

Ss. Isidore & Maria Torribia Parish Town Hall meeting @ St. Joseph in Campbell
April 7th, 2019
Notes

Father Pat opened the meeting, welcomed everyone, reviewed the agenda, and led the opening prayer, based on this Sunday's first reading (Isaiah 43:16-21).

Presentation (see power point for information contained on the slides)

Parish Staffing/Finances: Suzanne Krebs, regional finance director

Do we need a full time Finance Director or Deacon?

- The Deacon is unpaid; all the time he spends at the parish is voluntary.
- Our parish pays 14% of the salary/benefits of the Finance Director since this is a shared service with 5 other parishes and one school.

Can any of the paid positions be done by volunteers?

- The Business Manager cannot be volunteer.
- Maintenance staff needs qualifications, building and grounds, works with the diocese.
- Cleaning could be done by volunteers.

Is it possible to cut back hours for paid personnel?

- We look at this all the time—e.g. we now share a Business Manager with St. John Vianney.

What are the expenses in detail? What is the income in detail?

- An income/expense statement from 7/18-3/19 was distributed.

What is the large increase in Purchase Services?

- This is the line for part-time employees of the parish. We needed to hire a part-time maintenance person. The Faith Formation Coordinator had to attend required training for the position so that increased the expense. However, the cost will be coming down now.

Has there been mismanagement of funds or embezzlement?

- There has been no mismanagement of funds. We do an annual budget which is approved by finance council. We did not increase the budget but managed to keep expenses down. We never assumed collections would increase.
- There has been no embezzlement. My job is to make sure controls are in place and that there are checks and balances.

There is over \$82,000 in patrimony accounts—what can this be used for?

- These are long term investments that will be used for operations.

If the parish closes, what happens to the “trust funds”?

- Those funds are not on the parish balance sheet so I cannot answer that question.

How did it happen that this situation went on so long without being addressed?

- This has not gone on for a long time--this was sudden. The summary shows the collections were steady from 2014-2017. They went down somewhat when we had to change the Mass schedule. But there was a quick drop last fall. With Fr. Erb's retirement and a new priest in Corning last summer, It fell apart suddenly with a loss of \$1700-2000 per week.

If the All Saints Parish parishioners who attended our church did not register at Ss. Isidore and Maria Torribia, how does their loss now impact our finances?

- Their contributions did not go back to All Saints Parish unless they were placed in an All Saints envelope.

Other Parishes in the Diocese of Rochester and the Diocese as a Whole: Karen Rinefierd

“The Diocese” includes 12 counties and 88 parishes, 27 of which have multiple worship sites like Ss. Isidore and Maria Torribia.

Are there any other parishes in our diocese with 450 families and 3 churches?

- Mary Mother Mercy (Ovid, Interlaken, Trumansburg)--266 households, 3 churches, driving distance between churches 10-22 miles. This parish is led by a religious order priest who is in his later 70's. They came together a few years ago when their income was not meeting their expenses. They have had to change their Mass schedule when a helping priest was re-assigned by his order to a parish in New York City. They are doing okay now but any big building-related need could change that.
- Our Lady of the Snow (Cato, Weedsport, Port Byron)--301 households, 3 churches, driving distance between churches 6-19 miles. They are served by a pastor past the retirement age. The parish has gone through a planning process with the Auburn parishes. When one of the priests retires or is re-assigned, this parish will be clustered with 2 parishes (3 churches) in Auburn and the Mass schedule will change.
- Blessed Trinity (Wolcott, Red Creek, Fair Haven) -- 171 households, only weekend Masses in 2 churches.
- St. Joseph the Worker (Clyde, Savannah, Lyons) -- 466 households, 3 churches.
- These last two parishes went through a planning process this past year. In June they will be clustering together with an additional parish and be served by a pastor and parochial vicar. The Mass schedule will change.

What would it take to get another priest to help this parish and the Bath parish [St. John Vianney]?

- That is impossible. There is no priest to give you, and your two parishes do not have the money to pay an additional priest.

Are there retiring priests interested in assisting the rural parishes?

- Sometimes, if they have a home in the area (e.g. the Finger Lakes) or they are from an area. I do not see anyone on the horizon.

Is it possible for a visiting priest from the Mt. Savior Monastery in Elmira to come to say Mass here?

- The monastery is home to a religious order. Currently all their members living at the monastery are brothers. A retired diocesan priest who lives at the monastery provides Sunday Mass for them. He also occasionally helps with Masses in Elmira and he provides ministry at the Elmira hospitals.

Are there funds available to help our Parish with a big miles apart structure?

- There is no pot of money. There is a diocesan building fund that can help with large building-related projects. Parishes donate to it every year out of their investments, and there is a grant process to request funds. That would not fit your situation.

Can the Diocese show us mercy and help in this financial crisis?

- The Diocese is helping, but not money help as you might think--more devoting staff support to help right the ship. I was asked to work directly with Fr. Pat and the rest of your planning committee. Other diocesan staff, including the CMA office, are also helping.

What happens if a parish runs out of money? Has that ever happened to a parish in our Diocese or others?

- It has happened before—over the entire history of our diocese, churches have opened and churches have closed. My personal experience has been with a parish in a suburban area and with churches in Rochester. The experience is different there, since other churches are only a few miles away. It hurts. I work with the community to help them find another church community and find their place in it. Whatever parish money remains (usually from the sale of

buildings) follows them. The territory of the former parish and the money go to the parish or parishes where the bulk of the parishioners go.

Catholic Ministries Appeal (see power point slides for information presented)

- In the middle of the year, the goal for Ss. Isidore and Maria Torribia cannot be reduced. However, the CMA staff person is working with Fr. Pat, Suzanne, and Peter to help the parish. The diocese did not have a complete list of parishioners, and some members did not get a CMA mailing. They are working to correct the list. A letter from Fr. Pat and Dcn. Doug will be going out to parishioners that have not given yet.
- People have stepped up to give. We are in a better place than we were a month ago.

Weekend Mass Schedule/Other Questions Submitted by Parishioners: Dcn. Doug Farwell

Is it possible to have a Sunday Mass at each of the 3 churches in our parish? (response by Karen Rinefierd)

- Canon law and liturgical law presume that every parish community will gather once on Sunday, but permission has been readily given for there to be two Masses in the same day.
- Occasionally permission is given by the bishop for 3 Masses under certain conditions. This permission is given to the priest to celebrate, not to the parish to schedule. Necessity is not the same as convenience. Very few churches cannot hold everyone; our churches are not full. It is exhausting for a priest to celebrate 3 Masses; it is not just saying words but praying the Mass and leading the people to pray. We also need to keep in mind that the priests in our Diocese are aging.

Could a visiting priest or a missionary priest be invited to say a Mass once or twice a month during the summer months?

- This would not be based on need but convenience. We have 400 families registered in the parish, but only 400 people attending Mass; it is not 400 families attending. There are enough Masses offered to meet our attendance. I don't think the Mass schedule is causing our financial issue. Many came from Corning due to the past administration there. With the change in administration, they are now going back.

Does the increasing length of the weekly Mass at St. Joseph's cause a decrease in attendance? The increase in time is partly due to the music ministry that sings all parts of the Mass as well as hymns.

- It takes 1 hour to do a Mass according to the requirements of GIRM (General Instruction of the Roman Missal). 30 minute Masses are typical for weekdays but not Sunday. What are we here for? We should be praying. We (Fr. Pat and Dcn. Doug) need enough time to get to each worship site. Whenever there are Mass changes, there is a loss and people will leave when the Mass time is not convenient for them. The biggest loss is not the Mass schedule. Sunday is a High Holy Mass and is going to be longer than a weekday Mass. Music is a big part of the Mass. We can reduce a little (e.g. singing only 2 verses rather than 4 or 5) but we still need music at the Mass.

Is one site going to be closed? Will a church need to close?

- We hope not. We are trying to keep the churches open. It is up to us to get people here. If we close, we have to sell and it is not easy to sell. In February 2020 we are out of money. Our financial crisis hit suddenly. 7 months is not a long time. We then had a 42% decline in our collections at Christmas.

Additional Questions, Comments and Suggestions

We should have fundraisers, like a monthly lottery drawing.

- Response from Peter Olausson- a parish appeal letter will be sent after Easter. We hope it will help. One of our Faith Formation staff has resigned so we will have a little savings there. We have never reached out to young families. We have not kept track of people that come back. We do not have contact with those people. Fundraisers take volunteers. The Planning Committee plans to look at fundraising ideas.

The median income in our area is about \$42,000, and many children qualify for free breakfast and lunch at schools in this area. How much does everyone needs to increase their giving?

- Response from Suzanne Krebs--with the drop in collections, 39% right now. That would come down depending on other changes.

How can people give an additional 39%?

- Suzanne Krebs: That is the amount that needs to be made up. We can do other things as well— e.g. cost cutting or fundraising.

The Diocese used the wrong median income to calculate our CMA assessment.

- Response from Karen Rinefierd- The numbers come from your area, the community in your area, local median income. The goal for Ss. Isidore and Maria Torribia was based on 460 households, collections \$307,441, 564 Mass attendance, median income in the area \$34,869.
- Response from Deacon Doug—We have 486 families. We have not ever exceeded \$312,000 in collections per year. An increase of \$652 per year or \$12.35 per week is needed. A mention about tithing to parishioners. We are not going tell what to give, pray about it and give what you can.

If I reduced my household income by 34%, I would keep the lights on first before CMA, that gets paid last. The CMA is not at the top of my list. I am going to support my local church first.

- Response from Deacon Doug: As a diocese and a parish, we are asked to support the greater efforts to spread the word of God. CMA does support our parish, like we reviewed before. 2nd collections are for giving/sharing with others. It is not that you have to, do the best you can. CMA giving helps our church, we still need to pay. If the CMA does not get paid, someone may not get a retirement check, that's what CMA pays.

We have never been asked, no guidelines on tithing, it's not always about the money, but I could give more. Let's keep asking. Goal and guideline will help. Fundraising is going on. The Polish Dinner is April 27, that money is given back to the Church. Let's use our energy the right way.

Another question about purchasing services which went up in 4 years.

- Response from Suzanne--we had a maintenance person for snow plowing, a parish employee paid, and a Faith Formation coordinator hired. There was a one-time expense for training. We changed expenses by sharing a business manager. This purchasing services expense is leveling down, lower levels of hours. We forecast a lower amount in the future.

The Mass schedule change cut into the attendance. 9:00 am at St. Catherine's is the worst possible time. We are losing parishioners to the 9:00 Mass at All Saints. They have more to offer, better times, and childcare. We need to increase attendance. A better Mass schedule would help. All Saints has a better, more convenient hour.

- Response from Deacon Doug—This was the best schedule that could be put together with only one priest to offer Mass. Some other worship site would be cut with a change at your church. We do our best. We are going to look at the Mass schedule, we will revisit it as part of the planning process. It affects everyone. It's not going to be easy.

We could reduce the number of Mass booklets ordered and lower the number of bulletins. Maybe we can look online for bulletins.

- Response from Fr. Pat--My hope was that people would take some home and evangelize to their friends. They may read something that attracts them to start attending.
- Response from Peter Olausson: We don't pay for the bulletins, due to advertising.

God gives us special gifts, with prayer. People left All Saints. Then when a new Priest came, they went back.

Many comments on communication. Parishioners feel they are uninformed and were caught off guard by the current crisis. We need talking, not just in the bulletin. We need to have regular reports of committee activities, what is being addressed as well as reporting of finances to the parishioners. Talk to us. How can we be a full parish?

- Response from Deacon Doug--we fell short on communications. We need to talk as a family. Thank you for the transparency in the handouts. In the last 3 years the membership increase, did we save during those years? Did we reach out to them to become a member/register? There is more loyalty when you are registered.

We need to reach out to people who are not attending Mass—inform them of our situation and encourage them to participate in the parish again.

I don't like when it's said we like a short Mass or no singing. Someone should be in the front of the altar directing the singing. It would make people more comfortable. Did we never comply in the church? St. Joe's did have a cantor 6 year ago.

- Response from Deacon Doug—we need a cantor to enhance our Mass. We are trying to get a mike in the choir loft.

Is the diocese out to close a church?

- Response: The goal is not to close any churches. If enough support can be generated, all churches will remain open. We need to get attendance and collection up. Closing a church would not help the problem. Old churches are hard to sell. The closed church would continue to be a drain on parish finances.

Just asking will encourage people to give more. We don't want to lose our church and we don't want to fight about it.

How much should we give?

- Response: If every registered family gave \$53.00 a month, we would meet our expenses. Of course, some could not afford that amount while others could give more. It is a personal decision based on each person's own finances.

We should pray as a parish and ask God for guidance in addressing these issues.

Why are we paying for a Faith Formation Coordinator?

- Response: The Faith Formation Coordinator needs to be compensated for consistency and because of the amount of training involved.

I have tried organizing a spaghetti dinner, breakfast, luncheon, but few have offered support or attended.

No one takes the “Word Among Us.” Do we pay for special envelopes, plus a box too? It’s a waste of money.

- Response from Peter Olausson—We pay \$237 for missalettes, \$200 per quarter for envelopes. We get “Word Among Us” at a bulk rate.

Be careful in sending letters to parishioners about the CMA that you don’t offend people. Some, like myself, put cash into the basket the weekend the parish took up a special collection.

The contractor who plows snow is plowing even when there is nothing going on at the church.

- Response: Most plowing contracts require snow removal when the snow reaches a certain depth. Volunteers with plows could do the snow removal if they were willing, but they would have to have commercial liability insurance.

What tasks are volunteers able to do (e.g. mowing)?

- Response from Suzanne Krebs—Parishioners can mow grass, shovel walks, clean, etc. They have to have experience for the task they want to volunteer for (i.e. a person can’t volunteer to mow grass if they have never been on a lawn tractor before). Skilled tasks such as plumbing and electrical have to be done by licensed professionals. Parishioners also should not be climbing ladders or doing other higher risk tasks. Parishioners under 18 years of age cannot operate power equipment. Send your suggestions in to the office. We will check and let you know if it can be done by volunteers.

Do we bid out for services?

- Response from Peter Olausson—yes, we get 3 bids.

Comment about CMA

- Response from Deacon Doug—we owe \$30,000. If every family contributed \$200, we would cover it. Contributors have 9 months to pay their amount. You have a bad vision of the Diocese, they do a lot and are willing to support our parish. If not, I wouldn’t be standing here, since it cost \$15,000 for my diaconal formation. There were 7 guys in my class, so think what it cost to educate all of us. The Diocese is here to help. Get away from this interpretation they are out to get you.

A member of the planning committee- It was positive that we put this committee together very quickly. When we first met we realized that it was most important first to get the word out and help parishioners understand what is going on. How did we get to this point? I remember 10-15 years ago my mother told me this day was coming. You all care, that is why you are here. I invite you to contact a member on the planning committee to get items addressed. We will be fine. Let’s work together as a community and it will work itself out. There is nothing more to report yet, but the whole committee cares about our parish.

The website has been redesigned, and all the planning committee minutes are on the website. You can send any suggestions to the parish email and they will get to the planning committee

- A concern was expressed about the new website since it seemed that a pin number was needed to get into it. That will be looked at.

Closing prayer (all).

Meeting ended at 3:37 PM.