

## **ST. NOEL PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL**

May 21, 2007 Meeting Minutes

ATTENDANCE: Fred Botek, Giovanna Coccia, Anne DiFranco, Cheryl du Laney, Alice Hinkel, Mary Masse, Mike Mills, Dave Nethery, Fr. George Smiga, Chip Tusek, Tom Ulepik

**Opening Prayer:** Fred (Prayer to St. Noel Chabanel)

### **Meeting Goals:**

- 1.) To hear a report on the recent Spring Diocesan Pastoral Council Gathering.**
- 2.) To hear a report on the Cluster Planning and Coordinating Team.**
- 3.) To discuss how to update the parish on where we are currently with clustering.**

### **1.) Report on the 2007 Spring Diocesan Pastoral Council Gathering**

Fred and Fr. George attended the gathering on April 28, 2007 entitled:

**“Naming Our Challenges, Responding With Hope”**

Remarks from and dialogue with Bishop Lennon included:

a.) Introduction: We are believers (passive) but also disciples (active) living our faith. We are called to spread our faith and deepen it.

b.) Clustering Update: 231 parishes in the Cleveland Diocese – only 11 requests for reconsideration. This success speaks to the considerable work done up front; some of the 11 requests will be granted, others will stick to original assignments. Cluster Planning and coordinating (CPC) Team will be made up of 5 members; priest or parish life coordinator + member of pastoral council + member of finance committee + staff member + one other. Training sessions in late May/early June. Team must be proactive & communicate to the Parish. The Cluster does not simply replace the parish – aiming for what is best for the Diocese (think on a wider scale).

c.) Spread our Presence and pastoral care throughout the Diocese in an equitable manner:

Bishop’s most important goal & message “I am a member of the Diocese of Cleveland”. We must think of ourselves in broader terms. Never forget that this is Church work – reflection and discernment (not power politics). Clustering is a response to the need to be present and provide pastoral care. Does not squash parish identity; also, focusing on what to improve (better use of resources) for the parishes individually and the cluster collectively. Expects our Diocese to be stronger (financially & ministering to people) in 10 years. 45% of parishes in the red for 2006 (4 parishes on the brink). Bishop’s letters will be challenging for all.

d.) Be responsive to parish's challenges, those for cluster and its other members, other clusters and the entire Diocese: Biggest challenge is religious education (both kids & adults) – we cannot be faith illiterate. Catholics are the largest religious group in the U.S. – inactive Catholics are the second largest. We cannot let structural dilemmas hinder us from Christ's mission. Worship, education, formation and evangelization mark the quality of who we are. We have to invite fallen away Catholics back, but to what? We have to work on what we're inviting them back to.

**Fr George's comments:** Impressed with the Bishop's respect for clustering and for the previous Bishop (Pilla), his direct leadership in evolving the concept of clustering and its broader message/mission and his subsequent ability to make tough decisions as needed. Also very impressed with Bishop Lennon's ownership of Clustering process.

Information, including financial and demographic statistics of the Diocese was provided by:

Rick Krivanka, Director, Pastoral Planning Office

Fr. Larry Jurcak, Secretary and Vicar for Clergy and Religious

John Maimone, CFO, Diocese of Cleveland (and member of St. Noel Parish)

- Downward trend in Mass attendance (In 1970 56% of parish population went to Mass; in 2006 29% attended Mass).
- Ageing of our Catholics, while young adults are not coming back.
- Catholic assets depleting away (money and people).
- 34% of parishes (1 out of 3) cannot pay Diocesan assessments
- 20 or more clusters will have financial issues
- Only 3 open abuse cases now here.
- Diocese will not be able to bail out failing parishes & schools
- Demographic = leading indication of success
- Money = trailing indication of success.

## **2. Cluster Planning and Coordinating Team:**

The CPC team from St. Noel will consist of Fr. George, Alice Hinkle, Marianne Slattery, Sharon Waltermire and Ray Weimer. The team will address

- Areas of Vibrancy
- Areas of Challenge
- Areas Most Appropriate for Collaboration with Another Parish

The CPC team will gather detailed information on these areas, including input from the St. Noel staff and Parish Pastoral Council, and will report back to the Pastoral Council by this fall. These efforts are an update to the Vibrant Parish Life's 2003 Parish Self-Study Process.

### **3. Clustering Update for the Parish as a Whole:**

Various ways to update the parish were discussed. The bulletin should contain some basic information stating that more detail will follow. Council recommended that more detailed information be provided in Fr. George's quarterly letter to parishioners to include:

- Parts of Bishop Lennon's letter which will detail the areas we need to address
- Who is on the Clustering Planning Team
- Decrease in average mass attendance from 1970 – 2006
- Let Parishioners know what to expect before the media blows it up
- Stress "We are all in this together" as a Diocese, not just a Parish or a Cluster

Council agreed that a retreat should again be held in August. Date to be determined.

**Next Meeting: September 17, 7 p.m.**

**Opening Prayer: To Be Determined**

**Refreshments: To Be Determined**