

Priest Council Meeting for the Diocese of Fargo
Minutes
Diocesan Pastoral Center
April 15th, 2011 -- 10 am

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Bishop Aquila, Msgr. Joseph Goering, Fr. Luke Meyer, Msgr. Wendy Vetter, Fathers Jim Goodwin, Mathew Pamplaniyil, Jim Cheney, Tim Johnson, Jake Miller, Len Loegering, Gary Luiten, Ross Laframboise, Bill McDermott

Chair – Fr. Jim Goodwin

Secretary – Fr. Gary Luiten

1. Opening prayer – by Bishop Aquila

2. Approval of minutes. Motion was made by Fr. Loegering, Seconded by Fr. Laframboise. Motion carried.

3. Standing Subcommittees.

a. Continuing Education.

- i. **Spring Ed Days.** Registration packet went out. The presentation will be on marriage, by Dr. Greg Kolodziejczak, and one small section concerning the diocesan policy manual on marriage.
- ii. **Presbyteral Days.** Possible topics: conflict resolution training, and pornography.
 1. Survey for Location of Presbyteral Days – A survey was taken by Msgr. Goering. 43 priests responded. 18 for Fargo, 15 for Valley City, 5 for Carrington, 1 for Devils Lake, 2 for Hankinson, and 1 for Jamestown. Discussion of the location included the cost of the motel rooms, a place that promotes fraternity/community, a more centrally located place.
 2. It was noted that Carrington has been gracious to us in the past at Spring Ed Days. One member mentioned that one of the priests said we should have all events in one motel/location – but it was thought that would be more expensive. The question was raised, if all the priests come, will Carrington be able to handle it? It was thought that between the two hotels in Carrington, that it should be able to handle it. Also, another benefit to Carrington is that the church is only two blocks away.
 3. If the location is in Fargo, then priests can do other business also. But it was mentioned that if we come to Fargo to do other things, then we are not spending time with our brother priests, which is a large part of what Presbyteral Days are all about.

4. One of the priests said that the Walk for Life was changed so that the priests coming to Fargo for Presbyteral Days could attend. The Walk for Life doesn't necessarily have to be on that weekend.
 5. Msgr. Vetter moved that we move the location for Presbyteral Days to Carrington in the fall. Fr. McDermott seconded it. Vote was unanimous.
- b. **Pastor's Review Panel** (Deans). It was agreed among the presbyteral council members that the deans would be the stable group for the bishop's consultation for the removal of pastors, since the deans make up the clergy personnel board.

4. Old Business.

a. Roman Missal Updates

- i. Fr. Meyer stated that the implementation of the new Roman Missal will take place on the first Sunday of Advent 2011. Resources went out in the clergy bulletin and the Bishop sent parish guides to all pastors. Fr. Meyer passed around the study missal that is currently published. They will be distributed to the priests at the Chrism Mass, for \$10. Father Meyer mentioned that there are several publishers for the Missal. Two have responded so far.
 1. World Library Publications - sent a pamphlet.
 2. Midwest Theological From sent a missal (in Latin for now). They will use the same tabs, binding, etc. for the English. They are \$500 with a \$100 discount through diocese.
- ii. In the new Missal, the use of the phrase "in these or other words" has been omitted. Thus there are no options. If there are questions with the wording, Fr. Meyer is available to offer resources and respond to questions. This is the time for parishes to make an action plan for the fall.
- iii. It was mentioned that pew cards have been sent out to parishes from various publishers. Fr. Meyer said that andwithyourspirit.com has been making them, made of plastic. LTP out of Chicago is making an 11 X 17 tri-fold. OSV also has one, but it is hard to read. Fr. Meyer encourages new sung Mass settings when possible.
- iv. Fr. Meyer mentioned that the general attitude from people in the diocese is good. He did 3 regional workshops, and the faithful were receptive in the workshops.

b. Policy on Clergy Compensation in Special Circumstances

- i. Fr. Goodwin did research. Some priests are disabled, and some want to take a year leave of absence. It was mentioned that the Code of Canon Law doesn't mention a Leave of Absence for priests as a possibility.
- ii. The question arose as to whom we are obligated to provide sustenance to. Some cannot take an assignment, and some refuse to take an assignment.
- iii. The question arose as to whether or not this could be considered a sabbatical?
- iv. Bishop mentioned that we should not grant leaves of absence for any reason. Usually, in the vast majority of cases, it is the first step out the door.
- v. Msgr. Goering mentioned that this policy helps us not to find a way to punish the priest, but if the priest leaves, we have something in place in which our obligations to

them end after a certain number of months, etc. Otherwise, a priest might come back in 3 years and want back pay, etc.

- vi. The question arose as to how long we have to remunerate someone who keeps refusing to accept an assignment? Then you give them sustenance, and not remuneration.
 - 1. We must ask, “What is the normal living for a male?”
 - 2. Bishop mentioned that if we offer them a place to stay and they refuse it, then we’ve made the offer, which is reasonable, and we’ve done our obligation.
 - 3. Fr. Cheney reminded us that priests must be serving for at least 10 years before we can collect from the retirement fund.
- vii. Msgr. Goering stated that updates will continue to be done.

c. **Father’s Day Collection** – “Doughnut hole”

- i. It was suggested that we change the day from Father’s Day. It steals the day away from biological fathers.
- ii. Bishop reminded us that we are spiritual fathers. He reminded us that collection and day was approved by this committee first. The Diocesan Finance council approved it. The Diocesan Pastoral Council was supportive of the collection. Crookston takes up the collection on Father’s Day, too.
- iii. Fr. Loegering asked if this would include payment for pharmaceuticals. Bishop mentioned that this collection only covers the priests who are on Medicare, whose expenses fall within the ‘doughnut hole.’

5. New Business.

- a. Priests in residence policy. Monsignor Goering brought up this topic. He brought it to the deans first.
 - i. There are 3 points concerning this topic:
 - 1. What would be the policy for priests in residence?
 - 2. What about priests on partial/complete disability?
 - 3. What about fully-retired priests?
 - ii. It was noted that pastors should have expectations on “in resident priests” and that the three groups should be treated differently.
 - iii. Weakness without the policy: Pastors don’t have much support as to what he can ask a priest to do who is in residence.
 - iv. In each document, there are the general principles.
 - v. Agreement should happen before priest moves into the rectory.
 - vi. Msgr. Goering went over details on handout.
 - vii. Priests in-residence:
 - 1. Financial
 - 2. Ministry
 - 3. Weekend Substitution
 - 4. Day Off
 - 5. Household

- viii. Retired Priests:
 - 1. Pastors have oversight.
 - 2. Finances. Parishes shouldn't have to compensate a retired priest. But in extended help in the parish, it was thought that parish should give them some compensation. There should be a bullet point there.
 - 3. Ministry expectations
 - 4. Weekend Substitution
 - 5. Household
- ix. Priests on Disability
 - 1. If they are able to do Masses, etc. that's, great. Then let's have the parish cover the non-salary things like Continuing Ed. Funds, payment for retreats, maybe a cell phone, etc., because he is able to help out on that level.
- x. Question: Does that affect their status on disability? It was mentioned that Scott said that it would not, because it is non-salary compensation.
- xi. Bishop asked us to consider this more, and in Carrington we will finalize this at Spring Ed. Days.

6. Parish Consultations (Canon 515 par. 2). The Bishop made preliminary comments:

- a. There are 2 things the Code requires:
 - 1. The Bishop must hear the presbyteral council on closure or mergers of parishes. The Bishop after hearing the council, makes a decision, and then issues a decree.
 - 2. The second step is the relegating of a church building to profane use. This too needs to be heard by the presbyteral council, and then it takes a second decree to relegate it to the profane state. When this happens, the altar and stained glass windows and other sacred items must be removed.
- b. Bishop talked to the Congregation for Clergy about a case in a different diocese where the bishop did not follow the canonical steps. Also, they were closing parishes that still had anywhere from 900 to 1000 families.
- c. Bishop said that he learned from the Congregation that if the building would be given or sold to the historical society, the Code of Canon Law does not allow for the sacred furnishings to remain in the facility as the building is considered profane when it is no longer owned by the Church.
- d. Fargo Parish Proposals. A final decision has not been made concerning the parishes. Keep these matters confidential.
- e. Rural parishes. It was mentioned that even if funds are still available where those buildings have closed, the funds may wrongly be used up for liability concerns and then nothing is left for upkeep of the cemetery. Liability is an important consideration for empty buildings, because people do go into the buildings.

Father Meyer then gave a summary of the status on the Chapels.

7. Relegation of Fulda to Profane Use

- a. Fr. Meyer spoke about its history - Nothing has been done in the last 2 years. The pastor, Fr. Graner, said that \$2,819 a year was not too much to keep it going so that people could have funerals there. One of the people there thought that his son could use it for a house, but he changed his mind. Msgr. Vetter wondered if they have funds for the cemetery.
- b. There were 15 signatures on the request to relegate the building to the historical society.
- c. After discussion, a motion was made that the church in Fulda be reduced to profane use. Fr. Matthew seconded it. Nine in favor, one against.

8. Relegation of Olga to Profane Use

- a. Pro's and Con's were discussed.
 - i. Reasons favoring Olga to be relegated to profane use:
 1. It would put an end to a pro-longed death. Let's focus our energies on the living parish in Walhalla. Functions to raise the money are not even being held in Olga. They are being held in Walhalla.
 - ii. Reasons against favoring Olga to be relegated to profane use:
 1. There are number of events going on. They are having chili feeds, etc. It is more than just a building. They are having a monthly Mass, at least during the summer. Pastor and people want to keep it open. Building is in good shape, furnace is good – newer fuel-oil, forced air furnace. If we give the option back to the people, we may have less alienation. How long would they expect the parish to be around?
- b. A motion was made to relegate Olga to profane use, with a recommendation to further consult with the people. 8 were in favor, 2 opposed.

9. Relegation of Orrin to Profane Use

- a. Pro's and Con's were discussed.
 - i. Reasons favoring Orrin being relegated to profane use:
 1. Mold in basement, very few homes left in town.
 - ii. Reasons against Orrin being relegated to profane use:
 1. Pastor wants it to continue to 2013. It wasn't thought that mold itself would be a reason for relegation.
- b. Msgr. Vetter moved that Bishop relegate Orrin to profane use, with the timing at the discretion of pastor and bishop. Father Cheney seconded it. Motion carried 10 to 1.

Relegation of Mt. Carmel to Profane Use

- c. Pro's and Con's were discussed.
 - i. Reasons favoring Orrin being relegated to profane use: Heating is expensive.
 - ii. Con's: People want to see building stay as is until 2013, and even after that.
- d. Motion made by Fr. Johnson that we recommend that, at the end of the 5-year chapel status, Mount Carmel be relegated to profane use. Msgr. Vetter seconded the motion. Motion carried 10 to 1.

BREAK – at 12:07 pm, College of Consultors enter for next part – a joint meeting.

Fathers Jasinski, James Meyer entered. Msgr. Skonseng and Fathers Hickin and Fineo were present by way of tele-conference.

10. Fargo Metro Area Parish Proposals

- a. In the original proposal made by the diocese, there was a possible merger of Blessed Sacrament and Holy Cross, and Blessed Sacrament would be closed, and St. Benedicts would move to the Horace site and St. Anthony's would be clustered with the Cathedral.
 - b. Bishop stated where things are at today with the proposal.
 - i. The possible clustering of St. Anthony's with the Cathedral is still an option;
 - ii. Moving St. Benedict to new site in Horace;
 - iii. New piece: keep Blessed Sacrament open, and move Holy Cross to a new site just south of I-94 and west of Veteran's Blvd with a new elementary school.
 - iv. In the meetings that took place in February and March, consistently surfaced that there be a more central location for the school, rather than putting one at St. Benedicts and one at Holy Cross – to have 1 school rather than 2.
 - v. At Holy Cross's current site, there is only 6 ½ acres. Parking would a problem and it is not possible to build a two track school at that site. It would prevent any future building on this site. Property is available at a more central location. Diocese has entered into a verbal agreement on property. Approximately 15 acres. Cost per acre: most properties began at \$85,000 an acre and went up to \$1 million an acre. Owners agreed on approx. \$86,000 an acre. All the specials are there. Other places said the lowest they would come to is \$90,000 an acre.
 - c. Bishop wants to hear the priest council on:
 - i. the proposals for Blessed Sacrament to close and merge with Holy Cross;
 - ii. Blessed Sacrament remain open with the move of Holy Cross to a new site; and
 - iii. the possible move for St Benedicts to a new site in Horace. The Congregation for Clergy stated that we can move a parish to a new site for good reasons which includes changes in population
- 11. Proposal for Blessed Sacrament and Holy Cross and possible move of Holy Cross:**
- i. Fr. Luke Meyer shared maps. Old boundaries were changed. 40th Ave. boundary would balance out the three western parishes better.
 - ii. Msgr. Goering said that part of the proposal at first had 2 schools. Wouldn't it be better to have one school with 2 or 3 tracks of each grade? 64th Ave. at this time would be too far. Blessed Sacrament recommended this, and they agreed to help pay for the school.
 - iii. Msgr. Skonseng asked what town St. Benedict's would be in if it moves. Bishop said Horace.

- iv. Msgr. Vetter wanted to know what would happen to the old Holy Cross Building. Bishop said we could sell it. A wall would be put up which gives the Lutheran congregation their piece of property, and the rest of it we sell. Fr. Jim Meyer said there are 9 residential parcels that could be sold.
 - v. Fr. Jim Meyer thought that 80 to 85 % of the congregation of Holy Cross would accept the idea of moving. He said, "We cannot change the present design for future growth. We have to build for the future."
 - vi. Father Loegering said that he thought building only one school is a good sell, talking to the priests in his deanery. Fr. Cheney's deanery agrees.
 - vii. Fr. Jim Meyer was wondering what size of a building bishop was looking at building. Bishop said probably a 900 to 1,000 seat capacity church, to be on the safe side.
 - viii. Fr. Luke Meyer said that the area will grow 21% over the next 5 years according to projected demographics.
 - ix. When asked for the pastor's perspective, Fr. Jim Meyer said, "I am an obedient servant. I think it is good."
 - x. Fr. Laframboise proposed that Holy Cross move to a new site with a school. Fr. Cheney seconded it. Vote was unanimous in favor of the move.
- b. The move of St. Benedict's to the new site – Give them 5 years for the transition. They are going from a parish with 40 families in their boundaries to a parish with over 700 families. Presently there are around 200 households that come from a 50-mile radius. The people can move the present Church building if they want. It is up to them.
- i. Fr. Hickin noted that, in looking at the situation, there is no community ownership of the project. Where would the money come from to build the church?
 - ii. Bishop told us that Sts. Anne and Joachim had the same problem, and look where they are now 15 years later. Msgr. Goering noted that at that time of the initial proposal the people thought that they would be asked to build a school and only the present members would be building it.
 - iii. Fr. Hickin wondered if there has been a change in their attitudes now. Bishop stated it depends on who you talk to. Younger families are supportive of the move, older families not as much. Many recognize the plan to move makes sense with the growth in population. The new site would be much nearer the population and not in an industrial area.
 - iv. Msgr. Vetter said: "If you leave the present building as is, and use it until the present building is built, you won't have much opposition, and then they can leave the old building as a chapel of ease, and aim for worshiping at the new site at the end of 5 years."
 - v. Fr. Kadlec understands the need for the move, but it has been a challenge.
 - vi. Fr. Cheney said that it might be an easier sell for St. Benedicts if they know that they won't necessarily be building a school. Bishop said that eventually they will have to build a facility for religious education and if growth continues as projected there is the possibility of school on the land in 15 to 20 years.

- vii. Fr. Laframboise moved that we recommend to the Bishop that St. Benedict's parish move to a new site with the goal of worshipping at the new site within the next 5 years. Msgr. Vetter seconded the motion. Vote carried unanimously.

c. Cathedral/St. Anthony's

- i. Fr. Cheney consulted with the rector and pastor. Frs. Wilhelm and Courtright see a benefit in the two remaining as parishes. The pastors could remain in their rectories and work in consultation with each other. They would collaborate in R.E. Either side has room for R.E. students.
- ii. Msgr. Vetter mentioned that staff would still be needed at St. Anthony.
- iii. It was also noted that St. Mary's is having a difficult time financially.
- iv. Msgr. Vetter stated that if the Cathedral is in need of money, let's ask the diocese to help fund St. Mary's by a cathedraticum. The cathedral population has been dropping over the years, and consists mostly of old people. Because Cathedral is the mother church, he recommends funding through the cathedraticum.
- v. Bishop mentioned that this came up at the meetings in which a layperson told him that the cathedral should just "take 1 to 2 percent of the income from each parish." Bishop mentioned that The Code of Canon Law calls for a cathedraticum. It is not a huge amount. Msgr. Vetter agreed.
- vi. Fr. Jim Meyer noted that if the parish is asked for 1% for diocese, x% for cemetery, x% for schools, etc. it gets to be a lot.
- vii. Fr. Cheney mentioned that there may be a good future in St. Mary's. When the old people die, younger people may come in and buy their homes. It would be good to consider catholic schools being supported diocesan wide too.
- viii. Bishop likes the idea of a cathedraticum, because it teaches the importance of the cathedral as the mother church of the diocese.
- ix. Motion: Msgr. Vetter moved that we keep St. Mary's and St. Anthony's as they are with the caveat that they work together on religious ed; and that the diocesan wide cathedraticum of 1% be established for the Cathedral. Fr. Cheney seconded it. Vote was unanimous in favor.

12. Proposal to sell Cardinal Muench Seminary

- a. Msgr. Vetter spoke in agreement with what bishop wants to do with the seminary.
- b. A proposal from Fr. Ermer was reviewed. This proposal was to have pastoral center move to seminary building, and have seminary available for priest days, retreats etc., and to sell the present pastoral center building.
 - i. Fr. Loegering wanted to know what the cost is of the upkeep of the building, value, etc?
 - ii. Bishop said that we are dealing with a building that is older, that was built quickly and poorly. It is not the best facility around. Most developers who have looked at the facility have said they would probably demolish most of the building. Father Jasinski

noted it cost lots to heat the building. There is no insulation. It does not have private bathrooms for a retreat facility.

- iii. As a retreat facility, there are much better facilities in terms of how well built it they are, plus some rooms have shared bathrooms, more rooms, etc. Priests would much prefer the preservation of Maryvale for retreats, etc. Father Jasinski noted if you keep CMS for retreats, you would have too much space.
 - 1. It was noted that even the Queen of Peace didn't sustain itself.
 - 2. Msgr. Goering was not sure whether priests coming on retreat would want to be where the diocesan offices are.
 - 3. Many priests on the council noted that the present pastoral center site is a much better location than the CMS site.
- c. Fr. Goodwin asked if anyone had expressed interest in building on the property.
 - i. Bishop said 4 or 5 have expressed interest in it.
 - ii. Father Goodwin agreed that selling it is the best choice.
- d. Bishop asked for a recommendation from the presbyteral council and for a vote of consent from college of consultors.
 - i. Priests' Council: Msgr. Vetter moved that the priests' council recommend to the Bishop that the diocese sell Cardinal Muench Seminary and property. Fr. Miller seconded it. All were in favor.
 - ii. College of Consultors: Voted in favor of the decision to sell the CMS property.

13. Meeting Adjourned around 2:15 pm.