

Parish Pastoral Council, Saturday May 10, 2008

There was one action item for the council at this meeting, the selection of new council members. The disposition of that action item appears in bold below.

The meeting opened with a prayer led by Lucia Huskey.

Liturgy discussion - Fr. Dexter

Fr. Dexter opened the discussion by stating that when he first came to Christ the King, his main priority was the liturgy. He wanted to bring more life to the liturgy, to get more people involved, and he wanted to discuss the liturgy with the Council as he would like to see what people are saying about the changes. He explained that as a presider, he needed people to participate fully and to leave the gatherings feeling invigorated by the Spirit.

Some changes had to do with the "nuts and bolts" issues such as altar cloths and the furnishings for Mass. Other changes have involved the music at liturgies. These are not entirely Fr. Dexter's doing, but there have been some changes.

Mary Anne Collins offered the comment that it was nice having younger parishioners as lectors and eucharistic ministers. Everyone seems to have the impression that music is important to Fr. Dexter and that it is important for everyone to sing. Fr. agreed and added that it was also important to sing things that people want to sing. Philip Clark observed that Fr. Dexter has enlivened the liturgy and that people have more or less bought into the new direction of the liturgy. Distribution of communion seems to take a great deal of time, however. Fr. Dexter said that he believed that Mass should take about an hour and that the liturgy committee was working on ways to cut down the amount of time spent on some areas, such as taking up the collection and perhaps communion. It is important, though, that for communion there continue to be a common flow, that all receive from the same table, in order to reinforce the right imagery for the Eucharistic meal.

Father Dexter said that one issue that caused him a great deal of personal concern was the departure of the Ilam Mass choir and the Schola Pacis group. While some may have thought this change was his desire, this was not so. He said that he very much liked and appreciated the contributions of the choir and Schola, and he hoped that Lucia Huskey, Director of Liturgy and Music, would be able to reform an Ilam Mass choir in a way to emphasize more traditional music but also to achieve a balance of the old and the new. This is a difficult undertaking, but achieving such a balance would help meet the needs of more groups within the parish. Younger people that he spoke to at Fr. Ryan during a high school visit told him that they needed music that they were able and willing to sing, and hoped that they would be able to find this at the Ilam Mass as well as the other Masses. It seemed to be the case that more high school aged people came to the Ilam Mass, and Father stated that it was important that there not be three totally distinct communities around each Mass, but that anyone should be able to go to any Mass on the weekend and feel that they are a full member of Christ the King Parish. Variation in the music programs is fine, as long as the variation does not tend toward exclusivity. The choir needs to be recreated or reformed, but it is important that it is recreated in order to achieve the balance of styles of music.

Father explained that as presider, he needs the congregation to sing, that he gets his own energy from the energy of the congregation. When he first arrived and celebrated the 4:30pm Saturday vigil Mass without music, he felt suffocated, and could not continue to celebrate the liturgy without music and without greater participation on the part of the congregation.

Sam Francescon mentioned that involvement, whether getting kids more involved or getting newer parishioners integrated into the parish, was a matter of education, and that ongoing education on things like how to participate in the sacrament of the sick was important. Father explained that he was trying to continue this process and cited the example of his explanation of the importance of drinking from the chalice on weekdays and Sundays. Drinking provides the full effect of the sacrament - when we drink we ought to feel it, not just wetting our lips but feeling the full effect as it touches both body and soul.

John Nanni offered the opinion that early on during the transition, most people saw change not as negative but as an area of concern. People did not want to appear to be too quick to change from the way Fr. Mallett had done certain things. But now, people appear to be pleased with the changes made so far and there seems to be an eagerness for further changes. One thing that helps a great deal is an explicit explanation at Mass. People seem to be eager to hear about the reasons behind some of the changes made, and providing this education about them would be even more helpful. People are waiting for more to happen, want to hear more about the changes and want to know 'why.' Philip Clark echoed that sentiment and observed that people want to hear the gentle explanations even in midst of Mass.

Father Dexter accepted the point, but also said that Catholics in general tend to underestimate their knowledge - deep down we really know a lot about the faith. The connection to God that we share from being present at the liturgy on a regular basis, from allowing themselves to be transformed in a mysterious way in the Eucharist, allows us to "get it" about our faith even without an explicit understanding. He asked if people understand what it means to say that every procession is a Palm Sunday, a procession towards the Paschal mystery. John Nanni answered that for his part, this wasn't something that was at the forefront of his mind - he may have heard it before - but it's important to have these kinds of things brought back to the surface of his awareness through the explanations. These kinds of experience spur people on to be enthusiastic about the next change.

Father said in response that not much has really changed! Pat Pruett replied that the one area of dramatic change has been the music, and that it's provided a much more spiritual experience during liturgy. John Nanni continued the thought and said that the one thing that was really different now was the overall flow of the liturgy. The unifying commentary offered at various points of the Mass really contribute to the flow of the experience, and make it harder to drift off at certain points. Father replied that it was important to him to connect things in this way, to offer an opening comment that was tied into the topic of the homily, which would in turn lead to the table and the Eucharistic meal. Philip pointed out that these unifying comments were a new experience for the parish. Father Dexter said that this might in part be due to the fact that Fr. Mallett trained for the priesthood in Rome and this was a very "Roman" thing to do, that Pope Benedict took a similar minimalist approach, and that there is a certain holiness to this

style of celebrating Mass. The rubrics, though, allow for and encourage comments, and those comments can help the flow of the liturgy.

Father Dexter continued and noted that server participation was very important to him. Duties have been added and the servers have performed admirably. The more you give them to do, the more they seem capable of doing. We need to continue to encourage them so that they feel more of a sense of ownership of their roles, so that they can play their part in such a way that they anticipate the needs that are there in certain parts of the Mass, so that it seems that they're reading the celebrant's mind and anticipating the needs that emerge. Christine Gebhardt added that as the older kids take ownership of the role, younger kids will follow the model they set for them. In this way, kids will look to their peers for direction and be able to exercise a more meaningful role than if they're only being directed to do things by adults and being more passive in the celebration.

Sam Francescon said that this experience really sums up where we are as a parish right now - kids are seeing and hearing that they are needed in the server role and they are stepping up to new opportunities. This same dynamic holds for adults as well. We've been starved for a spirituality, and it seems like we're waking up now. Father Dexter replied that it's very important for people to understand that it's already there - the priest's role is not to make it happen, but rather allow it to happen. It's already there.

Philip Clark continued on the topic of the servers. He explained how his son now goes to church hoping to serve, even hoping that someone is absent so he can be called on to serve. The role has engaged the kids and is planting a seed that will bear fruit later. Over a period of time, the servers will become leaders in their parishes. Kathy Skinner added that efforts are under way to make sure that servers don't miss their assignments, and she is following up with families when absences happen. She hopes to set higher expectations and coach the servers along to live up to those expectations about the assignments and about their duties on the altar.

Father Dexter asked how people reacted to bringing baptisms into Mass at the 11am Mass on the first Sunday of the month. Mike Clepper mentioned that he was unaware of both the demise of the choir and the baptisms happening as he always attends the 8:30am Mass. Nancy Rohling said that from her perspective as she schedules the baptisms, the parents are all receptive to the presentation of children to the parish community at Sunday Mass, but some families have issues with dates and travel so they are not always able to schedule the baptism of their children during Mass. Those who have taken advantage of the opportunity all appear to be very happy with the experience. Father explained that when baptisms take place during the Mass, the community is able to see that it is growing and increasing, and this can be a very good thing.

Cindy Lybarger took the discussion back to the issue of music, and said that as a long time parishioner she very much misses the traditional music that had been offered at the 11am Mass. She was concerned about the perceived gap between words and actions regarding the repertoire that had been in place for over 19 years and was now largely gone. While people have expressed an appreciation for the music, nothing has been done to try to offer it or use it at Mass. Lucia Huskey responded that we're not able to do the music with the people we have on hand now. Dave Lybarger replied that to really do justice to the music, we might need people with different skills. Lucia is great at what she does, but we need to have leadership with

a different set of skills and competencies to handle the traditional music. Dave Kuhlman noted that as a long-standing parishioner he recalled that during the previous transition of pastors something very similar happened to the choir.

Mary Anne Collins asked about the incense that was used. One of her daughters has asthma, and the incense seems to cause her some distress. Dave Lybarger mentioned that one type of incense seemed to be almost caustic. Father Dexter explained that we were trying different kinds of incense to see which might be more suitable for our use. The kind being used now seemed to be better than others that have been tried. We also need to be careful about using only 1/2 spoon of incense as too much can also cause problems. Christine made the comment that with all the sprinkling she gets from Father Dexter's technique and with all the incense used lately she can come to church for her shower and cologne for the day. No one could possibly follow that comment, and so the liturgy discussion concluded on that note.

Selection of new members, new chair

Father explained that his vision for the council would benefit from a smaller sized group, and he asked the council to select one member to begin a new term at the next meeting. Some discussion about process ensued. Marge Tamberino asked about who was ending their term and who was continuing and for how long. Father explained that he invited members whose terms were concluding to stay on for an additional year in the interest of providing some stability through the transition, and all but three agreed. Dave Kuhlman, Gail Zika, and Willa Holmer decided to step down as of this meeting at the scheduled conclusion of their terms. Lori Pezzi, who was selected a year ago, also asked to step down as scheduling conflicts prevented her from being able to participate the way she hoped to be able to. Parishioners nominated seven individuals, and there was a brief discussion of people and their qualifications. Members were asked to cast one vote. Votes were tallied, and Patout Burns was the leading vote-getter and so was selected as a new member of the council. His term will begin with the next meeting, and will run for three years.

During the vote count, Father Dexter explained that in the future he hoped the council would select a chair from among its own members. He decided that for this term, though, to ask John Nanni to serve as chair. After speaking with John at some length about the parish and its needs and the opportunities we face, Father Dexter felt that John was well suited to providing direction for the council and asked him to consider serving as chair. John agreed, and the announcement was met by applause from members of the council. John's decision to defer his opening remarks to the council until the next meeting was greeted with further applause. The council thanked Dave Kuhlman, outgoing chair, and the outgoing members for their service to the parish.

Update on campaign, construction

Father Dexter passed out a letter which would be distributed in the bulletin and included in the next Cloister newsletter. The letter addressed the work now being undertaken in the church to improve restrooms and the lobby, to repair some plaster in the ceiling, and to recaulk and paint the stained glass windows. It also discussed the steps being taken to plan for building a new gymnasium and renovating the Junior High classrooms. The work in church will rehab the

existing bathrooms, provide new lighting and a new ceiling in the lobby area, and convert the old reconciliation room into a new accessible/family bathroom space. The timetable has been set in order to minimize inconvenience for any scheduled liturgies or weddings. The Campus Committee has also offered some good ideas about replacing the exterior doors with ones that would provide more of a welcoming feel and allow more light into the lobby area. And by replacing the internal lobby doors with glass doors, it would be possible for parents with smaller children to use the lobby area as a "cry room" and still have some access to the liturgy. This is not part of the present project, but it is something that is a longer term goal.

Father Dexter explained that we've hired Walsh and Associates, a fundraising consulting firm, to conduct a feasibility study to determine what funds we can reasonably expect to raise in a capital campaign. We've interviewed and selected an architectural firm to provide us with schematic designs and detailed cost information to help us understand what we might be able to afford in terms of improved facilities. The study process will begin with a parish informational meeting on the evening of Sunday, June 1st. Evening Prayer will be held in church beginning at 6pm, with the meeting following in the parish hall at 6:30. There was some discussion about times and venues, and how to conduct the meeting for the best effect. The recommendation was made to have multiple sessions, and one idea offered was to have briefer sessions after all Masses that weekend. These sessions are intended to give parishioners an overview of where things stand right now, and to invite their feedback both in comments made in the meeting and in participation in a mail-in survey which would be mailed out the following week.

Feedback

Dave Kuhlman opened the floor for general feedback. Dave Lybarger started with an update on the Why Catholic program. Over 80% of the parishes in the diocese have committed to participating in the four year program. Two sessions of six-week meetings are scheduled, and our goal is to use existing small faith groups and to possibly create new groups to allow people to participate. Dave is working with Valerie Cooper on assembling the planning team, and other meetings will provide group facilitators with training in the theology which will be presented in the program materials. Father Dexter said that he thought Christ the King was at some advantage in already having a set of active small faith groups. These groups are the best way to get people involved in and connected to the parish. With our recent growth, this is an ideal way for newcomers to get more involved.

Dave Kuhlman mentioned that he received a call from a concerned parishioner about our twin parish in Haiti. News reports suggest that conditions have further deteriorated, and it is possible that the people there may need help now more than ever. Dave urged people who might be interested in working more closely with our twin parish to contact him so that we might possibly extend our efforts beyond the financial support we presently provide.

Dave also reported that the Justice through Peace group sponsored a successful meeting featuring the Imam from the local mosque. The topic was on interreligious understanding, and the meeting attracted over 40 participants. Members of the group took part in meetings at the mosque which followed the meeting here at Christ the King.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for Saturday, July 12, 2008.