

Council Members:

Msgr. William Carton	non-voting	Present
Deacon Dennis Saake	non-voting	Present
Mr. Frank Prettyman	non-voting	Present
Nelda Ragan	non-voting	Present
Karen Pappas		Present
Gary Cademartori		Absent
Peter Abitanto		Present
Mary Ellen Ballou		Present
Tom Hayes		Absent
Frank Sharp		Present
Carlos Zuna		Present
Diana Zuna		Present

Highlights:

Karen thanked everyone for coming and reminded everyone that our meeting minutes are now available online at our Parish web site. She thanked Peter for preparing the minutes and, as well, for his work in assisting her over the past several months, since the work of the Parish Council has been steadily growing in demand. She advised the Council members that for some time now, Peter has been functioning as an Assistant to the Chairperson and that that role should now be more formally recognized. The Pastor and Council members concurred and thanked Karen and Peter for their ongoing work.

Monsignor Carton corrected a statement in last month's minutes regarding confessions during Lent. In addition to the usual Saturday confessions between 4:00 and 4:45 PM, they will also be heard between 7:00 and 7:30 AM on Wednesdays during Lent, not daily. Monsignor also announced that a Communal Celebration of Penance will be held in April at St. Dennis' Church for parishioners of St. Mark's, St. Dennis', St. Catherine's and St. Rose's Churches.

Deacon Dennis reported that there will be a meeting of the Finance Committee next week, after which the repairs and renovations of the Rectory will be started. The final proofs of our new Parish Directory were corrected and approved and final copies should be available for Parishioners who participated within 2 weeks.

Action Items from our January 31 Meeting:

- 1. Get all suggestions, inputs, agenda items to Karen for our meetings by the 10th of each month to allow sufficient time for review, approval and distribution of the package one week prior to each meeting. Responsibility: All Council Members**
- 2. Check on the various meetings, seminars, workshops, etc. that our Diocese sponsors and report on those of potential interest at our next meeting. Responsibility: Nelda Ragan**

3. Invite Meagan Toohey to our February meeting as a guest speaker. Responsibility: Deacon Dennis
4. Thank you letters need to be sent out to the October 25 meeting attendees from the various ministries. Responsibility: Karen & Parish Staff
5. Review the Harcourt program that Deacon Dennis had learned about at a recent workshop for possible use at St. Mark's. Responsibility: Deacon Dennis, Karen, Nelda, Mary Ellen and Frank
6. Contact our Webmaster to create a hot-key to the site that provides Bible Study on our daily Readings. Responsibility: Deacon Dennis
7. Prepare for continued discussions of the prioritized suggestions from our October 25, 2005 meeting (these are attached for everyone's convenience), and start reaching out to other Parishioners. Responsibility: All Members
8. Check within Sea Girt to determine the regulations regarding outdoor signs so we might know what our options are if it is decided to upgrade our Church sign. Responsibility: Mary Ellen Ballou

Action Items 1, 2 and 7 are ongoing.

#3. The guest speaker invited to our February meeting was unable to participate.

#4. The thank-you letters to the attendees at our special Oct. 25, 2005 meeting were completed and sent out in mid-February.

#5. The materials were received for the Intergenerational Catechesis Program that Deacon Dennis had introduced at our last meeting and were given to Karen to review. Karen found the materials quite valuable, especially the book titled "Generations of Faith Resource Manual". A goal of having perhaps 4 sessions per year was suggested, working around the Liturgy. One activity being considered is to have a live reenactment of the Stations of the Cross. Deacon Dennis said that we will need more volunteers for this program to be fully implemented. We hope to develop this further and will keep this Action Item open.

#6. A hot-key was created for our Parish website that provides Bible Study on our Sunday Readings. Click on "Catechist Corner" in the column on the left side of our web home page. Then click on the "Link to The Center for Liturgy at St. Louis University". There is a wealth of information there. This site also includes readings from previous and future Sundays.

#8. Mary Ellen contacted the town of Sea Girt to inquire about regulations regarding outdoor signs and was told to submit a plan of what we want to do for them to review and advise us on. No written regulations were made available.

The three agenda questions for discussion were: 1) How can St Marks Foster Adult Catechesis? 2) How can St Mark's foster better attendance at Mass? and 3) How can St Mark's foster more participation in ministries and more youth participation?

How Can St. Mark's Foster Adult Catechesis?

Karen started with extending the discussion we had on Action Item #5 regarding the Intergenerational Catechesis Program which has some excellent ideas and materials to consider. More work is needed here to develop a plan for implementing parts of this at St. Mark's, and we will need to recruit some volunteers to support this activity.

There are already certain Catechesis activities underway and planned at St. Mark's. Our Adult Faith Formation ministry has been in existence for some time and is currently in need of someone to take over the leadership. Deacon Dennis mentioned that a series of "Faith Enrichment for Adult Catholics" sessions will be held on Wednesday nights starting

March 15 from 7:00 – 9:00 PM, as part of our Parish’s Diocesan Faith Enrichment Center’s activities. Also we have an active Bible Study Group for young mothers and children that is very well attended.

We discussed how we might better use our Parish Bulletin to provide more educational information to Parishioners. We are now allowed up to 12 pages and are currently using 10. These additional pages can be used to support Adult Catechesis.

Frank Sharp suggested keeping the Homilies simple with one specific take-away, related to the Readings. This can also be reinforced with relevant information in our Bulletin, on our web site and even in our CCD lesson plans.

Monsignor suggested we try to focus our attention first on educating our Parishioners on the most important elements of the Mass / Liturgy and the Sacraments, especially Reconciliation and the Eucharist. He further suggested that perhaps the Celebrant can occasionally add explanations during Mass and briefly discuss the significance of certain parts of the Mass. Monsignor will try to develop a plan for this with Fr. Maynard. This could be also be reinforced by including additional information in our Bulletin, maintaining reference material on our web site, and through CCD instruction. Monsignor suggested that we should encourage our Parishioners to review the selected Readings in advance to prepare for Mass.

We didn’t have enough time for detailed discussions of the other questions on our agenda regarding fostering better attendance at Mass, increased Parish participation in various Ministries, and more youth participation. These topics will be discussed further at our next meeting. Here are some comments and suggestions on these:

Mary Ellen suggested that we try to have our CCD children perform more at Masses, using the children’s choir and having the children do more readings to help improve attendance. Monsignor will discuss this with the CCD leaders. Karen suggested that “relationship building” may be a good topic for a future Homily. Monsignor mentioned that we are trying to develop a youth musical group. Also there will be a special Welcoming Mass at all Masses on the Weekend of March 11-12, and the theme will be reaching out to those who are not currently involved with the Church or those seeking a spiritual home.

Diocesan Updates: Nelda provided Karen with 2 articles of interest from recent Diocesan publications that will be reviewed and considered.

Our next meeting will be on March 28, 2006 at 7:30 PM.

Action Items from February 28, 2006 Meeting:

- 1. Get all suggestions, inputs, agenda items to Karen for our meetings by the 10th of each month to allow sufficient time for review, approval and distribution of the package one week prior to each meeting. Responsibility: All Council Members**
- 2. Check on the various meetings, seminars, workshops, etc. that our Diocese sponsors and report on those of potential interest at our next meeting. Responsibility: Nelda Ragan**
- 3. Continue developing a plan for implementing the Intergenerational Catechesis Program that Deacon Dennis had introduced at our January 31 meeting. Responsibility: Deacon Dennis, Karen, Nelda, Mary Ellen and Frank**

- 4. Develop a plan for occasionally adding explanations during Mass on the significance of certain parts of the Mass, and discuss this with Fr. Maynard. This information can also be included in the Bulletin, on our web site and in CCD instruction. Responsibility: Monsignor Carton**
- 5. Discuss with our CCD leaders having our children perform more at Masses in the choir and possibly doing more readings. Responsibility: Monsignor Carton**
- 6. Prepare for continued discussions of the prioritized suggestions from our October 25, 2005 meeting (these are attached for everyone's convenience), and start reaching out to other Parishioners. Responsibility: All Members**
- 7. Read and be prepared to discuss at our next meeting the following articles that were distributed to all attendees: "The Spiritual Life of Teens in America" and "How to Build a Better Church". Responsibility: All Council Members.**

Suggestions From Our October 25 Meeting

The following suggestions were edited from our October 25 meeting minutes and are now prioritized as indicated below:

- Priority 1 – highly important / will be on the list for discussion in January**
- Priority 2 – important and should be considered / may already be underway**
- Priority 3 – lower priority**

1. How can St. Mark's Parish foster Adult Catechesis?

Priority 1:

- Parents thru their children / Program for parents of CCD children**
- Relationship building**
 - Need good communications**
 - Connection with people naturally**
 - Comfortable**
 - Church Groups need to have dynamic speakers**
 - Better avenues to reach out to people – ask**
- Offer discussion groups for young adults**
- Identify most important subjects of interest / more focused Homilies**
- Determine what areas of interest in the Church the parishioners would like to pursue with Adult Faith Formation**

Priority 2:

- Continue to offer RCIA & Bible study**
- Have Workshops for specifics, such as family planning** (already doing this)
- Library – Sunday's availability** (working on this)
- Page in the Bulletin on Adult Education** (working on this)

Priority 3:

- Have guest speakers / Parish renewals** (trying this / mission scheduled in Feb)
- Parents signature required on assignments**

2. How can St. Mark's Parish foster better attendance at Mass?

Priority 1:

- Publish who is saying the mass and who is the Homilist**
- St. Mark's should have a better, more friendly, up-to-date modern, highly visible and well placed LARGE sign outside of the church that will get the attention of more people and is capable of advertising some of our religious and social events.**
- Publicity / Advertising social events**
- Contact all and survey the inactive / mailings to inactive members**
(There will be a flyer in the Christmas bulletin targeting the inactive.)
- Could be reached through Catechesis**

Priority 2:

- Children's' Ministry**
- Check with other Parishes with good attendance for ideas**
- Guest Homilists / Co-Celebrants**
- More greeters welcoming at Mass / Ministry members**
- “CCD parents” - Role Model type – work with kids during Homilies**

Priority 3: (Parking issue) (Can't fix)

3. How can St. Mark's Parish foster increased Parish participation in various ministries?

Priority 1:

Ask directly: one-to-one, personal contact
Provide training
Socialize more / Irish night, Italian night, etc.
Informal personal invitations from Ministry members
Stress "Privilege" of serving / being invited to serve

Priority 2:

Ushers should try to be even more welcoming
Have representatives from Ministries speak at Mass

Priority 3:

Ministries need displays at socials (Msgr wants to keep the socials to just that.)
Sell from the pulpit by involved individuals (can't do this)

4. How can St. Mark's Parish foster more youth involvement?

Priority 1:

Update Web site and keep it current
"Word of mouth"
Children's' choir as a teaching tool

Priority 2:

Check with St. Catherine's & others on what they do (underway)
(Msgr will speak with St. Michael's in Union / best CYO in the state.)

Priority 3:

Bowling league (we already have this)
Basketball games (we already have this)

5. What one thing do you think would make the biggest difference in the spiritual life of our Parish?

Priority 1:

Church as a family
Spiritual thought
Parts of Mass explained

Priority 2:

Kid flexible

Priority 3:

More modern
Welcoming (Doing that)

6. What one thing do you think is the greatest need in our Parish?

Priority 1:

Young blood
More participation
Homilies should be limited, short
Mentoring our youth

Priority 2:

Hold hands at the Our Father

7. What is the greatest stumbling block to moving our Parish forward?

Priority 1:

Peoples' time

People feel that their feelings / input are not important

Lack of responsiveness of the general church

8. If you could give all the people in our Parish an injection of some spiritual gift, what would it be and why?

Priority 1:

Faith knowledge

Participation

9. What part of our mission statement is most challenging to you and why?

(These answers are not things we can prioritize.)

Group 1:

Hard to talk to people not here

How to do it

10. What kind of follow-up is needed?

Priority 1:

More dialogue between clergy and laypeople

More outreach

Priority 2:

More social events on a regular basis

Volunteer party

Priority 3:

Carnation Ball (Too large an undertaking for us now)

One attendee (Deacon Dennis had invited), Meagan Toohey, who is new and not yet a member of any Ministries, had prepared some interesting comments in advance on “reaching young adults” and these are included below:

All of Meagan’s suggestions are being give Priority 1:

Reaching young adults in our community

1. Provide lectures or social activities during times when young people are available, i.e., evenings and weekends. Include refreshments for all activities. For starters young people want spiritual nourishment, a place to ask questions and discuss spiritual issues, learn how to make good decisions and respond to the challenges of this world as mature Catholic adults, and a way to meet other Catholic/Christian young people.
2. Events should be advertised in all local media to attract young people from the local area not just St. Marks parish! Press Releases can be sent to the St. Marks weekly bulletin, all local church bulletins, e-mail lists of the local Catholic Youth clubs, i.e. YACHT, Catholic singles web sites, Diocese of Trenton web site, the Monitor, Catholic Radio and TV stations, etc.
3. Events must be publicized with 1 ½ to 2 months lead time, provide a way for people to register via e-mail, ads must state a web site address for more info, e-mail contact to write for more information. The time must be specific and people must be informed when the event begins and

ends. Everyone has busy schedules and do not wish to come to events where they don't know when it will end.

4. Find more ways to connect both our English and Spanish speaking communities. Ideas: exchange cultural dishes, hold a musical or dance performance both groups can appreciate, Flamenco, Tango, etc.

Ideas for events

After 5 pm Mass on Saturday, 6 pm Pizza and Beer in church basement followed by a lecture. Topics should be relevant to issues in young people's lives and they must be short and practical. There are many examples from the series, Theology on Tap. Ideas for topics were taken from, http://www.archdiocese-no.org/theology_on_tap.htm and www.yam.org/yam.cgi/programs/tot

“When You Come to a Fork in the Road, Take It!” The journey for us in our 20's and 30's abounds in “forks in the road.” There are more than a few times when the choices that we make during these years will affect us for the rest of our lives. Come join us for some practical and effective ways to choose the road that will lead to genuine fulfillment.

“Men! Women! Can't Live With/Without Them: The Quest for Relationships”- The journey for us in our 20's and 30's overflows with a quest to be in relationship. It is often a time to search for a life partner. Come join us as we discuss the Catholic context of what finding that partner means.

“Rags to Riches: Finding Spirituality in a Material World” - The journey for us in our 20's and 30's is a search for true and intentional living. When the rest of the world puts pressures on us to achieve and be “successful”, we must remain true to who we really are and are called to be, in service to others. Come join us for simple ways that reveal the importance of developing a spiritual side in the midst of living in a material world.

“Is That Your Final Answer? Practical Ways to Make Monumental Decisions” - The journey for us in our 20's and 30's brings us to a point of major life decisions. These are the years where decisions are made that have huge influences on our future. Come join us as we learn to discern.

Money - Financial Stewardship: Managing Money - and much, much, more!

Relationships - Mars and Venus Collide: Understanding - the Opposite Sex

Politics - American Freedom: Confronting Relativism

Prayer – begin to pray, learn meditation techniques - how to get started and explore your relationship with God

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