

Minutes for the Monthly Meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council

December 3, 2015

6:00 PM

PRESENT: Devon Atwell, Joe Cox, Deacon Bob Digan, Charles Houff, Carol Lombardo, Deacon Jim McElroy, Fr. Jack Sheaffer, Sheila Viale, Hilary Walker, Don Zukowski

EXCUSED:

ABSENT: Anita Curtin, Kara Curtin, Richard Lacey

I. Opening Prayer

Fr. Sheaffer opened the meeting with a prayer at 6:03 PM.

II. Review & Acceptance of Minutes from Previous Meeting

The minutes of the October meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council were accepted with one amendment: Don Zukowski was listed as both present and excused at the last meeting. He was, in fact, excused.

III. St. Mary's School

A. Stained Glass

Fr. Sheaffer is finishing up with the third and final group of 8th Graders tomorrow, Friday, December 4th. Stained Glass

B. Sacraments

The next Mass at St. Mary's School will be celebrated on Tuesday, December 8th, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Mass will be offered for Mrs. Agnes Furey, mother-in-law of Principal Jane Furey, who died unexpectedly on Saturday, November 21st.

Monthly Confessions at St. Mary's School are scheduled for Thursday, December 10th and Friday, December 11th.

C. Annual Bazaar

The Annual Bazaar was held on Sunday, November 22nd. From all appearances, it was very successful. Rian Dowd-Cabral and Sheila Dowd co-chaired the event this year and did quite well.

IV. Spiritual Life

A. Mass of Remembrance Follow-Up

The Mass went well. However, there were a few people whose names were not included in the program and prayers as well as a few families who were not invited. Sheila Viale is keeping track of things this year so that this does not happen again. The reception went well.

B. Thanksgiving Day Mass follow-up:

80 people were in attendance. We had 80 loaves of bread. We had only a few extra loaves and those were distributed at the Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service at the Stockbridge Congregational Church. We had plenty of prayer cards. We will do the same number of loaves next year. People said the bread was quite good.

C. St. Jude Mass

The next monthly St. Jude Mass will be celebrated on Thursday, December 10th at 7:00 PM at St. Mary's Church in Lee. The numbers seem to be steady – about 30 to 40 people – Father is hoping some extra advertising in the Diocese, especially throughout the Berkshires might bring in some more people. It was suggested that we look at advertising it on CTSB as well.

D. Upcoming Holy Days of Obligation

December 8th: Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The regular Mass schedule for holy days will be followed:

Monday, December 7th

5:30 PM in Otis

7:00 PM in Lee

Tuesday, December 8th

7:15 AM in Lee

9:00 AM at St. Mary's School

5:30 PM in Stockbridge

January 1st: Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. As we have done for the past few years, the schedule will be the same as Christmas, except that there will be no Mass at 5:30 PM on December 31st.

Thursday, December 31st

4:00 PM in Lee

Friday, January 1

8:00 AM in Otis

9:30 AM in Stockbridge

11:00 AM in Lee

E. Christmas

Our Christmas schedule will be the same as it has been for the past several years:

Christmas Eve

4:00 PM in Lee

5:30 PM in Lee

Christmas Day

8:00 AM in Otis

9:30 AM in Stockbridge

11:00 AM in Lee

V. Technology/Communications

A. Parish Website

The Oratory schedule is now up-to-date. Fr. Sheaffer asked that the Parish Office be notified regularly when a “permanent” change is made to the schedule so that the web page can be updated right away. An ad was placed on the Blog portion of the parish website for the Adoration slots that need to be filled.

We have added our monthly bulletin calendar to the parish website. This may be printed out in people’s homes. We will continue to use the web calendar, which is updated regularly, as needed.

B. Facebook

An ad was also placed on the Facebook for the Adoration slots that need to be filled.

C. App

The parish will soon have an app that will be available in the next few weeks. The app will have almost as much information available as our parish website and will also have numerous special features, including the ability to send notifications for upcoming events. More information will follow in the next few weeks.

There was discussion about how much our website and Facebook age get used. Fr. Sheaffer said that we are getting anywhere from 700 to 1,200 hits on our website every month. About on third of those are returning visitors. He said that the Facebook numbers seem to be down a bit but that may be because there have been a few periods where not much was being updated. There are almost daily updates now.

VI. Religious Education/Sacramental Preparation

A. Confirmation

We have confirmed that our Bishop Emeritus, Timothy A. McDonnell, will celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation at St. Mary's Church in Lee on Sunday, May 1, 2016, at 2:00 PM. We currently have 15 Confirmation Candidates.

VII. Christian Service

A. Winter Clothing Drive

Joe said it went well; there was a little less clothing than last year. He delivered two carloads to the Christian Center in Pittsfield. He said the staff was very grateful for the donations.

B. Diaper Drive

Sheila Viale presented information from the Berkshire Community Diaper Project (BCDP). There is a great need for this drive as diapers can cost as much as \$1,000.00 per month. It was decided that we will put off our Annual Personal Needs Care Drive until the Spring and conduct this drive in January. Sheila and Fr. Sheaffer will work to coordinate a date and to advertise the drive. *Please see "Addendum A" for more information about BCDP.*

C. CRS Fair Trade Sale

Deacon Jim is working with Kathryn Buckley-Brawner to set a date for the Fair Trade Sale; he thinks it will be in early March of 2016.

VIII. Our Lady's Oratory

A. Schedules

As was noted earlier, the Oratory schedule is now up to date. Deacon Bob also presented an update of the substitute list; it will be put online immediately.

B. Special Prayer Time

Deacon Bob said that the Oratory Committee has set aside the second Saturday of January (the 9th) as a special day of prayer for the election process in the United States.

IX. Old Business

None

X. New Business

A. Jubilee Year of Mercy

The Berkshire Deanery is participating in a program to promote acts of mercy. Cards will be distributed to people and the goal is that

people will do numerous acts of mercy and then write down a brief description anonymously and then post it in a designated place in each church, school, or other institution. Fr. Sheaffer will have more information by the start of the Jubilee Year of Mercy on December 8th.

We also have cards with Pope Francis' prayer for the Jubilee Year that we will use on December 8th and the following weekend.

B. Seminarian Gift Cards.

Carol Lombardo asked about the Seminarian Gift Card Program. Fr. Sheaffer explained that it is helpful for seminarians in covering some the expenses of some basic needs during the academic year. He will mention at each Mass this weekend that there are a few cards available and ask people to take them.

XI. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held at St. Mary's School on January 28, 2016 at 6:00 PM.*

XII. Closing Prayer

Fr. Sheaffer closed the Pastoral Council Meeting with a prayer at 6:32 PM.

*Next meeting was incorrectly listed as January 21, 2016 on the calendar.

The Berkshire Community Diaper Project

The BCDP, in collaboration with Austen Riggs Center and Berkshire Psychoanalytic Institute was established to raise funds to provide diapers for parents who struggle to afford them for their children, since diaper need has been correlated with significant depression in parents and with potential mental health issues for children. The "Diaper Project" has established multiple liaisons with community organizations.



Diapers are distributed to and available at:

- The Christian Center and the South Congregational Church Food Pantry, Pittsfield
- Community Health Programs in Great Barrington, WIC office
- Lee Food Bank
- K's Closet, East Otis
- Becket Federated Church

How Can You Help

Drop off diaper donations at:

- Berkshire Nautilus, 42 Summer Street in Pittsfield
- Lee Food Pantry (on Saturday from 10am – noon)
- St. Paul's Church, Stockbridge
- Stockbridge and West Stockbridge Post Offices
- K's Closet, East Otis
- Becket Federated Church

Write a check to the Austen Riggs Center, earmarked to the *Berkshire Community Diaper Project (BCDP)* and mail to:

Attn: Lee Watroba
Austen Riggs Center
25 Main Street
Stockbridge, MA 01262

For further information call 413-269-0138

www.facebook.com/BerkshireCommunityDiaperProject

Diaper Need Facts



- One out of three low- income families struggle to buy diapers. In the Berkshires, 2000 children from birth to age 5 are receiving nutritional help from WIC and likely also have diaper need.
- Diapers are not covered by WIC or by Food Stamps, which classifies them with cigarettes, alcohol and pet food as disallowed items.
- Families without washers/dryers must rely on store- bought diapers. If they lack gas money or a car, they must rely on expensive convenience stores.
- Children without a supply of diapers are not allowed at day care centers, so parents miss work when they can't supply them, thus losing money needed for their families.
- Diaper Need was an even stronger predictor of resulting stress and mental health difficulties in parents than was food insecurity. (Smith, et al, *Pediatrics*, 2013) Parents who can't provide diapers feel guilty, powerless, frustrated, depressed.
- Children who wear soiled diapers are at risk of rashes and infections; their irritable crying may also put them at risk for abuse or neglect from frustrated, depressed parents.