

Charlotte/Greece/Hilton Pastoral Planning Task Force Meeting Notes

Wednesday, February 15, 2023

ATTENDING: Holy Cross/Our Mother of Sorrows: Fr. William Coffas, Fr. Joseph Martuscello, David Cataline (observer), Our Mother of Sorrows: Marc Boeh, David Witkoski, 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: Fr. Lee Chase, Steve Amico, Jeri Rombaut, St. Leo the Great: Father Bob Ring (representing Fr. Joseph Catanise), David Jones, Barbara Surash, St. Mark: Deacon Frank Pettrone, Peter Blind, Kimm Wesley, Facilitator: Karen Rinefierd, Minutes Scribe: Maryanne Sutton

EXCUSED: St. Leo the Great: Fr Joseph Catanise

AGENDA:

6:30 **Prayer** (Matthew 5:43-48): Faith sharing, Intercessions, The Lord's Prayer

6:50 **Upcoming 7-Parish Lenten Mission:**

- Bishop Matano will preside at the Mission for a three-day event at St. Marks (February 23), OMOS (February 24) and St. John the Evangelist (February 25).
- Friday evening will emphasize youth and vocations with Fr. Joseph Martuscello and seminarian David Cataline sharing their vocation stories. Both adults and youth are encouraged to come.

6:55 **Finalizing each parish's emergency weekend Mass plan/communication/logistics** (*see 12/12/22 task force minutes for details of each draft*)

- All churches are asked to finalize their plan.
- Discuss plans with staff and Pastoral Council.
- Have as many people prepared and knowledgeable as possible so the plan can be executed if needed.

7:00 **Discussion: Outline of short bulletin topics** (*draft outline provided at meeting*):

- Every other week: sharing data we have gathered about our current reality/projections for the future.
- On alternating weeks: Good News: Highlighting parish/school ministries in our area.
- The data will be shared with our parishes since we want to be transparent.
- It will take about 4-5 months to get all the information mentioned to the parishes. If there is a reason to roll out information more quickly, we can always do a bulletin insert.
- One change made to the draft: discuss Parish Structure across the 12 counties of the Diocese first to set the stage for what follows.
- Make sure we mention how many parishes are in the diocese, general age of retirement, # of pastors, # of parochial vicars, # of permanent deacons

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- It was noted that some parishes include two to four churches (worship sites).

7:10 Preparing internally for a reduced number of priests serving our parishes

Discussion: If/when future clustering of parishes needs to occur, which groupings are most natural (e.g., based on geographical proximity, same school system, common community organizations, parishioners already going between the parishes for weekend or weekday Masses or other events, style or size of the parish)?

- Suggestion: look at campuses and who would be able to house multiple priests. It was noted that different priests have different preferences regarding living alone or in a community of priests.
- Priests prefer living in a rectory separate from the parish office.
- How attractive are living quarters for retired priests?
- The importance of good communication with parishioners and their involvement prior to decisions being made by the task force: One pastor stated that he would feel uncomfortable about executing team decisions without asking his parishioners for their input/feedback. Another suggested that each Pastoral Council/Staff/key people be aware of decisions/goals made at the Task Force. Some parishes already have a regular item on their Pastoral Council agenda for a task force report.
- The task force decided last fall that it was too soon to host church meetings. At this point we are sharing meeting minutes and bulletin updates about our meetings with parishioners. It will be helpful if task force members continue to share what they are hearing from parishioners at our meetings. We will hold town meetings and provide other ways for parishioners to give input before we finalize any recommendations to the bishop.
- **Homework for next meeting:** if your parish would join with another church community, which church would it be? Why?

7:40 Proposal for future task force work from Karen (for discussion, revision, alternatives):

- 1) That the task force create various scenarios regarding what we would recommend to the bishop if any of our current priests is reassigned or retires
- 2) What issues would have to be worked out in these above listed scenarios (e.g., Mass schedule changes, how other sacraments and hospital coverage would be handled)
- 3) If Mass schedules need to be adjusted, we should think about how many Masses we NEED versus how many we WANT
 - How can we bring our communities together?
 - Fewer Masses will have more people and the quality of the worship will change.
 - Priests not only do weekend Masses, but daily Masses, funerals, anointings, nursing home calls.

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- Do we have data about parishes that have cut the # of weekend Masses?
No one has done this kind of analysis at the diocesan level. Generally Mass attendance goes down, temporarily or permanently, with a Mass schedule change and often with any change, such as a change in pastors.

Homework: within the next week, share with Karen any ideas on how to begin this work of creating scenarios

8:15 **Content for next bulletin article:**

- 1) Link to Pastoral Planning Website
- 2) Asking parishioners to pray for our efforts
- 3) Emphasize that the challenges we face are not just a priest shortage but a parishioner shortage resulting in financial issues

8:20 **Future task force meetings:**

- **NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, March 15th, St. Leo at 6:30 pm**
- Tuesday April 25th at St. Marks
- Wednesday, May 31st at OMOS