

2011 Pastoral Council Retreat

January 15, 2011

Attendance:

- Pastoral Council:
 - Present: Bob (outgoing) & Maxine Weir, Brad & Darlene Polk, Carla Goetz, Fr. Jimmie, Fr. Ken, Phillip LaMantia, Carol Good, Kevin Cordera, Rita Haldeman, Roy Draper, Paul Hunton
 - Absent: Dave Kent, Dave Yant, Barb DeFelice
- Parish Staff:
 - Ken Meyer, Mary Ellen Stilwell, Dawn Borger

Items made as suggestions for improvement or for potential future action are highlighted.

Agenda:

I. Mass

- Mass was offered by a visiting priest from St. Vincent's. Of the 10 sisters currently in residence at St. Emma's, seven were present. Deacon candidates from Altoona also attended, along with their spouses.

II. Terce

- Pastoral Council members participated in the third of the seven canonical hours (Liturgy of the Hours) of the Divine Office (Terce) with the Sisters.

III. Breakfast

- Breakfast was hosted by the Sisters of St. Emma's

IV. Tour of St. Emma's

- Mother Mary Anne Noll provided a comprehensive tour of the main house in the Monastery. The upstairs of the main house has been used as a residence for priests since the 1950's. As there are no priests in residence, the Sisters are currently having the house converted to a Bed and Breakfast. The house is expected to be available for this purpose in the spring of 2011.

V. Pastoral Staff Introductions and Roles/Responsibilities:

Select members of the St. Barbara Pastoral Staff were invited to discuss their roles and responsibilities with the Pastoral Council. A summary of the items discussed are below.

- Mary Ellen Stillwell
 - RCIA and Evangelization program
 - 2 Catechumens, 6 candidates currently in RCIA
 - Frequently, letters are sent to the non-Catholic spouses in the Parish
 - If anyone is aware of someone who is interested in RCIA, direct them to Mary Ellen. Accommodation can be made for those who want to be in the RCIA process but are uncomfortable with the public nature of the RCIA program.
 - Home Visitation program
 - Total of approximately 2400 families in Parish.
 - First neighborhood visited was Country Farms Estates. 117 homes visited/contacted/contact attempted.
 - 2nd neighborhood visitations are about to begin.
 - Training of visitors was just completed.
 - 142 visits will occur (Oak Farm Estates).
 - Letters have been sent to Parishioners in this area.
 - Items provided during the visitation include
 - Coffee Cup
 - Ministry Booklet
 - Questionnaire
 - Invitation to a Spaghetti Dinner (on February 28th for Oak Farm Estates). Support for the Spaghetti Dinner by the Knights of Columbus is appreciated.
 - Total cost per visit is approximately \$3 (including the Spaghetti Dinner).
 - Funeral Committee efforts
 - “Sandwichgram” provided to grieving family during a home visit where information about funeral arrangements, including Mass coordination, is also discussed.
 - Contact is made with the family of the deceased at 3 weeks, 3 months, and one year as a support mechanism.
 - Families are invited to attend the All Souls Day Mass where they are presented the cross with the deceased family member’s name from the wall of remembrance (which is placed at the funeral).
 - Coordinates with newsletter committee
 - Performs welcoming meetings with new Parishioners
 - Coordinates the Haiti campaign
- Dawn Borger (coordinator of Liturgical & Environmental Arts)
 - Liturgical Planning
 - Mass Planning
 - Scheduling of 200 liturgical ministers
 - Coordinate with Bob Vareha to plan music for Mass.
 - Decoration of the church during the year, particularly for Lent, Easter, Advent, Christmas

- Supports the Fish Fry/Festival
- Liaison for Thanksgiving Outreach
- Support for the Funeral Committee
- Ken Meyer (Formation Program)
 - The regular youth formation program includes:
 - Pre-school/kindergarten program during 10:30 am Sunday Mass. This is lectionary based and summarizes that particular Mass' readings. The idea behind this is to keep the children involved in the Church message and
 - 1st through 5th grade program: 9:00 – 12:00 on Saturdays. 140 in the Grade 1-2 program, about the same in Grade 3-5. Textbook based. They also gather together as a community in prayer. The place of music in the liturgy One of the priests also provides a regular presentation and a closing prayer.
 - Junior High: Thursday evening. Approximately 70 participate.
 - High School: Sunday evening. Approximately 70 participate.
 - A home schooling program is available for those who can't attend any of the above. Approximately 30 are involved in this program.
 - The sacraments of initiation were discussed, particularly confirmation, 1st Eucharist, 1st Reconciliation. Family members (parents) are now encouraged to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the same time as their children.
 - February 8th: Visit to a Jewish Synagogue for the 6th graders. Adults/Pastoral Council Members are invited.
 - There are two Bible study programs.
 - The Catholic Men's Fellowship has a signposts program on Saturdays.
 - It was suggested that there should be an Adult home study program to provide folks who cannot attend the opportunities at Church a chance to increase their knowledge/explore their faith.
 - It was suggested that a topic that could be addressed in the Sr. High program dealing with addressing the pervasiveness of violence in the culture (games, movies, etc.)
 - An area of concern Ken has is the perennial problem of parents not coming to Mass. As an example, 30% of the 2nd graders preparing for Eucharist are not coming to Mass.
 - Theology on Tap is now being offered at Rick's Sports Bar in Murrysville. This will be advertised in the bulletin on 1/16/2011.

VI. Pastoral Council Discussion (including open forum)

- Discussion was held concerning the purpose of the Pastoral Council and Pastoral Council Goals.
 - The primary purpose of the Pastoral Council is to be a "pump primer." The Council cannot be the actual performer for all activities in the Parish. It is to assist in establishing general direction for the Parish in support of Fr. Ken.
 - Efforts of the Council in 2010 included
 - Supporting increased attendance

- Support for the Home Visitation Program (which is the primary Parish effort focused in this regard).
- Support for the Greeter Program (to make St. Barbara's more welcoming). A suggestion was proffered that it might be effective for those who greet to also bid people a kind farewell as they leave.
 - Use (or improved use) of nametags could also help in this regard (promote recognition and availability)
- Beginning the effort to establish a young adult outreach program
 - Increasing visibility of the Pastoral Council
 - Pastoral Council shirts
 - Quarterly events supported by Pastoral Council
 - Council member information posted on the website.
 - Adoption of St. Barbara's slogan: "Your presence makes all the difference"
 - St. Barbara's communication coordinator position was established (filled by Rheba Selac)
 - During 2010, it was determined that the Council would pursue a single goal of increasing of attendance/participation at Mass.
- Thoughts from new and returning members of potential activities:
 - It was suggested that a Pastoral Council Liaison program with other Parish organizations should be re-established.
 - A brief recognition of all active participants in Parish activities during Mass.
 - Ministry bazaar/fair to acquaint people with available ministries.
 - Need to promote approachability of the Pastoral Council
 - February 19-20. President of the Paulist National Catholic Association will be at the Parish and will provide a Mission on the Sunday/Monday/Tuesday from 7:00 to 8:30 pm. Topic: Sharing Christian life with another. Pastoral Council participation (including providing coverage for the whole mission) period was suggested.
 - "Meet the Pastoral Council" article in the bulletin, website, share the spirit, etc. The same could be done for each ministry/group in the Parish.
 - Increase outreach in the community during rites of initiation (baptism, 1st communion, confirmation). Facilitate group settings, social events, bidirectional communication during these events instead of one way communication.
 - **It was observed that all the discussions we had and efforts being pursued by the Pastoral Council were ultimately directed back toward the sacraments.**
- Initial observations of new members:
 - Previously not aware of what Pastoral Council members do and what the purpose of the Pastoral Council is.
 - Learned about the ministries in the Parish and how the Pastoral Council could help.
 - Increased understanding of the Council's purpose to establish a common goal.

- **St. Barbara's needs to "sell" itself better to the community. We need to proactively make people aware of what we have to offer. "If I was shopping, I wouldn't shop St. Barbara's because I'm not aware of what is available."**
- The website appears to be stagnant, which results in a loss of interest. Information isn't being fed from the various organizations in the Parish to the webmaster for update.
- **It might be helpful to post homily summaries on the website.**
- **Need to provide information (perhaps focused toward the youth) about things that make us particularly Catholic (e.g. the Saints).**
- It is sometimes difficult to engage folks to come back to the Church when they don't make the first step (take the initiative). Invitations (particularly face to face ones) help in this regard. It was noted that most people who have fallen away from the Catholic Church are not necessarily angry with the Church, they have just lost the connection for a myriad of reasons.
- Pastoral Council roles for 2011
 - Brad Polk was identified as the Facilitator with Roy Draper being the alternate. (note, this was changed at the February council meeting to Roy continuing his role as facilitator with Phil LaMantia as backup)
 - Paul Hunton was identified as Recorder with Darlene Polk as backup
 - The transition team for 2012 was identified to include Carla Goetz, Dave Yant, and Rita Halderman

VII. Mother Mary Anne Noll's talk:

Key points:

- Everyone has a god. Is it the true God that we seek? Is it the god of control? Is it the god of fitting in? The politically correct? Our Catholic values have gotten so "out of vogue" that they can't be spoken in society anymore. Teachers and parents can't have expectations because people might be left out or their esteem damaged.
- Seeking God. It is so easy when everything is going good. How do we keep believing this when everything is going wrong?
- Jesus and Mary are the perfect examples of when bad things happen, these are not punishments from God. When we pray about tragedies, we are providing a news report back to God. Instead, how do we stay open to understanding that God works through these tragedies? How do we hear God talking to us through these tragedies? What are we supposed to think and **do** to take Christ into the world in response?
- If we're seeking the infinite in the finite (people, places, things), we're doomed. Only God can fill or need for infinite love which cannot be satisfied in those things found of this earth.
- We need to encourage the young to grow their faith. We need to encourage the youth who have questions about the faith to ask the Church and leverage the 2000 year history of the Church.

- We should also not be so focused on providing too much information about the Church in one bite. We should make the effort as opportunities allow (even small ones) to take small steps. Maybe just say a decade of the Rosary with our children and explain it. Talk about just one brief topic about the faith.

VIII. Fr. Jimmie offered the Closing Prayer

Action items:

- Establish Pastoral Council attendance plan for the Paulist mission on Feb 20,21, and 21st. Determine greeter roles.
- Discuss young adult program.
- Address again methods for facilitating website updates so that they are more current.