

Presentation to the Bishop

Jan. 17, 2024

A. Overview (Fr. Greg) 5 minutes

- Short history 3 years ago we were not an ACC, 2 pastors, 1 pastor + 2 Parochial vicars, now just Pastor + Parochial vicar
- 6 parishes with a school and a catechetical center (started as individual parishes 50 years ago we had 7 priests for these 6 parishes, 20 years ago we had 4 priests, 3 years ago we had 3 priests and a year ago we went down to 2 priests).
- 4 sets of outside consultants have helped us (Stewardship, Lighthouse, Amazing Parish and the Planning Office) Clarity questions & organizational Chart
- Jan. 2023 told it's a possibility we would only have 2 priests and March it is probable. In the last year, the Pastoral Council (which has one rep from each parish) was given the task of creating a new Mass schedule going from 10 Masses to 6-7 Masses. To do this, they held listening sessions at every parish.

B. Challenges (Growing pains) from this past year: 10 min

Parish (Kathy: 5 min)

1. St. Donatus has written their own letter to be given to the Bishop.
2. Trying to do a paradigm shift, from I to We.
3. People have lost their voice in decision making. People not from their own parish are making decisions for their parish.
4. Concern about cost of staff, esp small parishes who feel they can do things with volunteers.
5. The southern 3 parishes are very much hurting, feeling lost, grieving having a parish without a Sunday Mass, everything has moved to the north, they don't see the priests,
6. With these hurt feelings, there seems to be a greater division between the North and South. Some of the same feelings of division with St. Alexis in the west with the loss of their secretary.
7. The process has been stressful on staff. More is being asked of them.

Communication (Kathy: 1-2 min.)

1. Difficult...variety of preferences of how to be communicated to (bulletin, text, email, mailings, at Mass), especially if people are not at Mass
2. Decisions being made now by staff that were done at the parish level. Who needs to know what, when and how they are told, etc...
3. More transparency needed, finance, pastoral council, trustees. Difficulty as to as you are in process of making a decision, when to you communicate it, in process or when it is final, what if it changes then some people have the wrong information.

Numbers (Mike: 1-2 minutes)

1. We are crowded, 2 largest parishes have people watching Mass on TV in a gathering space or church basement. Will they keep coming to church if they have to see watch it on TV? Less engaging.

2. River of Life is coming into the southern parishes. Fear that they will buy St. Donatus. They have actively pursued Catholics to join their Church in Sauk Centre. While we are decreasing Mass times, they are increasing their presence in our ACC.
3. • Since we reduced our Mass times: we have increased our Mass attendance by 3% but we have decreased our collection by 5%.

Priests (Mike: 2-3 minutes)

1. They are stretched too thin. They cannot be available to everyone who needs and wants their attention. Not to mention the school, faith formation, etc...
2. Concerns over what will happen when our Pastor moves. Will they change everything? What if they moved both together?
3. Some feel they should do 4 Masses a weekend, but our priests also have funerals, weddings and baptism on weekend.

C. Strengths (Kathy: 3 min.)

ACC events

1. Mass in the ball park
2. ACC Picnic with music, jumpy houses, games, food, etc...
3. Thank you banquet
4. ACC Retreat & Confirmation retreat
5. Youth speakers/Parish Mission

Church is full and feels alive.

We are able to share resources and have opportunities we couldn't have alone

Common employees to oversee parish life and staff working well together

Bigger Voice as an ACC rather than just one parish

Language being used- "Welcome to our 10:30 ACC mass here at _____" We also had signage.

Liturgical ministers welcomed at any ACC Mass

More support at Church suppers from the whole ACC

D. Questions for the Diocese (Mike: 2 min.)

1. What is the future direction of the Diocese? How and when will this be communicated? There is a sense that the Diocese has a plan on how they are moving forward and we will not have input and just be told.
2. When will we know if we have to make any more major adjustments.. if we have to decrease by 1 more Mass?
3. How do we help our parishioners that are grieving loss?
4. How do we help our priests grieve their losses?
5. Are closing parishes on the table?
6. How long will Pastors be able to stay in one place? Parochial Vicars?
7. How can the Diocese do more to promote vocations?

Helps faith: Offers of a variety of activities to get involved

Hinders: Limits the number of Masses we have close to us, living on the south end of the ACC

Concerns: Loss of Brooten Mass times, stress placed on the priests, limited Mass times in the South.

Well: Increased attendance at Mass

Priorities:

- Supporting our Priests

- Increasing each parish's ability to thrive

- Engaging the youth

Other:

If we could get an earlier Mass time in the southern parishes on the weekend. Our only options are 8 p.m. (too late for those with young children) or 10:30 am which limits family's abilities to enjoy a Sunday out of town or doing something involved because we're not done with church until noon.