

THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL – REFLECTIONS

It's been nearly a year since the St. Joseph Parish Pastoral Council was established, so perhaps it's a good time to reflect on what exactly a Parish Council is—and is not. It's also an appropriate time to list the names of those who are serving faithfully in this ministry.

Back in the fall of 2016 when I first wrote about this I said: "The primary role of a Parish Pastoral Council (hereafter PPC to save my typing fingers) is to create a **vision** for the parish. What are the priorities for our parish; where should we put our energy from year to year? How do we evangelize, i.e., invite more people to become part of our parish community (or re-connect with us)? How do we best serve those who are already here and how can we reach out more compassionately and effectively to those in need? The PPC helps to create a vision and **advises** the pastor and the pastoral staff as they seek to implement that vision within the parameters of Canon Law and Archdiocesan policy."

That pretty much defines both the scope and the limits of what a PPC is all about. In addition, in our case, one of the first things the members very wisely chose to do is invite staff members and persons responsible for various ministries to address the PPC. As one member observed at the time: in order to help set a vision for parish life, we need to have a clear picture of what's going on right now. The PPC members didn't want to step on any toes or re-invent the wheel if things were moving along just fine in any given ministry or group.

In the course of listening to one another and reflecting on parish life and ministry over the past year, the PPC recommended a number of initiatives. Youth Ministry and Young Adult Ministry were two gaps that the PPC members (and I) saw in parish life. So we now have the wonderful beginnings of Youth Ministry (for Jr. High and High School students) evident in this Sunday's Pancake Breakfast to raise money for their adopted family in Puerto Rico, displaced by the ravages of hurricane Maria. Just a few weeks ago, I asked two young adults (twenty-somethings) who are weekend Mass regulars to sit down with me and brainstorm ideas for drawing more men and women in their age group into a closer relationship with the parish. It was a great conversation and you'll hear more about that in the coming months. In addition, this year's Mardi Gras and the Ash Wednesday "Welcome" initiative were products of PPC discussions.

But one more thing needs to be understood about what the PPC is **not**: the members are not the "committee" that necessarily does the heavy lifting on projects. While some members add involvement in various activities to their PPC ministry, that is not their role, nor should it be. The time and thought they give to the various dimensions of parish life and the creative energy they provide are a great gift to the parish, and the hope is that other parishioners will be ready to hop on board and lend a hand.

But having said that, there is one item that exists on every one of our agendas, called *Eyes and Ears*. It's an opportunity for members to share with the group anything they've heard around the parish during the previous weeks that we might need to address in the future. Sometimes (sadly) it's gossip that might need to either be ignored or corrected; at other times that information leads to further discussion and becomes an agenda item for the next meeting. And at some point, likely in the fall when the new meeting space in the school is completed, we'll host an open meeting where any parishioner can come to offer suggestions or simply listen in on our discussions.

So, as promised, here are the names of the current PPC members. Some volunteered, others were recruited after the Parish Pastoral Staff did some brainstorming about PPC membership. In addition, an effort was made to reflect as much as possible in the membership the diversity of our community. If you can place the names with the faces, any member would be happy to talk to you about anything you might like to see us discuss in the future....Rikki Adebessin; Liz Adducci; Mike Cap; Mike Clark; Jan Coffey, Alicia Florence; Tim Gsell; Bill McLean; LaDonna Moreland; Ali Pedersen; Brenda White....and me. In addition, Ruth Austing agreed recently to be our recording secretary.

I'm very grateful to these twelve parishioners for their dedication to this important aspect of parish life and I'm hopeful that, with their creative energy and everyone's hard work, our parish community will continue to thrive and, along with our Village, continue to grow stronger in the coming years.

Fr. Bob