

## **All Saints Pastoral Council**

### **Minutes – March 8, 2017 Meeting**

**Present:** Steven Diaz, Joe Ridgway, Davie Kirby, Murray Gould, Mungai Njoroge, Waded Gonzales-Candelario, Kathleen Owens, Betty Rankin, Eric Greenfield, Jack Ziegler, Fr. Fred Daley.

**Excused/Absent:** Tami Gilbeaux, Elenore Arquette, Bill Tenity, Papy Amani

**Guests:** Meg Ksander

Jack Ziegler welcomed Council members and called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. and Fr. Fred began with a reflection.

**A. SW Syracuse PCA and Impact for All Saints Parish:** Fr. Fred presented the background for this project and its importance for the next phase of the reconfiguration of the parishes of the Diocese due to the priest shortage. He stressed that currently there are 109 full time priests serving in the diocese for 127 parishes and other core ministries. Forty-four of these are or soon will be 70 or more years of age which is the normal retirement age.

Currently there are nine priests serving the parishes that constitute the SW Pastoral Care Area (PCA). It is projected that going forward, this number will be reduced to three. The study suggests that given the mission of this PCA to minister to the poor of the geographic areas of the city currently served by these parishes, special criteria need to be developed for determining Church presence in the SW sections of Syracuse.

Given the priority of service to the poor as indicated in the Gospel and stressed currently by Pope Francis, the study group is recommending that in planning for the future, it is essential that there remain a concrete Church presence to implement outreach, programs and facilities to serve the poor and provide the poor with access to Church.

Support for this activity should be shared on a wider basis, e.g. by the Diocese or perhaps Western Region similar to the way the Diocese currently supports the Catholic school ministry. The group notes that it should not automatically be assumed that if parishes in this region close then this service to the poor would continue under the auspices of Catholic Charities. Not only would this be an inadequate response to the needs of the poor but perhaps not even a possible option given the structure of the Catholic Charities organization.

The study group is recommending that representatives from each parish of the PCA meet to develop a concrete proposal that follows the general direction of the study group which would be presented to the Diocese as moves toward the implementation of the next phases of the overall reconfiguration initiative.

The proposed plan needs to recognize that given the priest shortage, “priestless Sunday celebrations” may become a more common experience. In addition, parish leadership teams consisting of religious and lay persons need to be developed and trained.

The Council was in general agreement with the direction outlined by the study group. It was recognized that the reality of a “faith community” that results from the current parish structure can also be fostered around the common support and implementation of the Church ministry to the poor and other social justice initiatives.

Fr. Fred suggested that within this overall concept, a future SW PCA might retain all current parishes functioning under a variety of leadership structures supported by diocesan funding. It was further acknowledged that, similar to what is happening now with St. Lucy’s and All Saints parishes, parishioners will come from geographic areas other than those that constitute current parish boundaries.

Several Council members stressed that in proposing this approach to the Diocese, the study group, or the representative group from all the parishes, would do well to consider some “traditional issues” the reconfiguration normally addresses, e.g. continued use and support of present parish facilities, the provision of other traditional parish ministries e.g. faith formation for all age groups, Eucharistic schedules and sacramental preparation, etc. The concern was expressed that if the proposal does not address these more traditional issues, the Diocese will not give serious consideration to a structure that centers on service to the poor and other social justice initiatives as proposed by the study group.

The study group’s next meeting is scheduled for March 29<sup>th</sup> and members will provide feedback from their respective parishes.

**B. Report on meeting with Congolese Community:** Fr. Fred and Mungai reported on a meeting that was held with members of the Congolese community as part of obtaining input for the parish visioning process. They reported that the Congolese parishioners feel a strong sense of inclusion in the overall parish community for which they are most grateful.

They suggested a number of ways to enhance their sense of inclusion such as maintaining their role in the 11:30 Eucharistic celebration, further information on how they can participate in the current ministries of the parish, a request that Mass be celebrate in Kiswahili at least twice a year, be allowed to conduct “charismatic ministry” meetings and more inclusion in the decision making processes of the parish.

Several other ideas were suggested for possible implementation such as providing employment opportunities by establishing an African Restaurant run by members of the community; establishing an informal “Labor Agency” whereby community

members might be available to render services to other parishioners, neighbors or the at large community. They also expressed an interest in having resource persons in areas such as on-point to college, catholic schools, insurance, immigration laws address the Congolese Community.

The Council expressed gratitude and enthusiasm for the responses and suggestions of the Congolese community.

**C. Request that All Saints Designate Itself as a “Sanctuary Parish”:** Fr. Fred reported that he had received a call from Mayor Miner who is requesting that All Saints and St. Lucy’s designate themselves as “sanctuary parishes”. Historically Fr. Fred noted that any property designated as a “sanctuary” space, i.e. a safe space for undocumented persons.

He explained that there is no legal aspect to our designating ourselves as a “sanctuary parish” with regard to any ICA enforcement activity. It would indicate a public commitment to work with and being in solidarity with undocumented individuals. It would include involvement with local coalitions to promote immigration reform and support of illegal immigrants.

The obvious context for this is the current political climate being generated by the Administration and the promotion of what many perceive to be unnecessary and inappropriate federal restrictions regarding refugees and immigrants.

In responding to this request, Council members acknowledged not only that this designation would be considered in accord with our overall inclusive parish ministry, but it would be an opportunity to educate members of the parish on the overall issue of immigration and the need for reform.

One Council member underscored the complexity of illegal immigration given that it involves the breaking of existing laws and regulations that protect our national borders. In this sense, there could be parishioners who would not be comfortable with the parish so designating itself as a “sanctuary parish”.

The Council recognized the importance of this observation and while the request was approved by a vote of 10 to 1, all were in agreement that if we were to proceed, we should see this initiative as an opportunity to increase of our awareness of current immigration laws and regulations.

Before any such designation is made, the issue must be presented to the community at large with the opportunity for parishioners to provide feedback and input.

**D. Further Analysis of Visioning Date from Community and Next Steps:** Meg Ksander reported that the Sub-committee which is charged with compiling and analyzing the data received from the community survey has not had a chance to

complete its work. A report will be presented at the next meeting of the Council. Jack requested the Sub-committee to consider as a follow-up to the survey data the value of conducting another Town Hall with parishioners who are currently involved in the ministries of the parish to obtain their reaction and input based on the community survey.

Jack reminded the Council that the next meetings of the Pastoral Council are scheduled for April 26<sup>th</sup> and May 17<sup>th</sup>.

Fr. Fred led the Council in praying together a passage from Pope Francis' Joy of the Gospel. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack Ziegler