



St. Mary's Parish Council Minutes – November 10, 2021

Meeting Held in Forcucci Faith Formation Center Library

7:00 pm meeting called to order by Sean Hughes

In Attendance: Father Stephen Sledesky, Sean Hughes, Larry Christian, Leon Rippel, Susan Falkner (via Zoom), Lori Ryan, Jeff Ryan, Paul Mikkelson (via Zoom), Carol Storey (Women's Guild), Benjamin Reynolds, Annabelle Delacruz, Joanne Russell (Finance), Linda Duff (Synod Representative).

Absent: Paul Henault, Betty Bible, Jim Cramer, Josh Livingston, Jamie Kalamarides (Synod Representative)

Opening Prayer (Lectio Divina) led by Fr. Stephen.

OPENING COMMENTS

Review and approval of minutes. Minutes from the October 13 meeting were ratified and will be posted on the parish website.

PASTORS REPORT

Parish life. With the fall season, ministries have ramped up. We are still dealing with the residuals of the pandemic and appreciate the cooperation of parishioners in following the guidance of the archdiocese. The front entrance of the church is now accessible with the new steps and refreshed railings in place.

SYNOD OBJECTIVE IDEATION AND PRIORITIZATION

Synod Report Call to Action. Parish council members prayerfully read and reflected upon the concluding report from the Archdiocesan Synod and came prepared to the meeting with candidate objectives and initiatives across the synod themes.

Overview of Synod Themes. Linda Duff presented an overview of the synod themes to ground the idea generating and prioritization exercise and provided guidance to how the ideas aligned to themes. (See appendix for summaries from Linda and Jamie).

The following ideas were generated across the four themes.

The following ideas received the top votes:

- 1. Enhanced Youth Ministry
- 2. Form Leaders for Mission
- 3. Testimonials / Witnessing (tie)
- 3. Social Events and Fellowship (tie)

Next Steps. The upcoming parish council meeting in December will focus on integrating the results from the ideas generated from the two exercises in October and November into a cohesive and coordinated plan to bear fruit for the parish going forward.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Liturgy

- Received positive feedback regarding the remembrances at the All Souls Day Liturgy.
- Mass of Thanksgiving planned on Tuesday November 23 at 6:30 pm along with regular daily Mass at 8:00am on Thursday November 25.
- The choir is resuming and following COVID guidelines. They will begin with the 9:30 masses for Advent and will be ministering at the 10pm mass on Christmas Eve.
- A full slate of masses are planned for Christmas on Friday Christmas Eve and Saturday, Christmas Day. There is no vigil on Saturday.
- The Feast of Mary, Mother of God is not a holy day this year and will be celebrated on New Years Day at 9am. There will be no vigil for this feast on New Year's Eve.

Faith Formation of Youth. Elementary school classes are collecting and distributing boxes of joy. Middle school classes based on 'The Chosen' are going well and a special session with Deacon Art is upcoming.

Youth Ministry. A collection for Haiti is being planned. There is an upcoming national catholic youth conference we are planning to participate in virtually.

Adult Enrichment. No report this month

Social Action and Outreach

- Prepared and delivered meals to Mercy Shelter (10/3) and Immacare (10/25).
- Delivered non perishable food items, sanitizing supplies, personal hygiene items and paper products to Hartford South Park Inn (10/10) and Simsbury Food Closet(10/24)
- There was a donation from Lions Club of Simsbury of personal items from local pharmacies for delivery to Hartford Shelters, Simsbury Food Closet and Senior Center.

- A number of projects are being considered to address needs from Catholic Charities for Refugees and Family Center Clients, Immacare and others. This is an opportunity to coordinate with other ministries and leaders to take on these requests as an ongoing or one time project.

School Board. No updates at this time other than a poinsettia sale being planned and boys basketball season beginning soon.

Finance Council

- October numbers are not as favorable as last month. Offertory came in at 56k versus 71k budgeted. Revenue was down 14k and expenses up 4K. A lot due to timing. Overall net income down by 18k. Net loss for the month.
- The School Board presented the fiscal year plan for the school at the October meeting.
- The Finance committee formed a subcommittee on how to best invest reserves.
- A Neat board for hybrid meeting was purchased using funds parishioners donated toward this technology at the cost of 7k. We expect to have this capability in use by the end of the year for various ministries using the Forcucci Faith Formation Center.

CLOSING

Coming Attractions. We will be taking a look at the bylaws to address some inconsistencies with timing of our communications.

Closing Prayer (All Souls Remembrance) led by Fr Stephen.

APPENDICES

SYNOD SUMMARIES FROM PARISH REPRESENTATIVES

Five call to action themes for us to consider

1. Grow our own faith through prayer, adoration, fasting, and spiritual development - asking the Holy Spirit to guide us on our own journey.
2. Meet all sorts of Simsbury residents (youth, young adults, recently married, elderly) where they are geographically, time/calendar-wise and spiritually to just accompany them on their journey. This means identifying groups and individuals and going to listen to what their needs are.
3. Tell our own stories of *metanoia* regularly in both 1:1 and group settings.
4. Really welcome everyone continuously to our parish and community.
5. Invite those who have a calling/charism to deliver it through our parish.

How do we respond as a Parish Council to the Synod results?

Our challenge:

RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH PARISH COMMUNITY AND EACH CATHOLIC INDIVIDUAL TO RESPOND WITH BOLDNESS AND CREATIVITY, TO OUR BAPTISMAL CALL, TO FAN THE FLAME OF OUR FAITH.

The Synod document is not something to be learned or memorized but rather something that we read and invite the Holy Spirit to inspire us and guide us in understanding how to respond. If you have not had an opportunity to read the Synod results please do and if you have perhaps read it again using the lens approach.

- We invite God to help us to see us as he sees us, in truth, hope and possibility.
- What is our story and experience of God? How is God present in my life? To what is God calling me? We must know ourselves before we join as a community to respond to the ideas of the Synod.
- We take a snapshot of our present vocation, marriage, and family. Once we know who we are in the small domestic church of our family then we may extend the ideas of the Synod to others.
- Then wider scope of our parish family. We join in the community and review our parish mission statement and the ideas of the Synod looking at every aspect of who we are and what we do in the community.
- We look at our larger Catholic community. Now we focus outside of our St. Mary's community, beyond our boundaries to other churches, to our Archdiocese.
- Lastly, we take a panoramic view of the community beyond our homes, church, Catholic family.
- These increasingly wider circles will lead us to apply, in a way unique to our church, the message of the Synod: to experience God personally, share our faith stories, worship in sacrament and word, experience fellowship, minister to one another with the compassion of Christ and dwell in community both near and far.

St. Mary's Parish Mission: We are a faith-filled community centered in Christ that gathers in our Father's love to celebrate in Word and Sacrament. We seek to grow that love, to be guided by the Holy Spirit and to share an atmosphere of warmth and hospitality with all.

Quotes to ponder from the Synod Document Results:

- *"To be a disciple of Jesus is to be sent on a mission in this life"*

- *“Hope of the Synod is to disrupt the decline”*
- *“Move from instruction to transformation”*
- *“Rethink and encourage scope of lay witness”*
- *“Restore Catholic devotional life”*
- *“Engage the wider community so the church remains a significant contributor to the common good”*
- *“Profession of faith upheld by the Holy Spirit in faithful hearts”*
- *“Accompany all”*
- *“Identify today’s challenges and opportunities”*

Themes of the Synod- a summary:

I. Encounter Christ

- Divine worship
- Scripture study, devotional life, piety
- Lay movements

II. Becoming Missionary Disciples

- Personal conversion
- Sacramental preparation
- Unity in administrations of sacraments
- RCIA
- Support our schools
- Affirm marriage and address pastoral needs
- Support clergy vocations
- Continuing education and formation of clergy

III. Sent on Mission

- Evangelize the nones
- Missionary discipleship to alienated, neglected, rejected persons
- Ministry to those with same sex attraction
- Social justice
 - mobilize consciences
 - spiritual and corporal works of mercy
- Communication to peripheries
- Testimonies by laity

IV. Collaborating with the Local Church

- Equip to respond to the changing landscape
- Broaden vision of parishes, and work together
- Local church inclusive of multiethnic and multiracial membership
- Train newly ordained
- Dialogue ecumenically and seek interreligious dialogue
- Vigilance for safe environment and address sexual abuse
- Financial transparency

Synod Results- Emphasized these Focuses:

Liturgy

- Transform liturgy and seek consistency
- Re-catechesis
- Five areas of focus: Homily, Music, Lay Participation, Cultural/Intergenerational Sensitivity, Hospitality
- Form liturgical commission

Marriage and Family Life

- Domestic church
- Pastoral care
- All families

Youth

- Service opportunities
- Freedom to bear fruit
- Faith sharing
- Parish youth groups are vital... re-envision
- Outreach

Catholic Education

- Eliminate status quo
- New models
- Location of schools and financial stress on parish

Evangelization, Catechesis, and Communication

- Evangelize at the heart of identity of church
- Inclusive, wide vision: *we cannot give what we do not have*
- Digital technology
- Culture of encounter

Parish Life and Viability

- Assess numbers of parishioners and locations/pastoral planning

Concern for Priests

- Support priests to fulfill primary role both sacramental and pastoral
- Fraternity among priests/ cooperation
- Delegate responsibilities
- Responsible for universal and archdiocese law/ faithful to teaching, entrusted to laity
- Requires discernment and discussion

Vocations

- Friendly environment
- Parish outreach

Embrace all Races and Welcome Immigrants

- Accompany those especially in suffering
- Growing diversity of church must respect inherent dignity