**Our Lady of Victory / Our Lady of the Snow**

**Pastoral Council Meeting – November 2, 2021**

**Present:** Father Thomas Morrette, Father Nathaniel Resila, Julie Darling, Chuck Ciaccia, Chris Carroll, Deacon Brian Lewis, Warren Dolan, Connie Steinbach, and Mary Eaton (guest)

**Excused:** David Benjamin, Sharon Ryan**,** Adrienne Villano, Sara Detmer, Mary Wooten, and Antoinette Sanders

The meeting was conducted in the OLV Parish Office and called to order by Julie Darling,

Council Vice President, at 6:35 pm. It was noted that Kim Locisano and Peter Ogno have resigned from the Council.

Opening prayer was led by Fr. Morrette.

**Review of Minutes** – Julie Darling asked for comments regarding the minutes from the October 5, 2021 meeting. No changes were made. The minutes were unanimously approved.

**Parish Evangelization** – Chuck Ciaccia introduced Tom Cronin, Advisor to the Bishop for Family & Parish Evangelization. Tom was invited to attend the Parish Council session and speak about the SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) that he referenced in a recent Evangelist column as well as his experiences with evangelization efforts at parishes throughout the Diocese.

Tom started his discussion by stating that “the Laity needs to be reminded that it’s our church”. He pointed out that in many parishes approximately 7% of the congregation are dynamic parishioners who are highly involved in ministries and “do everything”. He informed us that his presentation would address the following:

* What is evangelization?
* What is SWOT / Parish strategic planning?
* How can we make this a better parish?

*Evangelization* – All Catholics are called to evangelize and spread the gospel; share the good news. He personally defines it as “sharing my joy and love of knowing Jesus with others”. He also pointed out that there is no end date for evangelization.

The Pillars of Evangelization include:

1. *Prayer* – do we get too busy to pray? Do we underestimate the power of prayer? How often do we enlist the power of the Holy Spirit?
2. *Relationships with each other and with Christ* – Do we make the effort to stay connected with people? Do we contact fellow parishioners when we don’t see them at Mass for a few weeks to ask if everything is OK?
3. *Faith* – Do we share our faith? Do we have the confidence to offer to say a prayer with someone who we are with who may be experiencing a difficult time? Small faith-sharing groups are an excellent and nurturing way to share our faith.
4. *Welcoming* – Is the parish friendly? Do people talk to each other? Do greeters actually welcome people when they come in the church? When someone walks in alone, do greeters go over to say hello and maybe walk the person to a pew? At one church he visited, umbrellas are kept in the vestibule. If it is raining, a greeter (or usher) will go out with an umbrella to walk older parishioners or a mother with a child into the church.

Council members asked questions and shared experiences as Tom was presenting. Chris Carroll pointed out that evangelization means different things to different people.

Tom has been holding gatherings for young persons at restaurants/bars and he has gotten a good response. He believes that many young people are searching for meaning in their lives. The locations are a familiar and welcoming place to have a conversation and discussion. A question he has asked the attendees is “what do you like about church?”. Many people responded that they liked the music. These gatherings are a pathway for discussion. It doesn’t happen overnight. A book, The Search by Chris Stephanic, was recommended as a good resource[[1]](#footnote-1).

The number of people attending mass has been greatly reduced because of COVID. Some parishes have started calling parishioners and welcoming back to mass. Calling people to say hello and welcome them to come back to Mass was thought to be a good idea. Connie Steinbach noted that there isn’t an accurate resource of the parishioners at OLV and OLS. The information in the online Diocesan database, the Parish Data System (PDS), has not been kept up to date. A short discussion ensued about the multiple places where parishioner demographics is stored. Julie Darling and Connie Steinbach agreed to meet on November 15, 2021, to discuss how to create an accurate centralized database and discuss the text of a script that could be used when making calls.

Tom Cronin was invited and agreed to attend the next Parish Council meeting on December 7, 2021 to continue the discussion of evangelization and also to assist with OLV/OLS’ SWOT analysis. Updated SWOT analysis forms will be sent by Tom and distributed to Council members.

The closing prayer was led by Fr. Morrette and the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Connie Steinbach

1. **Note**: The following was offered online as an example of the focus of this book.

   *For all the unprecedented changes we have seen in the past few years, the essential human questions are still the same. Who am I? What do I want? Is there a point to my life? More than likely, you have a nagging feeling, a yearning to understand your place in the cosmos. You wonder. You question. You explore. Welcome to the human story. Welcome to The Search*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)