

**Diocesan Pastoral Council**  
**March 26, 2011**

**Opening Prayer – Bill Flynn led the DPC in the opening prayer with music provided by Larry Hagan.**

**Welcome** – Sally Millick, the DPC Chairperson, welcomed everyone to the meeting. There was a large crowd in attendance since parish pastoral council presidents were invited to the meeting for a special session with Father Lang.

**Updates** – Tina Dyer, DPC Executive Secretary, explained the process in selecting the executive committee for the DPC. The committee consists of the Bishop, the Vicar General, the Vicar for Parishes, the Executive Secretary, the 5 DPC officers and two people selected by the Bishop from each of the four regions of the Diocese. The committee meets at least twice a year to discuss a variety of issues that are of diocesan concern. The regular election of the officers for the 2011 – 2013 sessions along with the selection of the executive committee members will be conducted at the May 14<sup>th</sup> meeting. Tina also requested that if any parish had extra “A User Friendly Parish” booklets to see her during the meeting.

**Evangelization Toolbox** – Tina stated that there was still time to send in suggestions for the toolbox. A final copy will be distributed at the May plenary session.

**Funeral Rites** – The plenary session’s primary agenda item was a panel discussion on funeral rites in the diocese. Marysia Czachor was the moderator. The panel consisted of Fr. Gregory Kreinheder from Holy Family Parish in Syracuse, Sam Buranich and Matthew Vincentini from Buranich Funeral Home in Camillus, Mark Lazaroski, the Diocesan Director of Catholic Cemeteries and Sally Millick the bereavement minister at St. Leo/St. Ann’s Parish in Holland Patent. Each of the panel members introduced themselves and gave a small opening remark.

\* In his opening remarks, Fr. Kreinheder said that people have lost sight of what a Catholic funeral liturgy represents. Father gave several examples of how the true meaning of a funeral liturgy has been lost and has become too secular and suggested ways to resolve some of the issues.

\* Sally spoke of her role in the funeral arrangements as a bereavement minister. From her own personal loss she started this ministry in her parish. Her group takes care of everything for the deceased and family. One example of what they do is to have a vigil service for the family and close friends about a half hour before the calling hours begin. At this time the family can tell stories(give eulogies) about the deceased, pray together and get ready to meet friends.

\* Marysia then directed the first questions to Mark Lazaroski the Diocesan Director of Catholic cemeteries, about parish and diocesan cemeteries. He said that there are 55 parish and 13 diocesan cemeteries. He spoke of the need of having a parish cemetery committee and that they should stay in contact with the diocesan cemetery office. If a parish cannot financially support a cemetery the Diocese will assume responsibility for it. In New York State there are many provisions for cemetery care. Fortunately religious cemeteries do not have to follow all the rules except those that pertain to perpetual care. When asked about regulations for cemeteries on the subject of ornaments or flags he said there are no written rules, but vary cemetery by cemetery. The previously strict rules for artwork on the monuments have been relaxed in recent years. On the question of paying the pastor, the bookkeeper or workers from cemetery funds, Mark said in the most part no. The exception is that if a bookkeeper or grounds person works for the cemetery for a specific time, a pro rated fee can be paid.

\* Marysia's next question revolved around cremations and what the Church says about them. Fr. Kreinheder stated that the Church does permit cremations, as long as the cremation was not chosen for anti-Christian motives. He said that the remains should be treated with dignity just like a body in the casket. The Church recommends that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites. The Church also urges that the remains be buried or placed in a mausoleum. Matt from Buranich Funeral Home said that 20% of Catholics are cremated in the diocese. In the Detroit area as high as 38% of the people are cremated. He also stated that the main reason people get cremated is because of the cost. The second reason for being cremated is to honor the wishes of the deceased and the third reason is that the family would like to take the easy way out. The normal funeral cost at their funeral home for normal burial is about \$7,000. The direct cremation process can cost as little as \$1,700.

\* Marysia then asked Fr. Kreinheder to discuss the problems that arise when eulogies are given at the funeral Mass. He said that the beautiful Catholic funeral liturgy is a movement from sadness to hope. When a eulogy is given the movement stops and regresses back to sadness. There are also times that eulogies have lasted 45 minutes. In most cases priests try to limit eulogies to five minutes. But Father also said that a parish has to be sensitive to the wishes of the family. Matt from Buranich also spoke of the funeral people, the cemetery workers and the military honor guards waiting to perform their services. There was a consensus within the group that eulogies by the laity at funeral Masses be discouraged. A more appropriate time for eulogies would be at a vigil service at the funeral home or at a luncheon following the Mass.

\* The next question was directed to Father Kreinheder. He was asked if funeral Masses could be celebrated the night before the burial? He said that it was fine liturgically, but logistically it would not work. He said that there are many groups that meet at Church during the evening. Marysia then asked Matt from Buranich if there are time restrictions for burials. He said that most burials occur from Monday to Saturday. If the family is looking at cost, Monday through Thursday before noon is the least expensive.

\* Matt from Burnich answered a question concerning services being held in funeral homes instead of a Mass at Church. He said there are more services held at funeral homes and not in the Church and an increasing number of instances where there are no calling hours at all. One of the startling comments made by the funeral home director was that the wishes of the deceased do not have to be followed by the next of kin. Even if the deceased prepaid the funeral expenses and told the funeral home what they wanted, it is not legally binding. Even though the deceased might have wanted a funeral Mass, it may not happen. Some reasons for this could be that the children are not going to Church or that the children are feuding.

**Small Group Sessions** – The DPC representatives were divided into six groups and asked to complete a voting form and two other questions. After listening to the presentations, the representatives were asked whether the Diocesan Pastoral Council should recommend to Bishop Cunningham that a new brochure outlining currently approved funeral rites be distributed to parishes. The results of the voting were: 80% strongly agreed, 20% agreed and 1% abstained. The other two questions are being collated and the results will be published.

**Best Practices-** Christine Jones from Christ Our Light in Pulaski talked about the parish’s winter fuel collections. Because there are so many needy people in the area the members of the Church decided to start this program. Their fund will pay the fuel companies/utilities companies one time each winter a maximum of \$125. People must prove their need to qualify.

A second best practice was presented by Mark Simpson from St. Mary’s in Cleveland. Their program is call “knapsack buddies”. They pack food for school children on Friday and give it to them as they leave school. This will supply some nutritious food for the weekend. With 70% of the population at or below the poverty line, this is a great program.

Father Lang informed us of a best practice in the Minneapolis St. Paul area. One of the Church members had an idea of providing youth envelopes for students from kindergarten through eleventh grade. On the envelopes were three questions to be answered.

This week I prayed for \_\_\_\_\_ (time)  
This past week I helped \_\_\_\_\_ (talent)  
My contribution this week is \_\_\_\_\_ (treasure)

One person counted the money each week, kept it in a separate account and at the end of the year there was enough money to pay for the communion hosts the following year for Masses, people in nursing homes, hospitals, etc.

Father Lang also spoke about St. Bernard’s School of Theology in Rochester. They will be establishing an extension campus in Syracuse for Theology studies. It will allow interested laity to pursue a Masters Degrees in Theology.

**Question and Answer Period** – Bishop Cunningham responded to questions collected from the DPC. Prior to his responding to questions, he spoke of his trip to Buffalo and the ceremonies at the Basilica. Here are samples of questions:

Q. How often are parishes required to complete an inventory form?  
A. Parishes are not required to complete a form. It is suggested for insurance purposes and for priests that move in to list personal property on an inventory list.

Q. When will the decisions be made in the merging or closing of parishes?  
A. The decisions have been made as long as parishes are able to continue. Changes will be made as things happen, as in a death of a priest.

Q. If a parish has unused religious articles, can they be sold or distributed?  
A. Once the article is blessed it cannot be sold. It can be donated to another church or held at the Chancery. A gift offering may be made.

Q. When has cremation been accepted in the Church? Can a burial plot purchased for the burial of the body be used for cremation?  
A. Cremations have been permitted for 50 years. The reasoning is that one cannot burn the soul. The Church still prefers burial of the body. The plot can be used for the cremains.

Q. What happened to the benediction services in the Catholic Church?  
A. Benediction services are still being held in some parishes.

Q. What steps are being taken to provide the traditional Mass to those faithful who prefer this Mass?  
A. There are four places in the Diocese where the Latin Mass is celebrated. They are at the Basilica in Syracuse, St. Mary, Oswego, Our Lady of Lourdes Convent in Utica and a church in Binghamton.

Q. What is the difference between a pastor and an administrator?  
A. A pastor is assigned for a six year term where the administrator has no time assignment. He may be a first year priest or just filling in.

The meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m. and followed with lunch.

**Next Meeting May 14, 2011**

Respectfully submitted,  
Ray Czachor  
Secretary

