



Genesis Vicariate Pastoral Council

TO SHARE CHRIST IN AND THROUGH THE URBAN CHURCH

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OCTOBER 10, 2011 MEETING MINUTES

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

AGENDA:

1. **Opening Prayer – Meeting Introduction**
2. **Group Discussion of Questions 4 & 5**
3. **Meeting Wrap-up**

OPENING PRAYER – MEETING INTRODUCTION

Alton James, Archdiocesan representative, opened the meeting at 6:17 pm with a prayer and peace was shared among the members.

He shared with the group a sample of what the final plan should be crafted like and distributed copies to the group. For each one of the 6 pastoral plans that the APC put out, this is the form in which you will need to respond. It should contain a planning group response, a simple vision statement, definition of pastoral plan in which you're speaking of (evangelical, stewardship, youth/young adults, etc.), who the planning group is made up of, activities that you plan to do, plans you're going to make and when they'll take effect. These don't need to be 'set in stone'; although you do need to attach a reasonable date to start a plan so it gives you focus and you don't lose sight of it. If you know you can't do something by a certain date, give a date you're going to start the major discussion and when it's going to be executed; if it is a far-ranging item, you'll need to set some anchors in the ground; you do not have to be able to give every detail of the plan.

There will be one plan for each planning group in our vicariate (Group 1 = 'City' group / Group 2 = 'Polonia' group). There will be an opportunity for you to look at specific things in the APC plan and to critique some of them. For instance, a lot of what we find is there's not a lot of 'social justice' components so you may want to say that in your response and then cite what you're doing. An example is one vicariate talked about the possibility of doing a gun 'buy-back' program sponsored by the Archdiocese of Detroit; this could be an Archdiocesan-wide program, it doesn't have to be limited to a region or vicariate. It probably has about a 2-year time frame, as it's something that's going to take time to do, but at least they have a stake in the ground and this gives them a goal. You do need to make sure it answers all questions of what you're planning to do, how you're going to do it and in what time frame it will take place.

The plans we come up with (some are starting to surface) will need to always take into consideration the Basic Assumptions. While there may be provisions in Canon law, understand it always defers to the local ordinary to implement, or to make the call, or to have the final say. We need to keep in touch with the basic assumptions and make sure that the plans we create don't over step that. When the plan is presented and it violates a basic assumption, it will probably not be approved in full. There are some plans currently going in that direction.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Question 4 Discussion

The council broke into their planning groups; each will be discussing questions 4 and 5. Alton noted that each parish should have received an email requesting to do 'Mass counts' for the month of October and to also do spreadsheets that show current statistics such as; Mass attendance (members from the CSA reported counts), church capacity, Masses held and how many each parish needs to have.

St. Gregory discussed that they have the least debt and it a suggestion was made that the surrounding churches merge together and all go to St. Gregory. They're looking at this as a different approach.

Alton stated the parish councils are sending this information in and our group will make the collective plan. The planning groups will decide what will be forwarded to the APC, not what each parish's council recommends. Other plans may emerge but what the collective group decides will be sent forward. It may contain some or part of all of their suggestions.

Donna asked if the planning group has been made aware of all the options from the parishes as to how we are coming to a consensus for submission; Alton noted we hope to have those responses tonight.

Madonna is in the process of being the training grounds for the "Urban Ministry". With that, they have established an Executive Committee of the council which has been meeting on a regular basis to develop that proposal. They have been following the TIF structure in addressing the different components of ministry training. The plan has to be turned in the next few weeks.

Alton stated the plan needs to be laid out with a certain date; for example 2012. If Madonna establishes itself as the "Urban Ministry Training Center", the thought would be that Madonna would remain as a parish. The work they do would provide the urban ministry training. The question is; could the AOD close the church and still make it the urban ministry training site? They would still want to remain in the cluster. They are beginning to categorize what comes under each responsibility and the basics at the core of the plan.

He also asked what the scope of the program was and the response is that it's "city-wide"; they're partners with neighborhood service organizations (i.e. Focus Hope) to legitimize what they do. Alton said they need to focus on Catholic relief services for the city that's being revamped. There will be an emphasis on what the parishes need. The proposal includes the information in "Changing Lives Together".

They've spent a lot of time on their restructuring. There haven't been any recommendations whether the other parishes in the group will remain as worship sites. Alton said it may mean mergers instead of clusters, whichever makes more sense. In the proposed plan you may want all parishes to remain open, but someone else then can make that decision later for you. What's out there now is that Madonna will remain a worship site.

There's also a proposal from St. Gregory's that the cluster remain as-is for the next 5 years. Their enrollment has stabilized in recent years at all 4 locations.

The alternative, due to staffing or other considerations (death, reassignment of a pastor); at that point all parishes merge with the main worship site being St. Gregory's. This is another plan that needs to be discussed, there are alternatives. It was suggested they could go down to two. If the one parish doesn't meet their number for evangelization or members, then the other will become the remaining parish. . One reason is that closing St. Gregory, Madonna and St Bens, even if outreach centers remained could leave a vacuum between Gesu/St. Cecelia and Blessed Sacrament Cathedral. Another reason is that St. Gregory has the lowest debt and our worship site is in good physical condition with a larger attached parish hall than any of the 4 parishes including the cathedral.

A representative noted that we have to look at ourselves as a business. If we can't figure out other ways to meet our needs and plans, they will need to close. It's not a realistic assumption that if the other parishes were to close their members would flock to Blessed Sacrament. A lot of people will go to other parishes, as over 50% of our members are driving in to their parishes; very few actually live in the parish's neighborhood. That's going to be a reality.

However, people have seen that after a year or two, you get people back because when they go someplace else they don't like it, so they come back. It's something about what we offer/give, the unique charisma they bring in the city - it draws people back. Chances are it's the people in the pews; not the building, pastor, etc. It changes the look of a site and it's the type of community. A representative noted you have to remove yourself from the center, people want to do what's best for their own - but you have to consider everything for everyone. There are other proposals that need to be looked at.

Other plans – like that of St. Bart/St. Rita - had a lot of questions that had to be asked in the negative. Specifically, they have to concentrate on their school. It's been the source for Catholic education; the foundation of the whole east side.

Alton asked, realistically, if the church will be able to continue to support the school at its current level and remain its own entity, as this year there was an increased SOF grant. Otherwise, they wouldn't have had enough money to continue to fund the school. The other thing is that SOF plans **will not** continue, they are planning to decrease them. This year's budget was based on 85 students; there currently is less than 85 students enrolled. The parish wanted to pull out his year, but with the added SOF grants and expected amount of students, they didn't.

A representative stated that their fate is tied to that of the school's. They've presented a plan to the head of their education group that they collaborate with the other group parishes for support, as it's the only school on the east side. They'd like to try to draw resources from other parishes to help their marketing. They're now drawing kids based on a mailer campaign. If all of the group one parishes assisted with marketing, proposed to parents to give consideration to St. Bart School and volunteer to join fundraising activities, they feel it could be much more beneficial. They have a manager and volunteer contact Catholic and non-Catholic people, businesses, etc., and the plan is to grow that in collaboration with the group one parishes. The worship site needs to be there to provide the Catholic presence to the school. If needed, they could cluster or merge.

Alton posed the question: "Is the parish prepared to support the school at the current level?" At this point they cannot at this time do so at this year's level. Just reaching out doesn't solve the problems now; it needs to be a solid plan. It was also expressed that St. Bart/St. Rita shouldn't reference the school to their current plan; at this point finances are not strong enough to survive at the current funding level. They should take the school out of the picture.

It was also discussed that if it's going to be a vicariate-based school that this has to be defined; all parishes have to agree with that proposition.

A question was asked that 'with all or any of the plans presented, will the APC come back with their own plan if ours doesn't work?' Alton said it may come back and may not be what we envisioned. We need to entertain other thoughts and ideas if we have any. If we want to present viable plans, they will need to be supported with viable information.

Question 5 Discussion

Queen of Heaven and St. Raymond will stay as-is. There's a Stewardship campaign ongoing at Q of H; their schools are successful, and the Sister is helping with the evangelization process and meeting with community members. Proposals are ongoing.

Assumption Grotto hasn't been taking part in the meetings; so Alton asked the group for their suggestions. Part of the problem is that we don't know enough about the parish, but we do know of parishioners that still go there and they do have a loyal following because of their Tridentine Mass. That's the one place in the City in which the Latin Mass is still occurring.

When looking at the charts and graphs, they have the largest amount of senior citizens and also the largest amount of loss over the last 5 years in their demographics as well as the neighborhoods that surround the parish. It's thought that they would want to go with Sweetest Heart of Mary if they have to cluster or merge. Whatever we suggest will still have to be reviewed by the APC. We could recommend that they have to select a cluster partner, close, or merge with another parish, but we also have to look at other things such as their outreach to the community. It was agreed that's what we as a group should do.

We don't have the final say of what ultimately happens to the Parishes; that is up to the APC and the Archbishop.

A representative mentioned that each time there's been planning in the past we haven't been invited; now that we're invited they asked whether "will we really have a say" in what happens? Alton stated that we will, as long as the plan is viable and workable. The plans will be considered and we're being asked to think 'outside the box'. The final answer will be based on what is practical, if the parishes can continue to do the mission of the Church, and what is financially acceptable.

The plan for the schools has to come from the planning group; Alton wants us to be aware of the baggage that comes with it and said we REALLY need to be realistic. If the plan comes back and someone questions it or sees it differently; don't be surprised. The concern is if a school is going to be a problem in making decisions or coming up with other plans; if so, then there will need to be a plan for the parish without the school included and leave it to the other planning group (the separate school planning group).

If the school's plan (which is independent) works and we get the support that the school planning group is asking for, (which would make us financially independent), can St. Bart's stand alone? This has not yet been discussed. Enrollment for the school needs to be 150 students in order to sustain itself without an SOF Grant, and there's been a very drastic drop in students this year. However, this is not the planning group's venue. It would take more time and planning to keep the school in the parish's plan and they may want to let the school planning group take care of it.

There was some confusion about the two Mass count sheets distributed in September. The first Mass count chart sheet should only be a realistic head count of adults and children actually attending Mass the day of the count. The other chart is based on CSA information submitted by the parishes of registered households. They take that information and multiply it by 3 (since the average household has 3 people) and this is what is considered the total of CSA registered households; even though statistically about only 35% of the people attend Mass every Sunday.

This formula is a favorable projection of how many people could or should be attending Mass, and how many Masses would be required. For example; if you are having 3 Masses now, the numbers indicate that there should be 209 people in attendance for Mass on Sunday, and your structure holds over 600 people, then only one Mass would be necessary.

Each parish needs to complete a Mass count sheet that can be emailed in to the AOD office. The count should include adults and children, and since the ushers also attend Mass, they can be counted also.

The group discussed St. Bart-St. Rita's concerns about the school and the questions were asked: "Have we decided what to do with the school?"; "Should we keep it separate?", etc. There is a committee doing the planning for the school and maybe we shouldn't be making recommendations for it? Some people want school in their parish plans; others don't. We have to be realistic or someone else is going to decide the matter for us. We are fulfilling the basic assumptions with the criteria that has been given to us and understand not all parishes will remain in the same format; some could become outreach centers, worship sites, etc. You need to keep in mind that there is a planning group for the schools; we really need to focus on the plans for our parishes and present them to the APC & AOD for their final decision.

There were concerns about the "5 priests" comment in the final recommendations for Question 5 that was submitted. (*Assumption Grotto, St. Raymond/OLGC, St. Bart-St. Rita, Queen of Heaven to coordinate Mass schedules, administration and priests. There are 5 priests, 2 others could be shared. "South" Group (Blessed Sacrament, Madonna, St. Benedict, St. Gregory), already in this model.*) It was suggested that the priests' could alternate their Mass schedules, however the priests' age and health should also be considered. We need to sit down with them at different levels and find out their intentions. Without that you have nothing and you're right back where you started.

A representative mentioned a concern about when you have a cluster and only have one priest, but an associate fills in for the priest (for example; saying Mass); some parishioners feel that their assistant is not interested and this changes the attitude of the parishioners. Even though the assistant is doing the best that they can, the parishioners need a leader (priest) to guide them; otherwise we're failing as a parish. The plans are good, but they don't see where this is addressed in the plan. They realize that the church is a business and religious institution, but if you don't have the money you can't keep the doors open. Other parishes felt the same way about their assistant not being actively interested.

It was stated that you can't base any of your plans on your priest. We, as parishioners, cannot let that define our Church and we need to realize that priests will come and go. The ideal would be that it's up to the people to take the responsibility of ministry. We need to challenge the parishioners to be active in this. Questions that should be asked would be: "Where are your siblings who were raised in the Church?"; "Could you devote an hour of your time?"; "What are you contributing to your Church outside of the collection basket?"; "What are your resources as to who you are as a person?" and "How can you use those resources to help your parish?".

We all need to challenge ourselves, our spouses and family. If we excel in a certain expertise we should try to use those talents/gifts help out our parish. We need financial people, people in administration, advertising, computers, etc.

MEETING WRAP-UP

Alton thanked the group for attending. He also mentioned that we have until November 14th - the 2nd Monday in November - to have the plans ready to go for the 7 pastoral areas. You must be sure to include a Vision Statement, list the definition, what it means to the group, etc. The plans don't have to have every element and the dates can be flexible.

Your charge next time is to come prepared to finish these final plans in order to make the deadline. The next meeting is October 24th. One thing we didn't talk about was attending Mass on October 27th at 7 pm at Sacred Heart with Renaissance or November 1st at 7 pm at Christ the King with the Trinity Vicariate.

The purpose would be that the Bishop is celebrating Mass for the Together in Faith planning groups and the vicariate members. Please be sure to let Alton know which date(s) we could attend. The 1st is a Holy Day and those are the only 2

days Bishop Hanchon was available. We would like for everybody to come out and celebrate Mass and fellowship with the Bishop.

FOOTNOTE: Please be sure to keep an eye on your email for updated VPC Planning Group Mass dates, times & locations as they finalize the information.

The meeting closed at 7:56 pm with a prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Monica Archibald
Genesis VPC Recording Secretary

DOCUMENT DOWNLOAD LINKS

[APC PLANS & FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS \(Questions 1-9\)](#)

The following are the reference files for the APC Plans & Final Recommendations:

[BASIC ASSUMPTIONS](#)

[REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS OF A PRIEST](#)

[APC YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY SUBCOMMITTEE](#)

[LEADERSHIP SUBCOMMITTEE](#)

[STEWARDSHIP & ADMINISTRATION SUBCOMMITTEE](#)

[CHRISTIAN SERVICE & OUTREACH](#)

[EVANGELIZATION & CATECHESIS](#)