

Charlotte/Greece/Hilton Pastoral Planning Task Force Meeting Notes

Tuesday, April 25, 2023- St. Mark's Parish

ATTENDING: Holy Cross/Our Mother of Sorrows: Fr. William Coffas, Fr. Joseph Martuscello, Holy Cross: Joseph DiVincenzo, Ryan Snyder, St. Charles Borromeo: Fr. John Firpo, Gina Reeder, David Steklenski, St. John the Evangelist: Fr. Peter Enyan-Boadu, Paul Parkman, Nick Verdino, St. Lawrence: Steve Amico, Jeri Rombaut, St. Leo's: Father Joseph Catanise, David Jones, Barbara Surash, St. Mark's: Deacon Frank Pettrone, Peter Blind, Facilitator: Karen Rinefierd, Minutes Scribe: Maryanne Sutton

EXCUSED: Our Mother of Sorrows: Marc Boeh, David Witkoski, St. Lawrence: Fr. Lee Chase, St. Mark's: Kimm Wesley

- 1) Opening Prayer with group faith sharing
- 2) Karen encouraged all members to step forward when they have an idea, a skill, a different approach to recommend. We depend on the gifts of all our members.
- 3) Two of the three groups working on collaborative initiatives will have their first meetings next week: shared website on Wednesday and evangelization on Thursday. We are not ready yet to launch the vocations committee--only four members have been recruited so far.
- 4) **Another way to approach a declining number of priests**—discussion
 - What do you see as the value of keeping the mission of our parishes front and center while simultaneously trying to take more responsibilities off our priests?
 - It's important to keep in the forefront as a guiding principle; a valuable thing to do.
 - We could look at the mission statement of all the parishes to see if they are the same or are different.
 - Each parish might have nuances regarding how it presents the mission of the church, but we have the same mission. Primary is evangelization: go and make disciples. Surrounding that is Word, Worship, Community, and Service—the four pillars, the way the mission of the church is described in church documents, including the catechism.
 - Perhaps we could create a graphic of the mission and use it in all of our churches to help parishioners understand more fully what we are about. Consistency. Everyone hears the same message no matter what church you attend.
 - We could articulate all the things that a Pastor or Pastoral Administrator does and what things can be delegated.
 - Pastoring is a team effort.
 - Administrative vs. Priest or Deacon responsibilities.
 - Styles of leadership vary as does the comfort level of the Pastor or Pastoral Administrator.
 - Pastors should **empower** lay people to take responsibility for certain aspects of parish life. Pastors are leaders not managers.
 - Priests are collaborators of the Parish and the Bishop; the Church is the body of Christ.
 - What is the value of the lay members of the task force gaining a clearer sense of how our Pastors/Pastoral Administrator invest their time and what makes delegating particular tasks difficult?
 - It would be interesting to know but not our goal.
 - It is important to know so parishioners will be more likely to step up and do something to keep a healthy parish.
 - I am not concerned to learn how Pastors' time is invested but rather I want to hear where they are challenged. How can we help?
 - Understanding is helpful so people know how they can step in and help.
 - We could define the ideal role of a priest so we can pick up other tasks.
 - I don't feel burdened as a Pastor as my committees and ministries are empowered. I have to stay in touch and communicate with ministry leaders and ask questions.
 - I attend meetings, listen, and ask critical questions.

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- I bring the vision of the parish to the people.
 - I have to discipline myself to trust people, build relationships and sustain relationships.
 - What does a pastoral leader need to do to empower committees?
 - Time Management can be difficult sometimes.
 - One lay member said he felt very empowered working in a Ministry.
 - I work with start-ups. Often we need to tell leaders that they are spending their time on the wrong things and encourage them to change.
 - Any other ideas for ways to make the role of priests (particularly pastors) more life-giving if the bishop continues to deal with the declining number of priests by clustering parishes?
 - Talk to priests who have been through this clustering process. Find out what works and what doesn't work.
 - How we can bring lay leaders together early in the process.
 - Have the diocese provide the resources as parishes prepare to cluster and priests/pastoral administrators prepare to take on additional parishes. Provide the pastor a guideline/best practices on how to successfully do clustering.
 - Have enough time to prepare for the cluster so everyone is prepared.
 - What else should we be thinking about?
 - Where should we put our effort?
 - Recruiting, training, supporting.
 - Consistent Mass times at all churches to help parishioners when priests are not available and they need to go to another parish for Mass.
 - Don't have Mass times that are the same, so people have a better variety of times.
 - Diversity of Mass times are best for priests when they need to ask a neighboring priest to fill in.
- 5) **Taking the work done on natural groupings at the March meeting to discuss possible scenarios to prepare for the bishop** (spreadsheet to guide our conversation was handed out at the meeting)
- Updated Excel document (attached)
 - Communicate thoroughly to everyone.
 - Don't have listening session in each parish but rather have sessions for parishioners of all 7 of our parishes or among parishes that we are proposing be clustered if a priest is not available.
 - We want opportunities so all opinions can be heard.
 - What will the end look like; 2 clusters or 3 clusters? And what would they look like?
 - Position this issue as not only a priest shortage but also a lack of parishioners and a vocation shortage.
- 6) Next steps for the task force
- Invite diocesan representatives to come to the May task force meeting and give input. [Since the meeting Shannon Kilbridge, Associate Director of the Dept. of Pastoral Services, has been invited and has agreed to come.]
 - We need to meet throughout the summer so we have enough time to create a draft proposal to share with parishioners at fall town meetings. We also need to decide the format/date of those meetings and create the content for a powerpoint presentation.
 - [Mentioned after the meeting: Should we meet with the pastoral councils before going to parishioners at large?]

Next Task Force Meeting:

- Wednesday, May 31st at Our Mother of Sorrows
- June Meeting: TBD
- July: TBD
- August: TBD