

St. John Fisher Pastoral Council Meeting November 1, 2023

Present: Msgr. David A. Sork, Joe McGuinness (chair), Namele Baker (vice chair), Stephanie Bezner, Rosemarie Diehl, Ron Homer, Antonia Lavender, Steve Ludwick, Tom Magee, Ryan McCormick, Jennifer Ryan, Mikaela Ventura, Gayle Plecha, Chris Acherman (recording secretary), and Ricardo Mata as the staff representative

Absent: Tim Niemann (youth rep.) and Charlotte Hargrove (youth alt.)

Guests: None

Msgr. Sork opened the meeting at 7:01 PM.

The Council prayed the First 15 led by Antonia Lavender.

Msgr. Sork welcomed the staff representative.

Pastor-Parish Life (Msgr. Sork)

Formation of Liturgical Ministers

Trainings for new Eucharistic Ministers and Lectors were held in October. Antonia Lavender attended the refresher training for current Eucharistic Ministers and thought Beverly Beatty did an excellent job. Ricardo Mata attended the training for new EMHCs and said about 12 people were there. He appreciated Msgr. Sork speaking to the group about the history of the Eucharist. Msgr. Sork said they will need to offer another training as they still do not have enough Eucharistic Ministers to be able to offer the Cup at the weekend Masses. They need 14 Eucharistic Ministers for each Mass because they need two Cups for each Host position. He will coordinate additional trainings with Beverly Beatty.

Peruvian Mission Festival, Oct. 15

Joe McGuinness thought the event was culturally very festive and the entertainment was very fun. Msgr. Sork gives a lot of credit to Carl Mossberg. This is a passion of Mr. Mossberg who started the event at SJF. The Mission Circle is to assure people that the money they donate actually goes directly to the Mission.

State of the Parish Address, October 14-15

Msgr. Sork said he hopes the suggestions provided by Pastoral Council at the last meeting were included in his speech. Stephanie Bezner thought it was an excellent succinct summary of where the church is and where we are going. Jennifer Ryan thought it was long and he had a lot to say. Msgr. Sork said his goal is to let the parishioners know what is happening within the parish community. Ron Homer appreciated being able to read it in the website newsletter as well.

Annual Financial Report, October 28-29

Stephanie Bezner felt the person presenting the report gave a good clear summary of where things stand even though it's not what they hoped it to be. She now has a good understanding of where things stand as far as the collections are concerned. Msgr. Sork

shared that Gayle Plecha writes the script, and the readers follow it pretty closely, but they are allowed to personalize it.

Dawn Unity Panel: “Living in a Polarized World”, Oct. 17

Msgr. Sork said this was an Ecumenical panel. Stephanie Bezner thought it was great. She felt proud to be a member of SJF at this program and thought Msgr. Sork did a good job. The focus on community was good to hear and the crowd was very diverse. Jennifer Ryan said it was nice to see the differences. They speak the same language but a different dialect. She feels Msgr. Sork is a holy man who is married to the church. The other people on the panel felt worldlier because they are parents with kids. It was nice to see the leaders speak about their different life struggles. Msgr. Sork said it would have been great to have a rabbi in attendance. Bob Rothman selects the panel each time and this is the best turnout they’ve had since Covid hit. It’s not meant to be a debate but rather an opportunity to hear the perspectives of each member of the panel. Msgr. Sork thinks this may be the last one he does.

Trunk or Treat, Oct. 29

Steve Ludwick’s family hosted a trunk. He thought about 12 cars participated and felt everyone had a great time even though it seemed smaller than last year. Ron Homer said his family had a great time. The food, trunk, announcements and program were all good. The Girl Scouts were helpful. It was a success with lots of people. Namele Baker said she cooked with Chris Ratliff. She thought it was too close to Halloween and perhaps that’s why the turnout was lower. People appreciated not having to pay for this event. Jennifer Ryan shared that her trunk won for “scariest”. Ricardo Mata said 14 Confirmation teens signed up to help and they took instructions from Yolanda Williams. He shared that last year parents appreciated having this option because not all were comfortable letting their kids go out trick-or-treating yet. Msgr. Sork said he hopes it will continue next year and said to keep it the last weekend of the month. Stephanie Bezner thought the school had publicized it more last year. She feels it should be advertised separately instead of lumped together with their Friday emails. Rosemarie Diehl added that there was a lot going on at the school that competed with this event. The focus of fundraising for the jog-a-thon may have taken away from the event. They should advertise on the banners in the parking lot next year. Msgr. Sork said the turnout was still good. Ricardo Mata said one of the parents has offered to help with advertising the event. Next year it will be on October 27th.

Looking Ahead – Upcoming Events

- **Military Ministry Collection, November 4-5**

This weekend is Stewardship Sunday. The priests will give a homily on Stewardship and then introduce the Bezner and Diehl families who will talk about what Stewardship means. During the week you’ll receive a postcard in the mail asking you to make a Stewardship financial commitment. The following Sunday you will make that commitment. He’s hoping people will look at it again and things will go in a positive direction.

The Military Ministry will be outside after all Masses this weekend collecting money and donations for the USO at LAX. They do this twice a year: Memorial Day and Veterans Day.

- **Mass of Remembrance, Monday, November 6, 7:30 PM**
This is an annual event to pray for those who have died this past year. The parish sent invites to those families who have lost someone in the past year. During the Mass each person is mentioned by name and the family member is given a candle. At the end of the ceremony there will be a couple hundred candles around the altar. It's a powerful Mass. Gayle Plecha shared that it will be livestreamed for anyone who is not able to attend. Please submit any names as soon as possible.
- **Veterans' Day Lunch & Celebration, Sunday, November 12, 2023**
This events occurs after the 11:00 AM Mass the day after Veterans Day.
- **Thanksgiving Mass at 9:00 AM, blessing of bread and wine**
Msgr. Sork said he always looks forward to this Mass and the people who attend really want to be there. He invites people to bring their bread and wine to be blessed. It's a nice way to begin Thanksgiving Day.
- **Anointing of the Sick, Saturday, December 2, 10:00 AM**
This Mass is offered twice a year for all those who are ill. For some it's the only time they are able to get out. It's been a tradition at SJF for a number of years.

Chair/Vice-Chair

Approval of October Minutes

Joe McGuinness asked for corrections to the October minutes. Hearing none, Rosemarie Diehl moved to approve the October minutes as presented. Ryan McCormick seconded. The minutes were approved.

2023 Mass Census Results (Joseph McGuinness)

Joe McGuinness thanked those who helped gather the numbers at the Masses. Some did double shifts. He appreciated Namele Baker managing the second weekend. Gayle Plecha put together a comparison of the previous years. The numbers are up from last year but are not back to pre-Covid attendance. They also feel the livestream numbers represent more than just homebound and they'd like to get these people to come back to the church.

Staff Representative Briefing: Ricardo Mata, Coordinator of Confirmation and Youth Ministry

Ricardo Mata introduced himself and gave a brief report of his work experience, history and personal life. He said it's been very challenging because the teens have lost their faith in LifeTeen. Only two kids and six adults came to the last event, but they made it happen. Another Life Night is coming up. As the group grows, he'll bring in the social life nights. About eight teens attended Knott's Scary Farm last Thursday. It was a challenge to have it on a weeknight. About 20 kids will be attending Inspiration LifeTeen this weekend at Magic Mountain. He feels some may have had to choose between the two events. St. Philomena will join SJF as they want to start LifeTeen in their own parish. November 10th is the next Life Night. It's a Friday night so hopefully they'll have a better turnout. He is looking at this year as a trial to see what works best. He has a great adult confirmation team. His first goal is to get the parents and teens confident that LifeTeen will continue in the correct way. He is restructuring the teen lounge to make it more youth friendly. They will have a December youth night with a dinner and social. Some kids are missing the confirmation

classes and this will give them the opportunity to make up a class by attending a Life Night. Confirmation is doing very well. There are 54 kids in Year 2 and 45 in Year 1. He is still receiving calls regarding signing up for the program. He has 20 mentors who will help build the next leaders. He asked for prayers and support from Pastoral Council that they will have a successful year.

He explained that Life Night is praise and worship. The first hour is about fellowship and playing games. Then he brings them into the center of the room for prayer, praise and worship. Each session has a title. The last one was Connected. The next one is called the Family Plan. What is the plan to have a better relationship with Jesus? Then they have their “food time” and this is an opportunity to talk. The evening ends with questions and answers and an opportunity to find out what they want to do next. Rosemarie Diehl asked about outreach and how they invite people to participate. Ricardo Mata said he only sends the information to the Confirmation program students, but they are welcome to bring friends outside the Catholic faith. It’s open to all youth in 9th-12th grades. Ryan McCormick asked if he communicates with the other coordinators regarding their challenges. Ricardo Mata said he is working with Gretchen at St. James, getting ideas from her, and she is mentoring him. She will be their first XLT speaker. XLT is adoration for youth. They will host XLT events the week prior to Christmas, December 22nd and the week prior to Holy Week, March 22nd. Ryan McCormick said St. Lawrence has a very modern approach to their Confirmation program. Ricardo Mata said he has been in contact with their coordinator as well and he is networking with Holy Trinity’s coordinator. Each month all the coordinators get together. They want to have joint activities, but first he needs participants at SJF before he can join with other parishes. Ryan McCormick offered his game/air hockey table for the teen lounge. Namele Baker said she took the census at Sunday 5:00PM Mass on the second weekend and it was nice to see the Confirmation teens with their families. Tom Magee asked if the Confirmation kids attend SJF. Ricardo Mata said these are high school teens from Peninsula and Palos Verdes High School with a few from Loyola High School. Tom Magee suggested having e-sports with online games to help bring the teens together.

Advent activity Volunteer sign-ups

- “Lessons and Carols” Concert (12/10/23 at 2:00 PM) Joe McGuinness said they need volunteers to be on the cookie and money collection teams. He’ll have a sign-up sheet at the next meeting.

Joe McGuinness said Pastoral Council will host the March 15, 2024 Lenten Soup Supper. Please consider volunteering to participate again.

Pastoral Plan and 2023-2024 PC Objectives Review

- Reports – Joe thanked everyone for the reports they received. He doesn’t need people to submit them next time. They were thoughtful and detailed.
 1. *The Pastoral Council will assist the parish in adopting engagement channels such as Flocknote to publicize the abundance of our parish life.* Rosemarie Diehl reported that they met with Gayle Plecha, Andrea Fowler and Lydia Hernandez to get FlockNote going. They sent the first issue on October 13th and it blew away their expectations. About 70% of parishioners have engaged the format. They received direct responses and some suggestions for what they’d like to see in the next one. The first issue had an introductory email from Msgr. Sork.

They hope some people attended the events they saw advertised. Today the second newsletter was sent out. So far about 40% have opened it. Gayle Plecha said about 300 people did not receive it so she will look into that and thanked Rosemarie Diehl for taking the lead on this. She commented that about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the 2,000 parishioners opened the email which is more than the number of people who attend Mass. How can we get them to attend Mass? The parish welcomes input for what should be included in the content. Ron Homer feels it has a nice design and it's engaging. Rosemarie Diehl would like to see a section for ministries. She is happy to meet with Ricardo Mata and provide a communication channel for Confirmation families. Ricardo Mata said many families are not registered parishioners. Msgr. Sork recommended registering them when they sign up for Confirmation. Gayle Plecha said Andrea Fowler is working on a link to signup to receive the email for the website.

2. *The Pastoral Council will support inviting the community to the Eucharistic Revival and the deepening of our faith through faith formation.* Stephanie Bezner reported that they received new ideas from the last meeting for ways they can build faith formation and participate in the Eucharistic Revival. Their goal is to foster participation in the already planned activities and host a table after Mass with a pulpit announcement to draw attention to the program and coordinate participation. Misty Jesse's Catholicism 101 is in line with their faith formation goals. Her meetings should be spotlighted in the Parish newsletter. They will meet with Misty Jesse to find out more information. They also want to host a table outside church after the Masses to encourage people to attend R.E. Congress and make it a parish-driven event. They would like to host a Eucharistic procession around June 1st. They will meet on November 19th to walk through the parish and retreat center properties to work out the logistics of hosting such an event. Msgr. Sork suggested having a procession after the 11:00 AM Mass on June 2nd to coincide with Corpus Christi. This group will have more information at the next Pastoral Council meeting. They want to support the Cornerstone program and would like to work on hosting a women's retreat. She reached out to St. Lawrence to get information about their program. They had a two-day event without an overnight stay. They do have a core group of people who are interested. She hasn't seen any other parishes offering a women's retreat so it would be nice if SJF could do it. Their target date is September/October 2024. Msgr. Sork said the hotels are booked for the National Eucharistic Conference so he encourages people to attend R.E. Congress. He recommends registering as early as possible to be able to select your desired presentations. SJF will not have a block of rooms at the hotel this year nor will it host a hospitality room. SJF will, however, have a reception with heavy hors d'oeuvres at the Morton's Restaurant on Saturday night. Ricardo Mata said they need people to RSVP for this event so they can accommodate everyone. Stephanie Bezner said they are hoping for 100% participation from Pastoral Council. Msgr. Sork recommended Pastoral Council host a table outside Mass in early January as soon as the booklets are available. Ricardo Mata said Religious Education is hosting the Parish Catechetical Leaders Advent Retreat on November 28 and hopefully they will have the booklets by then. Gayle Plecha said this group should encourage people to participate in SJF's Eucharistic

Adoration ministry. She explained what adoration is and since it already exists, it would be great to have more parishioners participate.

3. *The Pastoral Council will host 4-6 events for the parish over the year to welcome new parishioners and engage the existing community.* Ryan McCormick reported they are having a Santa's Cookie Workshop on December 10th from 12:00pm-2:00pm with Justin Fontenot. Santa and Mrs. Claus will be there and each child will receive a candy cane and prayer card. They will provide lunch and drinks, and the kids will decorate a cookie. This is an unbudgeted event and they estimate spending between \$600-\$800, and it will be all volunteer based. Gayle Plecha said the parish might be able to cover the cost from their Goodwill budget. They can also approach the supermarkets for cookie donations. She will help them look into that. They would like to have a Parish garage sale in March, a May movie night and July summer concert.
4. *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 they are helping Ricardo Mata create a more inviting environment in the teen lounge and improve the lighting. They've asked for help from Erin Mone. They provided support for the Edge launch on October 20th and saw an increase in attendance from 4 to 14. They will recruit help for the Edge event on November 3rd and LifeTeen on November 10th. They want to support the St. Lawrence youth events and build community with younger parishioners through Pickleball. They feel the softball is going okay but volleyball isn't happening just yet.

Next Meeting:

Wednesday, December 6, 2023 at 7:00 PM

Other

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

- Joe McGuinness said they liked Ryan McCormick's idea about offering an estate planning presentation. Gayle Plecha said the Archdiocese provides free seminars on estate planning. Volunteers schedule appointments with those who attend the seminar to provide assistance in their estate planning. They are willing to speak at SJF one morning and evening in January. If this group agrees, she will plan it. Stephanie Bezner offered her services on a Saturday morning. Gayle Plecha said they'll discuss it.
- Joe McGuinness reminded everyone about the Fraud and Scam Prevention presentation on Thursday, November 9th at 11:00am in Barrett Hall.
- Stephanie Bezner said she was approached three times last month by people who were upset because they were not able to receive communion on the tongue.
 - Msgr. Sork said there is one station for that and they will add a second station. He said the cantor will announce the two locations for those who wish to receive communion on the tongue. According to the U.S. Bishops, it must be consumed while standing not kneeling.

The meeting was concluded at 9:21 PM with the prayer of St. John Fisher Parish.