

**St. John Fisher Pastoral Council Meeting
January 10, 2024**

Present: Msgr. David A. Sork, Joe McGuinness (chair), Namele Baker (vice chair), Rosemarie Diehl, Ron Homer, Antonia Lavender, Steve Ludwick, Tom Magee, Jennifer Ryan, Mikaela Ventura, Tim Niemann (youth rep.), Charlotte Hargrove (youth alt.), Gayle Plecha, and Patti Johnson (substitute for Chris Acherman, recording secretary)

Absent: Stephanie Bezner, Ryan McCormick, and Chris Acherman

Guests: None

Pastor

Msgr. Sork opened the meeting at 7:00 PM. The Council prayed the First 15 led by Rosemarie Diehl and read by Jennifer Ryan.

Chair/Vice-Chair

2023-2024 Pastoral Plan Objectives Review: team progress

- Obj. (1) Channels to Publicize Parish Life: *The Pastoral Council will assist the parish in adopting engagement channels such as Flocknote to publicize the abundance of our parish life.* Newsletter. Ron Homer reported on the recent SJF newsletter, the fourth issue. It was emailed to 1900 addresses and reached 1260 mailboxes, slightly under 70%. There have been few un-subscribers. Only about 7% click on a link. That number has doubled, and is encouraging, particularly because there are few links at this point. In general, people are actively receiving the newsletter and clicking. Ron would like Religious Education and the ministries to be involved in future newsletters. There were more photos in this edition, including a good photo of Pastoral Council (PC) members at the Santa's Cookie Workshop, as well as other events. Ron described the newsletter as a dynamic bulletin that is going to emails. The staff has been very helpful. Antonia Lavender and Ron discussed ideas for improvements: 1) more photos, 2) with its lengthy format, readers must scroll to see everything, and so more "teasers" at the top would draw readers into the meat of the news. Mass times, listed at the top now, could be shortened and linked to more complete material lower in the issue. This would free up space for links to invitations, registrations, photos, games, etc.. Additional feedback would be gathered via the click-counts. Gayle credited Lydia for putting together the newsletter. Ron will send a report to Gayle with feedback for Lydia. Flocknote. The PC liked the idea to expand the use of Flocknote, the church-oriented communication service, particularly with RE and ministries communications. More photos could be included, benefitting both parishioners and staff. Reviews. It was noted that SJF reviews on Yelp and Facebook are positive. Antonia encouraged the PC to post reviews of SJF.
- Obj. (2) Eucharistic Revival & Faith Formation: *The Pastoral Council will support inviting the community to the Eucharistic Revival and the deepening of our faith*

through faith formation. Tom Magee and Justin Fontenot and his team supported RE Congress registration after last weekend's Masses. They got about 15 more people to sign up. As of today, there were five spaces left for SJF's Saturday night reception at Morton's Steakhouse (on Harbor Blvd. and Convention Way). More Eucharistic Ministers are needed so we may offer the cup at weekend Masses. There currently is a great shortage. The 11am Mass has the highest attendance, but the fewest EMs. If there are enough EMs at all the other Masses, then the cup may be offered at all but the 11am Mass. A potential EM must meet certain requirements, including: to be fully initiated, attend Mass regularly, and, if applicable, be married in the Church. They also must apply and attend a formation. Bev Beatty and Msgr. Sork will schedule a formation when enough people apply. Currently, EMs choose which Masses they prefer, which may explain the shortage for some Masses. Antonia suggested the EMs go early to Mass to see whether EMs are needed. Gayle Plecha recommended making an announcement at the 11am Mass. Applications could be available in the narthex, and representatives outside to answer questions. Gayle will suggest to Bev to submit a bulletin announcement about EM sign-ups. Msgr. Sork asked about last Saturday's Liturgical Ministries Formation at St. Lawrence Martyr. Fr. Paul Turner was the presenter. It was well-attended by parishioners from SJF, SLM, American Martyrs, and other nearby parishes. Namele Baker, Joe McGuinness, and Patti Johnson attended. They enjoyed it and learned a lot. Msgr. Sork will ask Misty Jesse to upload the presentation slides and videos onto the SJF website.

- Obj. (3) Welcoming Parish Events: *The Pastoral Council will host 4-6 events for the parish over the year to welcome new parishioners and engage the existing community.* The Santa's Cookie Workshop was well-attended and well-coordinated by the PC. 181 people registered, 250-300 people attended. Parish and School families attended, and they brought friends. The atmosphere was very welcoming. Rosemarie Diehl said the first-time event went well. There were some surprises, and they have a good idea of how to make it better next year. Lessons learned: the planners will look how to incorporate with the youth, they will have a budget, get even more participation, regulate food portions so they don't run out, continue to start it after Mass, and continue to have Mrs. Claus. They received \$95 in donations; next year, they will make the free will basket more obvious. There are not many events planned for this age group; it is hoped this will be an annual event. Antonia liked the homemade cookies, and she noted good interaction among the people. Ryan McCormick did well at organizing the event. Gayle said the receipts indicated the event was well-managed. She suggested planning and budgeting all events at one sitting so the planning can be even better. This also will give Justin a lot of helpful lead time. Gayle suggested using Sheila Bloodgood's Jazz Festival model. An engineer, Sheila thought of everything, including the timeline and contingencies, before the event. Over time, she tweaked it, and it has become a good model for other events. Photos from the event were used in social media and the newsletter. Namele said it was great evangelization to have the parish concert on the same day so that people could plan for a full day at SJF.
- Obj. (4) Catholic Fellowship and Youth Support: *The Pastoral Council will create opportunities for Catholic fellowship and provide support to Edge, Life Teen, and our maturing young adults, while encouraging parental involvement.* Namele Baker

reported that Volleyball is going well and is slowly growing. Steve Ludwick has scheduled volleyball for February. The evening includes food and drinks, which encourages fellowship. Tim Niemann and Charlotte Hargrove are working on a youth survey, possibly through the Youth Instagram (IG) account, which allows for anonymity. Topics could include Sunday and weekday Mass attendance and whether the youth experience joy in attending Mass. Charlotte explained how youth access postings on IG. Currently the SJF IG account has 123 followers and follows 112 people. A recent posting included photos from the Confirmation retreat. It was noted that reels of photos, rather than static photos, reach more people. Charlotte said the youth like the 5pm Sunday Mass, and so it would be good to post videos from that Mass. Ricardo Mata is IG savvy, and he could help to create and post reels, including views from the drone at the retreat. It also would be a good segue to reach youth via Flocknote, along with the newsletter and IG. Tim Niemann offered to hand out a paper survey after confirmation classes, i.e., to a captive audience. There are about 50 youth each in Year 1 and Year 2, for a total of 100 youth. The numbers are not akin to pre-COVID, but they are going up. Namele said about 20 youth attended the XLT event in December. This was a good turnout. The set-up was beautiful and the speaker and music were inspiring, and she expressed kudos to Ricardo Mata. About 30 teens attended the recent Retreat. On a personal note, Namele said she will be caring for her husband, Steve, from mid-January to the end of February. Therefore, she will not be available to help with the youth at that time. The PC will be praying for Steve, and Gayle will put his name in the Prayers of the Faithful.

Pastor - Parish Life (Msgr. Sork):

Santa's Cookie Workshop, December 10

The previous discussion covered everything. It was a great success, and it can be even better next year.

Advent Concert, December 10

Mikaela Ventura said the concert was really great and well-attended. They ran out of the 300 printed programs, and the cookies were all taken. Joe McGuinness thanked everyone who helped. The free-will collection went well.

Advent Penance Service, December 18

As no PC members attended the service, there was no input.

Christmas Masses

- **December 24, 4pm (with PAC overflow), 6pm, 8pm, Midnight**

4pm: The overflow attendees were in PAC. Both the church and the PAC were packed. Gayle Plecha said she did not recognize about 90% of the people. She noticed former SJF school families, especially those with kids home from school.

6pm/8pm: Everyone loved the children's participation at the 6pm School Mass. Rosemarie Diehl said the church was full, but not overcrowded; there was no need for an overflow location. Msgr. Sork said when he arrived at SJF, there were two Masses at 4pm and two at 6pm. He added the 8pm Mass, which helped to alleviate the 6pm crowds. The 8pm was the Youth Mass, and it was well-attended.

Midnight: Antonia Lavender and Ron Homer said the Midnight Mass was "magical." Msgr. Sork and Fr. Al concelebrated. The quietness, lighting, music, the lit manger scene, and nighttime arrivals reflected a reverent tone. Baby Jesus was added to the manger scene at midnight. Msgr. Sork would like to have five servers at that Mass so there could be incense and other rituals. It was suggested that personal phone calls might help solicit more servers.

- **December 25, 7:30am, 9am, 11am**

7:30am: There were more attendees than a regular Sunday 7:30am Mass.

9:00am: Joe McGuinness said this Mass was not too crowded, though there were more people than a regular Sunday 9am Mass.

11am: This Mass was full. Fr. Al was very welcoming. Tim Niemann liked the priests' note in the bulletin, as it made everyone feel welcome. Many people took photos by the manger. It was noted that this manger scene may be the same one used for 60 years. Gayle said it is stored carefully. Msgr. Sork noted the characters are added gradually through Advent, starting with the sheep.

Together in Mission Update (Gayle Plecha)

Gayle Plecha shared the great news that SJF has sprinted to the finish line. The parish goal was \$201,833. As of today, January 10, the amount paid is \$227,062.25, surpassing our goal by 12.5%.

Building Committee Update (Monsignor/Gayle Plecha)

Msgr. Sork said the Committee has not met since the last PC meeting, but they have been working with the architect.

Looking Ahead - Upcoming Events

- **Dawn Unity, January 16, 2024, at 7:30pm, at Congregation Ner Tamid**
 - Topic: The Garden of Eden. A Dawn Unity column appears periodically in the *Palos Verdes Peninsula News*. Msgr. Sork writes four articles a year for the publication. One of his articles will appear this Thursday (tomorrow). Topic: the Pope's recent approval of blessings for same-sex couples. To prepare for the article, Msgr. Sork read the declaration 5-6 times. He also had spoken about it in a homily last month. Antonia said the *News* is available for free at Bristol Farms.
- **R.E. Congress Early Registration, by January 15, 2024**
 - The dates are February 15 for Youth Day, and Feb 16-18 for Congress. Tom Magee said 25 people are signed up so far for SJF's dinner at Morton's

Steakhouse, with five spots remaining. In the past, SJF's hospitality suite offered a reception on Saturday night, when the restaurants were most crowded. When Justin learned the suites would not be available this year, he secured Morton's. The gathering will begin after the Saturday liturgies and will serve heavy hors d'oeuvres, This will be Msgr. Sork's 54th Congress. Rosemarie Diehl asked whether any youth would be going to Youth Day. Msgr. Sork answered that no one from SJF signed up, a disappointment for Ricardo. SJF had six kids last year. Unfortunately, PV parents don't want their kids to miss even one day of school. Tim said Loyola doesn't publicize the Day. Charlotte hasn't heard about it. Gayle noted it's been in the bulletin. Nick Macero, a SJF youth, gave a talk one time at Youth Day. Tom said if kids could be an official rep from their school, then they could put that on their resume. Students can still register online for YD. Msgr. Sork said attendance at YD and Congress overall has been low since COVID, and it will take time to build it back up. As an aside, Charlotte said kids outside of Confirmation don't get notices from the R.E. Office. Namele will talk to Ricardo about that.

- **Estate Planning Seminar, January 21, 2024, at 12:15pm**
 - Gayle Plecha said the Archdiocese encourages parishes to speak about estate planning. The Finance Counsel liked the idea. Stephanie Bezner does this type of work, and so she agreed to speak about it. She will provide all materials. A helpful ad has appeared in the bulletin and the newsletter.

- **Men's Cornerstone Retreat, February 2-3, at St. John Fisher**
 - The PC found the speakers publicizing the Retreat, at recent Masses, to be very compelling. One speaker brought his daughter to the podium to support his testimony, and another's wife said he was a better husband and father after attending the retreat. Ron Homer and Jennifer and Rosemarie's husbands have signed up.

- **New Parishioner Luncheon, June 2**
 - The PC was encouraged to mark their calendars with this date. Gayle said an invitation is mailed to each new parishioner, and they receive a follow-up personal phone call. Namele Baker will host this event, as Joe will be away.

Chair/Vice-Chair

Approval of December Minutes

Joe McGuinness asked for corrections to the December minutes. Hearing none, Ron Homer moved to approve the December minutes as presented. Antonia Lavender seconded. The minutes were approved as presented.

Lenten Soup Supper — PC Hosts on Friday, March 15, 2024

Joe McGuinness encouraged the PC to come help cook and serve at the PC hosted Lenten Soup Supper. It's always a fun evening. He will have a signup sheet at the February PC Meeting.

PC New Member Nominating Committee — members needed

Antonia Lavender will lead the Committee. Joe has given her material from the past. She has one committee member so far, and she needs three more. Steve Ludwick volunteered tonight. Antonia will talk to Jennifer Ryan after tonight's meeting.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 7 (Jennifer's birthday!)

Other

Namele Baker read the Other Guidelines for Pastoral Council members to bring concerns and affirmations to the attention of the pastor.

- Ron Homer mentioned that a Jewish friend of his came to SJF for a funeral. The friend had effusive comments about SJF.
- A brief discussion took place about the youth choir at 5pm Mass. Antonia is sad there are so few students in the choir, which used to be so full. Charlotte is in the choir. She said she sometimes is alone or there are up to three kids. Antonia offered to sing with Charlotte. Msgr. Sork said the attendance has been low, especially since COVID. Rehearsals are an hour before Mass, which works well. Antonia would like the PC to discuss at a future meeting how to publicize choir membership. Rosemarie Diehl said Charlotte should do an IG reel about joining the choir. Antonia offered to help. Charlotte expressed difficulty in singing the "belty" songs and reaching some of the higher notes. The range is too hard; it should be a lower pitch and slower. Gayle suggested that Charlotte should share this with Grant Hungerford. Tom Magee said perhaps fewer people sing because the cantor and the trumpets are loud. Tim Niemann said the music is more like a performance. If it were easier, then more singers might participate in the choir. To be discussed further at a future meeting.

The meeting was concluded at 8:53 PM with the prayer of St. John Fisher Parish.