing in confidence and mutual connection, each of us can put his/her gifts to good use. Thus we can answer the specific questions of our time, and offer a perspective of a hopeful future.

At the same time, the similarities and differences within our parish become very apparent in these charisms. The parish board wants to effect parish renewal by making use of both the similarities and the differences. In the charisms described above, the parish board discerns two ways of being Church, which supplement each other and can strengthen the parish by being renewed.

On the one hand we have:

The Adelbert, Francis & Clare, and Sacrament Church communities: These are asked explicitly to open themselves to each other, to discover each other's gifts, and to bond together to form one new community.

On the other hand we have:

The Maria van Jesse Church community: Of which is asked explicitly to renew itself by openness to necessary changes in internal organization, openness towards the other communities, inclusion of other groups in the community that make use of the church building (e.g. the English-language community), and to be of significance to all sorts of daily visitors to the church.

This call for renewal is not to be deferred, but goes into effect immediately.

The reason for its urgency is explained in the new attached Multi-year budget 2021-2030. The urgency follows primarily from the continuous budget deficit and the resulting loss of own capital. If we do not act, opportunities for investment will be lost and eventually the losses will no longer be sustainable. For 2020, the budget deficit was € 172,000; for 2021, the deficit has been estimated at € 181,000. Structurally, the personal, material and housing costs of the parish are too high. In the short term – which means the next year, 2022 – the personal and material costs should be part of a balanced budget, and there should be a clear path towards including the housing costs in a balanced budget as well. To accomplish this, measures should be taken in the current year, 2021.

Because the parish board bases its decisions on a multi-year budget, in which as many parishioners as possible should remain motivated to collaborate, the choice between church buildings is anticipated to occur when the intended changes have taken place:

- For the **Adelbert, Francis & Clare, and Sacrament Church**, the year 2023 (possibly 2024) is anticipated as the time when the renewed community should be realized, and a natural moment should arise to make a broadly supported choice for one of the three church buildings – based, of course, on a balanced budget for this new community.
- For the **Maria van Jesse Church**, it means that the intended changes will have taken place within this time, and that a balanced budget can be realized. This too is anticipated to occur in

2023 (possibly 2024). Only then will it be possible to determine whether the church can remain open or should be closed.

The activities outlined above should not lead to the formation of two separate communities which would be unaware of or indifferent towards each other. On the contrary: the renewal process can be successful only when it leads to a fruitful exchange between both communities. The parish board will be responsible for this, by organizing regular shared meetings together with representatives of both communities, in which the trajectories of the intended renewal can be agreed upon and its progress discussed. In this way we will be able to learn from each other, the process will gain transparency, and both communities can encourage each other to implement whatever changes are necessary. Because there is a shared interest that both communities should succeed.

When this renewal will have advanced sufficiently so that a balanced budget will once again be realistic, there will be a moment of choice which churches will remain open and which will be closed. This applies to both communities equally. Only after making the choice about which churches will remain, there will be financial space to invest. This means that large expenditures will be put on hold, as long as the deficit continues and as long as the choice between buildings has not yet been made.

In the multi-year budget, we have considered the scenario that despite great efforts on everyone's part, the process of renewing the communities will not succeed, for instance because too many parishioners cannot be sufficiently motivated to cooperate. In this case, an important part of the financial reasoning behind the multi-year budget will collapse. For this reason, the multi-year budget also contains a relapse scenario, which takes as its point of departure that only one affordable church will remain open. In this relapse scenario, only the Sacrament Church will remain open. In this way, the revenues necessary to cover housing costs will be safeguarded.

Only by sharing and allowing space for everyone's identity, we imitate the protection that St. Ursula gave to her travelling companions in truly dark days. Searching for the Lord, with the many gifts present in our communities, in diversity, prevents us from being surprised and carried away by developments. On the contrary, it enables us to truly participate in Christ's threefold office: royal (independent), priestly (sharing) and prophetic (proclaiming). We can realize the task to which we have been called by not avoiding it, but fulfilling it.

Prayer:

Lord God, we pray to You through the intercession of St. Ursula. We pray for the Catholic community in Delft. That we may have the courage to face the future without doubt and fear. We know and we believe that You watch over us with mercy and compassion. You have always shown yourself a reliable guide in our lives. Lead us into the future, where we will all be safe in Your hand. Protect us, as Ursula gave protection to many, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

