

**ST. THOMAS MORE PARISH
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
Monday, January 16, 2012**

Council Members in Attendance: Fr. Bill Wagner, Vic Ivers, John Duncan, Janet Tate, Sam DeBonis, and Jim Conrady.

Council Members Absent: Kathy Hornschemeier and Larry Bush.

Others in Attendance: Mike Gennett & Duane Bradley.

The St. Thomas More Parish Council meeting was called to order by Vic Ivers at 7:00 PM EST. Fr. Bill Wagner opened with a prayer.

Pastoral Region Planning Update: Kathy Hornschemeier and Duane Bradley are our parish representatives on the St. Thomas More-St. Bernadette Pastoral Regional Planning Committee. Duane gave an overview where the planning process stands. A lot of work has gone into this project. Duane updated Parish Council with the following information:

First, Duane encouraged everyone to look at the video by Archbishop Schnurr on the Archdiocese web site regarding Pastoral Regions. It may be found at:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YfO1tvyzn-w&feature=youtu.be&safety_mode=true&persist_safety_mode=1&safe=active

(This link has been added to our parish web site for general viewing.)

Duane then presented the update:

- Both parish councils will be eventually asked to approve the pastoral region plan sometime in the future.

- The plan is for a collaborative region. That is defined as:
 - A group of parishes with one pastor who is assigned by the Archbishop
 - The one pastor leads the parish staffs and leaders.
 - Each parish retains its own Parish Councils, Finance Councils, and Pastoral Staffs in a collaborative manner
 - One or more of the churches is used for worship
- This is not a merger. It is off the table for this project.
- The goal is to have as little disruption as possible and yet plan the liturgies when there is only one priest available.
- The plan includes each parish having a Deacon assigned. The plan does not work without a Deacon assigned to St. Bernadette.
 - All other positions remain as they currently are staffed with the exception of extra staffing for bookkeepers at each parish. Business Managers may be taking on additional responsibilities so the Pastor can have the time to minister at both parishes.
- The plan being formatted is just that...a plan. If the region is implemented some day, the new pastor may change the plan.
- The schools are off the table. There is no discussion regarding the schools.
 - The diocese is working on a master plan for all the schools that will be announced in the fall.

As this point Duane covered the proposed Mass schedule if the region is implemented by the Archbishop. (No specific proposals are noted...just general points by Duane with comments by council members as the specifics were presented.)

- No one disagreed with the proposed Saturday Mass schedule.
- Two options were presented for the Sunday Mass schedule: one with a Pastor plus a Weekend Celebrant and one with a Pastor and no second priest available.
 - Jim Conrady challenged the task force to look at adding 15 minutes between each scheduled proposed Mass time. This keeps the Mass times as close as possible to what they are today.

- Everyone agreed that both parishes will lose parishioners due to the changes in the Mass times. However, if there is only one priest available due to the priest shortage, there is no other option.
 - *Eventually, most of the other neighboring parishes will have to change their Mass schedules to accommodate the priest shortage. This exercise is not unique to our two parishes and only forces everyone to face an eventual reality.*
- Weekday Masses will alternate between the Parishes.
- Monday will be the Pastor's scheduled day off.
- The proposed Christmas Mass schedule assumes two priests will be available. This proposed Mass schedule will not work without two priests available.
- The proposed Easter Sunday Mass schedule assumes two priests will be available.
 - The Archdiocese Worship Office has proposed that there be only one Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil in a region. However, this is not the final proposal for our region. Hopefully two priests will be available for the Easter Vigil...one at each parish. These liturgies have not been finalized in the plan.
- The Holyday of Obligation Mass schedule assumes only one priest is available. Two schedules were proposed....one for a Holyday on a school day and the other not a school day.
- For Weddings and Funerals, only one secretary will schedule these liturgies for both parishes. This must be done so not to schedule two funerals or weddings at the same time at two locations with only one priest available.
- The proposed plan also offers recommendations for other non-Eucharistic Worship. This includes Baptisms, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Confirmation, Benediction and Adoration, Graduation, Ash Wednesday, Pet Blessings, May Crowning, and All Souls Day Masses.
- The following still needs to be decided: how to break out the finances by location for a single pastor and a single rectory.
- Both Fr. Bill & Duane stated they want to tread lightly on collaboration since this is not a merger.

Sam DeBonis asked how contributions will be affected. Fr. Bill responded that parishioners will be able to drop in their envelope or check at either location. The offerings for the other parish will be forwarded. Nothing can be done about loose cash. Mike Gennett stated that both parishes need to encourage electronic contributions so parishioners are ensured their donation is going to their home parish. This will also make the donation transfer easier.

The Next Steps are to fine tune the plan, present it to both Parish Councils for approval, and then send it to the Archbishop for his approval.

It was clearly pointed out that this plan does not go into effect until the Archbishop implements the region. No one knows when that could happen. It could even be a long time from now. This is just a plan if that day comes.

The specifics of this plan will not be released to either parish until all the necessary approvals are in place.

Business Manager Report: Mike Gennett gave the report.

The **2012 Festival license** has been processed by the Ohio Attorney General's Office. We are good to go!

The stewardship initiative has been extremely successful. Through January 15th, the Sunday collection is ahead of plan on the year by \$5,738.85 and last year by \$36,949.45. Commitment Sunday was October 9th and going into that weekend, we were \$28,537.68 behind plan and \$4,830.50 to last year. This is a major positive shift in just short three months.

In addition, at the same time, through January 11th, we have received \$60,900.00 one time gifts, more than double a year ago.

To date, the stewardship initiative has been worth over \$75,000 in increased donations. Thanks again to everyone on Council & Finance that spoke during the weekend of Oct 1-2. That was an important part of the success!

The only unanswered question about this program is how long are its legs? In talking with other Business Managers, it varies. Some have reported a fall off after a few months while others state they were experiencing the same increases a year later. For planning purposes, we need to be cautious. We clearly are not planning run-away spending increases.

This fall, we were also able to **accomplish a number of very important capital projects** we had on the back burner for some time (the stewardship campaign made this possible):

- Heider Hall roof - \$59,432.00
- Parking Lot repairs - \$22,546.00 (actual costs were \$27,646. Difference was donated.)
- Second bank of flood lights in the church - \$ 7,482.00
- Architect drawings – Handicap ramp - \$720 (more on this later in the report)
- A 1% bonus (pay and benefits) to all regular employees of record in the past year - \$11,743.64

Our employees had stayed with us despite years without raises or very small raises. We have a terrific staff. The 1% bonus was greatly appreciated by the employees.

The first draft budget for 2012-2013 has been finished and sent to Finance. We have a three step process for budget planning. The first draft is completed in January. The budget is updated in late May and is based upon very close to reality and the actual school registrations for the next year. The budget is also “tweaked” a third time in August after JulyFest results are known. The August budget is the final budget. We plan our budget based upon the actual needs of the parish and school. This methodology has helped us not to get into any kind of financial bind. We don’t commit to anything we cannot pay for.

We will be converting to three new on line systems this spring.

Tuition Management Systems (TMS) (our monthly tuition provider) is going out of the K-12 processing business. They have been our **monthly tuition payment system** provider for many years. With the future of college loans now limited to the Department of Education as passed in ObamaCare, TMS no longer want to court the elementary school market. Our contract was sold to FACTS which is a very large tuition processing company. (Many of our schools in the diocese already use them.) We have been working to get the new system up and running. Every family that wants to pay over the 10 month period will be required to register on line. Their school registration will not be accepted until this is completed. We cannot transfer their bank account information from one company to the other. FACTS is a broader based system that offers other services. However, for the first year, we will do a good job just to get the transition completed. We have set the new system up with the same criteria we have used with TMS. We will once again add the \$38 FACTS fee to the family tuition due.

We will be on the **new diocese common software platform** for finances within 75 days. A formal announcement is coming from the diocese any day. St. Thomas More will be one of the 15-20 pilot locations to make this change. Mike Gennett has been a member of the diocese task force that has been working on this project for the past year. The vendor selected is not currently in any location in the diocese and the diocese rollout will be difficult for some over the months and years to come. However, this accounting program is used throughout the United States in other dioceses and is designed for Catholic churches. Cincinnati is one of the last dioceses to have the finances on a common, uniform system. All locations will have to transition to a common chart of accounts. Some locations do not have computers and their transition will be more difficult. Training for the pilot locations begins in late February. The diocese has a goal of having the pilot locations live and on line around April 1. The goal is to eventually have every location on line, in the cloud environment for finances. This will include all volunteer organization accounts which would follow onto the system about 90 days after the parish and school are in place. The diocese will be able to monitor and challenge each location on a regular basis regarding finances. It will allow for far better control and accountability. The diocese obtains number of auditing tools once this system is implemented. Look for a new structure for reports and budgets

in the future. There will be a period of time while we are transitioning systems that will require patience.

There is a **major change coming** this summer regarding **the Child Protection Decree**. The diocese is moving everyone to a national data base system. Every employee and volunteer will have to be retrained and be recertified. If they aren't, they eventually won't be able to work or volunteer in the future. The Business Managers are scheduled to receive more information about this change at our January 25th meeting. We have no idea what costs, if any, there may be. Staff training for these changes starts June 17 and 18 in Centerville. We have over 1,000 names in our database and getting everyone recertified is clearly going to be a major project. The good news is if someone is volunteering and has been processed somewhere in any US diocese that is on the national data base, we will be able to access that information. This will current eliminate the duplicate requirement to be fingerprinted. The vast majority of our parishioners are supportive of the effort to do background checks. This change is a result of an audit last October by the National Catholic Council of Bishops.

Fr. Bill added a fourth change that will come next year. He has been asked to server on an Archdiocesan Athletic Committee. The goal is to establish common criteria how athletics are managed in all the Archdiocese institutions.

All of these changes are critical to our parish. Pray that these changes go smoothly. We need Council to be supportive of all these changes.

Last, but not least, **the Fenwick Club Seminary Collection** totaled \$1,227.50. We will renew our parish enrollment for the 2012 Fenwick Club at the seminary. Council voted last year to enroll our parish. Mike pointed out our membership did not get initially processed last year. The seminary has since corrected the error.

Pastor's Update – Fr. Bill gave his update.

In the future, Archbishop Pilarczyk will be asking the confirmandi candidates to kneel when he confirms them. He will now be sitting during Confirmation due to health related issues.

Our parish sacramental records are in the process of being microfilmed.

Archbishop Schnurr will host a vocation awareness dinner at our parish on April 12th for potential candidates from throughout the diocese for the seminary.

The Right to Life Committee will hold a prayer service this Sunday, January 22, at 6:30 PM in the church.

The new Roman Missal III translation for the Mass has gone well.

The cost of getting married is going up. The diocese has raised some fees for processing Foccus interviews.

The diocese has announced a new pay procedure for diocese employees from other locations that may work in any capacity at another parish. This includes priests. An example would be a neighboring Music Director subbing at our parish for a funeral, wedding or vacation. This individual is an Archdiocese employee and his pay plus all applicable benefits will now be sent to his home parish for processing through the diocese payroll system. All applicable taxes are to be deducted. Non-diocese employees including retired priests that work at our parish will still be treated as individual contractors. This change is due to an IRS audit at one of our parishes.

Mike Gennett asked for police protection when the Christmas and New Years collection was counted this year. Both were counted when the parish and school were closed for the holidays. This protection was requested due to various crimes that have been going on up and down Beechmont Avenue in the last month. The Union Township Police department was here for the processing of both collections. They also accompanied Mike to the bank. We are appreciative of their service.

Our school's High School entrance exams went very well. Our kids clearly excelled as noted by the results.

The Meeting adjourned at 8:25 PM. Fr. Bill led the group in a prayer.

**THE NEXT MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR MONDAY, FEBRUARY
20TH, AT 7:00 PM.**