

Diocesan Pastoral Council November 19, 2011

Opening Prayer – Bill Flynn and Larry Hagan led the DPC in opening prayer. Today we remembered 125 years of diocesan Saints.

Opening Remarks – Tina Dyer, DPC Executive Secretary, welcomed everyone and recognized Bishop Cunningham and diocesan officials in attendance. Tina introduced Bob Talomie the new representative for the Permanent Deacons.

Tina has been e-mailing representatives notices about upcoming DPC plenary sessions to be put in your bulletins Please make sure to give Tina your e-mail address so that you get these notices.

Welcome – Margi Lawrence, DPC Chairperson, introduced Cathy Cornue, Director of Faith who was moderator for the panel discussion and the Q and A session.

Panel Discussion – Faith Formation – Cathy Cornue, Director of Faith Formation for the diocese described the focus of faith formation as being lifelong and ongoing. We are about forming disciples. Cathy introduced the panelists who represented various types of parishes found within our diocese, urban, suburban, and rural.

Suburban Parishes – Maria Kirk, Director of Faith Formation, St. Francis of Assisi, Binghamton. Their program is centers around the Mass. The program takes place on Sunday between the Masses and involves families. The main focus has been on families, providing support to families through training and materials. Program for adults includes a movie night. Parents watch a current movie one week and then discuss it the following the week.

Urban Parishes – Julie Sheridan, Director of Faith Formation, Most Holy Rosary, Syracuse. Programs take place between the Masses to encourage and allow families to attend the Mass. Faith formation builds on the Mass. There are themes based 6 week sessions geared to each generational level. This has opened up more dialogue between family members outside of the classes. The secondary program offers the students choices that permit them to schedule the program around their activities. Students at the 11th and 12th grades levels participate in a program called Bridges to Faith. Attendance is not mandatory and allows students to pursue areas that are of interest to them.

Rural Parishes – Cheryl Smith, Associate Director of Faith Formation of Church of the Annunciation, Clark Mills. Cheryl focused on a tenth grade program that she designed called, *Power of One*. The program allows students to work on the program at home so that it accommodates student and parent schedules. The program engages parents and helps students to see how the Catholic teachings are relevant to their own lives. A copy of the presentation and the program schedule were included in the handout materials. The program uses an online program of study for the students.

Q. If a school has given up release time can they get it back? New York State law provides for release time so yes they can get it back. It is important to recognize that the schools are under a great deal of pressure to provide more education programming to students. Parents may also wish to have their children remain in school for the entire day and be looking for an alternative to release time.

Q. Do we have a handle on the number of students enrolled in our programs? There is a decline in enrollment after First Eucharist. Then the numbers increase for Confirmation. We are still more sacrament driven. We need to move away from our current consumer-based mentality and move toward a life-long faith formation focus.

Q. Any suggestions regarding keeping students involved after confirmation? Be very aware of their schedules. Include them in the planning. Think about a retreat. Don't be afraid to use school vacation times for teaching "mini courses. Not everyone goes away for spring break.

Q. I hear that use ministry is fun and the classes are not. Is there a way we can change that? Yes, but just remember the textbook is a tool. We hope and encourage Youth ministry as a complement to the faith formation program. Faith formation is intentional in the development.

Q. The DPC "Evangelization Toolbox of Ideas" was well received last May. Is there any thought to having a similar booklet with "success stories" in the area of Faith Formation? The office is planning to put together a resource for the diocese. Tina Dyer suggested that the DPC members could assist in gathering this information.

Q. Any suggestions for keeping parents at the church for the Mass? Have the children participate in the Mass. Then move to a program that involves the parents. Don't make it too long and be aware of outside or community events that might conflict. Once you get them in the door and provide them with a positive experience, they will continue to participate.

2011 HOPE Appeal Parish Survey Report – Danielle Cummings, Assistant Chancellor and Director of Communications for the diocese and Eileen Ziobrowski, the consultant who conducted the survey shared the results of the 2011 HOPE Appeal Parish Survey. The survey was a part of a study conducted to determine how parishes perceive the value and effectiveness of programs and ministries supported by HOPE Appeal funding. Significant area of ministry that were identified as most important include:

- Faith Formation
- Hospital Chaplains – particularly to pastors
- Catholic Charities

Ministries that were seen as very important include:

- Youth Ministry
- Resource Centers
- Respect Life
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Most used Ministries include:

- Faith Formation
- Catholic Sun
- Faith Formation Resource Centers
- Catholic Charities
- Hospital Chaplains

Ministries identified as most effective include:

- College Newman Centers
- Hospital Chaplains
- Christ the King Retreat House
- Cathedral

Please share the entire report with you parish pastoral councils.

Q. Was every parish in the Diocese included in the survey? Every parish was invited to participate in the survey.

Q. My parish council and parish are not necessarily comfortable with numbers and graphs. So I'll be taking this information and creating a more user friendly document for them. Dr. Ziobrowski is available to assist parishes in preparing for a discussion of this survey. You may contact her by email at pziobrow@twcny.rr.com

Following Dr. Ziobrowski's discussion the DPC members met in small groups to discuss questions related to the image of DPC across the diocese. The results of these discussions will be shared in March.

Tina Dyer addressed the responsibilities of DPC members. Are you a member of your parish pastoral council? If not - why not? Do you bring the information back to your parish council?

Remarks and Open Forum – Bishop Cunningham briefly discussed the issue of religious freedom. Our beliefs and our faith are being challenged in many aspects of our lives. These challenges are occurring at the local, state and national level. The area of religious freedom is an area that we are going to have to address carefully and thoughtfully. We will be hearing more about this as more challenges begin to face us.

Every five years the Bishops make an Ad Limina visit to Rome. Bishop Cunningham will be visiting Rome next week where he will meet with the Holy Father. Pope Benedict has the custom of meeting with groups of five or six bishops for about 45 minutes. A Quinquennial report covering different areas (e.g. clergy, family life), was sent to Rome ahead of time. This report went to the different Castries (departments) that represent those ministries. The bishops meet with the Castries to discuss these reports. Our report was about 150 pages long with a 4 page summary.

Bishop discussed the increased offertory program. The diocese negotiated a deal as a diocese with the company presuming that all parishes would cooperate in this program.

By doing so we received a significant discount. The diocese agreed to pay 25% of the cost for every parish and the parish would be billed for 75%. By going together each parish is paying half of what the cost would be if they funded the campaign by themselves with the company. About 70 parishes have completed their campaign. This has resulted in a 26% increase in funds collected by those parishes.

The new Roman Missal will be introduced on the first Sunday in Advent. It gives us a chance to learn more about what we're doing it and why we're doing it. The prayers are in a loftier language. It will be more of a challenge for the priests than for the parishioners. Sometimes we may not like the change, but we need to remember that we are part of a world-wide church.

Some of the questions answered by Bishop Cunningham were:

What is the English translation for "Ad Limina?" "To the threshold" of the tombs of Saints Peter and Paul.

Last year we had a DPC session about funeral practices. Has a set of guideline/suggestions been established for distribution to parishes? The diocesan liturgical committee has been working on a brochure.

What is your confidence level for implementation and acceptance of Mass changes taking place in Advent? I am very confident based on the enthusiasm of the priests at the fall priests gathering at Alex Bay Conference. Change takes time.

Do you think that the "lack of comfort" Confirmation candidates have with a priest is due to scarcity of priests and lack of opportunity to establish a relationship with a priests? I don't sense in any way a lack of comfort with these students. I think that generally kids are pretty comfortable with priests.

How are you assured that the information discussed at the DPC is communicated to the local parish priests and in turn to the members of their parishes? **Very few priests attend DPC.** First of all, DPC is not meant for priests. There is the priests' senate for them. The diocesan pastoral council is a primarily a group of lay advisors to the bishop. I am hopeful that you will take information back to your parishes as much as possible. As mentioned earlier, we hope that you sit on your council where you can discuss these issues.

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

Remaining Meeting Schedule - March 10, 2012 - May 19, 2012

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Group
Secretary

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