

# Charlotte/Greece/Hilton Pastoral Planning Task Force Meeting Notes

## Wednesday, November 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM -Holy Cross Parish Hall

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

**EXCUSED:** St. Lawrence: Fr. Lee Chase, St. Leo the Great: Father Joseph Catanise, St. Charles Borromeo: Gina Reeder, Holy Cross: Joseph DiVincenzo, Ryan Snyder, St. John the Evangelist: Paul Parkman

### AGENDA:

6:30 **Prayer** (Luke 23:35-43): Faith sharing, Intercessions, The Lord's Prayer

6:50 **Discussion: What can we do internally to prepare for a reduced number of priests serving our parishes and what should we begin preparing to present to the next Bishop?**

- How do we distribute the Masses over the seven parishes? Do several models. It might be as simple as a mathematical equation based on the number of priests available at a given time. The number of Masses would reduce across the seven parishes as the number of priests declines.
- Short-term versus long-term absence; planned versus unplanned absence; emergency absences.
- Have all the Mass times at all parishes at the same time so people can go to other parishes/ Have a priest go to another parish in need
- Have one church, a "Mega Church"
- Look at how other areas handle fewer priests—e.g., Florida churches are larger in size, fewer churches per mile, no rectory; Buffalo is doing a family of parishes approach
- Keeping all the churches open is not a long-term reality (given the financial resources available, maintaining a number of buildings is very daunting)
- This should be done slowly
- Can we pair-up churches now so people are familiar with the different parish communities?
- This must be broken down to short term vs. long term goals
- There are many things to consider in criteria when considering parishes to cluster (housing, space, schools)
- Fr. Bill Coffas: Pairing can be done very well, but people must change their perceptions. Be proactive rather than be reactive. Expose parishioners to other clustered parish communities. Communication is essential, including keeping the pulse on what parishioners are thinking. The more interaction between parishioners of the different parishes, the better the integration. Create new traditions (e.g., having one Thanksgiving Mass that rotates between the parishes). The cluster moved from having two Tridiums to just one—gradual change. The biggest challenge we faced at Holy Cross and Our Mother of Sorrows was moving to one Pastoral Council.
- How are parishes combined without offending the parishioners?
- Father John Firpo: Make sure parishioners from both parishes are a part of Pastoral Council, Finance Council, Liturgy Committee, etc. Fr. Firpo first was appointed Administrator of Holy Name of Jesus while already Pastor at St. Charles. There was a two-year process of bringing parishioners to understand that Holy Name was no longer viable (finances, children, ministries). If a church is closing (e.g., Holy Name of Jesus or Our Lady of Mercy) bring over items from that church and incorporate them into the remaining church. Make sure each parishioner from the closing parish is tracked and welcomed into whatever new parish they choose. It is a long process; it takes a while to adjust. We

## Charlotte/Greece/Hilton Pastoral Planning Task Force Meeting Notes Wednesday, November 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM -Holy Cross Parish Hall

must listen to the closing parish. The remaining parish must be open to change and creating new traditions. Know that change will be gradual—e.g., at pancake breakfasts, at first former Holy Name parishioners were first seated together; later on separate seating was not necessary.

- Father Peter Enyan-Boadu: Had experience with clustered parishes in a prior assignment. Communication is key. Hold town hall meetings and communicate and listen. Speak to parishioners, ask input, and listen.
- Prepare a “best practices in clustering parishes” document.
- Survey parishioners that have been through a clustering or closing.
- Our work could include developing emergency plans for when a priest is suddenly unable to preside at weekend Masses as well as more long-term situations. What would we recommend if a Pastor or Parochial Vicar were reassigned or if one of our priests will be retiring? What would we need to prepare for? What would change?
- We should recommend to the bishop responsibilities currently being done by priests that could be done by a lay person.
- Even in planning efforts where all of the involved parishes have members on the planning committee, even when there are town hall meetings, some parishioners will say they weren’t consulted.

7:35 **Small group work** on three collaborative initiatives: 1) Reaching out to inactive parishioners, 2) a shared vocation approach, 3) a shared electronic platform. *(See notes at the end of these minutes)*

8:10 Next bulletin article

- Include 3 topics we spoke about
- Underscore that the task force was not charged by the pastoral leaders with recommending parish closures but with coming to agreement on how to prepare for a reduced number of priests
- Mention top 3 results of survey, collaborative efforts

8:20 Setting next **three** meeting dates and location

- 1) Monday, December 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm – St. John the Evangelist parish center
- 2) Monday, January 22, 2023, at 6:30 pm – St. Lawrence Deacon Hall main room
- 3) Wednesday, February 15, 2023, at 6:30 pm – St. Charles Borromeo library (in school building)

**NEXT MEETING DATE:** Monday, December 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm St. John the Evangelist Parish Center

# Charlotte/Greece/Hilton Pastoral Planning Task Force Meeting Notes

## Wednesday, November 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM -Holy Cross Parish Hall

### Small group one: reaching out to inactive parishioners

Scribe: Dave Jones

Members of the small group: Dave Jones, Barb Surash, Fr. John Firpo, David Steklenski, Marc Boeh

Top three ideas for how to proceed with this initiative:

- Personal invitation/personal contact (phone calls, emails, connecting with people at events such as weddings and funerals).
- Postcard mailings.
- Messages on livestream

Who from your parish do you think might be interested in working on this initiative? (did not have time to address)

What should the next steps be?

- Gathering information (inactive lists, email addresses, etc.)
- Collaboration—what works at the various parishes?
- Reviewing key processes (funerals, weddings, sacraments)

### Small group two: a shared vocation approach

Scribe: Maryanne Sutton

Members of the small group: Fr. Peter Enyan-Boadu, Peter Blind, Fr. William Coffas, Nick Verdino, Fr. Joseph Martuscello, Dave Witkoski, Maryanne Sutton

Ideas/comments:

- What can we do collaboratively? Diocese should concentrate on promoting vocations in each parish—part of faith formation.
- Everyone has a call. We will have fewer priests—how can we prepare and train for that? Recruit and train people to pray and do outreach.
- We need to communicate to congregations that we can all help out and use our gifts.
  - How can we support our priests?
  - It's our parish.
  - We all need to help.
  - Lay people can help in ways they may not realize.
  - How do we communicate to the parish?
- We have to reach out and ask people for help with duties.
- Youth thrive with numbers.
  - Shared regional youth group.
  - Bring parishes together and make new friends.
  - Praise and worship, confession, adoration.
  - Expose young people to Catholic traditions and actively involve them in parish ministries.
  - “A day in the life of a priest” day for youth.
  - Connect young people to priesthood as they enjoy hands on contact with parish activities

# Charlotte/Greece/Hilton Pastoral Planning Task Force Meeting Notes

## Wednesday, November 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM -Holy Cross Parish Hall

- A “shadowing” concept.
- A regional vocation Mass.
  - Invite all who are open to see priests, sisters, deacons.
- Have priests, deacons personally invite parishioners to participate in a ministry—it is a powerful thing to have someone recognize your strengths.
- Create groups of people and gatherings—“30 club,” “senior club”

### Small group three: a shared electronic platform

Scribe: Jeri Rombaut

Members of the small group: Kimm Wesley, Steve Amico, Jeri Rombaut, Dcn. Frank Pettrone

Top three ideas for how to proceed with this initiative:

- Create a seven parish “platform” website—all 7 parishes would contribute to the expense of doing this
- Each parish’s homepage would have a link to the new platform
- Create communications to promote usage of new platform

Who from your parish do you think might be interested in working on this initiative?

- Possibly Deacon David Squilla at St. Lawrence
- Possibly Kimm Wesley at St. Mark’s

What should the next steps be?

- Track data on how much traffic our websites are getting—is this effort going to be fruitful?
- Identify what the platform homepage would look like and what information would commonly be shared
- Identify technical parishioners to foster these sites