



Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Sudbury, MA
Parish Pastoral Council

Minutes, March 9, 2009 Regular Meeting

In attendance: Fr. Bova Conti, Deacon John Nicholson, Pat Guthy, Beth Palmerino, Liz Radoski, Mary Toland, John Riordan, Jim Roach, Jill Shanley, George Guanci.

The meeting began with Evening Vespers at 7:30 p.m.

Review of Council Meeting Minutes for February 2, 2008

The minutes for the previous council meeting held on Monday evening February 2, 2009 were reviewed and adopted.

Report on Collaborative D Discussions

Father Bova Conti gave a general report on the February Collaborative D working group meeting. A number of topics were discussed by the four parish and one rectorate working group, including: the multi-parish Lenten Retreat, the Arise program, adult faith formation, Alpha sessions, bible study classes, Breaking Bread program and the work of the OLF PPC on pastoral planning, specifically the Council's work examining the Pickett text on Pastoral Planning.

There was limited discussion by this working group of pastors and parish staff about getting parish pastoral and finance councils involved in the collaboration process. Fr. Bova Conti made the case for getting some kind of council representation upfront in this process. The working group felt that not all parishes are in the same place yet regarding this planning and that such council involvement might be unwieldy and premature. It was observed that out of approximately 80 collaboratives in the Archdiocese, only a handful (perhaps a dozen) were at all engaged in the planning process despite the passage of time since the 2006 Archdiocesan report. Mary Toland made the observation that it would be helpful for the success of the planning process if implementation guidance were forthcoming from the bishops.

The next meeting of the Collaborative D working group will be on May 11 at Our Lady of Fatima.

Breaking Bread

Deacon Nicholson gave a report on the success of the first Breaking Bread series of dinners, which came out of the discussions by the Stewardship Commission about building a strong sense of community in the parish. It was noted that Donna Biggins played a pivotal role in introducing the program to OLF and was an enthusiastic and energetic leader for its implementation. Over 100 parishioners have signed up for the series of occasional dinners, and it is expected that word of mouth about how enjoyable and successful the first weekend dinners were will result in even more participation by parishioners. Most of the parish council attended the inaugural weekend dinners and praised the program as both enjoyable and very successful in helping Our Lady of Fatima Catholics to get to know one another better. As one council member stated: "Now I know some of the people I see in Church each Sunday!"

Discussion of Pastoral Planning

John Riordan began the discussion by reading a passage from William Huebsch's book "Dreams and Visions, Pastoral Planning for Lifelong Faith Formation". The passage, entitled 'Are You a Parish Leader?', described rather accurately how many lay leaders in various parish councils feel about their roles in pastoral planning. It was also noted that in both Pickett's text and the Huebsch book the general theme that came through repeatedly was one of community – a community of faith in Christ. George Guanci mentioned he was particularly struck by the discussion in Chapter 1 of Pickett's planning guidebook regarding collaboration and how it "begins with . . . understanding of the gifts of the spirit but adds three essential elements: discernment, development and application." As Pickett notes, collaboration is based on reliance on the gifts of the assembly of the faith community and the promise of Jesus that whatever is needed will be provided to the faithful in this endeavor.

Pat Guthy noted how important communications will be to the issue of successful pastoral planning. Jim Roach noted that the planning text was rather affirming in providing the council with a sense that we are not alone in going through the challenging issues of long term pastoral planning. Jim suggested that the council pay particular heed to the suggestion in Pickett that parish pastoral councils consider utilizing a specially designed and empowered pastoral planning team, and that on the collaborative level this might be a good template to use for regional parish planning.

A discussion ensued concerning the recurring theme in both texts and in our own faith experience that meaningful prayer has to be an important part of this planning effort – that it is not just a general organizational planning process for a community group or body politic. There seemed to be widespread consensus that the council consider a long-standing suggestion by Pat Guthy that the best way to launch the council's planning process was by spiritual reflection and prayer, and that perhaps a retreat for the council with Father and Deacon John would provide this necessary foundation. John Riordan noted that he would discuss logistics with Father.

Ending this thoughtful and moving discussion, Father mentioned that he felt God's presence manifesting itself in our discussions; that the Holy Spirit was allowing us to open up, to trust each other, to share our feelings of faith and commitment, and a very real sense of where we are as Catholics and followers of Christ.

Adjourn

After a prayer to Our Lady, the meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

The next meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council is scheduled for Monday April 6, 2009 at the Parish Center.