Tri-Parish Catholic Community

*Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish - St. Mary’s Ridge ~ St. Augustine of Hippo Parish - Norwalk*

*Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish & School - Cashton*

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Pastoral Council Report

4 October 2016

The reconstituted Tri-Parish Pastoral Council met Tuesdady evening, October 4, at 7:00 pm at St. Mary’s parish hall. The purpose of this meeting was organization. Those present were: (representing St. Mary’s) Jim Schreier - trustee, and Elizabeth Brown - PCCW President; (representing St. Augustine’s) Kathy Barrett - trustee, and Theresa Lehner - PCCW President; (representing Sacred Heart) Nathan Klinge - trustee, and Michelle Herricks - PCCW Vice-President; (Pastoral Staff) Fr. Michael Klos - Pastor, and Lisa Steger - DRE. Excused: Deacon Sam Schmirler.

After an opening prayer Fr. Klos explained that having gotten the finance councils of the three parishes on a good footing it was time to turn our attention to the pastoral work that is wupported by our financial stewardship. The pastoral letter promulgated by Bishop John J. Paul in 1985 foresaw the 2/3 of the council would be elected from the parish and 1/3 appoint by the pastor. It also foresaw the establishment of committees reflecting those diocesan committees and offices established at that time. The experience of so many rural parishes is that committees and committee work is not in keeping with the character of the habits and mindset of rural folks. Whereas more urban professionals are very used to and comfortable with committeess and committee work, rural folks are more inclined to get together and discuss an issue, decide what to do about it, and then do the work.

With these in mind, Fr. Klos explained that rather than twist arms in order to get folks to stand for elections and then sit on committees which may or may not respond to the needs of our Tri-Parish Community, it seemed more sensible to invite those who were already elected by the parishes - or significant segments thereof. Thus, the already elected at-large trustees and the PCCW Presidents were invited to participate; the vice-president in the case of Sacred Heart since the president is already on by reason of her position on the parish pastoral staff. Deacon Sam is also on by reason of his appointment as deacon to the Tri-Parishes. The balance of those invited to participate is any member of the parish that si already involved in the area of parish life under discussion or any other parish member interested in the topics under discussion.

Instead of committees, those assembled will fundction more like a “committee of the whole”. This should not be a concern with regards to potential voting issues because, as explained in Bishop Paul’s pastoral letter on consultation in the parish, deanery, and diocese, decisions on pastoral action ultimately reside with the pastor who seeks the consultation of those assembled and seeks to guide those assembled to a consensus, seeking the help of the Holy Spirit in recognizing what the people of God are called to do with regards to a particular issue or path of pastoral action.

Fr. Klos explained that this means there will be times of prayer during these meetings, therefore, the budgeting of a two-hour time slot for each meeting. The *discernment* process was explained as that process by which the assembly seeks the guidance of the Holy Spirit when seeking to knwo not only what we “think” ought to be done, but what God Himself is guiding us to.

There will be three meetings per year occurring on the first Tuesday in October, February, and June. Each meeting will explore and discuss a specific area of parish life: October - Justice & Peace and Marriage & Family Life; February - Spirituality, Liturgy and Devotions; and June - Evangelization, Catechesis, and continuing formation of both youth and adults.

The general format will be as follows: An agenda will be put out nin (9) days before the date of the meeting announcing the general topic, more specific topics if any, and an invitation to participate (this will include more specific invitations based on the topic(s) under consideration).

This first agenda item will be “Thanksgiving for Blessings Received”; in this item those assembled will seek to enumerate those things that are being done well within our parishes. Father made a point of the fact that not every item is going to be something done under the direct sponsorship of our parishes, but will sometimes be things done by *members* of our parishes under the auspices of other community organizations (i.e. Scouts, 4-H, local food pantries, etc.).

Having identified and given thanks for those things that are being done well, we will next seek to recognize where theere may be holes existing in our current efforts; also what are the resources given us through the riches and tradition of the Church that could make these efforts even more effective for the salvation of souls (for instance, what resources could be made available to coaches and other youth leaders that would make them more effective in not only coaching / leading our youngster but forming the whole person?).

All agreed that this seemed like a reasonable way to approach the problem of supporting evaluating, and encouraging pastoral action within the communities encompassed by the Tri-Parishes. The general plan was agreed to regarding core membership, parishioner participation, distribution of topics, and general approach.

All parishioners in the Tri-Parish Catholic Community are asked to pray for this new process and those who engage in, and will engage in the work of bringing a greater knowledge and love of God and love our neighbor into our midst. May God bless this and all of our efforts which bring us closer to Him and to one another in His peace and love.