

St. Nicholas Catholic Church
Minutes of the Parish Pastoral Council Meeting
Tuesday, October 26, 2010, 7:30 p.m.

Members present: Karen Allen, Nate Clark, Mary Dougherty, Maureen Fenty, John Kelsh, Graziano Marcheschi, Ann Rhomberg, Leonor Rojas, Gerry Smith, Fr. Bill Tkachuk,

Members absent: Susan Schaffrath

As chair, Gerry convened the meeting at 7:35 pm and Leonor offered the opening prayer.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the September 28, 2010 meeting were presented to the group. John noted that he was absent at the meeting and suggested the correction to the attendance list. The minutes were approved with this change.

Fr. Bill's comments:

Lay Ministry & Diaconate Formation Program: The meeting Thursday, October 21, to meet Chris Murphy and Lynne Mapes-Riordan was well attended and very positive. The meeting generated many personal, prayerful comments and affirmed both of them. There were some concerns raised about the need to get the conversation back to the formation and support of lay ministries. There was an ensuing discussion on the purpose of lay ministry and its role in parish life. One parish priority is to develop more lay men and women to feel competent and get more involved in the various ministries of the parish. The lay minister who goes through extended formation would be able to serve both a leadership role and as a general practitioner. The lay ministry formation program (**Called and Gifted, Instituto de Liderazgo**) will be the focus of the pastoral staff. They will spend a day on retreat that will include discussing some of the ways to return the spotlight to lay ministries and what resources are available for this effort. There has also been some discussion on developing an educational series on lay ministry in the Vatican II Church. One of our financial goals is to build a budget sufficient to send at least two parishioners each year to formation programs offered by the Archdiocese. The three sub-committees on Women and the Diaconate have continued to hold meetings in an effort to extend and expand the conversation on the subject. Fr. Bill said that there have been a number of voices since the October meeting who were confused about the issue of women in the diaconate. There seems to be a misperception that a "radical" group within the parish is driving this issue. Fr. Bill pointed out that his column in the Sunday bulletin will address this misconception, and that the issue of ordination of women as deacons remains an open issue in the Catholic Church. He is willing to support the efforts of those who want to advocate for the issue. Shifting the focus of the discussion to the formation of a lay ministry might help draw some of the concerned voices into the parish discussion and open up the conversation.

Karen mentioned that she is leading the sub-committee to explore educational options in the parish to continue the conversation about women in the diaconate. She said that she would like to broaden this effort to include the lay ministry options and asked for suggestions on how to draw more people into the discussion. It was felt that any discussion with the community should be task specific. If there was anyone who was interested in leading the larger issue, they should talk to and work with Sr. Christina and the staff. (Note: Lynn Jencks has since approached the staff and will be gathering others to coordinate efforts in the area of lay ministry.)

There was further discussion on the issue of Lynne “applying” for the Deacon Formation Program even though at this time this is not a viable option for her as a woman. Fr. Bill said that after he talked to Lynne, he felt the same kind of comfort in supporting her as he would have felt with a man expressing a desire to pursue the diaconate. Since the ordination of women deacons is an open issue, we are able to explore this within the current teachings and practices of the Church. The parish will discuss and look at ways that we can support Lynne and also think about how her ministry as a lay woman exploring diaconate might work alongside that of Chris as he moves toward diaconate. Lynne is aware that the ordination of women deacons may not occur in her lifetime, but feels called to explore the possibility. The ongoing conversation about women in the diaconate program could raise awareness of the issue and advocate for the expanded role of lay women in the larger Church.

Green Armbands: In response to the Sunday bulletin column on the green armbands that were offered to parishioners on September 26 by individuals not acting on behalf of the parish, Fr. Bill has received several more comments about the appropriateness of such an action at the weekend liturgy. Several people commented that were not comfortable with the action, independent of their opinions on the issue. Others felt glad to have the opportunity to make a silent statement. Some members of the Council also expressed their discomfort with the appearance that staff permitted the armbands to be distributed at Sunday Eucharist as well as with the rapidity with which the female candidate was identified. Fr. Bill wanted to reiterate that the action was not endorsed by the parish, there were no parish resources used, and the group of individuals involved was not acting on behalf of St. Nicholas Parish or any parish committee or group. This has been a learning experience and has forced us all to think about how we might handle future actions of a similar nature. The consensus seems to be that the distribution of materials at the end of the Liturgy would be a better approach rather than confronting people as they are entering the church.

Annual Parish Report: Fr. Bill distributed an advance copy of the annual Financial Report for the year ending June 30, 2010. He noted that the parish was especially generous in responding to outside needs such as the Haiti Earthquake Relief and also to collections for our sister parishes and the local Society of Vincent de Paul. The operating deficit for the year is less than expected because several capital projects undertaken in the year were paid for from the savings account. Total offertory collections declined for the second year in a row. In January, the parish will begin a push for the new automatic contribution system that is more flexible and similar to other online pay options. The addition of a full time Music Director will bring the expense for salaries in line with the budgeted amount. The Finance Committee will be starting to look at a new capital campaign within the next two fiscal years, since some major capital expenses (e.g., parking lot) need to be addressed within the near future.

Follow up on Retreat Topics:

The **subcommittee on membership and roles** (Gerry, Graz and John) distributed the first draft of a document detailing the mission, purpose and structure of the PPC. There was a robust discussion and several suggested changes to the document regarding the terms of membership, responsibilities, and the structure of the PPC. It was suggested that members review the document and forward their recommendations (via email) to Gerry to incorporate as appropriate.

There was also some discussion on the subject of attendance by PPC members at parish events, such as the recent open meetings. There was a misperception among some that the Council had

opted out of the discussion. It was felt that future events could be discussed at Council meetings and members could decide ahead of time as to whether and who would attend.

UPDATE: The restructured document on the mission and structure of the PPC has been approved via email, and will be ratified at the next Council meeting. The next step in filling the two vacancies in the PPC will be that a communication will go out to the parish in early 2011. We will seek new PPC membership candidates for discernment and review by the Pastor in order to fill 2-6 positions on the PPC.

Other Business:

- Members were reminded that Ministry Sunday for Hispanic parishioners was on Sunday, October 31 after the 1:00 p.m. mass. Leonor suggested having a few members of the Council present. Nate, Gerry and Maureen volunteered to assist.
- A suggestion was made to hold a town hall meeting for the Hispanic community (in Spanish) to discuss the issue of women in the diaconate and lay ministry formation. No definite conclusion was reached on this topic.
- Gerry paid for the ad in the parish directory on behalf of the PPC – each member is to pay him \$35 towards this ad.
- The schedule of the meetings for the current year, with the assignments for the opening and closing prayers, was distributed to members.

Nate offered the closing prayer and the meeting adjourned at 10:05 pm.

Upcoming Meeting Dates: Tuesday, December 7, 2010, 7:30 p.m., at the Rectory
Tuesday, January 25, 2011, 7:30 p.m., at the Rectory