

Charlotte/Greece/Hilton Pastoral Planning Task Force
Monday, April 22nd, 2024 – 6:30-8:30 pm @ St. Lawrence Deacon Hall

ATTENDING: Holy Cross/Our Mother of Sorrows: Fr. William Coffas, **Holy Cross:** Joseph DiVincenzo, **Our Mother of Sorrows:** Marc Boeh, David Witkoski, **St. Charles Borromeo:** Fr. John Firpo, Gina Reeder, David Steklenski, **St. John the Evangelist:** Fr. Peter Enyan-Boadu, Nick Verdino, **St. Lawrence:** Fr. Lee Chase, Steve Amico, Jeri Rombaut, **St. Leo the Great:** Barbara Surash, **St. Mark's:** Deacon Frank Pettrone, Peter Blind, Kimm Wesley, **Facilitator:** Karen Rinefierd, **Minutes Scribe:** Maryanne Sutton

EXCUSED: Holy Cross/Our Mother of Sorrows: Fr. Justin Miller, **Holy Cross:** Ryan Snyder, **St. John the Evangelist:** Paul Parkman **St. Leo the Great:** Fr. Joseph Catanise, David Jones

Prayer (Acts 9:26-31): faith sharing, intercessory prayers, the Lord's Prayer

Preparing the next draft of the recommendation to the bishop

The future of the Pastoral Planning Task Force

- Question from a task force member: when does this Task force end? We have been gathering for 2 years and have accomplished what we have been asked to do. This task force has expanded its original scope beyond addressing what we would recommend to the bishop for the time when he does not have enough priests and pastors/pastoral administrators to serve our parishes as they are now constituted.
- After the recommendation goes to the bishop, we will poll the Task Force members to see who wants to continue on this task force and who would like to be replaced. At that point the Task Force will likely take on a more coordinating role with the collaborative ministries of the 7 parishes and their communications.

Focus on the Church's mission of Word, Worship, Community and Service:

- Agreement to add more complete information about the accomplishments and the activities of the 7-parish committees (evangelization, shared website, vocations).
- We should also add that these three areas were the ones deemed most important by the Task Force.
- Evangelization and vocations are important to grow our church and address a systemic problem.
- Should we add any other plans for addressing the Church's mission in the future (especially evangelization and social ministry/pastoral care)? Not at this time.
- How do we address the issue of the health of our Church and how do we spread the good word of Jesus Christ?
- At the staff gathering, questions came up in several of the small groups about how we will attract young people/youth to our Church.

More about the content of the recommendation that will go to the bishop

- The central component of the recommendation will be the wisdom of the 7 parishes regarding how we can best handle what we know is coming--which clusters make the most sense to us if/when there is future clustering because of a lack of sufficient number of priests/pastoral leaders.
- That situation (a trigger event leading to a change) could arise with priest retirements, health issues, or needs elsewhere in the diocese. We should have language in the recommendation that says, "We realize that you may need to employ other options that are not presented in our recommendation or ones the task force has not considered."

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- Central to the Church's mission is the salvation of souls in this part of the diocese.
- There was a lengthy discussion about the increasing demands being put on clergy as more and more parishes are clustered or merged:
 - There was genuine concern for clergy wellness expressed at the staff gathering.
 - The reality in our diocese is that priests are asked to cover more and more parishes. We need to be able to care for our clergy, so they don't get overwhelmed. Clustering is happening and will happen. Will we be prepared for clustering?
 - The relationship of a pastor/pastoral administrator and all priests to their people is important. Two priests are now serving the entire city of Elmira, and it is impossible for them to be in relationship with all of their people as was possible in the past with many more priests in the area. Fr. Martuscello, now serving 3 parishes (5 churches) in the Auburn area, has said how difficult that is.
 - When clustering, people will ask who will visit my relative in the hospital? How will I get along with the new Pastoral team? Church is about relationships with God's people and their response to us.
 - Additional item for the recommendation: We should include the difficulty of pastoral leaders/priests developing pastoral relationships with their parishioners in these large entities as a concern of ours.
- Pastoral Care is so important. How do we empower our people to be Evangelizers? How do we serve the needs of God's people?
- In the future we may want to prepare a booklet of all the pastoral care and social ministry that is done through our 7 parishes—our parishioners would be surprised by the breadth of what is being done.

Re-visiting the clustering recommendations for 5 Pastoral Leaders in light of the staff comments on 2/22

- Before the meeting Karen prepared a one-page spreadsheet for each of the three possible clusters with five rather than the current six pastoral leaders: Mass attendance, church capacity, percentage of capacity used per Mass, number of households, baptisms, first communions, confirmations, weddings, and funerals.
- Recognition that there will never be a perfect cluster scenario.
- Agreement to keep the clustering recommendations contained in the draft discussed by the parish staffs on 2/22.

Educating about clustering and models of pastoral leadership/clergy appointment

- Suggestion that we create a 15-minute Youtube video to explain various models of pastoral leadership.
- We should create a glossary of terms to include in our recommendation and to share with parishioners.
- Suggestion that we have a 2-sided FAQ bulletin insert in the fall and then follow that with more in-depth bulletin articles. Multiple exposures are valuable.
- Agreement to use the fall gathering of the Pastoral Councils and Finance Councils as a first place to educate about clustering (what it is and what it is not):
 - 30-45 minutes on the agenda before moving to the draft recommendation and seeking their input/questions on the recommendation.
 - This could be a panel of our priests who have had experience with clusters: Fr. Bill Coffas at Holy Cross and Our Mother of Sorrows, Fr. Peter Enyan-Boadu in the 19th Ward

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(where several parishes clustered and later merged with some churches being sold), Fr. John Firpo with St. Charles Borromeo and Holy Name of Jesus (where Holy Name of Jesus later closed), Fr. Bob Schrader at Peace of Christ in Rochester (where 3 parishes clustered and later merged). They could share what worked and what did not.

Next Task Force meeting and location:

- Decision to invite the Bishop to a future meeting in late June or July. Action: Fr. Bill and Fr. Lee will extend the invitation.
- Task Force members will generate possible questions to share with the Bishop beforehand—we will send him three.
- We would like a 2-part meeting with the Bishop in the first half. Then the two Finance Directors would join in the second half and talk about how the parishes are doing as well as their concerns. The Bishop could certainly stay for the second part if he has the time.
- It was noted that bishops don't close churches; parishes/churches close due to lack of attendance and finances.
- The date of the next Task Force meeting will be determined by the Bishop's availability with the location to be determined.

Pastoral Council/Finance Council Meeting: Tuesday, October 15th at St. John the Evangelist

Parishioners' Meetings: Tuesday, November 12th—We will have both Day and Night gatherings. Tentatively at-St John the Evangelist which is central, has a hearing loop, and can livestream.