

Diocesan Pastoral Council November 7, 2009

Call to Order – Tina Dyer, DPC Executive Secretary, called the meeting to order at 9 a.m.

Bill Flynn led the DPC in opening prayer. Our opening prayer remembered DPC members who have gone before us, included the gifts they gave to us.

Bishop Frank Harrison	Compassionate
Bishop Joseph O’Keefe	Scholarly
Father William Brown	Generous
Father David Barry	Resourceful
Honorable Ruth Sullivan	Perceptive
Anna Ducar	Dedicated
Robert Griffin	Purposeful
Sister Maureen Burns	Caring
Deacon John Lee	Personable
Ann Dobreski	Steadfast
Deacon Peter Benz	Diligent
Madeleine Collester	Happy
Msgr. Peter Owens	Congenial
Dr. John Readling	Pensive
William Collins	Organized
Msgr. Michael Minehan	Thorough
Elizabeth Quilter	Engaging
Joseph Schramm	Giving
Ursula Martin	Joyful
Anne Penoyer	Reasonable

We also prayed for those whose lives were lost in the tragedy at Fort Hood and for their families.

1. **Opening Remarks** – Sally Millick, DPC Chairperson, welcomed all members. Sally reminded DPC members to discuss with their pastoral councils the tools, programs, instruments, or other resources a parish needs to have a comprehensive evangelization program. These resource needs will be reviewed at the March plenary. At the May session we would like to be able to offer some recommendations to Bishop Cunningham regarding evangelization in the Syracuse Diocese.
2. **Evangelization Process at St. John’s in Liverpool** – Father James O’Brien, pastor of St. John in Liverpool presented the parish evangelization program entitled “*Awakening Faith*”. This effort began in September 2008 as an outgrowth of the parish’s decision to take seriously the Commemoration of the Year of St.

Paul. Bible study and faith sharing programs involving 90 people who studied the writings of St. Paul. These individuals became aware of the evangelizing spirit of St. Paul and so the parish decided to look for a way to replicate that spirit.

The parish found that the materials available from the Paulists to be very helpful. Some of the materials Fr. O'Brien mentioned included "*Go and Make Disciples, A Plan for Evangelization for Parishes in the United States*" and the "Awakening Faith" process. This process was a great resource for the parish in that the materials provided guidance and allowed the parish to tailor the materials to meet the needs of their parish. The process includes brochures that address the variety of needs of the people who may be contacted, ("We Miss You" for those who have fallen away from the Catholic Church, and "Come and See" for the un-churched).

The greatest obstacle was the perception of evangelization based on their personal experiences with the aggressive nature of other groups that conduct door-to-door evangelization. Nonetheless the parish selected door-to-door evangelization as their format. 82 people were trained and went out "two by two" and knocked on 1600 doors in the parish. Since then there has been an increase in requests for sacraments and parish registrations.

3. **Update on the Senate of Priests** – Father O'Brien, Chairperson of the Senate of Priests, provided an update on the Priests' Presbyteral Council. This group is composed of priests and like the DPC is a consultative body to advise and be consulted by the Bishop on issues of the diocesan concern. At the present time the Senate is discussing evangelization and issues surrounding the retirement of priests.

- ✚ **"Best Evangelization Practices"** – Josie Geer a member of St. Lucy in Syracuse presented the "Bread of Life Meal" evangelization practice in her parish. This is an interdenominational ministry held in the former St. Lucy's school building. The ministry is made of several groups. One group prepares soups stews and salads for the lunch program. The maintenance crew and dining room crew set up the table and chairs, posts the scripture of the day, and serve hot coffee to the early birds who arrive around 10:00-10:30 a.m. Another volunteer picks up desserts from Wegmans. There is a nurse who volunteers to take blood pressures. At 11:00 o'clock the volunteers and those served join in prayer. The "Bread of Life Meal" is able to evangelize neighborhood people, street people, people from the rescue mission families, and people who are out of work.

- ✚ Father Timothy Elmer, Judicial Vicar of the Tribunal Office, gave a talk based on a homily he recently delivered on "The Role of the Prophet". Did you ever have things just the way you wanted them and then someone came along and upset them? If so you can appreciate the impact the

prophets had among the people they were with. They challenged people's notions, their values. They were charged to restore the laws and beliefs that the early leaders of the Church that had been established by the Lord. This is necessary to help remind the people of how they have strayed from the teachings of the Church. People tend to get comfortable and lax, the prophet challenges us to do more than know the truth, because we must also speak and do the truth. As Christians we are not just of the world we are in the world. As Catholics we often prefer to hide just like people in the TV witness protection program – "In Plain Sight." We hide and prefer to blend into groups even when it compromises our beliefs and a truly Christian response. Sometimes being prophetic can be painful in our families, in our workplaces and in our relationships..

✚ ***"Best Evangelization Practices"*** - Jane Klaben spoke regarding evangelization done by the Legion of Mary from St. Patrick in Jordan. The Legion of Mary began in 1921 in Dublin, Ireland. They dedicate themselves to the Blessed Mother and try to emulate her work on earth. Their work includes visiting hospitals, nursing homes and shut-ins. They visit the newly baptized and practice door to door evangelization. They provide literature, rosaries, pictures and things for the children. Their work is done in a very gentle way. People are usually relieved that they represent the Catholic Church. The members of The Legion of Mary are looking for those who are hurting, those who have had a bad experience, or may be are afraid to come back to the Church. The members are understanding. They listen in a non- judgmental way. Listening is the most important tool of the trade. Everyone wants to be heard. They aim to listen instead of talking. By listening patiently and respectfully they then have the opportunity to help people understand where they are and where they are going.

New Vicar General – Msgr. Yeazel, the new Vicar General assists the Bishop in his responsibilities as bishop. The Bishop has asked Msgr. Yeazel to undertake some of the responsibilities of the diocese, particularly in the area of parish debt. We have incurred a debt of \$8.5 million. Since June 30, 2009 the diocese has collected approximately 1.5 million in cash and another 1.5 million has been committed, which still leaves a debt of 5.5 million. Much of what has not been paid is the school subsidy. People often want to know why the parishes should have to pay to subsidize the schools when their parish doesn't have children in the schools. Having catholic schools is a diocesan apostolate – shared by all of us. Most of the leaders in parishes came from the catholic schools. The majority of people who go into the priesthood and religious life come from the catholic schools. When you go back to your parishes ask your priests if your parish has paid all of its bills? What happens to a debt when parishes are merged? The main parish becomes responsible for the debt.

4. **Question and Answer Period** – Bishop Cunningham responded to several questions collected from the DPC. Some of the questions were:

- ▶ **How is Bishop Moynihan doing?** Bishop Moynihan is doing very well. He has had his second knee replacement and hopes to make a good recovery and be out and about soon.

- ▶ **As the new Bishop of Syracuse can we use some of our past pastors to work in the area of youth ministry?** If we want active youth ministry we really need to do it. It is unfair to expect this to be the responsibility of the priest. We all need to be directors of vocation. It is our collective responsibility to encourage and nurture our children to enter the vocations rather than to discourage them as some parents do. My life as a priest is rich and rewarding; we should not dissuade our young people from the priesthood by assuming that they cannot have a full life as a priest.

- ▶ **Why are some parishes able to conduct Communion services when the priest is away and others are not?** That is really a parish decision not a diocesan decision.

- ▶ **Regarding the six year evaluation of the pastor, how are evaluation committees formed? Are they handpicked by the pastor?** Yes, but the committee should include people with concerns as well as parishioners who are in complete agreement with the pastor. The committee should include parish council members, trustees, some staff, parishioners, etc. Recently spoke with two priests who will continue in their current parishes and both found the evaluation process beneficial. It should benefit both the priest and the parish.

- ▶ **I understand you have received a proposal regarding the future of the northside churches. Can you share your thoughts regarding this proposal?** I have not received it yet. When I do I will respond to it. The fact is that the population on the northside does not merit the number of parishes it has. We need to carry our most wonderful memories with us when we go. We owe it to the people who have gone before us to allow our parishes to have death with dignity and go on to represent them in our new parishes.

- ▶ **Do you think women should be able to become deacons? If not why? What can we do to overcome this challenge?** I uphold the teachings of the Church. The role of the deacon is one of service to the Church. We all can reach out in love and service to the Church without the grace of ordination. The real effort needs to be in serving the needs of the people in what ever capacity we have available to us.

▶ **Please explain the difference between a rector, pastor, and a business administrator?**

- The rector takes the place of the pastor, for example the bishop is the pastor of the Cathedral. The rector serves the pastoral needs of the Cathedral so the bishop is able to fulfill his duties as bishop.
- The pastor takes care of the pastoral needs of the church
- The business administrator helps to take care of the administrative functions of the church to free the pastor to take care of the pastoral needs.

▶ **Can a Catholic be married out of doors?** The normal place for two Catholics to be married is inside the parish church. The church is the place we go for sacraments; in the church in the presence of the Holy Spirit. **If the couple is not married by a priest can the priest give a blessing somewhere else like a blessing in a restaurant or country club?** Why weren't they married in a church?

Bishop, will you be visiting ALL of the parishes in Syracuse this year? I did visit all the parishes in Ogdensburg over a 5 year period. I will do my best to visit all the parishes in the Syracuse Diocese – but not all this year!!! It is a great grace to live among you. I am making my way around the diocese.

▶ **What is the difference between evangelization and conversion?** Evangelization means you are reaching out and preaching the good news. The hope is that conversion will happen over time. So many of our Catholics need our evangelization to know the fullness of the Catholic Church. Evangelization can be many different things. Let the gospel live within us to share with others; some of those will be our fellow Catholics

The session ended at 12:30 p.m with lunch/dismissal.

Next Meeting March 20th.

TO DO - Reminder – In preparation for the March 20, 2010 plenary session discuss with your parish pastoral council the necessary tools, programs, instruments, etc. your parish would need in order to initiate a comprehensive evangelization program. Be prepared to share this information in March.

Respectfully submitted,

Ray Czachor
Secretary