

St. John Fisher Pastoral Council Meeting March 1, 2023

Present: Msgr. David A. Sork, Sheila Bloodgood (chair), Joe McGuinness (vice chair), Namele Baker, Janos Bakos, Stephanie Bezner, Rosemarie Diehl, Antonia Lavender, Steve Ludwick, Ryan McCormick, Gayle Plecha, Mikaela Ventura, Lucas Damasco (youth rep.), Tim Niemann (youth alt.), Katie Dante (staff representative)

Absent: Chris Acherman (recording secretary)

Guests: Patti Johnson (sub for Chris Acherman), Tom & Karen Smith, Gay & Dana Hargrave, Carl & Teri Mossberg, Howard & Sherry Schneider

Quorum was confirmed, and Msgr. Sork opened the meeting at 7:02 PM.

The Council prayed the First 15 led by Rosemarie Diehl.

Msgr. Sork welcomed Katie Dante and the visitors, and Sheila Bloodgood thanked Patti Johnson for taking the meeting minutes.

Pastor-Parish Life (Msgr. Sork)

“Together in Mission” Speaker, February 4-5

Antonia Lavender said the speaker, Msgr. Tim Dyer, was able to connect with the SJF community. Stephanie Bezner was impressed he spoke in both English and Spanish. Joe McGuinness appreciated that Msgr. Dyer complimented the beauty of the SJF church building and that he mentioned examples of SJF’s contributions. Namele Baker added that he mentioned, specifically, SJF’s gifts to our sister parish (Parroquia Del Sagrado Corazon Y Santa Maria De Guadalupe) in Cudahy, which, as Antonia Lavender added, included furniture. Namele thought she heard a discrepancy in the amount of money SJF donated to that parish. Gayle Plecha explained that donation money is pledged and is still coming in, so a portion of the pledge to Sagrado Corazon is still to be fulfilled. Also, donations in-kind have been made to Sagrado Corazon, with a value similar to the money that was donated. Katie Dante said Msgr. Dyer spoke to her after the 5pm Sunday Mass; he appreciated the teen choir. At her invitation for him to return, he said he would bring some of his teens with him. Stephanie Bezner suggested doing a tamale dinner with the Cudahy parish; Msgr. Sork said they had done that previously as a way to thank SJF. He also said he had invited Msgr. Dyer to speak here with the hope of encouraging more SJF parishioners to contribute to Together for Mission.

Fireside Chat with Msgr. Sork, February 7

Stephanie Bezner thought it was great, particularly for contextualizing sin. There was a good turnout, considering the weather. She welcomed having future similar events.

Cornerstone Retreat, February 10-11

Sheila Bloodgood read comments from Eric Cardenas, who attended this men's retreat, held at American Martyrs. It was 26 hours long, and it was transformative and bonding. Eric would like to set up an event at SJF. Msgr. Sork said he had hoped to attend the retreat at American Martyrs, but his schedule was full.

Janos Bakos attended a Cornerstone Retreat on February 24-25, at St. Lawrence Martyr Parish. Forty-five men attended. He said it was very organized, and he felt very welcomed. The Witness talk was excellent. The men ranged in age from 20s to mid-70s, and included a father and son pair. They slept overnight in sleeping bags in the old church, now a large meeting room. He recommended the retreat for everyone. Separate retreats are held for men and women.

R.E. Congress, Youth Day, February 23

Joe McGuinness took students to Youth Day; they all got the workshops they wanted. One particularly helpful topic was "How Is God Calling You?" Msgr. Sork was concerned about the low number of students from the parish. Katie Dante said nine students had signed up, but only five attended (two seniors and two sophomores cancelled). Some parents discouraged their kids from attending so they wouldn't miss school. This has been a recent trend. In past years, up to 25 SJF students attended Youth Day. Msgr. Sork said at his last parish, they had three busloads of students. Tim Niemann and Lucas Damasco said Loyola High School did not take students. It used to be a day-off of school, but it is no longer.

Stephanie Bezner noted a March date had been announced initially for this year's Youth Day, but it was changed. Msgr. Sork said the dates for Youth Day and Congress are at the discretion of the Anaheim Convention Center. The next Youth Day will be on February 15, 2024. To Stephanie's comment that perhaps the Day should be for younger students, Msgr. Sork said younger than high school age is too young.

Noted differences from previous years:

- In the past SJF sent liturgical dancers and speakers for Youth Day
- COVID caused a large drop in attendance for both Youth Day (down to 5,000 from 15,000) and the Adult Days (down to 15,000 from 40,000)
- Last year was hybrid, with both in-person and live streaming; this year was all in-person
- Registration books used to be sent to previous attendees. This year, no books were sent, with "disastrous" results in attendance.

For the future

- Parents in particular are worried about students getting behind in school. SJF should emphasize the service and the leadership aspects of Youth Day, which are pluses for students' resumés.
- Joe McGuinness: The Church loses so many students when they get to college; it's important for high school students to hear the good speakers at Youth Day, including renowned international speakers.

- Students are excited when they sign up in December; it's important to maintain that momentum when February comes.
- This year's sophomore attendees could inspire next year's students to attend. Have them speak at Mass.
- Rosemary Diehl suggested that this year's attendees record their message now, while they are still excited. Antonia offered to help with a video recording.
- Msgr. Sork hopes the Congress planners will resume sending the registration booklets next year.
- Gayle Plecha noted there is a highlight video now on the Congress site that could spark excitement.
- Comments from this year's attendees could be placed now in the bulletin.
- Katie Dante used to take about 20 youth to UCLA for the "City of Saints" conference held in the first week of August and hosted by the Archdiocese. Since many parents want to travel at that time, it has become difficult to entice students to attend the conference.

R.E. Congress, Adults, February 24-26

Sheila Bloodgood went on Saturday/Sunday to her first Congress. She heard Terry Hershey, who combined humor and reflection and who will do a retreat soon at the Mary & Joseph Retreat Center; Michael Higgins, who spoke about the Church's need for the laity; and Fr. Tony Ricard, a hip, high-energy priest who spoke in the Arena. She also enjoyed the social time in the parish's Hospitality Suite, where she also got to meet Brett Siddell from The Busted Halo Show. He was invited to the suite by Patti Johnson. The Sunday morning Mass, presided by Bishop Vann, was beautiful. It was multi-lingual, combining Spanish, Vietnamese, and English.

Joe McGuinness has attended previous Youth Days. but this was his first Adult Congress. He enjoys the youth days but prefers the Adult Days. His favorite topic was Mary, especially her role with Jesus. He encouraged everyone to go. The speakers in the Arena were amazing and enriching. Fr. Tony Ricard, from New Orleans, was terrific. Fr. Tony brought youth with him from St. Augustine High School in New Orleans, where he is Campus Minister.

Katie Dante said Fr. Leo Patalinghug was outstanding. He loves to cook. She would love to have him speak at SJF. His ministry is called Plating Grace.

Additional Comments:

- Msgr. Sork: This year, there were 10 workshops offered for each session instead of 30, pre-COVID. A new system of assigning rooms for the speakers meant a lot of people didn't get their first workshop choice. He asked how we could motivate more parishioners to attend.
- Antonia Lavender suggested having attendees speak at SJF Masses. It was suggested to have Joe McGuinness speak. He could give the dates for 2024 — February 15 (Youth Day) and February 16-18 (Adult Days) — and let people know how good the speakers are.

- Msgr. Sork said Congress attendance was hampered by not having the registration booklets, and receiving them in November, as in the past. He encouraged people to go and to stay overnight.
- Ryan McCormick suggested having a bus or carpooling from SJF, which would be helpful, particularly for first timers.
- This was Msgr. Sork's 54th straight Congress. The first one held in Anaheim was also his first one, which he attended as a deacon. The deacons were needed to distribute communion. He spoke about the full schedule of Congress. The first event of the day starts at 7:30am, and the last one is at about 9pm. SJF has its Hospitality Suite, with hors d'oeuvres on Saturday night. A total of 50-60 people attended that cocktail party this year.
- Gayle Plecha estimated 20 people were in the suite at Friday lunchtime. She added that Ricardo Mata and Justin Fontenot worked really hard on hosting, decorating, and staffing the suite.

Choir "Passion of our Lord," February 24, 7pm

Antonia Lavender said the Passion was amazing and the music was wonderful. She was proud to see so many people there, despite the weather. Dana Hargrave (a guest tonight) and Sheila Bloodgood sang in the choir. Sheila said Director Grant Hungerford closed the evening with a moment of silence and contemplation before departing the church. A gust of wind filled the church during the silence, which brought a moving ending to the evening.

Building Committee Update

Gayle Plecha laid out drawings of the current plan. She started with the "macro" plan, showing the overall layout of the campus. Highlights were the new Msgr. Gilb Welcome Center, a secure perimeter around the school, and new double gates.

A more detailed chart revealed the plan for the Fireside Room. It will be doubled in size, the fireplace will be removed, and the room will be extended into the current patio. With a capacity of about 100 people, this room will be used a lot for events such as funeral receptions. It is smaller than the current Auditorium, but with easier access.

The current Music Room will encompass the adjacent patio and will be divided into three spaces, providing more privacy for multiple users, such as the Parish Music Director, the School Music Teacher, and others. The current Kitchenette will be doubled in size. A new walkway, with no steps, will lead from the Church to the Admin building or to Barrett Hall.

The new Msgr. Gilb Welcome Center will be a single, central, accessible, easy-to-find building that will meet the needs of parishioners and visitors. It will be more welcoming, visible, and much easier to navigate, particularly for visitors. The interior will include:

- A reception area that will be large and welcoming for all parishioners
- Central offices to encourage parishioners to mingle, whether they are Religious Education or School parents, older, younger, etc.

- Better space for the School receptionist and the School Principal (with a view of the school yard), and better placement for the School office staff
- A new Staff lounge to replace the current Faculty Lounge and the Office lunchroom, offering new opportunities for the Parish office and school staff to interact
- One office machine room, providing more efficiency and less duplication of resources
- A conference room that will be available for night meetings; the adjacent areas will not be accessible in the evening hours
- Areas in different corridors for faith formation personnel, parish staff, clergy, and a resource room

It was noted that no parking spaces will be lost. This is the last portion of the master plan that included the new church and a remodeling of the parish activity center, developed around 2006.

Looking Ahead – Upcoming Events

- **Fireside Chat with Fr. Kalu, March 8** – He will speak on “Conscience: the Voice of God.” 7pm
- **Lenten Retreat, March 12-14** – Janet Sullivan Whitaker, a composer and musician, will present the retreat and speak at all weekend Masses. Gayle Plecha said there will be a dinner on Sunday night only, so people can go to Mass, dinner, and then the speaker. Sheila Bloodgood said there would be postcards in the church to publicize the retreat.
- **Soup Supper, PC Hosts on March 17** – Sheila Bloodgood passed around a sign-up sheet. The volunteers to cook may come at 4:30pm. She has three people coming early, which is enough.

Katie Dante said that after a five-year break, the Year Two Confirmation Candidates will present the Living Stations on the 17th, after the Soup Supper. This presentation will be in place of the regular Stations that night, and it will be from a teen’s perspective. Grant Hungerford will be there with musicians. Rehearsal is on March 12. A Narrator will provide the words; there are no lines for the teens to learn. She is confident the Holy Spirit will provide. The teens will present the Living Stations again on Sunday, March 19.

Sheila Bloodgood and Katie Dante will discuss whether the teens might attend the Soup Supper that night, which might add 50 people to the food count. They may start the supper at 5:30pm to allow the teens time to eat. The EDGE students will attend the Living Stations as well.

- **Lenten Concert — Rutter “Requiem,” March 26** - Sheila encouraged everyone to attend. Choir and chamber orchestra, 2:30pm

Chair/Vice-Chair

Approval of February Minutes

Sheila Bloodgood asked for corrections to the February minutes. There was one correction brought forward by Steve Ludwick. Stephanie Bezner moved to approve the February minutes as corrected. Antonia Lavender seconded. The minutes were approved as corrected.

Staff Representative Brief: Katie Dante, Coordinator of Confirmation and Youth Ministry

- Living Stations will be presented by the teens in the Church on March 17, at 7pm, and on March 19, at 3pm. They will be 30 minutes long. She invited everyone to come. Parents will be outside of Mass on March 12 to help promote.
- A Retreat had been planned for early March for Wrightwood, but the Retreat Center there reported 7 ft of snow, and so they could not host anyone for another 1-2 weeks. Katie said she has moved the retreat to the Mary and Joseph Retreat Center. She has a lot of work to do to make this happen, but she is happy she did not have to cancel it.
- The Life Teen group combined with the EDGE middle schoolers last month for a Mardi Gras party. Justin Fontenot made the food. Nine Life Teens and eight EDGE kids attended. Namele Baker helped to decorate and clean up.
- Fridays are good for the Life Teen students. Msgr. Sork had hoped to have Life Teen on Sunday nights, but that is a homework night for many students. Katie may still try to make Sundays work. She appreciates the help she has had.
- May 13, 2023 is Confirmation. There are 53 candidates; only two students did not continue from Year One. There are 55 kids in this year's Year One class.

Feedback regarding US , ADLA Synod Synthesis documents

Shelia Bloodgood asked for thoughts on these two documents, including how to share them with the parish. Stephanie Bezner suggested enhancing the community experience of the parish and continuing Fireside Chats to educate parishioners about the Mass. Joe McGuinness said active listening is important in order to understand what the person is saying and to avoid misconceptions about the Catholic faith. Rosemarie Diehl said it is helpful to educate parishioners in a "digestible" form and to foster community. She likes the Fireside Chat format, perhaps doing them in themes. Sheila Bloodgood suggested publishing links to the Synod Synthesis documents on the Pastoral Council page on the SJF website, and to advertise that in the bulletin. Sheila Bloodgood heard a speaker at Congress, Fr. Thomas Reese, talk a little about the synod. He noted Americans are results-focused, whereas the Pope is focused on the *process* of the synod, and he is open to more conversations. Stephanie Bezner suggested exploring Synod themes together as a parish.

Msgr. Sork noted the steps taken so far: we had the listening sessions, Sheila Bloodgood summarized the comments, and sent those to the regional office. Those were sent to the Archdiocese, who sent them to Washington DC (the National Conference of Catholic Bishops), who then sent a summary to Rome. These comments

are combined with others from North America. In October 2023 and 2024, the Bishops will meet to discuss the input. Msgr. Sork said SJF parishioners were part of an historic event. Sheila said she saw input from her sister's parish in Virginia, and she noticed common themes with SJF parishioners. She said Fr. Reese, from the R.E. Congress, said there are some regional differences within the US and huge regional differences between the US and developing countries such as Africa.

Campaign Prayer discussion

Highlights of the discussion:

- Stephanie Bezner said it's a great prayer, it's more the way we approach it. Perhaps we rename it as a SJF prayer and just remove about five words that reference the campaign.
- Namele Baker brought a first draft of an alternate prayer. She has seen a division in the support of parishioners for the existing prayer. She would like something more unifying.
- Antonia Lavender said people may not realize it is a campaign prayer. The words were chosen carefully, and she agreed with removing only about five words. The name, "Campaign" prayer, is confusing.
- Joe McGuinness likes the idea of a prayer that unifies the community at the end of Mass. He said it is proper for the parish to pray for the campaign; he likes the idea of praying for what we want.
- Sheila Bloodgood said the prayer asks for people to pray for the campaign, not necessarily to donate money.
- Stephanie Bezner added her reaction was not an urge to "donate." We met our fundraising goal, and these are beautiful words. If we remove those approximately five words, it's an appropriate and beautiful prayer.
- Janos Bakos suggested changing the title of the prayer.
- Antonia suggested adding two words: "...our life of worship, *our parish*, our reception of your Word..."
- The consensus: it is nice to have a prayer for the end of Mass. This is a beautiful prayer that perhaps could undergo subtle changes and be branded as welcoming and unifying, not as a campaign prayer.
- Howard Schneider (guest) said he thinks this prayer was written as a fundraiser for the campaign. It should be more focused on community building.
- Sheila said this is a prayer for completion of the project, not just a request for money.
- Msgr. Sork said we continued to say the original campaign prayer until the church was dedicated. The prayer was edited to the current version.

Sheila Bloodgood said that the PC's feedback regarding the prayer would be relayed to the Campaign Committee.

PC New Member Nominating Committee: status

Sheila Bloodgood passed around a sign-up sheet for speakers at Masses on March 25 and March 26. Steve Ludwick and Rosemarie Diehl shared the script they received from Sheila Bloodgood; they added content to personalize it. They welcomed comments. PC

members will use the script at the Masses. Katie Dante said she liked the script, particularly the ideas that we are “seeking” members and how rewarding it is to be on the Council. After their presentations at the Masses, the speakers will go to an outside table to answer questions and distribute flyers and PC applications.

Lucas Damasco and Tim Niemann will speak to the Confirmation students on March 19, at 2:15pm, in the gym. PC applications will be available. Msgr. Sork said an adult PC member should speak at the 5pm Sunday Mass. Sheila Bloodgood said the two teens would be welcome to help out at the info table after Mass.

PC Team Calendar, March-September 2023

Sheila handed out the calendar and encouraged the members to mark their calendars.

2022-2023 Pastoral Plan Objectives Review: Team Progress

- 2022-2023 PC Objectives
 1. *The Pastoral Council will host/support three Welcoming Events over the 2022-2023 term to build our parish community.* Stephanie Bezner shared plans for an 80's music concert on July 15 and a Jazz festival on September 16. Antonia Lavender is doing the publicity. Joe McGuinness and Steve Ludwick are working with Grant Hungerford on the September Jazz festival. The concerts will be outside Barrett Hall; guests may sit on the grass or at tables on the blacktop. It will be BYOB.
 2. *The Pastoral Council will assist the parish in publicizing parish activities and ministries using a variety of tools, including social media.* Rosemarie Diehl said they are going beyond social media, such as placing signage in the parking lot. Banners would be festive, and they could publicize events, such as the summer concerts, or enhance a seasonal theme. They also are trying to brand social media posts with consistent color and style. Mika Ventura has volunteered to do graphics.
 3. *The Pastoral Council will directly support youth and young adult program development and monthly events.* Joe McGuinness explained their target markets:
 - a. YOUNG ADULTS: the hope is to keep them connected. Steve Ludwick spoke with the Manhattan Beach commissioner about a softball league. Steve spoke with SJF people after Masses and found they are willing to play with the American Martyrs slo-pitch team. His props (baseball bat and bag) sparked interest. Steve also mentioned he also had lunch with Fr. Charles from St. Lawrence Martyr to see what they are doing with Young Adults. Mikaela Ventura attended an information session at SLM. It was in the Teen Center; about 20 people attended, aged 18-39. They welcomed her, though they teased her about being from The Hill. The group is trying to meet weekly. It's been good for them to get together, especially after COVID and also while working. More males than females attended. They are wanting to establish a Leadership Team. Fr. Charles said this group should be “Human First, Faith Second.” She will get information about future events. She is the

only one so far from SJF who has attended the SLM meeting. She told SLM she could publicize their gatherings in the SJF bulletin. They may open the group to non-Catholics, too. Steve Ludwick thought the Young Adults would like sports (softball and volleyball) and Bible studies.

- b. YOUNG KIDS; Joe McGuinness thanked Mikaela Ventura and Namele Baker for supporting the EDGE effort. To help parents be good role models, Joe and the others are looking for programs to enrich the parents and connect them with their kids. Antonia Lavender suggested having a monthly talk for parents; it could be social with discussions. Many parents have been away from the Church, and they could use the support and education. Joe said he will work with Justin Fontenot and should have more to report next month, including about the Summer Bible Camp.

- 4. *The Pastoral Council will support the marketing efforts to increase school enrollment.* Stephanie Bezner thanked the PC members planning to attend this Saturday's gala. There will be 2+ tables of PC and other parishioners. Stephanie also thanked Janos Bakos's wife for donating five cases of wine. The School is receiving lots of applications for students. Stephanie encouraged everyone to talk about the School to RE families and other friends. She looks forward to hearing more from the Principal Search Committee. Antonia Lavender requested School flyers for her real estate office and association.

Next Meeting

- **Rescheduled:** Wednesday, March 29, 2023, at 7pm. There will be an information session before the meeting at 6pm, which will include a potluck dinner. Ryan McCormick noted this new date is during Spring Break for public schools, and so people may be gone. Msgr. Sork said the meeting had to be rescheduled because there is a Penance Service on the regular first Wednesday. Sheila Bloodgood encouraged the PC to invite parishioners to attend the info session.

Other

Joe McGuinness read the guidelines for Pastoral Council members to bring concerns and affirmations regarding parish life to the attention of the pastor.

- Rosemarie Diehl asked about using the Hallow app at SJF. It provides daily prayers and other resources for Catholics. Her team will look into this, including pricing for individuals and parishes. Gayle Plecha said Bishop Barron uses it.
- Sheila Bloodgood asked about using Venmo at SJF. Gayle Plecha said the Finance Council has not yet met to discuss this.
- Guest Tom Smith asked what had been decided about the Campaign Prayer. Sheila Bloodgood restated that the discussion at Pastoral Council would be referred to the Campaign Committee for further discernment.

The meeting was concluded at 9:28 PM with the prayer of St. John Fisher Parish.