

Diocesan Pastoral Council
September 12, 2009

1. **Call to Order** – Tina Dyer, DPC Executive Secretary, called the meeting to order. She welcomed Bishop Cunningham, and introduced Fr. Lang, and the Diocesan staff members. Tina informed the DPC that Sr. Katie Eiffe’s office has been renamed the Office of Faith Formation.

Tina announced that Bishop Costello has officially retired. We appreciate all blessings he has bestowed upon us and the guidance he provided to the DPC during his time with us. We wish him well during his much deserved retirement.

Bill Flynn led the DPC in opening prayer.

2. **Opening Remarks** – Sally Millick, DPC Chairperson, welcomed all members and recognized the new members to the DPC. Sally introduced the DPC theme for the year – Evangelization.
3. **Responsibilities of a Parish Representative** – Martha Group, Membership Chairperson, reviewed the responsibilities of Parish Representatives to the DPC. A description of the purpose and responsibilities of the DPC was provided in a handout.
4. **New Superintendent of Schools** - Chris Mominey the new Superintendent of Schools for the Syracuse Diocese addressed the Council. Mr. Mominey expressed gratitude to all parishes, pastors, finance committees and parishioners for all they do in support of Catholic Schools. Although not all parishes have children in the schools all parishes support our mission for Catholic Schools. The Catholic Schools Office will be taking a new look at the long term vision of Catholic education. The office recognizes the financial commitment made by the parishes and understands its responsibility of fiscal stewardship with an emphasis on development. The Catholic Schools Office will engage in honest conversation about what it can and cannot do in support of Catholic education. Priests have an active voice at the table when talking about Catholic education. Mr. Mominey is committed to working with finance committees, parish councils, everyone at the table to discuss the viability and sustainability of Catholic education in the Syracuse Diocese

Mr. Mominey highlighted Celebrating a Year for Priests. This year at the Catholic Schools Week Annual Dinner Dance all priests in the diocese will be honored with the “Light the Way” Award. The dinner dance will be held on January 29, 2010 during Catholic Schools Week.

5. **Overview of Evangelization** - Sr. Ellen Rose, SSJ, Superintendent of Schools, Ogdensburg provided an overview of Evangelization. Evangelization is a mandate given by Christ to the Church and therefore, given to everyone. It is not a new message, the message is always Christ, the message that Christ proclaimed. Christ's message must have a new ardor, a new method of expression, expressed in ways to ensure the people of the 21st century understand the Gospel.

What is Evangelization? It is a complex process made up of various elements. It is a process that unfolds in stages often by fits and starts with varied elements.

- Renewal of Humanity
- Witness
- Explicit Proclamation
- Inner Adherence
- Entrance into the Community
- Acceptance of Signs
- Apostolic Initiative

It is the power of God's Word, the grace of God's Word that converts. The message of God comes through the evangelizer in the world in which they live; into every strata of humanity. Evangelization is not just a question of preaching the Gospel, of reaching the multitudes, but also of upsetting our personal models of life. It has to do always with the person who proclaims the message.

Christ reached out and spoke to individuals. As Christians we should no longer be asking what can I do to save myself, but rather, what can I do to save others?

Sister Mary Eamon Lyng, SSJ, Director of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, Office of Evangelization provided specific information regarding the Diocese of Ogdensburg's efforts in support of evangelization. She also shared a number of resources that she encouraged everyone to make use of.

6. **Small Group Reports** – A spokesperson for each small group shared an example of Evangelization. These examples are as follows:
- Make everyone feel welcome and a part of the parish at each Mass.
 - It is important for us to be mindful of how we present ourselves and represent our faith on a one-to-one basis.
 - Representative within the geographic area of the parish invites new residents to the parish whether the family is Catholic or not.
 - Sends out birthday cards to children who are baptized until the child reaches school age. Then information on religious education is sent to the family.
 - Diehard disciples – People who volunteer to take children on field trips and activities sharing with them their faith.
 - Individuals with the parish learn Spanish to be able to communicate with migrant workers. The parish puts aside money to provide dental care to children and transportation to medical treatment.

- Ministry fairs/exhibits held between Masses to engage people to become active and participate in parish ministries. This activity doubled the size of ministry participation in one parish.
 - Comprehensive Faith Formation Program open to Catholics and other faiths.
 - Group meeting with good coffee and donuts. Invite new members to attend to get them talking and socializing with each other.
7. **New Vicar General** – Msgr. Yeazel, the newly appointed Vicar General was unable to join the group today. We hope to see him at our next plenary session on November 7, 2009.
8. **Bishop Cunningham’s Remarks** – We gave a standing applause to welcome Bishop Cunningham. Bishop thanked everyone for the warm welcome they have provided him in the form of support, prayers, letters, and cards. Bishop stated that he was trained in the process of observe think, act. He is still in the observing stage with some thinking, action will come later. During the past week Bishop has had a wonderful opportunity to observe Catholic education in action. Enthusiasm and excitement as we move into the new school year. All teachers are committed to the call to evangelization.
9. **Question and Answer Period** – Bishop Cunningham responded to written questions collected from the parish representatives.
- **How are Catholic School assessments determined? Is there a formula that can be shared with the DPC and the parishes?**
I do not have an easy answer to the question. The four regions of the diocese each has its own formula. In the Western Region (the North is included) there is a meeting of key leadership to look at the future of Catholic Schools in their area. The question of (Western/Northern) region assessments will be reviewed as part of the meeting.
 - **How are the HOPE Appeal calculations determined when parishes are combined?** Parish assessments for items such as the clerical fund, school assessments, HOPE Appeal, etc. are based on parish income. The parish financial reports indicate different sources of income which are labeled as Schedules - A, B, C, etcetera. Schedule “A” is regular parish income.

When parishes merge, Canon Law and State Law reflect that the assets and the liabilities of both parishes remain as part of the new parish. We recognize that, for a variety of reasons, parish mergers have an impact on the income of the new parish. There may be a variation in the income that is other than the income of the two parishes added together. Thus, when parishes merge the assessments for the fiscal year are based on previous experience. HOWEVER, after merging the income schedules of the new/remaining parish are studied for the studied for

the first quarter following the merger. Assessments are then redone with the projections that are based on the first quarter's actual experience.

- **Why are churches asked to commit beyond levels they can afford?** The Bishop hopes that no parish is asked to give beyond its means. Nevertheless, he noted that “we are all in this together,” and we share certain obligations, such as Catholic Education, in common. Diocesan assessments are based on parish income.
- **Why hasn't the church taken a more active role in advocating for universal health care?** The church is in favor of health care for all. Check the USCCB website (www.usccb.org) under Health Care. The website describes what the Church is in favor regarding universal health care. The next issue of the Catholic SUN is devoted to health care.

In the spirit of evangelization what will the Diocese do to support St. Lucy' parish with Native Americans, African Americans and Hispanic populations, and the inner-city and poor in general? We will continue to minister to the various ethnic populations in our diocese through HOPE Appeal and parish programs. Catholic Charities along with numerous parish programs are continually reaching out to the needy among us. We shall always do our best to serve everyone.

- **I always hear the rumor that the Diocese of Ogdensburg is ahead of us. Why is that? Geography? Size?** Every Diocese has its strengths. The Syracuse Diocese serves a very different demographic group than the Ogdensburg Diocese. The people in each work very, very hard.
- **In Sister Mary Eamon Lyng's talk on evangelization she talked about the characteristics of the parish. These characteristic are found in parishes that have been closed. Will there be any reconsideration for those parishes that have been closed or will be closed?** We need to be thinking beyond a view that Church is a building. Parishes were established for a variety of reasons and to meet different needs than exist today. Resources are limited. It is wrong when all a parish can do to pay its utility bills. No bishop likes to close a parish, it is painful. The process in our Diocese is a strong one. The College of Consultors and the Presbyteral Council have affirmed the process when it has been determined that the parish will be closed. Closing is like a death in the family. That family member would want us to go on. If the parish is really vibrant, the vibrancy will continue on in the new parish.

- **Some people think should priests to retire at 75. I don't agree, what do you think?** Canon Law requires that a priest submit his resignation from his administrative duties at age 75. It does not have to be accepted. It depends on the Bishop. If he is in good health he should continue to serve as a pastor.
- **A parish that closed is so filled with anger and frustration. What can be done?** The process is like the stages of grief, people have to work through it.
- **What do you think is the greatest challenge facing our Diocese? What can we do to overcome this challenge?** Secularization of our culture. The theme of evangelization will help this as will strengthening family life in our Diocese. Education is a challenge, reconfiguration is a challenge; there are many elements we face. We will do our best and we will do it together. We will continue to review parish closings, but be clear, we cannot change decisions that have been made. We have to move forward, we have a responsibility to those who come after us to leave them a Church that is vibrant. I promise to always listen and consider what is said and always do my best.

It was wonderful to be here with you. I look forward to many happy years with you. All of you and those who I love are in my prayers each and every day.

Bishop Cunningham then blessed the food and the session was adjourned at 12:20.

Respectfully submitted,
Martha Group
Secretary Pro-tem

Next plenary session – November 7, 2009