

PARISHIONER CHURCH HALL MEETING

MONDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2016

ST. CHARLES CHURCH HALL

2:00-4:00 P.M.

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS/RESPONSES

Question: How many priests are in administration in the Diocese—“behind a desk all week”?

Response: There are four: the Bishop, the Bishop’s Secretary (on loan from the Diocese of Burlington), the Chancellor (full-time at the Pastoral Center; helps with Masses on weekends), and the Vicar General (has two sacramental ministries on weekends).

Comment: The pension rate of 12% is higher than “when I was working.”

Response: The rate is 12% of salary and is set by the Diocese.

Questions/comments concerning the Catholic Ministries Appeal

Response: The CMA formula is partially based on the median income in an area. The median income does filter out the higher incomes in an area. Important to know that there is an appeal process in place; an appeal can be submitted in September and a committee does review.

Question: What percentage goes to administering the program and can it be cut?

Response: The amount is listed in the mailing (Diocesan mailing checked after meeting—it is 5%).

Comment: People are not aware it doesn’t support Catholic Charities and the Samaritan Center.

Response: Some of the money (approx. 10%) does go to Catholic Charities across the 12 counties of the diocese.

Question: Have the slides showing the median income and the decreased population in this area been sent to Rochester?

Response: Yes. The Bishop is well aware of the demographics. He reads and responds to all information sent to him.

Question about having children who attend Holy Family School: In the past, parents had to put a certain “suggested” amount of money into the offering at church. The pastors would follow-up if you were not contributing. Are parents still expected to do this?

Response: All parents are asked to support the parish, but there is no set offering amount.

Suggestion made to take the school building down at Lourdes as this might attract a buyer. **Question: Should we consider investing in re-opening Lourdes school building instead of making improvements to the older St. Mary’s building?**

Comment: Knowledge of what is going on is very important—many people were not aware of the problems with the Lourdes school building and were upset when it closed.

Response: There is a high cost to either upgrade or demolish the Lourdes building.

Question: What have we done proactively to bring in younger parishioners—are there ways to do this?

Response: We need activities besides Mass; other denominations have large youth groups. Ryan Salisbury, former Youth Minister, had some success over several years, but there needs to be an ongoing effort.

Question: Can we get priests from outside our area/diocese?

Response: Those arrangements are made by Bishops. There are currently 10 priests from other dioceses helping in parishes in our diocese; the African priests usually return to their own dioceses where there is great need as well. [Number cited was modified after October 17th for accuracy.]

Question: Why was there no Vacation Bible School this past summer; people went to Protestant churches for the Vacation Bible Schools?

Response: Donna Bennett has done it for many years. It is hard to get volunteers; it is also hard to get attendees, as many parents are looking for daycare during the summer. The Catholic school children have the opportunity to attend enrichment camp. Lori Brink, Principal at Holy Family, and Donna will discuss adding a Vacation Bible School component to the school’s day camp.

Question/comment: Why are the younger people at evangelical churches? These churches have many young families and large weekly collections; how and why are they attracting the younger people???

Response developed after the meeting: This is a phenomena found across our diocese and throughout the United States. Many Catholic parishes are wrestling with how to respond with many different initiatives being developed. Some of these are described in books such as Rebuilt and Great Catholic Parishes.

Comment: Impressive presentation today. Many, many people depend on our priests; and our priests need support and relief; this needs to be a consideration in the planning process.

Comment: We applaud those who have presented and commented today.

Question: Are there grants available?

Response: Experience in Rochester area in pursuing grants—one group that does offer grants requires a tremendous amount of paperwork and documentation which would require many more resources. We are excluded from other organizations that provide grants because of being a religious organization.

Mary Beth Prechtl does apply for and receive grants for the Blessed Sacrament food pantry; the new windows at St. Mary's were also part of a grant.

Question about subsidy for Catholic School: should there be a specific formula based on parish income and the number of school families attending from your parish?

Question about Catholic Courier expense for each parish.

Response: This is based on the number of parishioners who receive the Courier.

Question: Where do Regional Mass contributions go?

Response: Envelopes go to each parish; the loose money is deposited and divided among the 4 participating churches; a residual is provided to Blessed Sacrament for utilities and building upkeep; some funds are used for regional events.

Question/comment: Center of our religion is Sunday Mass; there are 6 worship sites and 10 Masses on the weekend; what is being planned concerning Sunday Masses?

Response: The “process” was described—there will be fewer Masses; all parishes are collecting attendance numbers every week. Soon, the planning team will be

looking at the character of each Mass (music, liturgy, who attends). A list of principles will be developed to guide the selection of Mass times. (Are Masses at the same time advantageous or not). By spring we should have a good direction of what the Mass schedule will be.

Question: Have we been told that we are not getting a priest after Fr. John's retirement?

Response: YES.

Comment: Will it be possible to get one young priest; the presence of priests and the stories of their calling/vocation foster interest in becoming a priest.

Comment: There are dioceses across the country that are "priest rich"; why can't we share them???

Comment: Thank you to the committee for your thoroughness and transparency.

Question: Have decisions already been made—is it "a done deal"?

Response: Today we are sharing facts, figures, and reality—nothing has been decided. [Clarification afterwards: We know that Fr. John will not be replaced when he retires and the financial realities we need to respond to. Please see the powerpoint presentation for a description of the areas for planning and the decision makers for each.]

Question: Is there opportunity for involvement, for those who want to participate more?

Response: Take part in the online survey concerning ministerial needs

Individuals on the planning team need to hear your input

Need volunteers to step up in many areas of our parishes

We are going to need more lay volunteers vs. paid positions.

Comment: Today we talked about finances, buildings, and priests. We need to focus on ourselves as a faith community powered by the Holy Spirit!