



Genesis Vicariate Pastoral Council

TO SHARE CHRIST IN AND THROUGH THE URBAN CHURCH

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APRIL 11, 2011 MEETING MINUTES

Genesis Vicariate Pastoral Council
"Together In Faith" Phase II Meeting
6:30 p.m.
Blessed Sacrament Cathedral

AGENDA:

1. **Opening Prayer**
2. **Group Assembly/Meeting Overview**
3. **Suggestions/Input**
4. **Personal Reflection - Parish Group Reflection/Sharing/Discussion/Consensus on Questions**
5. **Vicariate Reassembly/Debriefing/Outcomes/**
6. **Wrap up - Preparation for Next Meeting**
7. **Document Download Links**

OPENING PRAYER - GROUP ASSEMBLY/MEETING OVERVIEW

The meeting opened at 6:30 pm with a prayer.

Alton welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda. The groups will first be meeting by parish for individual reflection then parish-level group discussion after which they will be rejoining and meeting as a whole.

On the back of the agenda are the "Basic Assumptions". Moving forward we'll need to keep these in mind. Copies of the reference documents "Priests Assigned to Parishes" and "Priest & Parish Statistics" were distributed. The back contains the explanation of the information on the front. For question one, the group was asked to review their own parish's Parish Evaluation Inventory (PEI). Each parish is responsible for completing their own PEI. Alton made sure everyone had their parish's Sacramental Statistics and Pinpoint Maps. When reviewing the Sacramental Statistics, you need to ask if the numbers increased, decreased or stayed the same.

The Kennedy Statistics are a set of data as a result of someone at your parish that reporting it. 'Kennedy' is a big book published yearly that contains information from all US parishes. A letter sent out in June to the parishes and the pastor decides who fills it out. Alton asked the reps to remember to not get bogged down in the statistics; we're looking at the trending information, not the raw numbers. Alton will hand out the statistical information for the next meeting that evening; the data will not be available beforehand to review.

One of the important pieces of this process is for parish planning. Fr. Rob passed away at 54 years old and this is why you need to do this planning, in case of an emergency. It is absolutely crucial; we need to be prepared to make sure our parishioners always have somewhere to go and help our parishes to grow.

SUGGESTIONS/INPUT

A rep asked if there's there any discussion over the redefining of the role of the priest within the AOD, possibly redefining the role of the pastor. With the ever decreasing amount of priests, how do we better utilize the ones we've got?

Alton answered that when a priests' assignment comes in and when a priest is assigned to a City parish, they have to have an understanding of the special needs of those parishes. Our parishes are unique from the suburban parishes although they have the same dynamic.

A priest's job is to provide pastoral care. For example, one priest can only do 3 masses on a weekend. If your pastor is doing more than that, he needs to scale back. It's up to us to manage our resources. Some priests can do maintenance on boilers or roofs, but it's not expected of them. Not all pastors have these skills nor are they expected to.

The document "Realistic Expectations of a Priest" ([click here to download](#)) explains the duties and responsibilities of a parish priest. For instance, they're supposed to only work 45-60 hours a week spread over 6 days and there's a requirement that they take a day off. When you see your pastor working on their day off, make sure they take the day off. It's also required that they take a yearly retreat, attend a bi-annual convocation, prison Mass and gather together as a 'priestly fraternity' monthly. A priestly fraternity is when they gather together as a group, break bread and interact without discussion business. It is important for them to get together and relax, break bread, verbally share their challenges, because only they know the stresses that they have. Burdens shared are burdens lightened.

PERSONAL/PRIVATE REFLECTION – PARISH PLANNING GROUPS

The group broke into the parish groups at 7:05 pm. They reflected on the questions individually for 5 minutes, then as a parish group

Please [click here](#) for the External Data and Statistics Review and Internal Catholic Data Review (the handout the discussion is based on).

GROUP DISCUSSION

Question 1: Review the PEI from 2004-2005 for each parish. How have the parishes changed over the past 5 years? Have the original PEI plans describing the sacramental strategic and sustainable nature identified by each parish been implemented?

Queen of Heaven: Religious education has sustained themselves over last 5 years. Without dedicated lay or religious-people to guide them in the future there will be in decline. They don't know if the PEI plans were implemented (not sure of the information contained in the PEI) or how people could follow up.

St. Bart – St. Rita: They didn't have access to their PEI at the time of reflection. They merged with St. Rita and that caused an increase, but they lost membership due to elimination of Sunday's 11 a.m. Mass. They also lost members that migrated to the suburbs; youth, volunteers, Altar servers, etc. The youth that graduated did not return because they moved. There's been a decrease in parish revenue with lower weekly contributions, the closure of the convent as a rental property and smaller fundraising returns. They lost 2 deacons in 5 years and changed pastors twice.

St. Hyacinth: In the past 5 years the parish has been moving forward and continues to remain stable. The pastor, Fr. Janusz, continues the work needed at St. Hyacinth relative to the plans and sacramental statistics. They are unique in the fact that they continue to carry on traditions by teaching the Polish heritage and customs at the same time continuing to evaluate the needs of parishioners that belong to the parish but are of different ethnic backgrounds.

St. Benedict: Comparing the information in the PEI, registered households declined over 66%. They have clustered with 3 other parishes.

St. Gregory: They've done the same thing as St. Benedicts. The congregation has decreased and they've had a reduction of staff; their business manager retired and has not been replaced. They have new families coming in, but their numbers haven't increased. The younger groups hopefully will have matured enough to have another generation. Collections decreased with members leaving and going elsewhere. They are now in a cluster with Madonna, Blessed Sacrament and St. Benedict.

St. Lad's: Since 2005 they've had a temporary administrator and are gearing up to cluster with Trans-OLCH and St. Louis the King. Changes are being incorporated that went into effect that year or the year after. Plans were implemented out of necessity. Parish donations decreased by 20%. They've had a lot of funerals, the parish is getting smaller. Parishioners are dying and they're not getting new ones.

Madonna: The Capital Campaign is ongoing and there's been an increase in weekly contributions. They're encouraging parishioners to contribute more because it affects operations if they don't. The sacramental nature of their parish is non-territorial. Most parishioners come from outside the parish neighborhood. They have a family-oriented parish; there's a large Nigerian population with young kids and their senior population is growing. Parishioners that left when the Mass schedule changed are returning.

Blessed Sacrament: the PEI plans have been implemented. As most parishes, they have a decreasing population and identify the need to increase services, attract youth. Sacramentally, they're going against the shrinking trend, there's been an increase in sacraments in the last 5 years.

St. Raymond: All numbers are down, especially Mass participation over the last year. At Sunday Mass, the faces of attendees have changed. Mass is looking more like the neighborhood than the suburbs. Every Sunday a few more people that receive outreach come to the door, inquisitive of what it means to be Catholic.

Good Counsel: Their numbers have decreased, there's been little change and they're not doing too good. On, June 26th they'll be officially merged with St. Raymond. The number of sacraments are down. If they get 3 kids they're happy; they used to have 15 or more.

Queen of Apostles: They've come to the conclusion that some changes are downward and they've reached a point of stability, staying the same the last 5 years. The Baptism rate has been stable over last 5 years, but the ages are a little older. Confirmations are up, there were 23 a month ago. Religious ed numbers have gone up. In 2005, they didn't have one; the next year had 48 people. This year there are 62. The number of parishioners fluctuates up & down, but is stabilizing and their income is stabilizing. They reached a point of stability and would like to continue on that. Evangelization is the key; they need to continue to show community involvement. They've opened their doors to the scouts and block club, and continue to market themselves. They'd like to do 40-hour devotion.

Question 2: Which parishes have experienced an increase or decrease in Catholic registered households and what do these trends indicate? How does this compare to general population changes?

Queen of Heaven: Registered households have declined due to people moving in with family members or going into assisted living. The trends indicate a decrease in the city and go in line the population decline. Believe larger mergers are inevitable.

St. Bart-St. Rita: - They've had a decrease in registered households, a lot of funerals and an aging population. They lost some members due to a decrease in services. There were a lot of young people that brought elderly people to Mass. When the 11 a.m. Mass stopped, they lost a lot of those attendees. The neighborhood population increased, but is mostly non-Catholic.

St. Hyacinth: The population around the parish has decreased yet registered households have increased. They've had 12 new families that replaced ones lost. In the last 3 years they've signed up 36 new associate parishioners (people who support the parish but don't attend on a regular basis). They're in a non-Catholic neighborhood; people moving have no effect on their numbers. The associate parishioners get 10 envelopes per year; they go to another church but donate to St. Hyacinth.

Alton noted that when parishes are asked to convert to the new software, ParishSoft, only 1 parish can be registered per family, but they can donate to or work with other parishes. You won't be able to be a 'registered parishioner' at more than 1 parish.

St. Benedict: They've had a decline in registered households; the shrinkage is about equal or matches the downsizing of the local community. They see an increase in the business community in the area and this gives them some hope.

St. Gregory: They recently had a census taken, but have not received the results. They've had a decrease in membership of the parish; they've tried evangelization, but hasn't work too well.

Alton stated one thing parishes can do is wait until after May 8th and begin to try to do mass counts for a month. Pick a month in Spring & Fall, but not near holidays and look at the number of people that actually attend Mass. You don't want to do a count when people come for big celebrations. Looking at the actual numbers will help as you go forward. Mass counts are quick and easy to do, just physically count the bodies in the seats.

St. Raymond: They have a decrease of Catholic population by 50% at the parish level, neighborhood 15%. In 1955, they had 2500 families; they're now fortunate to have 200 people on Saturday & Sunday.

Queen of Apostles: Registered households have declined. One problem they're trying to overcome is the number of Mass attendees that aren't parishioners and don't give envelopes. They're trying to get them to join. Population trends

are going up in Hamtramck; they're stable if not increased, but most are non-Catholic. They're faced with the dilemma of how to increase the number of parishioners with fewer Catholics in the area.

St. Lad's: Since 1994, the population of the city of Hamtramck has increased by 25% and decreased households by 75% - this is based on the city parish's 6000 Catholics that don't attend mass at any of the 3 parishes within the city. They're having a hard time holding on to their own within the city limits.

Blessed Sacrament: Between 2005 & 2010 there's been a decrease in the city's population by 25%; the state of MI - 10% . They've had an increase but the number fluctuates, last year was an increase. These numbers seem to alternate year-to-year, but they are on an upswing. Also, this is against the general trend of the city. BSC is holding its own.

Good Counsel: There's been a decrease in Catholic population and income; there are more seniors and people moving into assisted living. They'd like to pull in the grandchildren and the Hmong community has younger children. Community services have increased by 1500 people serviced. Some donate to the church and come to mass, but they don't become registered parishioners. The percentage served that come to Mass is about 30%. When Fr. Bob invited them in, the size of their services grew and were moved from the Chapel to the Sanctuary. He explains the Mass and Catholic faith and they enjoy it.

Madonna: They're in line with the stats and have had a parish population decrease, but it's showing 20% and should be 10%. Since they're a non - territorial parish, it's not a significant decrease. The nearby population that is parish members is about 15%. Most people drive in to come to Mass and live outside the parish boundaries.

Question 3 – Do the sacramental trends reflect a pattern similar to what the general population has experienced over the past 15 years? Have the number of baptisms, weddings, confirmation, first communions and funerals in each parish increased or decreased proportionately? What does this mean for the general life of the parish?

Queen of Heaven: Sacramental trends changed over 15 years, there's fewer Catholic schools to bond with, they've all diminished. People usually go for sacraments where their school is and they're going back to gothic churches for weddings because of the esthetics and ambience of City churches. The general life of the parish will diminish with time.

St. Bart – St. Rita: The sacramental trends follow the Catholic population trends. They remain, but have become a lot smaller. Unfortunately, funerals and the blessing of the sick are the only sacraments they're having more of. Outside of that all sacraments have decreased. These trends diminish the life of the parish, they need to recoup these losses to sustain the parish.

St. Hyacinth: Over the past 5 years, sacramental trends have generally remained constant. Baptisms have stayed the same. Weddings, confessions and communions have increased; deaths have decreased. People know they're still there and like to have sacraments at the parish of their youth instead of a suburban parish.

St. Benedict: The sacramental trends have not decreased as much as the parish population drop has been. The decrease has been proportionate to the decline in parish population. Sacraments dropped by over 56% and funerals down to 76%. They've been having a small amount of membership growth lately.

St. Raymond: Sacramental trends do reflect a pattern. Parishes are aging, and it's a shame there aren't Catholic families with children. There's a ton in the parish area but aren't Catholic or churched. The challenge is to reach out to those families. It's amazing how many non-Catholic parents are being asked by their kids to find out about the faith.

St. Gregory: The problem lately is that kids make their 1st Communion, are baptized and confirmed, then they don't see them anymore. They attend the rituals to get to adulthood and don't return. They're having funerals, losing members and not bringing in new ones. They need to keep the kids that make their communion, baptism and confirmation and bring them up in the Church; it will help the parish. Need to have activities to try to get them to participate so they don't feel left out.

Alton suggested you see if you can make a determination where the kids live in relationship to the parish. Make phone calls to follow up with the family and ask the reason they stopped coming. Shirley noted that the children would come if the parents did. A council member also noted how the kids have travel sports teams now and instead of going to Mass at their parish, they go by where they travel to.

At Madonna they have young men that meet every month

Queen of Apostles: The number of sacraments has gone down. When they had a school, they had a lot of sacraments, but are not sure how it reflects on today's stats. If you go to 2005, the number's not as bad because when you have more kids you have more sacraments performed in the parish. The decrease is in relation to registered households. What does this mean for the general life of the parish? They don't feel that it reflects much and that the people that are there are the life of the parish. Marriages at the parish affect a family group, not a lot of people in the parish; it doesn't reflect the life of the parish. Baptism is also a family thing; if you have a decrease in baptisms, it doesn't reflect the on the life of the parish. They have a lot of activities and devotions they consider to be the life of the parish, not individual family gatherings & sacraments.

Alton said that when you think of the life of the church, a marriage is a family event. If you have a decrease in marriages, do you have a decrease of families attending? If you have a decrease in baptisms, there are fewer families involved. Where do we see life? At births, weddings and baptisms; that's where we see our life. Your children become the life; they get married, have children and the family continues to grow as a result. We're looking at the bigger picture.

There's a direct relationship in sustainability when you look at the number of many parents using the crying room. If no one is, you're in a diminished mode. People say if you have decreasing families in parish, it's because it's a family affair. After weddings, families become a member of the church. That's how they leave; those that don't return didn't intend to. They get married for the family in the family parish.

You have to look at demographics and what's changed. People are coming when parents have a special day; their parents are the ones that went to school there. When you see the active senior citizens, you see their kids. We'd all like to see young people, but need to know how to attract and how to retain. They're in the suburbs; they've got jobs and live in Macomb County. Senior citizen parishes need to find new parishioners.

At St. Hyacinth, their sacraments don't come from the households. They come because they like the church for one reason or other. Every wedding they've had, the couple has stayed. That's how they get an increase, not a decrease. If you talk to them they'll stay. They had 7 weddings in 1 year and they've all stayed. They feel more at home in the parish; they went to churches in the suburbs and it's not the same. They treat everyone as an individual.

You have to grab the ones that do come. Blessed Sacrament found their growth by families that came for weddings. If a family came for an event, the ushers talked to them and they stayed. People like the personal contact, the one on one.

St. Lad's: Since 1994, individual Catholics decreased 80%, a similar trend with baptisms & weddings. Funerals have not decreased. One significant area of decrease is there's no more confessions & communions, because children go to St. Florian or Q of A. Looking at Mass attendance, they're lucky if they have one person under 30 at the English language Masses. The Poles are mostly not registered and they have a different mix. This is the future of the parish, not the 2nd generation Poles. They them to get involved in the parish and it's difficult to get them active and involved. They have no Eucharistic ministers or ushers that are Polish.

Blessed Sacrament: Their number of sacraments doesn't reflect the trends; the numbers are up. Households have increased as well.

Madonna: The trend is proportional to the other parishes. Sacraments, except funerals are going up. They have an aging parish. The Nigerian community has children and is growing. They're trying to stimulate young people to get involved. If they like what's going on, they'll bring their friends. If they don't stimulate enough of them, the parish is going to diminish.

Good Counsel: They're on a decline because they're an aging parish. The grandparents are bringing kids, not the parents. You have a lost generation there because they don't want to be involved.

Question 4 – What percentage of parishioners live outside of their parish boundaries and why? Compared to other parishes in the planning group and vicariate? What does this mean to ministerial activities other than weekly Mass?

Queen of Heaven: A very high percentage (85%) of parishioners live outside the parish boundaries. City services, transportation, crime and lack of jobs are just some reasons. Good block clubs and merchant participation in planning

meetings could promote improved conditions and help area teens get meaningful employment. A decline in ministerial exists today.

St. Bart - St. Rita: It's basically a money problem. People moved north and left the parishes here. There's always been people living in the suburbs that come back to support the church. Most that come back live outside the city. Also, they know if there are no young people to take over, the church will die. There has to be young people, no matter how you look at it. If there's no little ones, the church will go. 60% of parishioners live outside the parish boundaries and come back; they're going to try to turn that around.

St. Hyacinth: 90% of parishioners live outside the parish boundaries. They left the area and it declined. There's been no change to the 3 Masses on weekends. All parishioners are visited in the hospital or at home when they're sick.

St. Benedict: 70% of the parishioners live outside parish boundaries due to a decline of the neighborhoods, causing them to relocate. Some have never lived within the parish boundaries but feel spiritually connected to the church. Some enjoy the fellowship and still others are staying to serve the poor and needy through outreach. They need an increase in ministerial activities to retain and attract more parishioners other than weekly Masses.

Queen of Apostles: A number of parishioners live outside the boundaries; 32% don't live in the vicinity. Why? It's for personal reasons; crime, to live closer to their jobs; for their financial situation. They think they become more financially blessed. Why do they return? They like what they see and had in the past. 64% live in the boundaries. The zip code, 48212, encompasses the parish boundaries. They got this from a current mailing from the parish to the registered parishioners.

Alton noted the pinpoint maps are based on CSA households. It shows 48% within the parish; 28% in other parts of the vicariate and 17% other areas. Part of this process is the plans that will be given to the other body that will have the trend data from the pinpoint maps. Don't use personal data you may have. If you look at the breakdown it will be reflective of a reality for you.

This information is not from the AOD, this is information supplied from parishes. The size of the boundary is not the case. You can't go by population because they're not all Catholic or attending parishes.

St. Lad's: 45% of parishioners live within parish boundaries; this has remained constant. Those living in the vicariate are at other parishes. Those who are in Hamtramck are staying. There's small houses, they have 3-4 kids and can live upstairs and down. In the 50's, 60's 70's they moved to the suburbs. Parents will be moving there when they are older to be near their children.

St. Raymond: According to the numbers given, 60% live outside the parish boundaries. Why they moved are the usual reasons. Those living within the boundaries, their children tell them daily to move out of the city. Many are older widows and widowers, living in homes too big for them. This mean you have to do more outreach to neighborhood community. It's a tough balance, you might have 10-15 kids of different ages coming in, so it's hard to do a youth program.

Blessed Sacrament: According to the stats, 77% live outside the parish boundaries. Parishioners moved to the suburbs and come back to the parish. It is the Mother Church of the Archdiocese and this has a big draw.

Madonna: Most live outside parish boundaries (97.1%). It's for the same reasons; economic conditions, housing, loss of jobs, etc. It's a challenge to bring parishioners back for activities. Although it's a challenge, they do come for choir, Bible study, the St. Joseph's Society men's group.

WRAP-UP

Alton thanked the group for the for robust discussion. The 'homework' is to work on the next questions before the May 9th meeting. When we meet, please bring questions 5-8 completed, discussed and written out. Be sure to bring 2 copies, one to turn in to the recorder. The hard work is questions 9-10 – that financial data that will not be given out beforehand. Financial information tends to give you a different perspective; the data is concrete and you' need to be prepared for that. We're then going to look at the APC plans and start looking at what we're doing from the planning group level, not as a parish.

Donna Tschirhart noted that the statistics we're working with are what parishes sent back. Check out your parish's CSA process; that's reflected in the statistics. The list is supposed to be updated yearly. Parishes are supposed to turn in cards

for everyone and if they didn't turn in cards for people who didn't donate, their numbers aren't reflected in the parish. You need to find where these numbers don't match.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.

DOCUMENT DOWNLOAD LINKS

[EXPLANATION OF PHASE II DATA](#)

[EXPLANATION OF VICARIATE STATS](#)

[PARISH LIFE FINANCIAL DATA EXPLANATIONS](#)

[REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS FOR A PRIEST](#)

[TIF PHASE II BASIC ASSUMPTIONS](#)

[PARISH PLANNING GROUP 1 DATA \(Archdiocesan Website\)](#)

[PARISH PLANNING GROUP 2 DATA \(Archdiocese Website\)](#)

[ST. BART & CATHOLIC SCHOOL PLANNING INFORMATION](#)

[PARISH EVALUATION INVENTORIES \(PEI's\)](#)

[PINPOINT MAPS](#)

[SACRAMENTAL STATISTICS](#)

Respectfully submitted,

Monica Archibald
Genesis VPC Recording Secretary