

## **St. Leo Parish Advisory Council Meeting**

Meeting Minutes

September 21, 2020

Present: Father Grosso, Denise Esposito, Christine Green, Marie Cordeiro, Ann Hogan, Mike Carlon, Sandy Schwoerer, Brenda Jegier, Anthony Marsella, Eileen Towne, Mike Nicholson, Judy Sarnelle, Joe Baranowski, John Kennedy, Chip Howe, Raffaele Iovieno.

Meeting was conducted via Zoom teleconference.

Mike Nicholson called the meeting was called to order at 7:33pm. Fr. Grosso opened with a prayer.

The minutes of the June meeting were approved unanimously.

### Pastor's Comments

- Fr. Grosso opened the meeting by stating that a third weekend Mass was added in July. There are still two weekday Masses which have roughly 10-15 people a day – this enables those who do not feel comfortable with the more crowded weekend Masses to attend Mass in person.
- Father reiterated that these are challenging days. Bishop Caggiano is holding a meeting for all priests of the diocese on September 23<sup>rd</sup> to discuss what we as Catholic parishes should be doing to survive the current situation. Father stated that the Bishop has asked the pastors to reach out to their parish leaders and have a frank discussion about what can be done right now to ensure viability in the future. Father began by sharing that he feels that it will take many years to re-build. People are getting used to not coming to Mass in person. Attendance is down from roughly 1,000 a weekend to approximately 250. Many have not given to the offertory and costs are actually higher in some expense areas due to COVID cleaning, signage, etc. By far the most difficult part is that we just do not know when we will be 'out' of this situation. Before opening the topic up for discussion Father added that he feels the best way to move ahead will be when we can re-build 'community' – hopefully with the 2021 Fair - the fair is such a strong community effort. It is the strong sense of community and fellowship that makes St. Leo so special.
- A lengthy discussion followed wherein the different leaders of the various ministries spoke about how they have been affected by the pandemic and the shut down that has followed. It was decided by all that a digital presence is key to staying in touch. Phone calls are a great idea and the personal touch is always best, but an effort like that needs to be attached to a more broad-based outreach which the digital presence can provide. This must be something interesting and eye catching that drives people to the website which is constantly updated.

- In conclusion the council agreed that there need to be short-term and long-term strategies. Digital will help with retention which is St. Leo's key to success right now as will any kind of social or spiritual events that might be able to safely occur.
- Father thanked the council for their input and the ideas that he can take to his meeting. Long-term, Father said he will listen for ideas as we plan for a return to 'normalcy'. He is without a curate and does not see getting one anytime soon, so he will do his best to do what he can as a one man show and greatly thanks all who are helping him during these times – it takes many people working hard to ensure the safety of the parishioners – thank you.

- Reports

- Committee Reports

- *Digital Outreach*

- John Kennedy reminded everyone why the committee was formed – to explore online giving, communications with the parishioners and community engagement
        - The online giving platform **Faith Direct** was chosen. They are cooperative and helpful and the transition from the previous method of credit card giving has been great
        - **Flocknote** was identified as the preferred method of email outreach to the parish. Father Grosso would prefer to hold off the rollout of that as he is comfortable with his current outreach and is concerned about not being able to effectively ask people to sign up since he is not seeing people at Mass.
        - The website is our most effective tool and our webmaster Karen Bennett is diligent in updating it – however the heads of the ministries are not always great about giving her updates. Our newly reborn Facebook page is doing great and everyone is urged to like it and share its content.

- *Youth Group*

- Looking at ways to meet – first meeting is Sunday, September 27<sup>th</sup> outdoors and plans for the year will be made then.

- *Seniors*

- Judy Sarnelle reported on her great efforts to stay connected to the members as so many live alone – thank you to Judy! She is sitting tight and staying in touch with phone calls, birthday cards and is thinking of posting the monthly newsletter on the St. Leo website as well as mailing it home.

### *Social Concerns*

- Brenda reported that they are planning a drive-up food drive in October and they are currently working on dates.
- Brenda also reported that for the Thanksgiving meal we cannot use the St. Leo kitchen to cook and transport the food. Carol Kennedy – the event chair – is working with New Covenant House as there are a million questions about what they themselves will actually be able to do on that day.
- The Christmas Giving Tree will be all gift cards.
- Finally, Brenda informed the council that she will be resigning as chair of the Social Concerns group. She was mightily thanked for all that she has done – her skills will be greatly missed.

### Ex Officio Reports

#### *Religious Education*

- First Communion was finally celebrated in late September – the children were split up into four groups and each of the Masses was lovely.
- Confirmation is October 28 and 29 – there will be three services – no Mass this year and attendance is limited.
- Religious Ed classes began October 6 with grades 1-5 going once a month and the middle schoolers once a week.
- There are many baptisms which is great news! Eileen has been conducting pre-Baptismal classes on the phone.
- There are two RCIA candidates who need to finish their sacraments (and have been waiting due to the pandemic) and Father will try and expedite it

#### *Music Ministry/Liturgy*

- Denise has been busy coordinating the in-person Mass reservations and safety protocols. She was happy to report that people are feeling safe. She URGED the council to read over the ‘re-opening’ directives from the diocese so that if anyone asks about the safety measure being taken the council members can speak to them accurately.
- There will be minimal music for some time as choirs are not able to distance but Denise and Alma did a wonderful job at First Holy Communion and are planning for Confirmation.

New Business and Miscellany

Ann Hogan updated everyone on the people she used to bring Holy Communion to. She is keeping in touch and looks forward to the day when she can bring them the Eucharist again.

Father Grosso led all in the closing prayer.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:15pm

The next meeting was scheduled for Monday, October 19th

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Green  
Council Secretary