

St. Mary Parish
Franklin, MA
Meeting Minutes of Parish Pastoral Council
January 27, 2014
Sacred Heart Conference Room

Present were Fr. Brian Manning, Fr. John Sullivan, Fr. Anthony Le, Nan Rafter, Pastoral Associate; Terry Kerr, Music Director; Karen Ackles and Jayne Malonson, Religious Ed. Directors; Parish Council members: Dolores Brunelli, Paul Clary, Cheryl Crowley, Frank Fiorillo, Timothy Hurdelbrink, Joan McGuire, Kathleen McNeice, Rosemary O’Koren, Lisa Oxford, Curtis Patalano, John Ristaino; Guests: Fr. Paul Soper, Director of Pastoral Planning; Sister Patricia Boyle, CSJ., Assistant Director of Pastoral Planning.

Fr. Brian welcomed everyone and invited us to pray the prayer used before every session of Vatican II. He also told us that Pandora Carlucci, chairman of the PPC would not be with us due to illness.

After introductions, Fr. Brian gave an overview of how the PPC, upon receiving the recommendations from the Pastoral Planning Office, are working on a plan/ vision for the future of our parish. Our PPC is engaged in the work of discerning how we can best offer worship to God, grow in spirituality and faith and also live our daily lives in the words and actions of Jesus.

Fr. Paul commended the our priests, staff, and PPC for being deeply involved in our church and community and for giving our Matthew Kelley’s book “**4 Signs of a Dynamic Catholic**” to each household who attended our Christmas Masses.

Fr Paul stated that 16% of self- identified Catholics attend church in the RCAB; 25% attend “regularly” but not every week; 75% are not churchgoers. “Our concern is to find the 75%” In the past, the parish priest focused 95% of their time with parishioners, those who come to church and those we know. In the book “rebuilt,” authors Fr. Michael White, a Pastor and Tom Corcoran, a Pastoral Associate, helped to change their parish into a lively, vibrant living community of faith for all who came through the church doors. The authors of “rebuilt” chose a methodology that focused on the people they didn’t know. Their goal was to have less than 5% of unknown people at Mass. They found that people who come to church can’t always tell you why they are there. Some expect to be turned away or treated as a lesser member. In the book, everything was about the Sunday liturgy, which was oriented to the lost person, the person who comes the first time or attends infrequently. Then “push” the people in the parish to say “I am not here for me. I intend to be an instrument to change another’s life...a disciple maker change’s lives.”

Sr. Patricia spoke about “Radical Hospitality” and how St Mary’s parish in Franklin was already doing this as witnessed by the tragic events of the past few weeks. We are many parts but one body in Christ. She cited an example of how people can be turned away because of insensitive

actions. (A young mother who brought her crying infant to church was unwelcomed by the negative comments and looks. She left that church and found another that had a crying room)

Day in and day out we need to ask “can we make room for the unwelcomed?” We need to become intentional about hospitality. “Do I move in when someone comes to sit in my favorite spot or do I make it difficult? Do I acknowledge the person sitting next to me or smile at the lady with the crying baby? Does the church offer coffee and donuts, but don’t tell the new people where it is or have someone invite them to go with them? Sometimes we separate ourselves from others not meaning any malice, just by habit. Do we reach out to the people we don’t know. Another example she gave was that one pastor encourages the young people to go to their facebook page and tell their friends they are going to Mass or are at Mass, which is an invitation to “come and see.” Teens need to challenge their ability to have the conversation to talk about where they are in their faith, reaching out to others becoming a disciple maker.

The challenge is this; “In your small world,” how do you extend hospitality? Being intentionally welcoming will become routine and not a onetime event. St Mary’s is well on the way toward implementing radical hospitality. However, it needs to be on a day to day basis for a church to develop a welcoming first impression. How do we not become overaggressive? We must be professional and sincere, pay attention to people, learn names. Simple steps lead to big results and remember that one person can make a difference. Be aware that new people may sit at the back of the church. Say hello to them, but also remember that some people may like quiet. Smile at the person and have eye contact. Have a prayerful, well planned liturgy. Don’t say “it doesn’t do it for me but instead say it’s not about me...it is what I can do for others.”

In summary; The book “rebuilt” does not have all the answers but asks many of the right questions. What does our parish find valuable that we can use here at St Mary’s how can we bring the people in the pews to an adult place in their faith? Part of leadership is to connect with everyone by moving out into the margins...to reach everyone in some way. Encourage adult leadership to be examples who reach out to everyone. It is important to listen to the needs of the people. Ask the questions...How do I relate to the person and how do I relate to the community?

Giving the book out at Christmas was a beginning and an example of strategic intentionality through wording. (the book was given out to each household not family) Use affirmation and continue to reach out until you get it right. Have a balance, accept the good and learn from the challenges. We here at St Mary’s have begun to see an increase in parishioner interaction but we still have work to do. We are all called to be disciple makers.

The discussion came to a close.

Father Brian thanked Father Paul Soper and Sister Patricia Boyle for facilitating the discussion on Rebuilt.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM