

## Minutes of St. Thomas More Pastoral Council

Sept. 20, 2021

Father Brad Whistle presided over the meeting in the absence of Jeff Case and led the opening prayer.

Present were Father Brad Whistle, David Leis, Richard Vieitez, Lynn Baker, Tom Clinton, Joe Hobbs, Julie Turok, Jeri Duong and Miguelina Young.

Absent were Jeff Case, Naomi Becker and Daniel Miller and David Riley.

August minutes were approved.

There was no old business discussed.

Under new business, Father Brad reported that Mass attendance has been consistent with numbers prior to the latest Covid situation. Because of Covid, all meetings will be held in great room of parish center (as was this one). Food will not be served at any parish function. Father noted that directions came from the diocese office.

### Ministry reports:

Richard Vieitez said that Clayton Walker reports that we are going to livestream Mass for the foreseeable future and that we are having more people watching now than in the past few months.

Lynn Baker: Monica Hayden is the new system director. She reports total enrollment is 408.

There are 135 students that are members of St Thomas More. They receive a subsidy from the parish which is important to the students and the St Mary School System.

Religious education is provided to all the classes. Marianna Romero has just been hired to teach religion to 1st and 5th grade. Since not all the teachers at St. Mary are Catholic, and therefore cannot teach religion, Marianna will be providing religious instruction to help fill that need.

A goal set by Monica is to replace the religion books for middle school and high school. What they have are in bad condition.

She is happy to report they are back to having in person Mass.

Regarding RCIA: Steve Shoulta reports: The biggest change that I am working on this year is to transition RCIA from a “school year model” to year-round. This will require changing the mindset of the entire parish so that the members of the parish will feel welcome to invite people to begin the process. RCIA can and should begin when an inquirer is ready. We do not “begin” in August and “graduate” at Easter. We have a fine team of individuals that are knowledgeable in the faith and willing to share. We just need to pray to have the Holy Spirit nudge the hearts of the ones that are on the fringes to join us in the process.

We have two regular attendees and probably four or five ‘prospects.’ Prospects are individuals that have either said that they are interested or someone has mentioned that this individual may be interested, and yet they have not yet made an appearance. One individual is in the beginning stages of inquiry and has on-going health concerns. I have been communicating with that person through their Catholic spouse.

I wish that we had more active inquirers, but I feel that what we are doing now is building a foundation for what we will be able to do in the coming years. The weekly RCIA sessions are short, focused prayer meetings with emphasis on what we have learned from the week’s Sunday liturgy and some discussion on a topic of the week.

Ashley Hayden reported: Father Brad decided that with illness stats going higher and higher, and with recommendation from the Diocese to not have unnecessary meetings, Children’s Liturgy of the Word meeting together was not the safest solution. It’s so unfortunate since we were just now ready to start back up again. However, we do understand the importance of Children’s liturgy to our young generations so we are working on offering the lessons virtually. We are working on having the lessons posted on our Church website as well as a link in the weekly newsletter that goes out on Fridays. When the time comes that we are once again able to meet in person we are ready with Safe Environment certified volunteers.

Kelley Groves reported: First Reconciliation classes will begin next week. The classes will be done virtually this year via email. You will receive an email with student teaching videos and one parent video each month. There will be questions for the students to answer that relate to the teaching videos. Those answers will be due two weeks after the Monday that the lessons were sent. Parents can ask the children the questions and then type their responses to be emailed to [kelly@stmore.org](mailto:kelly@stmore.org). All of the videos and questions that relate to the videos will be emailed that are needed for the classes. Parents will need to set up a free Formed.org account if you have not already done so in order to view the teaching and parent videos. All of our parishioners receive a free FORMED subscription at no charge! This is a gift to our families to allow you access to Catholic movies, study series, inspiring talks, and eBooks- all in one place.

Regarding Faith Formation: 1. To prepare volunteers for the school year, catechist meeting, training and formation sessions were held on August 4, 11 and 18th. On August 4th, Ging Smith, Faith Formation director, welcomed everyone to the new school year, discussed the calendar,

scheduled activities, and the required paperwork and diocesan training for all volunteers. She also thanked everyone for volunteering this school year, and asked that we nurture the Christ-centered spirituality we have as Disciples so we can fruitfully disciple our students for the Lord.

Dr. Jeff Andrini came on August 11th and led the volunteers in the discussion and reflection on the Evangelizing Young People and Catechist Spirituality.

Deacon Jay VanHoosier facilitated the session on Classroom Management on August 18th.

Registration - 115 students, last year's was 97.

There are 26 volunteers this school year with 23 returning and 3 new: Meagan Tincher (SJ) helping with 1st grade, Suzi Gilland (STM) with 3rd grade and Anita Fitch (STM) with Pre-K and K. All of them are catechist aides, with Suzi willing to teach when the main catechist is absent.

Jenny Gillituk of SFDS resigned in May from the Board. Lori Hatton has accepted as her replacement and had been asked to comply with the diocesan required safe environment training and background check.

Circle of Grace Safe Environment training for all grades was held on Wednesday, September 15th. Those that were absent will be trained at a later date.

A meeting with parents was held last Wednesday, Sept 15. Ging met with parents to talk about Faith Formation, the scheduled activities for this year, and how important and irreplaceable the role of parents is as primary catechists to their children. Fr. Basilio and another Board member attended the meeting. Ging also asked how Faith Formation and parents can better partner together in the weekly religious instruction of their children, especially how to help them carryover and reinforce the faith lessons and activities at home.

A monthly gathering with parents will be held in the fall, then depending on how it turns out, continue in the spring. This gathering of parents with Ging, and possibly Fr. Basilio and others, is called UPDATE YOUR FAITH WHILE YOU WAIT (parents come to the meeting while their kids are in classes). Ging hopes that through this, the parents will feel listened to, assisted, affirmed, and can hear the testimony and struggles of other parents in raising their kids in the faith as they, too, feel encouraged to grow in their own faith. Lectio Divina from the USCCB website will be used to prepare families for the upcoming Sunday Mass. Depending on what these parents find helpful, other faith materials will be used.

Given that this is only for an hour, this is the tentative plan for these gatherings:

Scripture or article Reading, or video

Reflection Questions

Sharing

Closing Prayer

Ging also sent out to parents in an email the links to religious apps and resources that she finds personally helpful (Laudate, Ascension Presents, 3 Minute Retreat, Word on Fire, Renewal Ministries, A Year with the Bible, A Year with St. Faustina, Catholic Minute, Liturgy of the Hours: Sing the Hours on Apple podcast, Living Faith, Catholic Answers, Bishop Barron's Sermons, and other YouTube links).

She prays and hopes that since most of the parents at the meeting do not have these on their smart phones, they can start using one or two of them daily for themselves and their family. The Holy Spirit will do the rest when one's heart and life is open to His promptings and inspirations.

Last Saturday, September 18, from 2-4 p.m., our 8th graders, their catechists and Ging helped pack care package items for troops overseas at THE HUGS PROJECT OF WESTERN KY (2219 W. Hovekamp Road, Paducah, KY, 42003). This served as their Power of One Community Service project. There were 15 participants and the Fergusons who run the place were very grateful.

The 8th grade catechists will think of another class project in the spring to fulfill the remaining service hours.

Opening Mass, is this Wednesday, September 22, 6:00 p.m., STM with Fr. Basilio presiding. Derrick and Kelly will be assisting with music. Thank you so much in advance!

October being the month of the Rosary, Faith Formation will pray this holy devotion in classrooms or possibly outside of the St. Mary Elementary building on October 27. The Living Rosary in the gym cannot be done anymore in this pandemic.

There will be a discussion on this at the catechist meeting on September 29. If the catechists decide to hold the Rosary outside for everyone, then the Living Rosary will be done outside. If not, it will be prayed in individual classrooms.

October 27 is also the scheduled Fall Fundraising for the 2 Philippine Seminaries, St. John Paul II College Seminary, and the St. Mary Theologate. This fundraising has been going in for several years at Faith Formation to help needy seminaries in my home country. Usually what was done was to sell ice cream for donations. With COVID 19, we will ask for donations this year without the ice cream.

That in the spring is to be held on April 20.

Reconciliation Services: November 10 for Grades 3-6; November 17 for the rest of the grades

Assessment of Catechesis and Religious Education (ACRE) for Grades 5, 8, and HS is scheduled on February 16.

St. Joseph is the Faith Formation saint for the year. Instead of adopting a saint for each class as was done previously, Faith Formation has St. Joseph for all classes this year since Dec 2020-Dec 2021 is declared by Pope Francis as the Year of St. Joseph. Ging will suggest, give, and lead

catechists to resources and materials to help students and volunteers know more deeply this great saint and pray more to him for his intercession and help.

David Leis reported: Altar Society – Eileen Segebarth

No report. Unable to reach her by phone

Homebound – Ashley Hayden: Homebound Ministry is currently up and running- as long as the facilities do not have to shut down to visitors which seems to happen every week or so. I call each facility at the beginning or end of the week to check on statuses and report to the ministry. There are currently 7 facilities that our homebound ministry visits with either Holy Communion or for prayer.

Greeters, Ushers, Liturgical – Jill Langston reports that we are currently not using greeters. I cannot get enough ushers and liturgical ministers as it is. The 9:00 Mass is in pretty good shape with liturgical ministers. The 5:00 and 11:00 Masses are struggling, especially with ushers. Getting people to volunteer with covid continuing has been a struggle.

Music – Kelly Groves say we are not able to start choirs yet, per diocesan guidelines. We had planned to start the first week of September. We will start back up with the adult choir, children's choir, and the funeral (Resurrection) choir. We have gained several cantors in the past few months. And have held cantor workshops to help with vocal technique, breathing, vowel formation, posture, etc. And of course, we continue to have many weddings and funeral liturgies with music.

Joe Hobbs reported: Telephonic meeting with Ashley Hayden who reported that the Stewardship Committee had not met the past few months due to Covid and Ashley having conflicts. Nothing to report other than Time, Talent, and Treasure info being sent out to parishioners for their responses. Hope to have a committee meeting soon.

Jeri Duong reported: No report on Mt. Carmel Cemetery (need new contact). Jill Langston reported that at the last staff meeting, it was decided that meetings were to be limited to small groups and take place in the parish hall with masks and social distancing. The Over 50s Potluck will still meet, but not with food. Office volunteers are still being used daily to cover lunches. No report on Rosary Garden Club; Ashley Hayden reported that parish picnic has been postponed. In lieu of that, Knights of Columbus has brought up the possibility of doing a parishioner appreciation boxed chicken dinner as a drive-through, but nothing final has been determined: Boy Scouts: Pack 7 in midst of recruiting. All who have signed up thus far are from St. Thomas More. There has been some interest from signing up girls, but no interest from their mothers who would be willing to be den mothers. The girls would be in separate dens, as per BSA youth

protection policies. Another signup is scheduled for tomorrow night. The hope is to launch Pinewood Derby in late October. Two "fundays" are upcoming at Camp Manchester. Popcorn sales will be wrapping up the second week of October.

Though unable to attend the meeting, Daniel Miller submitted the following social concerns report via-e-mail to the council chairman. With COVID-trying to start opening up funeral meals. People have been bringing in meals and that is going pretty smoothly. Trying to start up bereavement group. Cathy Trussell to meet with Ashley soon, but is having some health issues, keeping her from fully engaging that at the moment. Homebound ministry has been going to facilities and has added 2 new facilities to route. Working on virtual meetings for various groups and focusing on pushing communications for stewardship weekend which is this week. Working to get Bible studies, dinner for 8, etc. up and running in person and looking for solutions on that.

Miguelina Young reported:

Eucharistic Ministry:

- The second Saturday of each month will be the designated meeting day for the ministers. First meeting was Saturday, September 11th. Meeting was conducted by Sister Yessica.

Lectors:

- The third Saturday of each month will be the designated meeting day for the lectors. The first meeting was Saturday, September 18th. Meeting was conducted by Sister Yessica.

Other updates:

- Sister Yessica has now begun to lead our weekly (Thursday) Bible studies.
- Fr. Basilio has begun training acolytes on Sundays, after mass, when possible.
- Fr. Basilio and Sister Yessica continue to lead our adoration on Friday evenings.

The meeting was closed with prayer.

Next meeting is Monday, Oct. 19 in the parish center.