

Minutes for St. Margaret Mary Parish Pastoral Council - DRAFT April 2, 2024 meeting

Present: Fr. Max Behna, Mary Kinstra, Steve Novotny, Lise Nauman, Kelly Metzger and John Runger. Jennifer Nolan and Bob Presnak attended via Zoom.

The meeting opened at 6:55 pm with a prayer led by John Runger.

Clarity Questions

Fr. Max began the meeting with a review of the clarity questions from Amazing Parish.

1. Why do we exist? To help people experience new life in Christ
2. How do we behave (what are our core values)?
3. What do we do? Encounter Christ, grow in Christ, and be Christ to the world
4. How will we succeed? Radical hospitality, faithfully Catholic, vibrant community
5. What is most important right now (what is the rally cry)?
6. Who must do what?

President's Report – Steve Novotny

March minutes were approved with suggested corrections.

There was some discussion about the level of detail to be included in the minutes. Further discussion will be added to the agenda for the May meeting.

Attendance at Easter Masses and Vigil was astonishing. There was a significant increase at all services. (Easter Vigil increased from 260 to 278 attendees; 9 a.m. Easter Mass from 360 to 1073 attendees; 11 a.m. Easter Mass from 463 to 1118 attendees. For a total increase of 1,386 attendees or 127% Easter weekend.)

Budget information was shared as an attachment. A question was asked about whether there would be a 2023-2024 annual report.

A “complex security” review will be done this summer. This will include reviewing local school and church security systems with estimated costs for consideration.

Pastor's Report – Fr. Max

Alter servers – Fr. Max shared that the rationale behind focusing on orienting males in grades 5 through 12 was focused on priestly vocations, but this was not discerned well or thoroughly enough and he decided not to move forward with it at this time. Altar

serving is open to boys and girls in grades 3 through 12. A question was raised of whether we might consider having boys serve at particular masses and girls at another, with some thinking that the servers might feel more confident serving in that configuration.

Fr. Max shared parish statistics that he sent to the Diocese to make a case for having an associate priest. The increase in mass attendance and sacrament participation seems to indicate that the mission and vision is having a positive effect.

Pastoral Council recruitment update was shared and council members were invited to send questions if they have them. It was noted that the at-large member number was incorrectly listed as three on the website and will be corrected. There was a question about whether the council overall should be enlarged with other commission/committee representatives, which will be discussed at a further date.

Tabernacle update – Fr. Max invited council members to share the feedback they'd received in response to his homily regarding the possibility of adding a tabernacle to the altar.

Feedback included:

- The feedback did not just center on whether or not to add a tabernacle, but there was also conversation about design. Putting something into the church when it wasn't a part of the original design is a challenge for certain individuals.
- Some negative feedback was shared after the weekend the possibility was announced. Not all feedback centered on the tabernacle and some of it was concerning regarding an underlying concern of what this might lead to. A question was raised about whether a survey should be done or facilitation of some deeper conversation about the decision-making process.
- In general, those who have expressed concern are long-term parishioners of 20 or 30 years.
- Some time was spent reflecting on whether some of the feedback is a response to change and were reflective of other changes that they didn't agree with. There was an acknowledgement that change is part of our life but that we can help people become more comfortable with it through clear and complete communication.
- A specific email which asked about prior volunteer work not being continued was mentioned. It was discussed that we no longer participate in interfaith dialogue, however charitable contributions that were made in the past are still being supported through the same types of organizations.

Fr. Max shared that as he has reflected on the feedback he's received, he believes a lot of this comes from pre-Vatican and post-Vatican II experiences people have had with the Church and what that time in the church represented for them. For some there is deep hurt or misunderstanding and unfortunately the addition of the tabernacle appears to have stirred that up for them, which is an unintended outcome of a spirit-led proposal. He also emphasized that it is important to listen to all age groups within the parish and to affirm that the next generation of parishioners will help keep the parish going. In his listening, many want to have a lot of the same experience that our founding parishioners had and want to help build the future.

There was discussion on ways to bring groups together that represent different generations in the parish to discuss issues in the parish, giving them a chance to talk and hear from each other. Can we facilitate conversation between those groups and gain more appreciation and understanding of each other?

There was a discussion on the ways to open channels of communication and get a pulse on the perspectives of parishioners, about the possible addition of a tabernacle and beyond. That might be accomplished by doing a survey, having listening sessions, hosting town hall meeting. Might need to recommunicate what the role of the council is, reinforcing that parishioners should be able to come to council members and ask questions they have.

A statement was made that if there is a vision to make additional changes to the worship space this may be a good time to start talking about it. Fr. Max said that there are no plans at this time and that any steps beyond the tabernacle he would imagine being a grassroots initiative.

A council member said that some council members don't have information about whether the things that are being done are within budget. Don't feel we are armed to give intelligent responses in regards to expenditures versus budget. A council member reminded the group that at one point there was discussion about having the finance committee submit a report to the council monthly.

Concern was discussed that without further parishioner input, the insignificant number of parishioners who provided feedback would potentially cause difficulty in addressing how a decision was reached. It was reiterated that the majority of the feedback received was either positive or neutral. Fr. Max mentioned that when people make comments to him he suggests that they also communicate with the pastoral council.

With the data collected on mass attendance over recent years, it is incontestable that the parish was shrinking and has now grown, which may suggest that the changes made thus far seem to be appealing to people. It was noted that we would be observing the opposite trend if people were not happy at the parish. Two examples were shared to support this line of thinking.

The council is going to do a better job of posting minutes to the website. Ideas mentioned were posting detailed minutes prior to the next meeting, giving parishioners input on the tabernacle design, and more details on the monetary fluctuations which have been observed in the bulletin.

The council came to the consensus that we should begin the next steps to communicate that the tabernacle project will move forward. It was agreed that an in-person conversation with parishioners opposed to the addition or design of the tabernacle would be appropriate. The council will gather a list of names and these conversations will take place prior to any further parish-wide announcement indicating the project will move forward.

Closing

Fr. Max led the closing prayer and the meeting adjourned at 9:39 p.m.