

## Minutes of Church Hall Meeting 3/27/17

St. Charles

3-27-17 6:30-8:30 pm

Introduction of Committee

Opening Prayer

Karen Rinefield – Addressed the question, “Does the Bishop know what’s going on in Elmira?” She answered yes, he gets regular updates, cares about the community here, admires our proactive approach, and prays for us.

Question about where Fr Rick and Fr Scott will be. No answers yet. The Bishop and Priest Personnel Board are looking at the available openings, and the Bishop is deciding on appointments. The Bishop is fully aware of our situation. Fr Rick has applied for the position of the pastor. Fr Scott is interested in staying as well. Hopefully the bishop will be able to announce priest appointments earlier than in other years. They are hoping for a mid to end of April announcement.

### Questions about the proposed merger:

- Why are we clustering?
  - It is a natural conclusion
  - We are already working together in many ways...ie...one bulletin, shared staff, etc.
  - It makes good financial sense
  - It makes a parish stronger
- What priests will we have?
  - Pastor and Parochial Vicar
- What is involved in the merging process?
  - Merging process takes about 1 to 1 ½ years
    - Parishioner comment: hopefully this can be done sooner
  - We have already had some mergers in Elmira: Blessed Sacrament and Christ the Redeemer
  - There is a process that is followed according to church law and civil law
  - There is a legal identity
  - New name needs to be determined
- Can any priest apply for vicar position?
  - Only position to apply for is the “pastor”
- Where are we at re: transition with ministries, committees, finance committees, etc.?
  - Once the Mass Schedule is in place, the liturgists will create a new schedule of ministers
  - As of September, there will be 1 Parish Council
  - The three Parish Councils will submit 4 names from the current council to make up an interim council for 1 year and then elections for a single Pastoral Council
  - Until the merger occurs, there will be 3 separate Finance Councils because there are 3 separate entities. The three Finance Councils will meet together regularly, probably quarterly.

- Why isn't Horseheads involved in the cluster and merger?
  - They are geographically separate from us
  - Horseheads is doing fine alone
  - It is easier to unify Elmira.
- St. Mary's is challenged financially. Is the group looking at financial challenges?
  - Staffing will have to be looked at
  - Financial Councils will work with the pastor and Finance Director to determine strategies for increasing income and cutting expenses, e.g. an increased giving campaign.
- CMA – at present time St. M and CTR together are approximately \$40,000 short. Given the financial challenge, has the Bishop thought about giving us some relief?
  - Parishes can petition to lower their CMA goals.
  - When the three parishes merge, the three goals will be added together.
- I am concerned about our financial challenges. How do we get relief?
  - There is a formula used to set goals so that they are equitable across the diocese.
  - The number is partially based on households. However there is a concern with inaccurate data which hurts us.
- How do we find out who are serving as members of councils or committees of the 3 parishes?
  - Some parishes have posters with pictures of their council members. They used to be printed in the bulletin. You can ask the Pastor.
- Who still has young adults in their families? They don't get up early....they go out at night. Consider doing a later Mass for that age group.
  - We will talk about Mass times later.
- Lack of people is a reason for the merger but why are people leaving in the first place? St. Casimir used to be "robust." I see kids flooding out of "CCD" but are they making it to Mass? Where are the families from Holy Family School and Notre Dame High School? We need to evangelize.
- Evangelization has been talked about by the Planning Team. It is a need across the diocese. Where are the families? How do we evangelize? How much goes into Parish Life?
  - This will be a focus of a new committee to be formed.
  - It is a need across the country.
  - We need more education ...."life long faith formation."
- Are there plans for any church closings at the present time?
  - Buildings are available for sale but nothing pending.
  - Buildings can be used for Weddings and Funerals.
- Why can't we have "Sunday School" closer to the time of Masses? This might bring in more families. Currently there is ½ hour spread
  - Thank you for your suggestions.
- Can Deacons do a Communion Service if needed?
  - Only in emergency situations.

### **MASS TIME comments and questions**

- 4:00 and 5:30 Mass on Saturday rather than 2 – 4:00 Masses
- St. Mary's 4:00 Mass is comfortable for the elderly and easy for them to attend
- St. Mary's highest attendance is at the 4:00 Mass and has a number of people in wheel chairs who could not get out later
- Schedule should be based on 2 priests only
- There should be 1 ½ hours between Masses so 1 priest can cover
- Could we do an earlier than 4:00 Mass?

- No – we cannot do a Mass before 4:00pm
- Retain a Saturday Mass at OLL
- 4:00 Mass at Ss. P&P
- Mass times should be decided on by the priests
- Blessed Sacrament should have 4:00 and 5:30 Masses
- Keep the Tuesday morning school Mass
- Canon Law requires priests to make Mass decisions. What authority does the planning team have to make decisions?
  - As we plan, we have 3 pastors. The Planning Committee includes these pastors and they will be part of the decision making.
- I am thankful the pastors are seeking input from the people
- 2- 4:00 Masses doesn't make sense. It is important that priests are available and to cover. 4:00 and 5:30 Masses is a good option.
- 4:00 and 5:30 can work if one priest is ill
- Look at starting Sunday Masses at 7:30 am
- There is no reason to add a second evening Mass
- 6:00 Mass at Elmira College. Some colleges have a 10:00 or 10:30 Mass
- Have a 7:30 pm Regional Mass
- Have a 12:30 Mass for young adults
- 7:30 p.m. Mass – Non- Catholic Churches don't do one that late – we shouldn't either
- Move the 5:00pm Mass to St. Charles
- Non Catholics only have 1 service so that is why the attendance is “bursting at the seams”
- Suppress the 7:30 Mass idea....the college has a large seating capacity
- Have a Mass at St. Charles....it is the youngest building
- 12:30 Mass is a good idea
- Keep the 4:00 pm Mass at St. Mary's
- Stagger the Mass times and keep them no longer than 45-50 minutes
- We need to remember the building is not important. We need to make a “vibrant community”
- 7:30 pm Mass is good for young adults and teens
- 12:30 p.m. would not be good for families – Sports take precedence over Jesus. Families are not here because of sports such as soccer, CYO, etc. Children in Religious Ed do not go to Mass.
- We had a 7:00 pm Mass at College. Was very popular
- 7:30 Mass is a good time for young families.....are we excluding young families?  
On the other hand, it is a long day for the priests
- What about senior priests?
  - They can do Mass on weekends but it is up to them.
- We need continuity of leadership for our parishes. If our priests can apply let them have the positions. We will have problems if someone new comes in.
- Has anyone thought of a 2:00 pm Mass on Sunday? They have it in the Buffalo Diocese
- A comment was made about shorter homilies and Masses.
  - We have wonderful homilies. Don't shorten them. The Holy Spirit comes through the preachers.
- The 4:00 pm Mass is already packed at St. Pete's.
- St. Pete's has no steps, is well lit and well attended even by St. Joe's community
- On suggestion B1 and B2 – All Faith Formation kids have to drive across town if 11 am is at St. Mary's. Consider putting the 11:00 at either St. Pat's or St. Casimir
- Can we write to the Bishop to support Fr. Scott and Fr. Rick?
  - Bishop has heard this and understands it. He is aware that the priests are well loved. But you can write and he will respond.

- Commuting in Elmira is a gift compared to other locations such as Southern California where I came from
- Spread Masses out – the priests need time to talk about how to make this “a community”
- Fr. John will be living here and will help out
- If whatever option is chosen doesn’t work, can it be changed?
  - Yes.
- How will we hear of the Mass schedule decision?
  - Pulpit, bulletin and website
- How long will Karen Rinefierd and Tom Kubus be with us?
  - At least a year or as long as we need
- Will music ministry be taken into account?
  - Yes
- When will the weekday Masses be scheduled?
  - That will come next after the weekend schedule is in place
- Would it just be more economic to have Masses in 3 churches?
- Early Masses are not attended well. Should we move them to a later time?
- We need to cut down on the number of church buildings at some point. How far out is that decision?
  - Churches and buildings have been available on the market
  - We are looking at ministry needs and market conditions for each building
- Deacons have full time jobs and families. “We” are our priest’s families.

Fr. Scott closed with comments and prayer.

- Discipleship is not easy or convenient.
- We need to accept change and can’t always have what we want.