

St. Cletus Parish Council Meeting Minutes February 25, 2013

In Attendance: Lynn Owen, Laurie Steinkamp, Al Rothermich, Chris Unterreiner, Celeste Leuck, Fr. Jim Benz, Mike Mohrmann, Donna Pundmann, Tony Scoggin, Mary Bryne, Ann Ficken, Deb Young, Deacon Mark McCarthy **Excused:** Dan Pelikan

Meeting was called to order at 7:00pm and opened with Evening Prayer

Minutes of January 29, 2013 meeting were approved as submitted

Formation – Father Chris Martin

Father Martin is the Archdiocesan Vocation Director – Father Martin shared that the vocation challenge is an issue with discernment, not calling. It is his job to talk to youth to encourage them to hear the call. The Archdiocese currently has 240 parish priests for 189 parishes. Based upon anticipated retirements, the Archdiocese is on a pace to decline by 80 priests in the diocese in the next decade. In those 10 years it is anticipated that 50 new priests will be ordained, 130 will be lost due to death or retirement. If that proves true, the Archdiocese will have less than 1 parish priest per parish in 10 years.

On a more optimistic note, it was noted that if every parish could encourage one young man every 10 years go to the seminary, the Archdiocese would have 27 new seminarians each year; when attrition is considered, that would result in a graduation rate of 15 per year, rather than the current pace of approximately 5 per year. That is a very realistic goal. Demographic data shows that there are currently approximately 60,000 men in the Archdiocese of discernment age, so it should be very realistic to get 27 new seminarians every year. Father Martin encourages the parish priests and parishioners to be aware of the young men who might be being called and to encourage them to discern that call. All members of the parish should foster a culture of vocation.

There are 38 seminarians right now in the Archdiocese. Father Martin hosted a “fishers of men” event to encourage pastors to encourage vocations. There are currently 29 applications from young men wanting to become seminarians next year. Father Martin would like to see that number reach 50 next year.

Father Martin reminded the council that Jesus told us to pray for vocations. We must also be open to the idea that He may harvest vocations in our parish. One of the signs of a vibrant parish is that it fosters vocations to the priesthood and religious life. There are many parishes which haven't had a young person discern a vocation in over 20 years. Father shared that Incarnate Word Parish in West County had never had a seminarian, but after starting an adoration chapel, four went into the seminary.

Father has asked parishes to start vocation committee – to keep vocations on the forefront of the parish's mind. He also asked whether there are petitions at Mass regarding vocations, and if not, suggests that they be considered. The chair of a vocation committee would serve as Father Martin's point person to help coordinate Archdiocesan efforts for vocation discernment. For example, one parish is having a “servers' picnic” and seminarians will be attending. Some parishes have a crucifix or chalice that is passed from home to home to pray for vocations. There are many activities that can be pursued to help a Parish keep the awareness of vocations present.

Father Martin also shared that the number one reason young people don't join the priesthood or religious life is that they have never been personally invited. Father Martin was first asked as a Junior in high school. Many young people are just waiting for that invitation, so don't hesitate to invite a young person you feel might have a calling.

Father provided a number of handouts regarding several initiatives related to vocation awareness in the Archdiocese.

The Archdiocese has begun a new initiative "The Invisible Monastery Project". Individuals can log in on to their website and identify prayers they will offer per week for vocations. Individuals can also volunteer to be contacted by the Father Martin when special prayers are needed. Therefore, when Father has a need for prayers for a young man who is currently discerning and needs prayers, he can e-blast those people to ask for those prayers.

The Archdiocese has also begun Project Andrew – where priests are invited to bring high school students to dinner with the Archbishop to learn more about religious life.

Father Jim asked Father Martin about the Archbishop's thoughts about inviting African or other foreign priests to the Archdiocese to help address the current shortage of priests. He's not in favor because he believes we have enough opportunity within the diocese. He also is concerned that we have not had one Hispanic seminarian from the Archdiocese, and sees that as a big opportunity. Currently, a man must have lived in the Archdiocese for at least 2 years before being an Archdiocesan seminarian.

It was interesting to note that the United States just stopped being a mission country in eyes of the Church less than a century ago. We now must be more self-sustaining in vocations.

Currently priests are allowed to retire at 75, but there is no requirement that they do so. Some at that point become retired priests "in residence" where they can reside at a parish and help with Masses, but not have traditional parish responsibilities. It is important to remember that being a priest is not a "job" but a vocation and therefore priests never fully retire from the priesthood, just from being pastors.

There is a home for young men who are discerning the priesthood, or who are paying student debts prior to entering the seminary. There are currently 3 young men living there with Father Martin. Young men have to deal with any debt prior to entering (such as a mortgage), as the Archdiocese cannot absorb those debts. The Serra Club of St. Louis and Serra Club of St. Charles both exist to support and promote vocations. Most of the work supports the current seminarians, but Father Martin also asks for financial support for events which promote vocations. There is a cost to attend the seminary, and seminarians are responsible personally for \$18,000 annually in tuition.

Another reason young people don't choose vocations is that parents discourage, or in some cases, even forbid it. That has become a bigger issue as family sizes decline because all of the "hopes and dreams" are pinned to the one or two children in a family.

Father Martin left us with this thought:

We are not called to do everything he shared with us, but we are called to do what our Parish can do best to help with vocations. How do we best foster it at St. Cletus?

Parish Survey:

Al Rothermich reported from his small group, which reviewed the following categories from the survey: Greetings and Announcements/Worship Aids/Music.

Overall themes regarding Greetings and Announcements –

- duplication of announcements at Mass
- potential need for retraining of lectors
- greeters should do more greeting (perhaps a separate ministry)
- request for more quiet/reverent time before Mass
- opportunity for pastoral training regarding reverence during mass (dress, prayerful participation, not leaving early)

Overall themes regarding Worship Aids –

- Many respondents would like words and music for the songs used but not in the Missal or Music Issue
- Large Print books have been requested

Overall themes regarding Music -

- Opinions vary regarding traditional versus contemporary music (Masses vary, but not much specifically traditional on Sunday morning)
- There is untapped talent in the pews
- Some desire more quiet time after communion

Celeste Leuck shared the summary from her group which reviewed comments related to: Participation, Prayerful Experience, Overall Experience.

- Many comments were similar to those already discussed
- Some feel that it is too loud in church and there are too many distractions, especially young children
- There may be an opportunity for improved homilies

Her group had a few recommendations to consider:

- Explain, perhaps periodically in the bulletin, that different Masses have different music (new parishioners may not know this)
- Suggest to parishioners that the gathering space be used for unhappy children, conversations, and social gatherings and remind them that the church should be quiet and prayerful before and after Mass.
- Perhaps have the rosary said before Mass either in the church or the daily chapel before Sunday Mass once a month and offer a special intention.
- Print guidelines for behavior at Mass for kids and adults or mention resources that can be helpful.
- Can the daily chapel be used for unruly children? If so, should we add close captioning or sound?

There are two groups yet to report to the council.

Retreat:

The suggestion was made to hold the retreat on a Sunday in September, beginning at 10:00. Through the discussion regarding selecting a date, Chris Unterreiner volunteered to coordinate a listing of available dates. Each member is asked to send Chris their availability for both Saturdays and Sundays in September and October to see if there is a date that works for everyone.

Father's Notes:

Father reminded the council of the upcoming Lenten Speakers' Series. The next is Father Jeff Vomund on Sunday, March 3. Brad Soderberg and Bishop Hermann will be the last two. The first was well attended.

The PTO is promoting a magic show on March 23 at Lindenwood.

The Men's Club breakfast is on March 17 to support the St. Vincent DePaul Society.

There is a benefit for Paul Orso on March 16. It is a trivia night in the gym.

Agenda Meeting to be determined by Executive Committee

Next Meeting March 25, 2013, at 7pm