

**St. John Fisher Pastoral Council Meeting  
April 14, 2021 – Zoom Meeting**

**Present:** Msgr. David A. Sork, Chris Ratliff (chair), Joe Arroyo (vice chair), Cathy Alessandra, Janos Bakos, Sheila Bloodgood, Dana Hargrave, Steve Izuno, Antonia Lavender, Joe McGuinness, Dave Williams, Gayle Plecha and Katie Dante as the staff representative.

**Absent:** Chiby Onyeador (youth rep.), Maddy Magaña (youth alt).

**Guest(s):** Mark Sur, Jordan Ryan, Michael McGuinness, Jenny Ryan, Tom Magee, Suzy Fernandez-Ramirez, Susan Reymond

Msgr. Sork opened the meeting at 7:02 pm and welcomed the guests and staff representative.

The Council prayed the First 15 led by Janos Bakos.

**Pastor-Parish Life (Msgr. Sork)**

Msgr. Sork explained the First 15 to the guests and prospective members. St. John Fisher is a religious organization, so the first fifteen minutes of the meeting are given to the Lord. Someone reads the Gospel for the next Sunday, followed by a few minutes of silence for reflection, and then members can share their thoughts.

**Discussion & Ideas: “Return to Normal” webinar**

The video link was sent to all members to watch, and Msgr. Sork asked for each member to share their reflections on it.

- Antonia Lavender thought it was an excellent presentation and agrees SJF needs to mark the opening of the return to the church with a celebration, but when is unknown. She was quite impressed with the social media participation in other parishes and asked if SJF could enhance its social media for those not ready to return yet.
- Dana Hargrave thought it was a smooth presentation and felt she was getting marketed, but also thought there were some good points. She'd like to see the parish take a measurement of where we stand and if we need a rescue. She sees people coming back to Mass as restrictions are lifted and some are still watching on Livestream.
- Chris Ratliff thought reopening may mean something different to SJF than other parishes. We should declare a day and time and have an event to be marked as a reopening. Many people won't come back on their own or they've gotten out of the habit of coming to church or are still concerned about COVID-19. A celebration weekend and perhaps a welcome back committee are needed. Maybe Misty Jesse's Fall Kick Off would be a good event for a welcome back celebration. He liked the idea of a participation activity such as a time capsule to get folks to stop by the parish office to pick up something that could be put inside a capsule or pick up a candle for a vigil. These could coincide with the capital campaign. Ask people "Have you come back? If not, what are you waiting on for your return?"
- Steve Izuno liked the video because it was straightforward and basic. The initiative is not about the parish, but it's about the different types of parishioners. One part is craving to return and wants the interaction. There's another faction that has gotten comfortable viewing Mass from home and isn't ready to return. You need to create a reason to return and why it is so important to be a part of the parish.

- Cathy Alessandra said the video stressed that communications need to be abundant and cannot be overdone. There is a faction of highly engaged people who haven't returned. Now is the time to engage parishioners who aren't coming via emails, postcards or some form of communication. She feels that in the next month a good majority of parishioners will be vaccinated and feel more comfortable returning to church.
- Chris Ratliff feels that SJF never closed down. He thinks there will be a huge range of answers to what people need in order to return to church onsite.
- Antonia Lavender said some people may be waiting for the coffee and donuts, as a sign of normality, to return.
- Joe Arroyo said the proposed plan has many different types of communication. The SJF staff is excellent, and the plan could be accomplished by utilizing the people. Some elements of the plan are already in place at SJF. He feels optimistic about what SJF could do.
- Janos Bakos is surprised that people are afraid to return to Mass inside. He wonders if it's possible to offer both inside and outside Mass to accommodate more people.
- Joe McGuinness feels people are getting used to Zoom for most everything including Mass. It's become very convenient for time, location, and skipping past the music etc. He wonders, when the dispensation expires, will viewing the Livestream still fulfill the obligation?
- Dana Hargrave said people need to feel the need to return to the church and the community.
- Joe McGuinness added the approach will be important to establishing a relationship with parishioners to get them to return to church.
- Tom Magee doesn't feel any of this is mutually exclusive. He can be at church or on the couch and still feel close to God. Some people may not want to be vaccinated and will not return to church. Some people may not participate at all if there aren't multiple options for worship.
- Sheila Bloodgood agreed with the video that the focus should be on the people who were attending last year not the ones who haven't been coming to church for years and years. She likes the idea of having a plan and what will be done and acknowledging that the time must be flexible. The welcome back idea is good and should include some type of project people can participate in. The social media discussion interested her. She feels SJF struggles with social media content but added that maybe she doesn't remember that discussion accurately. The group in the video understood what they were talking about and their job was to take some of the weight off the organization so each parish can shape it the way they want it.
- Dave Williams liked the idea of the mosaic with every family having a tile in it. He feels it should emulate the stained glass in the Narthex. The mosaic could be hung on the wall to the left of the entrance of the church, and when the new pastoral center is complete, it could be moved to the front desk. It could be used to tie the two spaces together and be a reminder of what everyone has gone through during the pandemic. The September welcome back event could be a good way to announce the mosaic.
- Msgr. Sork had hoped to get information from the youth reps, but they were not at this meeting.
- Antonia Lavender hasn't noticed many children at the Masses and wondered why. Msgr. Sork doesn't have a take on that at this time.
- Jordan Ryan said he has children under 10 years old. He goes to Mass because he loves God, and he goes every single week because it's required. It's difficult to get his kids to

Mass, but his family has returned. Once the dispensation is over, people will come back because it's required.

- Katie Dante said a lot of the teens are missing and it troubles her. She is not fully vaccinated yet, so she understands the trepidation. She also feels watching Mass on Livestream has become too convenient and people are not receiving communion.
- Chris Ratliff suggested making a list of all the ways SJF has reached out to parishioners. Then use that as a checklist to make sure every possible means has been used to encourage people to come back, including an announcement at every Livestream Mass. The message needs to be saturated into the people.

Msgr. Sork asked members to communicate additional ideas, not just discussion but what needs to be done to follow through, via email to the chair. These will be discussed at the Executive Committee meeting. He felt based on the reflections that Pastoral Council thought it was a positive video and some things could be adapted at SJF. It will be discussed again at the next meeting. He understands Cathy Alessandra's comment about not returning until she's vaccinated and maybe others feel the same.

### **Feedback and Updates**

- **SJF Lenten Retreat (Fr. Dooling)**

Dave Williams attended every night to help Misty Jesse. He found the speaker interesting but wasn't as dynamic as he had thought he'd be. Dana Hargrave felt it was a tough environment, being in the church without many people. There wasn't a comfortable setting for direct communication. He had good things to say, but the chemistry wasn't there. Joe McGuinness thought he was a replacement for another speaker so maybe that had something to do with it. Msgr. Sork said about 400 devices watched it via Livestream the first night. Chris Ratliff added that if there were two people per device, that means almost 800 people were watching so that is an excellent turnout. Sheila Bloodgood added that each night it dropped a little. Maybe a weekend night is better than a weeknight. She thought that having the presenter at the ambo instead of closer to the people may have made it difficult to connect with him. The stories were good, but there was no bang at the end. Dave Williams said the Adult Faith Formation team has not met yet to discuss the event. He feels Livestream should be a permanent part of the Lenten Retreat so that the elderly who are not able to drive at night have the option of participating. Chris Ratliff said if you can get the full presentation at home, then you'll stay home. If you serve a meal onsite, you will get more attendees. They need additional factors to bring people to the SJF campus. Dave Williams said Fr. Dooling wanted to present the retreat in the church rather than in Barrett Hall. Last year's speaker would have preferred the church over Barrett Hall. Future retreats may be in the church.

- **Holy Week**

- Palm Sunday – Dave Williams was at the 9:00 am Mass which started in the gathering space at the plaza. They were at 25% capacity and he thought it was great. He thought they were supposed to process around the church, but it didn't happen. Msgr. Sork said it was supposed to happen, but Fr. Kalu forgot to do it. There is no procession at the other Palm Sunday Masses.
- Penance Service – Msgr. Sork said there was no penance service due to COVID-19, so they set up three confession rooms in the church. They used the multipurpose room (MPR), the quiet room, and Msgr. Sork's confessional. There

was a good response, so he feels it met the needs of the parishioners. No feedback from Pastoral Council.

- Holy Thursday 7:30 pm – Dave Williams watched it on Livestream and though it was well done and seemed “normal,” other than the lack of washing of the feet. Msgr. Sork said there was a procession of the Blessed Sacrament from the church to the PAC with only the liturgical ministers. The parishioners could go on their own for adoration until midnight. The procession was cut off from the Livestream.
- Good Friday 3:00 pm and 7:30 pm – Dave Williams attended the 7:30 pm service, which was Livestreamed. Dana Hargrave marveled that all the Holy Week services were handled so beautifully during COVID-19. Sheila Bloodgood did the Livestream for Good Friday. She tried to show the Passion as a scrolling text at the bottom of the screen. The decorations in church looked really good in person and on the screen. Gayle Plecha said Erin Mone is an SJF parent and has been decorating the church for the last year since COVID-19 started. She does a great job playing to the camera and to those assembled in the church. If you see her, please thank her. She also decorated the gym for adoration on Holy Thursday and it was gorgeous. Joe McGuinness said there was a good crowd for the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday. He liked having it outdoors especially with COVID-19. The Tanios family was leading it every Friday during Lent. He feels it should be done this way permanently since SJF has outdoor Stations of the Cross.
- Easter Vigil – Dave Williams was impressed with the camera work and outdoor fire scene. Sheila Bloodgood said Dave Bloodgood has new software, and the camera was attached to a pole on a ladder that showed up as a fourth camera, so it turned out well. Msgr. Sork received a text from someone in Colorado at a rest home. She was very moved by the presentation. He is grateful to all the video ministers, and Dave Bloodgood has been a great gift. Grant Hungerford set up the wireless mics to work both inside and outside. No baptisms by immersion were able to happen due to COVID-19 so they were done by infusion, which is pouring water over the head. There were 14 baptisms this year.
- Easter Masses – Msgr. Sork said the limit in the church was 25%, and after Easter the county moved into the orange tier, so the limit increased to 50%. He didn't want to turn anyone away so the 9:00 am and 11:00 am Masses were also shown on a screen in the PAC-Gym which allowed people to receive communion. Grant Hungerford set up speakers outside in case there was overflow in the gathering area. No one was turned away. The 7:00 am Mass had a good turnout. 65 people were in the PAC-Gym at the 9:00 am Mass. Chris Ratliff said there was a large overflow of people in the PAC-Gym at the 11:00 am Mass. Katie Dante said about 220 people attended the 1:00 pm Mass so they all fit inside the church. Antonia Lavender said it seemed to work well to close the doors to the church when it was full and greet people in the parking lot to direct them to the PAC-Gym.

Dana Hargrave asked when missalettes could be put back in the pews. Msgr. Sork said they initially were told everything had to be removed from the church due to potential contact spread. The restrictions are not the same as before because of the Supreme Court decision. There is more flexibility now, but they want to be careful about controlling the spread. Chris Ratliff said he would send Msgr. Sork an article from the CDC regarding contact surfaces. Gayle Plecha added that the Archdiocese periodically sends out guidelines and although we don't follow everything to the letter, Msgr. Sork makes decisions that make sense for SJF. She expects another update with the changes. Msgr. Sork said he is aware that some parishes have a high rate of COVID-19 infection.

Cudahy is about seven times the rate of Palos Verdes so the same rules can't apply to all parishes.

- **Divine Mercy Sunday**

Joe McGuinness thought it was a fantastic service and very reverent. He didn't know much about it and now he really appreciates the significance of Divine Mercy Sunday. He suggested some kind of direction for the congregation to understand how significant it is. Antonia Lavender wished she had more instruction beforehand and feels there should be a big fanfare about it next year.

### Looking Ahead

- **Encouraging COVID-19 vaccination**

Last month Pastoral Council had asked Msgr. Sork to encourage parishioners to be vaccinated. His article about the misinformation regarding the use of aborted fetuses has been in the bulletin for several weeks. He quoted from the Vatican's COVID-19 committee and encouraged people to take whichever vaccine is offered. Chris Ratliff feels this is a topic worthy of ongoing encouragement. In the media there seem to be messages that foster doubt and mistrust. A continuing campaign from all the priests is important.

- **Capital Campaign Outlook**

Msgr. Sork shared that the Campaign Executive Committee has been meeting regularly. They met last Monday to discuss polling members of the parish to find out when it would be appropriate to restart the campaign in light of COVID-19. They want to work out a common script when calling people, leaving a message or sending an email. Gayle Plecha said the Campaign Executive Committee wanted Msgr. Sork to ask Pastoral Council when they felt would be a good time to resume raising funds for the Msgr. Gilb Pastoral Center and school improvements. Msgr. Sork said to communicate any thoughts or suggestions to the chair. Chris Ratliff suggested looking at whatever thought process went into suspending the campaign and if those reasons have now passed. If they have, it would be a time to resume. Dave Williams wondered if once people are back in the church, would it be callous to restart the campaign immediately. Starting the phone calls is a good way to feel that out. Sheila Bloodgood said the return celebration and relative timing would be something to consider and what makes the most sense. Msgr. Sork said they are still in a discernment process. Dave Williams feels it should happen months after the welcome back, but we'll have to see. Sheila Bloodgood said to reengage with the narrow group sooner and the wider group much later. Cathy Alessandra said if the reopening celebration is in the fall, then maybe the beginning of 2022 would make sense.

### **Chair/Vice-Chair**

#### Approval of March Minutes

The chair asked for corrections to the March minutes. Hearing none, Dave Williams moved to approve the March minutes as presented. Dana Hargrave seconded. The minutes were approved.

#### Staff rep brief: Katie Dante; Coordinator, Confirmation and Youth Ministry

Katie Dante stated that Confirmation is on May 8<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am and 1:00 pm with Bishop Trudeau presiding. She is eager to see the teens and their families return to Mass. There is a lot

of positivity with 96 candidates to be confirmed. Zack Zuvich is eager to get started again with LifeTeen and Youth Ministry. He was recently able to attend two sporting events to connect with the teens. She wants to plan summer events, but they are still waiting for more information from the Archdiocese. Since the teens are in Zoom classes all day, she did not want to add another Zoom class as they wouldn't get anything out of it. They've been recording each Confirmation class with different speakers and posting it on Sundays at 3:00 pm. The candidates have eight days to watch and complete the quiz or assignment, so she knows if they understood the main points of the class. Parents have been watching and learning as well. She asked Sheila Bloodgood if they could have a video minister to Livestream the Confirmation Masses. Each candidate is allowed four guests in addition to their sponsor. Sheila Bloodgood will see who is available to do it.

### **2020 – 2021 Pastoral Plan Objectives Review**

The chair asked one member from each team to give an update on their objective.

*Objective #1 – We will develop live and virtual opportunities to interact, worship and retreat with emphasis on the vulnerable and disenfranchised of our community.* Cathy Alessandra said her group met with Gayle Plecha regarding a new website and also met with the Communications Advisory Committee. Developing a new website will be a long process. Her group also worked with the Objective #4 group and everything seems to be status quo. Maybe a hybrid retreat will happen. Objective #1 can be closed out.

*Objective #2 – We will use what we have learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to further our community bond.* Dave Williams said the bulletin article ran an extra week with no response, so they are done.

*Objective #3 – We will enhance youth and young adult engagement by contributing to and supporting the creation of online resources.* Antonia Lavender said her group has not met, but she's spoken to Zack Zuvich and is encouraged with his presence at school sporting events. All online activities have been suspended due to overload. She added that the youth ushers at the 5:00 pm Mass seem to need more training to better handle the social distancing. She has closed out her objective.

*Objective #4 – We will assess the health of SJF ministries and lend assistance where needed, emphasizing impact of COVID-19 and current social issues.* Sheila Bloodgood said this objective is complete. She has nothing further to add. The ministries are making good progress and have been able to adjust where needed. Many ministries are eager to return.

### **PC Nominating Committee update**

Dana Hargrave reported that everything worked out very well and a good group of candidates have applied. Four PC members spoke about applying to be on Pastoral Council at the Palm Sunday Masses. The hard part is to get the applications in, do the discernment and elections. Gayle Plecha said there were 11 people at the information session tonight and she has received 5 applications. Applications are due by April 30<sup>th</sup> and can be picked up in the parish office or printed from SJF website. The article will continue to run in the bulletin for the month of April. The chair thanked everyone who participated in the recruiting process. He asked Pastoral Council members to reach out to the prospective members to answer any questions.

### **Next Meeting: May 5**

The chair said to mark your calendars for the next meeting on May 5<sup>th</sup>. The Pastoral Council Executive Committee will meet on April 23<sup>rd</sup> and decide how to hold the May 5<sup>th</sup> meeting. Please email him with continuing thoughts on the Return to Normal video, the reopening celebration discussion, and restarting the capital campaign.

**Other**

Joe Arroyo read the guidelines for Pastoral Council members to bring concerns and affirmations to the attention of the pastor.

- None.

The meeting concluded at 8:50 pm with the prayer of St. John Fisher Parish.