“MEET THE PASTOR” – List #1

* Answers to some questions, Father will share more in the future.

*Reviewing notes from ‘Meet the Pastor’ evenings.* I’m sorry it has taken me awhile to get to this, but I am reading over the notes collected at each of the six sessions we organized between late August and early October. A number of questions and ideas were put forward that needed consideration and follow up.

There were so many, I doubt I can address all of them in my columns; I will be asking one of my staff to post them on our websites. But here, at least, are some of the questions; I’ll share more in the future:

**“How can we get word about funerals?”** Some said they only heard about a funeral after the fact. Answer: I’ve asked a couple of staff members to work out some options. We could announce at a weekend Mass, except it’s not at all unusual for the request to come in on a Sunday or Monday, and the funeral happens later that week – so a weekend Mass notice is impossible. Stay tuned.

**“Will we resume passing the collection basket?”** I’ve talked to all involved, and that should be happening everywhere as before Covid, as well as the practice of bringing the gifts forward.

**“Are the three parishes’ finances ‘autonomous.’?”** Right now, each parish is autonomous regarding finances, although beginning July 1, a number of expenses began to be shared. The three finance committees have been closely involved in the exact details of how expenses are shared, and reimbursements are made regularly, and the end of year reports for all three parishes will reflect this. In the years to come, there will be steps toward greater integration, but nothing will change “in the dark of night”: it will happen out in the open. In approximately 5 years, the plan is to have all three parishes become one legal corporation embracing three locations. Well before then, the exact manner in which all funds will be handled will be laid out, publicly, in the greatest possible detail. Nothing will happen suddenly or secretly.

**“What about altar servers?”** I have a plan for our kids to be re-involved as servers; that will likely take place next spring, once schools let out. In the meantime, we’re working to draw back servers and invite adults as well.

**“Will our three bulletins be united?”** Our staff-members who prepare the bulletins are working together, and over time you will see all three contain the same essential information.

**“Will our three parishes have a new name identifying us?”** That is the plan but again, this won’t happen until we’ve all had time to reflect on this and give input. With so much going on, I figured we didn’t need to rush into this decision.

**“Will Our Lady of Good Hope (or Saint Henry) begin having both forms of the Holy Eucharist”** – i.e., as St. Mary already does? With so many changes, and so many tasks for me, personally, I decided this is something we can come back to later. Remember, although we speak of the “Body” and the “Blood” as distinct, whenever you receive the Eucharist in either form, you actually receive both. Since both are now available at one of our parishes, I figured this wasn’t an urgent matter to address; if anyone sees it as urgent, feel free to contact me, I want to accommodate special needs and I need to be aware of them.

**“Can our parish staff be listed in the bulletins?”** We’re working on it. There are a lot of people who work for our three parishes, and it’s important we begin seeing our “staff” as one staff for all, not three separate staffs. That means a LOT of names in the bulletin! With limited bulletin space, we may only list some.

**“Is there a 5-year plan for the family of parishes?”** Yes! And I’m trying, over time, to share all the aspects of that in my columns, in meetings, and from the pulpit. It’ll take a while to lay it all out – probably 5 years! But the essence is that we are in transition to being “one big happy family” of parishes, and once the transition is complete, we become a happy family that invites others to become part of our family – i.e., evangelizing and growing.

**“Will we continue to use handouts at Mass, or will we use hymnals?”** I’ve asked our musicians at the three parishes to give me their advice; there are pros and cons. Stay tuned.

**“Is Faith formation and adult spiritual development going to be left up to every individual parish? Are you going to give direction or supervise each parish?”** Faith formation for everyone is central to our mission as a family of parishes, so you bet I’m going to supervise. As I reorganize our staff, this will be a task one person must help me oversee. In some respects, of course there needs to be consistency; but there can also be variety of options and each parish can have its own contributions.

**“What about where the priests will live and where offices will be?”** The “Transition Committee” I formed is helping me sort out issues relating to our staff, and that will lead to sorting out what we’ll do for a main office and satellite offices. Then we can look at enabling Fathers Bishop, Howard, and me to share housing. You’ll hear more about this down the road but realize that some of our facilities may not work out so well or require costly improvements.

Someone asked specifically about the rectory/house at St. Henry: this is currently used for a lot of offices; back in the day, there were far fewer offices and the priests lived upstairs. We need a lot more offices so this wouldn’t work.

**“Can we list all daily Masses in all three bulletins?”** I like the idea, butwith limited space I want to let our staff members who are reworking our bulletin figure this out.

**“Can our churches be open more for prayer?”**I’m in favor of that and I hope we can increase the hours the churches are open. Meanwhile, here are the current hours:

Our Lady of Good Hope: Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday - 10 am to 3 pm

St. Mary of the Assumption: Monday thru Friday –  8:30 am till 1 pm

St Henry: Monday thru Friday  – 9 am till 4 pm

**“Can the lector introduce the priest offering Mass?”** Easier said than done; the announcements are written several days before; the priests switch around, even the night before. The lectors don’t always poke their head into the sacristy before Mass. So, there’s a reasonable likelihood it’ll glitch and make confusion worse. Better idea: I’ve asked all priests to keep introducing themselves. In time this will work out.

**“Will the three parishes’ social outreach be combined?”** What will happen is a single staff member will be responsible for overseeing all social outreach and supporting it; but there’s no need for each parish’s efforts to be merged; but there is a need for all of us to work together rather than totally separately.

**“How can we get more volunteers for various activities, such as extraordinary ministers for Holy Communion? Can our clergy encourage?”** This is an ongoing need; we just had ministry fairs at each parish, and I hope we can find new ways to do this going forward. As I work to reorganize our staff, one of the people on our staff will have responsibility for this very need. The priests can mention from time to time, but there are lots of things folks want the priests to talk about and we talk too much sometimes, as it is!

**“When a Mass is being offered for a deceased person, it used to be mentioned from the altar who the Mass was for.”** The intention is being included in the petitions and this should be happening; whether the priest says that name out loud during the Eucharistic Prayer is up to him.

**“Can parishioners have baptisms, weddings and funerals at all three parishes?”** There is no problem with this in general, but it’s something our staff and volunteers will have to get used to. If you call and ask and don’t get a good answer, let me know, we’ll figure it out.

**“What about scheduling more daily Masses and visiting shut-ins?”** With two daily Masses for all three parishes, I see no urgent need to add Masses at church; but the other priests and I have begun having Mass regularly at area senior facilities. Remember, we have a fair number of funerals as well, so I am not rushing to add more daily Mass obligations at the moment.

We also have great volunteers visiting area facilities with the Holy Eucharist regularly. After a few months, I’m going to look at our present schedule and see if it can be improved. We may need more people to volunteer to bring Holy Communion to the sick and homebound, stay tuned.

**“What about more time for confessions?”** Since July 1, we have added some time on Wednesday and Saturday, and I am planning to add more. I’ve asked parishioners’ input on what days and times would work, and I’ve only had one or two offer suggestions; more input would help. This will be a “work in progress.”

**“How about a simple fan in the Parent/Child upstairs room at St Henry?”** Since this question came up in August – sorry for the slow follow-up! – we’ve replaced the a/c unit in the “skybox.” If comfort is still an issue, let me know. Given the design of the church, we may have limited options.

**“Can we have votive candles at St. Henry?”** I’m asking some of our key staff and volunteers about the feasibility of this; stay tuned.

* Father Martin Fox

frmartinefox@gmail.com

(937) 434-9231