

PARISHIONER CHURCH HALL MEETING

MONDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2016

ST. CHARLES CHURCH HALL

6:30-8:30 P.M.

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS/RESPONSES

Comment: Thank you to the three priests serving the local community. They need to know how much they are appreciated and loved. Thank you also to the individuals (Amy and Mike) representing St. Mary's.

Comment: Pleased with the transparency and openness of the planning committee.

Comment: All Elmira Catholic Community employees should have job descriptions and annual evaluations in place if difficult decisions to reduce staff need to be made.

Comment: The household numbers displayed on slides "seem" inflated; decisions need to be data-driven and that data needs to be correct.

Question: What is the impact of the regional Mass collection on Blessed Sacrament Parish?

Response: Envelopes (color-coded) go to the individual parishes. The loose money is deposited and divided among the 4 participating churches; a residual does go to Blessed Sacrament for utilities and building upkeep; some funds are reserved for regional events.

Question: Why were no Deacons included in the composition of the planning committee?

Response: Deacons are part of staff and a staff representative was chosen for the committee. [At the 11/7 planning team meeting, it was agreed to ask the deacons to choose a representative among themselves to serve on the planning team.]

Comment: Elderly parishioners are contributing to their churches. Contributions are less from the younger age groups. Many individuals were raised to understand there is an obligation to support your parish, and attention needs to be given to this.

Comment: Numbers are a symptom of what is happening in our churches. Seeing people she “went to school with” attending evangelical churches and tithing. Younger people don’t necessarily know their faith—something needs to be done for younger families—ministry is needed.

Comment: Individual comes from a long line of Protestant pastors; converted to the Catholic faith. We need ways to share our faith and to energize our young members.

Comment: It is not all about giving money; we all have “something” we can give or do.

Comment: Recommended book that addresses “Making Parishes Great”; addresses leadership, discipleship, building up Sunday throughout the week, and evangelization outside the doors of our church. (Book title is Great Catholic Parishes).

Comment: It has been stated that there will be two priests next year based on availability and that the decision has already been made. Auburn has 6 priests now—what will they have next year? Is it really okay for a city of this size (Elmira) to have only two priests?

Comment: The committee was asked to consider evangelization programs. Blessed Sacrament Parish uses Light House Catholic Media. Light House has a program called “Formed.” Need to do something simple; read or listen to a CD. Has been successful with younger people. Another suggestion is community prayer; prayer is a foundation for change.

Comment: Saint Mother Teresa said “without priests we don’t have the Eucharist.” Young men need to hear the story of our priests’ calling/vocation. We need to pray for our priests.

Comment: The Adoration Chapel at Christ the Redeemer is a wonderful place to pray; they are always looking for help.

Question: Why is St. Mary Our Mother Parish not represented here; it is the only other parish in Chemung County?

Response: There is other planning happening at the Deanery level. St. MOM is not part of the scope of our Elmira Pastoral Planning Process, but there may be opportunities for more future collaboration.

Question: Are there any programs for volunteering at Holy Family School?

Response: The school is always interested in volunteers. It was suggested that an announcement be placed in the bulletin. Lorie Brink (HFS Principal) did share that the school has a website, a face book page, and a mobile app.

Question: Is there a correlation between young people not contributing and young people not attending Mass?

Response: Yes, definitely. How do we get our children back to church?

Question: Is there some way to petition the Bishop to get another priest for Elmira, or would that be fruitless?

Response: It never hurts to follow through and ask.

Question: There have been times when a daily Mass was not available locally; can this be addressed?

Response: The priests are trying to go “where the people are.” Example—there is no Mass at St. Mary’s on Wednesday, but there is a Mass at Woodbrook on Wednesday with 45 people attending.

Suggestion: Could we publish when other Masses are occurring in the area to give others the opportunity to attend?

Comment: We need to be thinking about programs to invite Catholics to come home; use the media.

Comment: Individual grew up in Pittsburgh. When industry closed down, churches were closed with no planning or input from members. Many Catholics left the church as a result. We are lucky to have this input. Just having this meeting, this discussion, is an opportunity to make us a better community.

Question/comment: Is the planning committee looking at short-term solutions before moving on to long-term solutions; could a short-term approach be to raise funds and reduce costs, then move on to growth through evangelization?

Comment: We need to hear today’s message and information more often than every 5 years.

Question: Why was there no fundraising to help keep St. Charles open?

Response: St. Charles Church has been up for sale for over a year. Important to remember that due to the financial situation and declining number of priests, the focus needs to be on the people and the ministries vs. buildings.

Comment: We need a list of all the Diocesan churches and the number of priests at each. Response: Karen Rinefierd will take the responsibility to get this list.

Comment: We need to focus on **why** we need priests.