

St. John the Evangelist Parish Council
January 19, 2010 Minutes

The St. John the Evangelist Parish Council met on January 19, 2010, in attendance were Fr. Tom Powers, Sr. Evelyn Ronan, and members Mike Holownia, Maryellen Denning, Mimi Eldridge, Bill Kelliher, Pat Fiege, Susan Jablonski, Julie Pernokas, Mary Gotgart Mike Racette, Norm Boucher, Jim Stokes and John Salvati. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.

Opening prayer and reflection was led by Sister Evelyn.

Following the reflection, a motion to approve the minutes from the November meeting was seconded, the vote taken and the minutes approved.

Review of Christmas Masses

The first order of new business was a taking the sense of the group of the Christmas Masses.

In general people sensed that the masses were even better attended; that while the parking lot was grid lock between the 5:30 and 7:00 parking might have been better over all; the alter; the music; the flowers; and the atmosphere particularly in observing appropriate silence was “absolutely beautiful”; and despite their heft each and every poinsettia from the alter arrangement found an appropriate home after the 5:00 Sunday mass.

Update of Parish Planning Group’s Work

Mike Racette updated us on his on going liaison discussions with the group particularly Mike Nilles. The lack of a groundswell of response to the recent bulletin article was somewhat disappointing and perhaps reveals that the community is somewhat asleep on the issue. To enhance awareness the group is planning to focus more directly and thereby utilize better existing parish groups, as example Arise participants.

Father Tom shared the experience of a meeting that he and Sister Evelyn had with the Director of the Office of Pastoral Planning, Fr. David Couturier. A point of the meeting was to propose a Lenten program that was pitched as a Parish wide conference, the theme of which was suggested as, “disciples on new road” using the Emmaus Journey as a model.

The conference would have a keynote speaker; utilize breakout groups, as well as Planning Group members as facilitators. The goal of the conference would be to raise the general level of parish consciousness around the issue, “...this is where we are; this is where we hear Christ calling us...”

The event will be held on March 14 from 1:00 to 4:30 and be followed by the 5:00 mass. Questions remain about how best to market the afternoon and how best to extend invitations “intergenerationally”.

A question was posed how best to get the word out so that people will hear it. Possibilities of pre-registration/RSVP; a call around by the Parish Council; special mass announcements; etc. were raised. The point was made that the issue is so large that it remains uncertain how to frame it.

Suggestions for the conference itself included framing the data; putting into it into a context of possibilities, challenges and guidance, etc.

Fr. Couturier, who is also working on a diocesan vision as well, will meet with members of the Planning Group and the two will be direct collaborators in the effort. At the diocesan level there was a gathering of the key central administrators to think through their priorities from that level as well. This was done through a two day process designed by Fr. Couturier. The results of this session have been placed on the Diocesan web site as a draft and responses are invited, acknowledging that a critique was needed from beyond the group.

Two points did seem to be omitted from the draft being

- the parish as the primary vehicle for change; and
- the large question, “... how as a church do we interact with the world around us...”

Fr. Powers recommended that as an introduction to the priorities one should read Fr. Erickson’s, the Diocese COO, introduction which had been distributed.

Further discussion of the issue raised the need for the March 14 event to be dynamic and sister Evelyn suggested that example of the disciples on the Road to Emmaus would suggest the kind of transformation we are searching for.

While the use of examples of what is being done in other parts of the country where the issuer has been faced to some degree, there is always the dilemma of presenting an aspect in isolation and not opening up to the broad range of possibilities available that are far more exciting. Along these lines it was pointed out that a range of resources are available to certain dioceses and parishes versus what might be available to others and that this shapes a variety of social fabrics unique to each; therefore the issue must be addressed by paying particular attention to the local context.

A suggestion was made that invitations be extended to other parish councils. It was thought while an important step, it should be preceded by the parish conference, since among other things the histories of surrounding parishes are quite different and to do this too early might diffuse the focus.

Energy Audit Inventory

Fr. Powers introduced this topic with the comment that this was not simply on the level “...how we approach the conservation of energy and re-cycling...” He fleshed out the issue to include, work presently being done with electricians, recycling businesses, as well as energy audits. The issue of technology particularly as it relates to communication was added.

In both area’s conservation and technology individual parish members have come forward to provide their expertise. Regarding technology, possibilities of moving from the static website to more phone based communication systems such as twitter were introduced, as well as the introduction of blogs onto the web site. Pitfalls of certain choices were also raised in terms of the maintenance of email lists; the potential need to monitor questions; etc.

In general the communication goal is to make available more dynamic processes for communication for the parish.

Finances

At this point, the communication discussion led into a more specific issue of communication, how to introduce the parish to changes in the manner in which parishes will be asked to contribute to the archdiocese.

Fr. Powers explained the move toward a system of “taxing parishes” that is based upon a formula that will include the annual appeal and set a goal for the parishes. This system is being piloted in 30 parishes presently. The tax is for the support of archdiocesan activities, collections such as that for Peter’s Pence are separate from it.

In terms of its communication, Fr. Powers commented that one of the eternal ways has been the Sunday Announcement but the fruits of a single announcement have been weak. Suggestions offered included.

- A parish chairperson
- Use of posters
- Bulletin announcement
- In pew packets
- Use of a DVD message from the Cardinal

This was followed by a discussion of how to borrow from the fact that, without diminishing the impact of the 2002 – 2007 phenomena, parishes are appearing to be doing better.

The Cardinal’s message will be a three minute Gospel based reflection. The discussion deepened with the primary emerging questions seeming to be; how can we effectively show the impact in the structure of our church; is this a way of saying we are at a page

turning moment; people need to understand the consequences of success and of failure in this effort; if we really are turning the page it will be most successful if a message comes directly from Fr. Powers and Sister Evelyn; past videos have been good in showing how the money is used in helping us be Christian.

The discussion wrapped up with Fr. Powers suggesting that any volunteers to chair or co-chair the effort should not hesitate to come forward to him.

Parish Photo Book

Mimi and Pat have completed their initial round of research, which resulted in identifying the two major players. The plan is to meet with them. It was noted that the cost if there was any was not easily understood from the web sites of the businesses involved. Some of the questions to be answered are how easy will access to the process be; what do the sample photographs look like; and what are the reputations of each?

Questions remained as to when it would be best to schedule the photo taking; the tie in to Christmas cards was raised; would summer be good when college students would be home, etc?

Coats for Kids

The one word summary of the event was “fabulous”. The Christmas wish list was also enormously successful.

Upcoming Meetings

As a result of the February School vacation the February meeting will be moved to February 23rd and for the same reason the April meeting will be moved to April 27th. The March (March 16) and the May (May 18) meeting dates will remain on the normal schedule.

Eyes and Ears

The new infusion of lectors and Eucharistic ministers was unanimously viewed as a positive development; particularly that it demonstrated a noticeably younger group coming into these roles.

With thanks to all the meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM