

February 12, 2024 – Pastoral Council Meeting at SJPF Parishes office

Present – Fr. Jarred Kohn; Matt Eilerman (SM); Sarah Werner (SM); Kim Ruhenkamp (SM); Diana Paulus (SPP); Brenda Schmitmeyer (SPP); Michelle Seger (SPP); Paul Hoying (SH); Sarah Albers (SH); Steve Baker (HA); Sheila Bensman (HA); Deacon Paul Timmerman; Jodie Blindauer; and Jill Heitmeyer.

Absent: Jeff Banks (SH) and Leslie Higgins (HA)

6:30 PM

Fr. Jarred started the meeting by welcoming everyone and explained that Matt Eilerman had asked if the meeting could begin with everyone praying the evening vespers for the Liturgy of the Hours. Fr. Jarred led and all participated.

### **CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

**Mission** - Father Jarred explained that there are differences between the two schools in our family of parishes.

Holy Angels: established in 1876 and has come to rely heavily on the Holy Angels church stipend. Fr. Jarred stated he has been working with Denise Stauffer, principal of Holy Angels School, to reduce the amount of the stipend and has gotten to approximately a 33% reduction. Although Holy Angels School was once considered somewhat of an exclusive school in the past, this is no longer the case as it now has students attending from all walks of life and has changed the dynamics of the school. A positive is that we have had around 5 students per year come into the church.

St. Philomena Montessori School: only established in the last few years. While Holy Angels School is a traditional learning school, St. Philomena is Montessori learning where classes are more student directed. Fr. Jarred stated that this does appeal to some parents as an alternate to home schooling and incorporates a Catholic education. Difficulties can be that there is special training for Montessori teachers and because of that there are not a surplus of teachers. It was asked if there was a wait list for St. Philomena and Fr. Jarred responded that yes, Carrie Winhoven, principal of St. Philomena, had told him there was. It was then asked what is the cost to receive Montessori training for the teachers. Fr. Jarred stated that he thought it was around \$4,000 to receive the base training and that you have to receive additional training for the different classroom levels. Asked if there was a big turnover in teachers and Fr. Jarred said no. The question of the school expanding was brought up and Fr. Jarred responded that at this time, he had given Carrie permission to have an additional classroom for the Fall of 2024 to accommodate a 1-3 classroom. Is the thought that St. Philomena will be a PreK through 12 school? Fr. Jarred stated that at this time, any plans to build a school are on hold until 2027 as we focus on everything being put into place with Beacons of Light.

**Finances** - The question was asked when looking at the finances for Holy Angels School if they really fall short as much as the report showed. Fr. Jarred answered yes and again stated that he is working on lessening the stipend. Will this amount decrease with state funds and Fr. Jarred answered that he and Denise both hoped that would be the situation. A question was raised with regard to the PTO monies and Fr. Jarred explained that the archdiocese required us to pull those funds into the school and further explained that having monies overseen by employees is better for everyone involved.

**Future** – For Holy Angels School Fr. Jarred stated that difficulties will be declining birth rates and that there had been a legacy of past students sending their children, but that has changed with those who leave for college and don't return to this community. A question on whether there were students bused from some of the surrounding areas and Fr. Jarred said yes, he stated Hardin Houston and Jackson Center.

For St. Philomena, Fr. Jarred stated that they are in a holding pattern as they share the church basement with religious education classes and rooms for meetings and that there is not enough space to expand. He did state that the school's Development Director had asked about the school looking to rent a space off site in order to allow the school to grow and Fr. Jarred said he was fine with that. Another question was then would the school not be affiliated with Sacred Heart of Jesus Church and Fr. Jarred said that would not have to be the case and gave examples of other churches in the archdiocese that have schools not on their campuses. It was noted that having the school somewhat close would be nice as the students attend Mass and use the St. Philomena Chapel.

With regard to Lehman Catholic High School, Fr. Jarred stated that they are owned and are the responsibility of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Holy Angels Church does give a stipend of around \$350 per student who is a registered member of Holy Angels Church. It was pointed out that other churches do this for their student members who attend Lehman. Fr. Jarred shared that there are priests who rotate for Mass at Lehman from 4 or 5 families of parishes.

## **CONFESSIONS**

**Issues** - Fr. Jarred explained that after discussion with his vicars, the conclusion was Wednesday night confessions would be hard to do based on the fact that they are sometimes going between the different religious education classes on different campuses, having a priest available for emergency calls and other commitments.

**Opportunities** – Fr. Jarred said that we will be offering confession times at Sacred Heart on Fridays from 3pm-4pm during Lent. He said this was based on looking at the schedules for Crown and Honda, thinking that they may get people to stop after leaving work. This is also a better time for the priests as they are a bit more flexible with their schedules on Friday afternoons.

## **FINANCES**

**Where We Are** – Fr. Jarred said that he had been having conversations with some of his brother priests as to how discussion of finances fit into parish council. Fr. Jarred said he is looking to add members to some of our church finance committees where we would end up with 4-5 members on each committee. The April finance meeting will be setting the budget and Fr. Jarred said he will consider whether those will be sent to parish council members. The question was asked that wasn't the 2<sup>nd</sup> year member of parish council supposed to be part of the finance committee? Fr. Jarred said he is looking at how that will work and thanked the members for their patience.

A council member then asked how long are they to remain patient? When will we move forward? What is trying to be figured out? That Fr. Jarred keeps stating that the office is working on things and

that employees are overwhelmed. Fr. Jarred stated that he did not know how long it would be and asked if there were specific items.

One example given was that the money counters at St. Michael didn't know if they were supposed to count money on President's Day as the banks were closed. The answer was given that the money counters had been informed that they can count money on Mondays as long as the St. Michael office isn't closed. The family offices do not close for President's Day.

Another member stated that a parishioner had shared that when they called the parish office, they were given a response that the parish employee was too busy to help them. Fr. Jarred again asked about specifics which the member didn't want to share and so Fr. Jarred suggested she send him an email.

A third member stated concern with how funeral planning for a funeral last fall was handled at Sacred Heart church. It was explained that for that funeral, the Sacred Heart bereavement team was just being trained and not yet ready to meet with families. Two employees went and met the children of the deceased, providing them with the selection of readings and music specific for a funeral Mass. The member stated that the feeling was that the priests hadn't supported the family of the deceased in their time of need. Fr. Jarred stated that there was also confusion with a priest from outside our family of parishes being brought in to celebrate the Mass without the office knowing about it.

Another member then shared that she had the exact opposite experience. Her mother-in-law had taken a bad fall and had been hospitalized for an extended time at Miami Valley in Dayton, coming close to death. She talked about how supportive the priests had been to their family, visiting her mother-in-law on different occasions and how grateful they were for this.

A member who visits the homebound said she was hearing great things from them that when they call the office to request a visit from a priest, they are there within 2-3 days.

It was shared that we are hearing lots of good feedback from families that all four of our priests are doing a great job getting out to visit parishioners.

Fr. Jarred reminded members to share with others that it's best not wait until someone is at the end of life to call a priest when possible. The priest would like to have the opportunity to support the person by offering conversation, confession, and the Eucharist. Sometimes these things cannot be offered if the call comes when the person is actively dying. There are, too, those situations that are true emergencies and the priest will do everything they can to reach the person before death.

All of this discussion led to the question of exactly how to reach a priest for these types of situations. The parish office will put together instructions to be put in the bulletin and websites with detailed information.

Lastly, a member shared that they have worked in customer service for many years and that although the church isn't a business, when comparing it to a business, we are in a change period. When there is change, mostly what you hear are the complaints, rarely do you hear the compliments.

**Shared Expenses** – Fr. Jarred stated the shared expenses document will be shared when it is put together and will also provide last year's shared expenses document.

## **VISION**

**Peter on the Water** - Fr. Jarred shared how his adult life has been full of constant change, and he therefore has to work more with understanding when it is hard for people to accept change. He spoke about the story of Peter on the water and how Peter was courageous enough to get out of the boat and that when he kept his focus on Jesus, he was able to walk on the water. As soon as Peter takes his eyes off of our Lord, he begins to sink, but he was close enough to Him that Jesus reaches out His hand and saves Peter. Fr. Jarred encouraged all to remember that when we trust and keep our eyes fixed upon the Lord, He has us in hand.

**Picture** - Fr. Jarred went on to say that we can focus on the past and keep dwelling on painting a picture of gloom and doom, or we can decide to move forward and embrace the good that we have here in our family of parishes.

Fr. Jarred shared that his dream is that when you enter a communal space in all of our four churches that there would be a map of the world with pushpins showing all the missionaries that we are sending out into the world – not just the pushpins showing what we are doing here. He reminded us all that we have gifts that we can share with the universal Church.

**Future** - Fr. Jarred encouraged us to pray about what is the good that could be?

## **BEACONS FEARS**

A member asked how do we find a way to heal the hurt? Another member stated that St. Michael has taken a hit since the first of the year and although Fr. Jarred has said he has no intent to close any church, the financial announcement that was made brought fear and using the word dire was an overstatement. The member went on to explain that when looking at the Archdiocese of Cincinnati utilization report, St. Michael was reported at 67% utilization which was lower than parishioners expected when the attendance is good which is causing fear to abound. She also explained that she felt this was a misrepresentation and worked with a St. Michael parishioner to measure the pews. She stated that even if the archdiocese won't change the seating capacity it was her thought that at least announcing to parishioners will help ease fears.

Fr. Jarred stated that we can look at the numbers but reminded members that archdiocese isn't using those numbers to determine how many priests are assigned here or that it could be used as a Beacons stopper.

Several members stated they still felt it would be good to look at the numbers to help calm the fears of parishioners.

Fr. Jarred said he will have Deacon Paul Timmerman and George Sholtis work on this with Rob Brock of the archdiocese.

It was again brought up by a member that parishioners are still harboring fears over what happened to St. Patrick, adding that she felt people are going to other parishes because they feel more comfortable there. Another member added that they were told people are going to Minster as they

feel they are seemingly not doing anything with Beacons there and asked Fr. Jarred how do we get those parishioners back in our churches?

There was talk from several members about Fr. Jarred moving too fast with the Beacons process. They were posed with the question of what has changed in the last 120 days? It was pointed out that Fr. Jarred has listened to people's thoughts and fears and has stated that a decree would not be presented until at least 2026.

One item that was said that has changed is that there is only one Parish Council and discussed that they can only suggest things to Fr. Jarred.

Another member stated that we need to look before the last 120 days and how fast things were moving with the office move and other things.

It was pointed out that Father is listening to their suggestions and stated that the council members need to give credit where credit is due. Fr. Jarred has listened to suggestions and has slowed down on some of the Beacons process.

Another member shared that he felt like 90% of parishioners are not feeling all the fear – it's painful and it sucks, but the Holy Spirit will guide us, and we will come out okay on the other side of this.

Another member stated that when we look at all the churches in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, ours are fairly full in this area. The reality of it is that we only have so many pastors that can be utilized – we can be a part of the solution in doing our part in making the best use of the pastors – it will make us stronger. The secular world is pulling our faith apart – we need to pull together more now than ever. He went on to say that he had seen where parishioners were asking how do we prevent another St. Patrick? He said he had looked for more information on this and couldn't really find more than people's own memories. He also shared that he has had some conversations with parishioners on what their fears are and when he pushes for specifics, they can't really come up with anything.

Another member restated that he thinks we just need to slow down in order to calm fears.

When asked what that looks like to him, he stated he really didn't have any specific thing.

### **NEXT MEETING**

Fr. Jarred stated that going into the season of Lent, we would not be meeting again until after Easter. The next meeting will be in April.

Closing prayer was led by Deacon Paul

Adjourned: 8:15 PM