

Reflections on the Parish Pastoral Council

It is just three years ago that the announcement came from the Bishop that St. Anne's and Holy Angels' Parish were being linked as parishes and assigned two priests to share. With this announcement there were many mixed reactions including fear, distrust, anger and stubbornness. Perhaps there wasn't a positive feeling in anyone but the least negative of us decided "Let's see what is going to happen before we react!"

Since that time Father Graham and Fr John have taught us to call our relationship "A Communion of Parishes"; we have been relieved to learn that neither parish is shutting down and have come to realize this isn't just happening to us. It is the reality of our diocese – all parishes are joined in various 'families' to create working relationships that will see the Catholics of this diocese into the future with a greater missionary emphasis.

During these past three years a Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) was formed. This entity is different than those Parish Councils we think of from the past. Those of us who are fortunate to be on the PPC have had the opportunity to learn so much about the purpose of this group as we have tried to take on the related responsibilities.

The role of this group is to help our priests understand the spiritual needs of the parish and ensure that the mission of the Church is a part of everything we are doing in our Communion of Parishes. We are working together so the priests can carry out their ministry effectively. Perhaps it is easier to say what it is not. It is not a group that oversees Parish activities or organizes them. It is not a group that others need permission from to proceed with their good ideas. It does not coordinate the use of the halls, the state of the buildings or look at the use of parish funds. Other parishioners do these jobs very well!

The last two years this group of six people have been busy with developing our understanding of the task of the PPC. It has been a powerful experience as we have had to grow in our own relationship with Jesus and of our understanding of the mission He has given to us as Catholics. That mission is set in Matthew 28 vs.18-20. *Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."*

As well as local meetings we have also attend some sessions with other parishes and families of parishes. Everywhere people are struggling to understand their role. *Discerning* and *New Evangelization* are key words in the discussions. We are working now to develop the Vision of our unique partnership which will help all of us who are members come to better know our Lord Jesus Christ. With this Vision we will set some goals for the parish to attain and ways to measure if we have reached these goals.

In the meantime we have also dealt with some of the concrete steps to help us to think in terms of "our communities together," as Bishop Fabbro said we must in his letter on Pentecost. Some of the changes that have been accomplished in our Communion of Parishes to date are the combining of office space, a combined PPC, hiring a business manager, rescheduling Mass times, sharing Sacramental preparation and publishing a joint bulletin.

There is much to be hopeful and optimistic about as we face the future of our Communion of Parishes. Please continue to pray for The Parish Pastoral Council.

Parishioners will always be needed to serve on the PPC. Please pray and consider if this is an area you could use your talents to serve the Communion of Parishes and the mission of our Catholic Church.