

Diocesan Pastoral Council November 13, 2010

Opening Prayer – Bill Flynn led the DPC in the opening prayer. The DPC members remembered family members who were serving now or who gave his or her life in service to our country.

Welcome – Sally Millick, DPC Chairperson, welcomed everyone and recognized Bishop Cunningham and diocesan staff in attendance. She reminded us that Sister Katie Effie had left to rejoin her order in Latham as Assistant Director of Hospitality. Cathy Cornue has been selected to replace Sister Katie and will soon assume the position as Diocesan Director of Faith Formation.

Bob Walters is busier than ever after the last DPC session that was devoted to youth ministry. Sally read an email from Bob expressing his gratitude for the invitations he has received to assist parishes in creating a youth program.

Updates –Evangelization toolbox – Tina Dyer, DPC Executive Secretary reminded the representatives to send in suggestions for the toolbox. Every parish is asked to submit a new idea or best practice. Members will receive a hard copy when all the suggestions are compiled.

Elections for DPC Officers and Regional Executive Committee Members – The Executive Committee has worked to refine the process in response to some concern that some names were not forwarded to the nominating committee the last time officers and regional representatives were chosen. Officers may only serve for two years in a particular office. New people will be chosen for the 2011 – 2013 term at the upcoming May plenary session. Tina explained that a plenary session is like the House of Representatives - every parish sends a representative. The Executive Committee is like the Senate with two representatives from each region - North, South, East, and West. A special sheet was included in the packet for recommending individuals that would be interested in serving as an officer and/or on the Executive Committee. All recommendations must be in writing.

Tina reviewed the responsibilities of each officer and of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee meets to have candid conversations with the Bishop. From these conversations future DPC agendas may emerge. Members were encouraged to make suggestions for topics the Executive Committee could discuss with the Bishop.

Best Practices – “District Representatives” - Bill Winnewisser from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton discussed how the parish has divided itself into six districts. Each district has a representative on the parish council. Before the council meets, each representative contacts 5 to 10 parishioners in his/her district. The positive results of this practice:

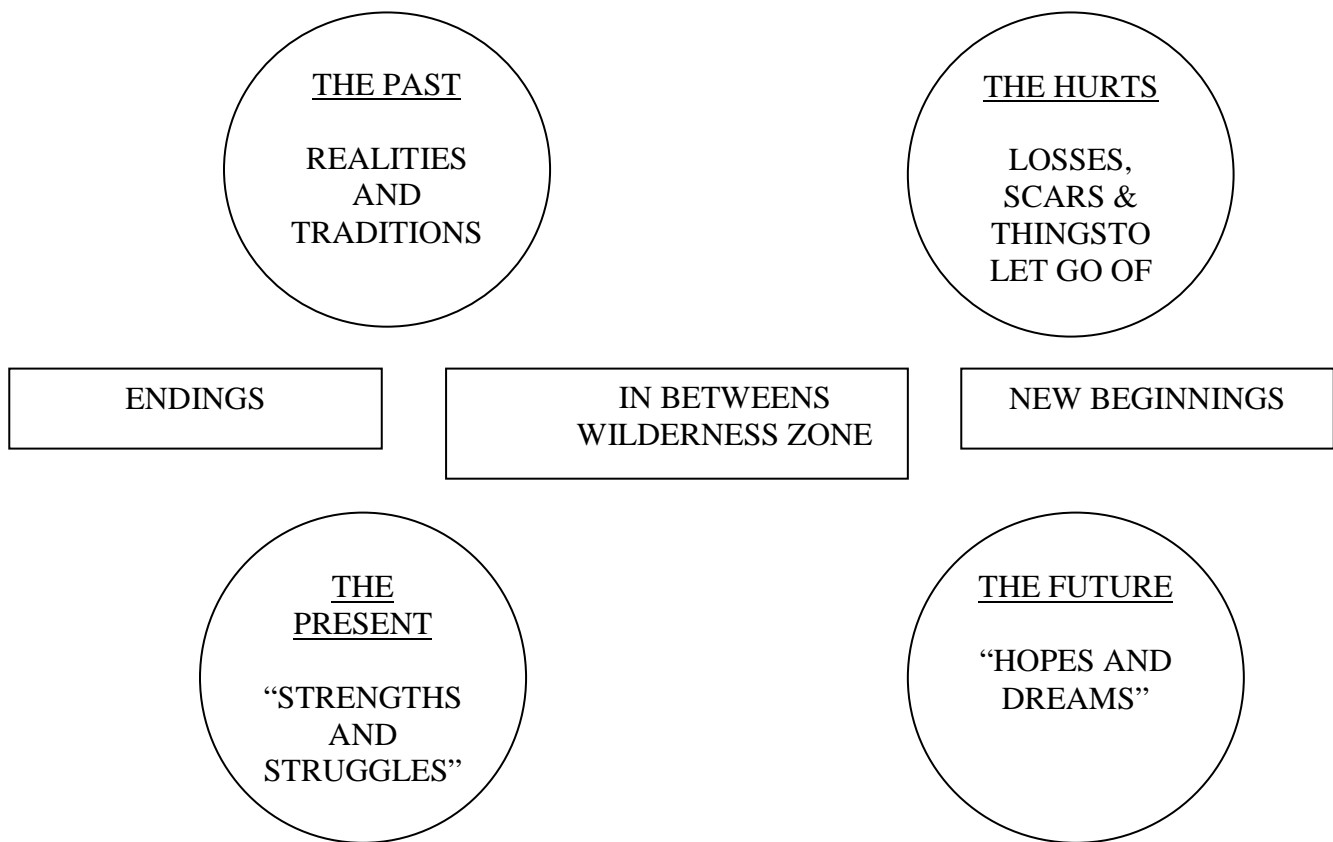
- Provides a direct communication link between council and parishioners
- Gets new ideas
- Identifies problems

- A way to follow-up with new parishioners.

“The Art of Change: Faith, Vision and Prophetic Planning – Father Lang, Vicar for Parishes introduced Dr. Maureen Gallagher from the Reid Group. Dr. Gallagher’s work focuses on turning challenges into opportunities. She has written the book *The Art of Change, Faith, Vision, and Pastoral Planning*. Maureen works with parishes, schools, and other organizations regarding relationships, communication tools, and conflict management. She and her colleagues have developed a theological process for dealing with the changes within the Church.

A summary of the presentation is outlined below.

TRANSITION PROCESS



We have a rich heritage, as leaders in the Church we have a special obligation to live one life, integrate all parts of our lives as a whole. How has our faith changed and grown? What is the yearning we still have within us?

We can be stronger if we work together and do what we do best.

Many are in the wilderness zone now, more so than at any other time in the history of the church. In this place something is being lost but it is not the end of the world. It offers the possibility of new beginnings.

Dr. Gallagher had participants identify a personal change, an ending that they have experienced. What was it like in the *wilderness zone*? How did it feel?

Identify a change in your parish, an ending you have experienced. What is it like in the *wilderness zone*? How does it feel?

The wilderness zone is not a good place to be, it's scary and is like a death, but change is an opportunity to grow in faith and rise again. We need people who can help us look at our situation differently.

What are the stories of our past? What are the strengths we have now? How can we build on our strengths? How can we allow people to grieve? How will we handle our anger? What's remaining the same or deepening?

What are some traditions that we can maintain that enrich us all?

How can we help with all generations of the parish?

THE FUTURE

Ask yourselves, what will our parish look like once it has achieved its vision?

Maureen shared some ideas from her experiences for parishes to consider.

Remember almost everything that Jesus did involved a meal. Gather the folks, tell the story and share the meal.

Young Adults

At baptism assign volunteer sponsors who mentor and support the young parents. Invite the couples to a dinner a few months after the baptism. Seat them two to a table and assign the mentors to take care of the babies. Provide two questions at the table to encourage discussion. What's the best thing that has happened to you in the past month? What's your greatest fear? Say grace in really special way. Schedule a second gathering where each couple is given a vial of holy water and put the sign of the cross on the baby. Parents take the holy water home and bless the child each night before bed.

College Students

Have parishioners send cookies and a note to the students who are away at college. Have a pizza party when they come home for break so they can reconnect with their friends at the church.

Leadership Opportunities for the Laity

The priest is the spiritual leader of the parish. Other individuals can take on some leadership roles with the approval of the priest. How can we assist him

remembering that he is the final decision maker. Remember that trust, honesty and transparency must be present.

Dr. Gallagher's book *The Art of Change, Faith, Vision, and Pastoral Planning* was available for purchase. Anyone who did not purchase at book at the meeting and would like to do so should email Father at jplang@aol.com

Senate of Priests Subcommittee on Term Limits for Pastors – Tina Dyer reviewed the work of the Senate of Priests Subcommittee on Term Limits. The Senate of Priests has asked the DPC to indicate its thoughts regarding the subcommittee's recommendation.

Best Practices – “Youth Representatives on Parish Council” at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. Dr. Joe Morra shared the parish's practice of including youth representatives on the parish council. Youth representatives attend all meetings and have an opportunity on each agenda to speak on matters of importance to the youth in the parish. The parish has found this to be very successful in keeping youth involved, enhancing their understanding of the workings of the parish as a whole, and keeping the parish focused on the needs of the youth along with the other needs of the parish.

Increased Offering Program – Kit Parker, Director of Development/Stewardship, provided information on the increased offering program to be conducted by the Cuneen Company. It will run from January 2011 to March 2012, with the exception of the HOPE Appeal blackout period. All parishes are asked to participate. There are four parishes presently participating in the pilot program.

Question and Answer Period – Bishop Cunningham responded to questions collected from the DPC. Prior to his responding to questions, Bishop spoke of the importance of the increased offering program. The benefit for every parish is that the cost, \$4.50 per family is much less than any single parish could obtain on its own. This program will assist the parishes in meeting the many their financial obligations. Bishop Cunningham then thanked Dr. Maureen Gallagher for leading us out of the wilderness and into the present where we can embrace new challenges.

Q. It seems that parishes with schools reach out so much more to families. My daughter started taking her children to a large church and no one welcomed them. What can be done?

A. All our churches should be welcoming communities. They must reach out with best practices to Catholics first and ex-Catholics second.

Q. Have we forgotten our roots as Americans? How do we reverse what's going on?

A. There are many pressures on our Christian Culture. We need to recognize who we are in our faith and as citizens.

- Q. Is holding hands during the Lord's Prayer "liturgically correct"?
- A. There is no directive or prohibition on holding hands. It depends on the parish. About 30% of the parishes hold hands.
- Q. Since the arrival of our new pastor people are leaving in large numbers. What can we do because we are the Church?
- A. The parish does not belong only to the pastor. Find your voice and speak to the pastor. There are a number of people today who follow the pastor to his new parish. People vote with their feet.
- Q. What does the Church think about the Young Life Program?
- A. Teen Life is program in many of our parishes. Stuebenville and confirmation retreats fill the needs of many of our students. One program may not meet the all the needs of a single individual but different programs attract different students therefore it is important to have a variety of programs to meet the needs of all our children.
- Q. Is Holy Family in Vernon going to be merged with St. Helena's in Sherrill? Or is Holy Family going to be closed?
- A. I do not anticipate either one closing at this time.
- Q. What is the deciding factor in deciding whether a parish should be linked or merged?
- A. There is no one single factor. There are several and these are listed on the website. Take a look at whether or not your parish is able to meet all the needs of the parish.
- Q. I read your message in the Catholic SUN to the Catholic High School students that Respect Life month. How can we reach more teens?
- A. I used that platform as a teaching opportunity for high school students, primarily juniors. The students were very attentive to the presentation. A question and answer period was held responding to questions presented by the students ahead of time. They included questions on abortion, euthanasia, suicide, stem cell research and cloning, and why do bad things happen to good people. There is a real hunger on the part of our young people to know and understand the teaching of the church. It is the responsibility of each adult, parents, teachers, and catechists to have the courage to discuss these issues thoughtfully and consistently.
- Q. Would it be of benefit for Father Scardella to put together a script of the new Mass to be read?
- A. I would not favor a script being read at the Mass. I would expect that this will be done through homilies. Try to look at this as a

change in translation in order to ensure that all English language translations are consistent.

- Q. What does Canon Law state on how many intentions can be said at one Mass? Some parishes have more than one intention for the mass.
- A. Canon Law is the law of the church. It contains about 1700 rules and regulations and has been translated into English. There should be one intention per Mass. Not one person, but one intention. The practice of more than one intention should be done only with permission of the bishop. If there is more than one intention, the priest keeps one stipend and the remainder goes into the parish funds.

The meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m. and was followed with lunch.

Next Meeting March 19, 2011

Respectfully submitted,
Ray Czachor
Secretary