



Genesis Vicariate Pastoral Council

TO SHARE CHRIST IN AND THROUGH THE URBAN CHURCH

MSGR. MICHAEL LEFEVRE, VICAR
9844 WOODWARD AVENUE
DETROIT, MI 48202
(313) 865-6300
WWW.GENESISVPC.ORG

FEBRUARY 2011 MEETING MINUTES

Genesis Vicariate Pastoral Council VPC Representative Meeting
7 p.m. ~ February 28, 2011
Blessed Sacrament Cathedral Offices

AGENDA:

- 1. OPENING PRAYER**
- 2. PASTORAL PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW**
- 3. PARISH REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS**
- 4. GROUP ASSEMBLY - REFLECTION, SHARING, DISCUSSION, CONSENSUS ON QUESTIONS**
- 5. VICARIATE REASSEMBLY – DEBRIEF, REPORT FINAL CONSENSUS, OUTCOMES, WRAP UP & ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS**
- 6. WRAP UP/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

PARISHES PRESENT: Our Lady Queen of Apostles, St. Florian, St. Louis the King, St. Ladislaus, Transfiguration-Our Lady Help of Christians, St. Hyacinth, Our Lady Queen of Heaven, St. Raymond, Our Lady of Good Counsel, , St. Gregory, Church of the Madonna, St. Bartholomew-St. Rita, Assumption Grotto, Blessed Sacrament.

OPENING PRAYER

The opening prayer by was led by Msgr. Hanchon, Regional Moderator and Stan Bloch, Council President. Greetings of peace were shared among the members.

PASTORAL PLANNING REFLECTIVE PROCESS OVERVIEW

Alton James, our facilitator, welcomed the council and explained that he facilitates meetings between the Archdiocese and parishes and attends regional moderator meetings with vicars from 4 regions. We are in Phase II of the Together In Faith (herein "TIF") process, which incorporates Archbishop Vigneron's 'Vision To Share Christ' in and through the Church. It is a comprehensive plan developed for the AOD at all levels. The goals and objectives as articulated by the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (APC) are integrated in a way that complements the efforts of the archdiocesan plans for fiscal security, the Changing Lives Together initiative, the Pastoral Plan for the City and the Catholic Schools Plan. This planning process will seek to move parishes and Catholic schools away from "maintenance mode" towards being mission-driven, visionary and far-reaching.

To better understand the process, the council reviewed Alton's "TIF Process" presentation handouts. He noted that this process is going on throughout the 4 regions and can be with parish councils or those involved in parish leadership. They are to take the communication plan back to parishes and share with their parish councils & parishioners. The loop is to be continuous so no one is left out of the process.

Each parish is to have 4-5 lay leaders to represent their parish in the Planning Group. Representatives will be Parish Pastoral, Finance, or Vicariate Pastoral Council members or some other parish leadership and will have a solid understanding of their parish's mission, values, hopes and dreams, sacramental, outreach and formation activities and financial situation. There must be a commitment from representatives to attend all meetings. Every parish will participate because we are all in the planning process. If a parish isn't present or represented, a plan will be made for them by the council, sent to the Archbishop and a plan will be determined by him. You are asked to make sure your parish has people at the table; it is up to you to participate.

The process started in January 2011. From February to June will be the planning process and the council will meet twice a month. In July & August the plan will be given to the APC for review and they will be sending back plans for rework in September & October (dates are forthcoming). In November the final plans will be submitted to the APC for their review and recommendations. In December the final plans will be submitted to Archbishop Vigneron and in January 2012 the Archbishop hopes to give us his plan.

The representatives will communicate the planning process to the rest of the parish at every step. Pastors are asked to report their progress to their Parish Council and parishioners by having an occasional town hall meeting, an announcement from the pulpit, notes in the parish bulletin, etc.

The goal is to formulate a plan for the next 5 years as there is no current plan. These plans are being created by all groups in all regions. This also may include parishes merging, clustering, etc.

PARISH REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Alton distributed the reflective piece with the questions; "What are the core values or key factors that describe the vitality and essential, life giving qualities of your parish?"; "What are the five most inspiring hopes and dreams for the future of your parish, that would most enhance parish vitality and life?" and "What kind of Catholic School opportunity would you like to see available for your parish families? A parish school, regional school, all-girl's school, all-boy's school, other options?".

The attendees broke into groups by parish to discuss the following questions at 7:30 pm. The directive: Begin with prayer and reflect on the 1st question privately for 10 minutes, then write down your 1st thoughts. Do the same with each question (above). Share your reflections with the rest of the people from your parish and planning group and draft the consensus of the group. Msgr. LeFevre instructed the council that if they'd already answered some of these questions and had a copy of their parish's appreciative inquiry from 6 months ago that they could use that.

GROUP ASSEMBLY - REFLECTION, SHARING, DISCUSSION, CONSENSUS ON QUESTIONS

After reviewing the questions individually and as a parish, the group moved into the 2 larger groups. The "City" group consisted of Queen of Apostles, St. Florian, St. Louis the King, St. Ladislaus, Transfiguration-Help of Christians and St. Hyacinth (referred to as the "Polonia" group).

POLONIA GROUP: Prior to the discussion of the reflection questions, the "Polonia" group had a quick chat regarding how they're to survive as we're all struggling for both funds as well as number of people/parishioners. As a consensus, each group stressed that they had good attributes of their parishes/communities, as well as a need to attract young spiritually motivated individuals. Fr. Frankowski, from St. Florian, said the only we can focus on this task is through prayer.

In response to Reflection Question 1 (Core Values), the parishes stated the following:

St. Hyacinth: Mrs. Zabrzynski spoke on how the Parish believes its vitality comes from longevity and tradition. People (Alumni) are drawn back from the suburbs by the many events the parish plans; those include festivals, Easter activities, card parties, church tours, as well as traditional services that the attendees say don't have the same feeling in suburban more modern churches. The Church also attracts people to an earlier Midnight Mass (beginning at 10pm), a special Mass held for Polish dance troupes, and Easter tour of churches on Holy Thursday. The parish also stressed their community involvement with activities such as Goodfellows collection, a food pantry, and a Giving Tree during the Christmas season. There is currently no education at the location (in terms of catechesis), the only education they feel they can share with individuals is carrying on of Polish traditions.

St. Florian: Fr. Frankowski, a Society of Christ priest, provided an overview of values he felt his parish embodied. He stressed that the parish is a predominantly Polish parish, offering 2 Polish and 2 English weekend Masses. They have many social activities throughout the year to engage their parishioners as well as visitors including an annual Strawberry Festival, Quarterly dances, Easter and Christmas dinners, hosting concerts, dance groups, and theater productions (pulling in people from all over the archdiocese, surrounding states and Canada), boasting the parishes own singing groups and a choir as well as a youth band. Father also talked about various educational opportunities the Church offers including having an English instruction school teaching English to those coming to minister, a religious education program (catechism) geared toward the Polish immigrant youth, as well as a Saturday morning Polish language school. The church also offers services by the Westiarki nuns within the parish, and offering a food pantry. Further discussion included religious/traditional church services that keep people involved such as Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on Fridays, Divine Mercy every day, Processions during Corpus Christi and Easter, a yearly rosary procession to Pope Park (on Jos. Campau), as well as multi-lingual (Polish/English) Lenten and May devotions.

Queen of Apostles: Stan Bloch discussed some of the values that QofA has to offer including offering many social activities throughout the year – senior's bingo group, dinners, ushers club, a well-respected choir, a Christian Service group that runs the Advent giving tree and Thanksgiving food collection, a vibrant Parish Council and Worship Committee, a block club, AA, health screenings for the elderly, and a Radio Maryja Mass once a month. Stan also stressed education the parish offers, both religious and spiritual. Religious education (catechism) consisting of 50-60 students both from the city as well as surrounding suburbs; Spiritual education in terms of workshops/prayers for the unemployed, speakers (including Raymond de Souza and nuns assisting Pope John Paul II). The Church also offers traditional services that bring people in including weekend Masses, traditional Pasterka/Midnight Mass and Easter Resurrection services, as well as various devotional opportunities throughout the year (May, October Rosary devotions, Lenten devotions, etc.)

St. Louis the King: Mary Lewandowski spoke about activities at her parish. Activities include many parish dinners, Rosary Society every month, an Ushers Club (with 50/50 raffles), a choir, a food pantry, Giving Tree during Christmas, as well as clothes drives. She said the church primarily (90%) consists of members outside the local area. In terms of education, the Church is proud to promote vocations.

The "Polonia" parishes then reflected on the 2nd and 3rd questions collectively. In terms of future, discussion took place on the linkage between our churches and the surrounding city of Detroit. Since the city of Detroit is focused on rebuilding and growth, our churches want to see how Hamtramck and surrounding communities can be positively impacted and attract new parishioners. The groups discussed promoting community and diversity, as well as ecumenical dialogue between the various religious and ethnic groups that reside in our areas to build bridges. The churches discussed their need to cooperate with other parishes, as communal strength can only help to build and sustain parish life.

In terms of Catholic school opportunities, discussion took place on having a regional or vicariate school vs solid religious programs offered at individual parishes. Parishes agreed more towards a solid catechetical teaching rather than the traditional school setting, as it has seemed that the traditional parish school model has failed.

CITY GROUP: The second group (The "City" group) consisted of Our Lady Queen of Heaven, St Raymond, Our Lady of Good Counsel, St. Gregory, Madonna, St. Bartholomew-St. Rita, Assumption Grotto and Blessed Sacrament.

Each parish had a representative introduce themselves and state what they feel are their most vital components. Msgr. LeFevre requested that they state what makes their parish different.

Blessed Sacrament: Feels their parish is welcoming, they see themselves as unique as they are one of the only Cathedrals in the U.S. with a parish and they have 200 active families. Their hospitality makes all families feel welcome. Their outreach is to invite homeless into their homes. They have an "open society" and are proud of their RCA. People come for assistance and become part of the parish family. They're the seat of the AOD and take pride in open doors, hearts and families.

Our Lady of Good Counsel: Pride themselves in their ability to be multi-cultural; they share part of the Mass with the Hmong community, an ethnic group that came from China (Cambodian, Laos). They enjoy sharing cultures; their Mass is said in English & Hmong. Their outreach is a large food program that was developed from a summer into year-round program and includes St. Vincent DePaul and St. Raymond. Msgr. Hanchon noted that outreach programs distribute 1.2 million lbs. of food last year. St. Raymond is finding a need to explain the Catholic faith to people taking advantage of their food outreach program, which has been expanding. People are asking to join the Masses on Sunday & Mondays.

Church of the Madonna: Has a strong 12-month food program with support from FEMA. Sometimes their funds come up short and their parishioners supply food and money to keep the program going. They've worked on weekends with FOCUS Hope packing boxes and are looking to use that as another mechanism to expand their community outreach and inspire young people to replenish their aging parish. Their 5-yr objective includes developing programs to attract and retain young people, because of this they are creating an environment of wholesome music. They have several organizations; Madonna Women in Action; Men's St. Joseph Society (both give annual scholarships to those who apply). Both organizations work with other societies and groups to put together programs for year-round participation. Look forward to starting Bingo as a fundraiser with a bi-weekly or monthly bingo program. They're focusing on fundraising activities with low overhead, less labor-intensive, more profitable events. They have the 1st charter School; Joy Preparatory Academy, which has been fully occupied for 4-5 years. Currently discussing how to reach out and go to their significant Nigerian community, they've been to activities in the Nigerian community outside the church and feel if they show they are a family, they may become more involved in Madonna's mission.

Our Lady Queen of Heaven: Had 2000 families in 1972 and down to about 400 in 2010. They'd like to utilize their charter school, "Dove Academy" whose lease comes up in June. Feel they need to tap into culture and facilities, let the

neighborhood and school know that they're there for everyone's benefit. They'd like to reach out to young people and bring them back into their programs and have a Kids for Christ Program. Don't want people to think attending Church one hour a week is fulfilling their obligations to the parish. They want to bring outreach to those unfamiliar with it and make new people feel comfortable. They host an annual June Festival and feel the need to be more open by getting into a culture where events are on the calendar for strangers to see.

Msgr LeFevre stated that it's a common reality and asked how we can impact charter schools by getting into "unchurched" families that are in the schools right on the Church's doorstep.

St. Benedict: Strong points are their Liturgy, Hominy, food outreach program and open-door policy. They share fellowship on Sundays and have college students doing mission work in different areas. There are no resident priests even though they have the AOD's largest rectory. They host alternate Spring Breaks and house a multitude of college students. The gym is being used for girl's activities and some boy's activities and there's a prenatal program at the convent. It's a large church with active and engaged members. They're hoping for new members, student groups and that families coming into the area will come into their parish.

Msgr. Hanchon noted that in upcoming data we will see that there's a hole because City of Detroit because they're not responsible for Highland Park or Hamtramck. He would like to bring to the poor in Highland Park (along the Woodward corridor) what we have to offer. Msgr. LeFevre stated that one of the largest charter schools is funded through the City of Highland Park and has 300 students.

St. Gregory the Great: Parish has a welcoming spirit, outreach to the community with a food program every Wednesday that gives out bags of groceries. They have a charter school but outreach to the school limited. The school has the oldest Boy Scout troop in the country - Troop 194 and the members of the troop come to Mass on Sunday. Community groups use gym and they're looking to outreach to them. They have a Ladies of Peter Clayberg group and an Alumni Group for past graduates. Largest fundraiser is their raffle. They have a Fall Festival, Lenten Fish Fry, Soup Sundays, Chili Cook-off and a number of smaller events. They send the largest group to Rainbow.

Msgr. LeFevre stated that one thing that is great about the cluster is the Bible Summer School with 50-60 students that rotates between churches. They have a Picnic on Belle Isle (originally Madonna's) and see young people like no other time of the year. It has the most active committee.

St. Bartholomew-St. Rita: Parish is unique because it has the only Catholic School on the eastside. They have weekly Bingo; Christian Women's group, an annual Rummage Sale. At one point they had Nigerian students staying in their Convent. They need to draw youth and retain them. St. Bart was created for the Polish community on eastside. Over the decades they've adopted a lot of Polish traditions that they still hold dear today; Oplatki (sharing of the Wafer at Christmas Eve meal); Chalk & Incense for Epiphany. At weekly Mass Father asks whose birthday it is and the congregation sings Happy Birthday and Sto' Lat. St. Bart lost their resources and stopped a local food pantry program, also lost the building and volunteers, but they help St. Dominic with theirs (food, clothes, transportation, etc. to 6 zip codes on East Side of Detroit. They conduct an ongoing food collection program and weekly fill 2 baskets with food and get bags of clothes which they take to St. Dominic. There's a reciprocal agreement for local residents; if they pass qualifications can be eligible for outreach even though not in one of the 6 zip codes. Volunteers with Notre Dame Club of Detroit helped them form a 5-year marketing plan. Their school solicits funds from individuals & companies and holds events like Charity Poker at Race Track (received \$20K in donations) which subsidizes tuition (\$2300/year) and helped gain 5 more students. They raise outside contributions to be less of a burden on the parish and increase attendance. The students are primarily non-Catholic so they take advantage of having students take part in Mass, events & productions. They fill the Church for student events. Trying to introduce the parish its services to the surrounding area and rent out rooms for a Head-Start program. They've been given a grant from the Skillman Foundation 5 years in a row.

Msgr. LeFevre stated that the Archbishop wants Catholic education in the City and asked "what do we do with that?". Some parishes give a percentage of their rental income of charters back to the Archdiocese and St. Bart's school. Only his parishes donate money directly to the school. He also noted that he Archdiocese is open to a new school in the City. Msgr. Hanchon asked if a regional school might work. All-boy? All-girls?

Msgr. LeFevre then asked if, as a city parish, we fund an urban transportation fund to bring those to the schools and possibly some charter income be the funding for it. Is this affordable?"

We went back around the group for additional input and St. Raymond's rep said that when it comes to having a charter school, it's mostly a fundraiser. Would it be great as an evangelization tool? In Detroit we need to move quickly. He also

talked about how to fund St. Bart's school and if parishes should be funding scholarships. They previously had a school and were forced to keep it open even though it cost a lot of money.

We need to look at demographic data. Incentives are currently for people to move into middle of the city. They're revamping an area in Brightmoor, closing all the schools and moving everyone to one school. Msgr. LeFevre noted that our next meeting is about demographics.

VICARIATE REASSEMBLY – DEBRIEF, REPORT FINAL CONCENSUS, OUTCOMES, WRAP UP & ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS

Everyone came back together as a group and said they felt the process went well.

The Polonia group recorder gave an overview of the parishes' discussion. She stated that the "Polonia" parishes are "steeped in tradition" and things that have come out of that - events, festivals, parish functions, etc. - are keeping the traditions alive. The group's parishes provide religious education, faith formation classes and workshops.

They feel their future is uncertain that there needs to be an ecumenical dialogue about the changing faith of the City and social relationships. There needs to be more Catholic School opportunities and more faith-based programs rather than traditional school settings.

The City group recorder gave an overview of the parishes' discussion. She stated that the "City" parishes feel that the youth is the future and that attraction and retention of young people is highly important. The parishes discussed their various outreach programs, reaching out to their communities and the funding of St. Bart's school.

WRAP UP/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next month the Polonia group will meet on the upstairs and the City group will be downstairs after the initial gathering.

Meetings will now start earlier. Gathering will be at 6 pm and the meeting will start at 6:30 pm, this was decided by a group consensus. The priests do not have to attend, their attendance is optional and they will continue their bi-monthly daytime meetings.

Alton said that he will get the next meeting's questions and discussion material to the members out a week before and that the members need to go back to their parish and talk about what was discussed. He suggested putting question cards in pews as that's what some parishes in other groups are what some are doing. This process is all about sharing the information we have.

Howard Weathington from Blessed Sacrament and Knights of Columbus announced that during the 40 Days of Life, (March 9 – April 14) he'll be outside an abortion clinic "Women Care" every day and asked the group join him and to pray for an end to abortion.

Msgr. LeFevre gave his thanks and expressed his appreciation to the group and the meeting was closed at 9 p.m.