Roc Catholics Northwest Steering Committee
October 21, 2026
Notes

Attending: Fr. Lee Chase, Fr. William Coffas, Dcn. Edward Giblin (Vocations Committee), Marianne Katz (Evangelization Committee), Dcn. Frank Pettrone, Karen Rinefierd (facilitator)

Excused: Dcn. David Squilla (ROC Catholics Northwest website)

2027 Lenten Retreat for the seven parishes

- Sunday, March 7 (2:00-3:30 pm): "Finding God in All Things: The Examen prayer in daily life"
- Monday, March 8 (6:30-8:00 pm): "All will be well: Praying with Julian of Norwich and Teresa of Avila"
- Location: St. Charles Borromeo
- The retreat leader both days will be Jason Downer, SJ. He was born and raised in Rochester, attended McQuaid, and entered the Jesuits in 2010. Fr. Downer is currently Superior of the Jesuit Community at Lemoyne and Assistant Director of Novices for Jesuits USA East (since the novitiate moves next year, he will likely relocate in the fall of '27-'28).
- Karen has reached out to the members of the 2026 Retreat Committee to see if any want to serve again this year. After next week's Evangelization Committee, she will work with pastoral leaders to ensure there is representation from each parish.

2028 Lenten Retreat

- L. Chase asked where we stood with the 2028 retreat. Karen said that she has not yet had a chance to research or reach out to those national speakers who were previously recommended. She saw recently that Fr. Mike Schmitz was speaking at Madison Square Garden and assumes that our retreat would not be appropriate, given his national prominence and the size of our budget.
- Agreement that we want to emphasize our seven parishes. A recent retreat by Chris Stefanic at St. Marianne Cope included a large audience from beyond their parish.
- L. Chase then suggested inviting Bishop Bonnici. Bishop Clark used to enjoy leading an occasional retreat. Those present thought this was an excellent suggestion. Our vocation committee had planned to ask him to preside at a Mass for vocations early in 2027, but we prefer the retreat if possible. If he agrees to the 2028 retreat, we will cancel this request.
- Agreement to reach out to the bishop pending approval by the three other pastoral leaders. B. Coffas agreed to contact him.
- Easter in 2028 will be on April 16.

Collaboration Updates

<u>Evangelization Committee</u> (Marianne Katz)

- Work on the Advent flyer is in process.
- The committee's focus this year is on Pilgrims of Hope, scheduled for the Easter season.
    - The intent is to encourage our parishioners to visit all seven churches for Eucharistic Adoration. We are focusing on one already-scheduled time for Adoration at each

parish—one per week. If parishioners cannot attend that date/time, we will suggest another of the regular Adoration dates or a Mass at the church.
    - The committee is working on details:
        - Creating a passport with information about each parish and a place for a sticker when a person has visited that church.
        - Prayer aids that can be used during Adoration. Marianne said that the evangelization committee would find it helpful if parishes which already have a prayer aid for Adoration would share it.
    - Kris Burgio has a book for children explaining Adoration. She plans to offer a story hour at St. Leo's prior to the Easter season which we will advertise.

Discussion:

- Will there be a prize for those who visit all seven parishes? The evangelization committee has discussed that but not made any decisions yet.
- Bishop Barron has a book about Holy Hours.
- Students at St. Lawrence School experience Adoration in a "holy quarter hour" monthly.

<u>Vocations Committee</u> (Dcn. Ed Giblin)

- This year's "Adopt a Seminarian" is underway.
- The committee has been publishing interviews with local lay ecclesial ministers in bulletins and on the ROC Catholics Northwest website.
- On November 12 there will be a Holy Hour to pray for vocations at St. Lawrence followed by an informational session for those seeking to learn more about the permanent diaconate. Dcn. Bill Rabjohn has agreed to lead the Holy Hour.
- The deacons in Auburn recently hosted a discernment session for those interested in learning about the permanent diaconate, including their wives.
- There could be as many as twelve applying for the diaconate this year.

The diocesan initiative Called by Name

- During this November homilists will preach about vocations and encourage parishioners to nominate those they think might be called to the priesthood. By the end of the month parishes will collect the names of those identified. Those who accept the invitation to learn more will be invited to a Mass and luncheon at St. Patrick's in Victor. Seminarians in Rome will remote in to talk about their discernment.
- Karen wondered if it might be good to record the seminarians for the diocesan vocations website. The response was that the diocese would need their permission and not record the rest of the session.
- It was noted that the parishes are seeing more young men coming to Mass. They often come in groups.

<u>ROC Catholics Northwest website</u> (Karen Rinefierd for Dcn. Dave Squilla)

- Parishes sending information about their events has picked up again this fall.
- No issues.

Recent staff changes

- Mary Mann has begun at St. Lawrence as a parish office assistant and bulletin editor. She will eventually also be Safe Environment Coordinator. In the meantime, Dcn. David Squilla

is handling safe environment, in addition to his other responsibilities, and cleaning up the records.
- There have been two recent deacon deaths: Dcn. Don Eggleston and Dcn. Agenol Rodriguez.

What are the parishes currently doing to promote St. Lawrence and Holy Cross Schools? How can we more effectively and comprehensively promote our two schools?

- Holy Cross School: A blue ribbon committee has been established to lead this area. It includes people from both Holy Cross and Our Mother of Sorrows. This year there was fuller advertising, including lawn signs and more on social media. A database is being created of alums from both Holy Cross School and the former Our Mother of Sorrows School. More than 100 have been registered so far. The hope is that alums will get more involved—e.g, if the school wants to do a presentation on a particular occupation like architect, that an alum who is an architect could do it. There was a presentation about the school at all six Masses. The school currently has 148 students. Sr. Laurie has done an excellent job and created a good environment. All teachers came back this fall. E. Giblin added that the presence of B. Coffas in the school also makes a difference.
- St. Lawrence School: There were some hard transitions since former principal Frank Arvizzigno left to be the diocesan Superintendent. With Joseph Gaudio now in place, things are extremely positive. He is a coach at Aquinas and formerly served on staff. There are 161 students this year. Retention of teachers has been good. They receive a bonus at the end of the year if they stay. The school emphasizes Catholic identity and faith and now has a specialized religion teacher. The school has a phenomenal online presence. Publicity is mostly word of mouth, with lawn signs in front of the school as well as bulletin articles and social media. L. Chase also spoke at Masses.
- L. Chase suggested getting the two principals together to strategize about how to promote our schools. Perhaps information about the schools could go to all families in the seven parishes after baptism.
- Universal pre-kindergarten will begin soon in New York State and that will hurt us.
- Positively, there will be more financial aid for school families since NYS is opting into the new program where people can make donations to the diocese for scholarships. They will then receive a tax deduction. Also, since the diocesan bankruptcy is settled, we will get more from the Cabrini Fund.
- Bishop Bonnici has been extremely supportive of Catholic Schools. He has visited all the diocesan schools and wants to celebrate Mass at each.

Other

- There was a question about the recent Holy Hour for Life. We know that St. Mark's and St. Leo's offered this opportunity as did the cathedral, but they were not well attended.
- A new initiative at Holy Cross is to house the furniture outreach ministry of the St. Vincent DePaul ministry at St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Parish in the former convent. More and more local families are needing this ministry. The plan is to expand this to the rectory later on.

Next meeting: Tuesday, January 19 at 1:30 pm, in Deacon Hall at St. Lawrence