

Cluster #25

Meeting Minutes

March 24, 2008

Norm Belanger called the Cluster #25's transition committee meeting to order at 7:00 pm at Most Holy Trinity Conference Room followed by an opening prayer. The following members were present: Msgr. Rene Mathieu, Fr. Coleman O'Toole, Fr. Greg Dube, Norm Belanger, Stephen St. Cyr, Joe Goozie, Paulette Millette, Jean Saunders, Anne Daly and secretary, Louise Beaulieu. Excused: Fr. Kent Ouellette, Fr. James Brewer.

Subcommittee reports:

Faith Formation: Paulette has been away and did not attend the last Faith Formation meeting. She wanted to know if she should contact Sister Angela when she comes on board on June 1. Msgr thought that would be a good idea and that she should touch base with the Faith Formation group to see how things are going after Holy Week.

Parish Life: Msgr again expressed some concern with parish life committee minutes since their activities could also be appropriate to the Social Justice & Peace committee. Without a representative from this transition committee, the group is without direction. After some discussion, Msgr will ask Fr Kent to contact the Parish Life chair, Gloria Trottier, regarding a liaison to the group.

Social Justice & Peace: Anne reported that parishioners were very generous with the socks collection for refugees, a total of 1,958 pairs. Valentine & Easter cards were sent to St Mary's shut-ins. There will be a blood drive at St. Philip on June 7 and they will be counting money for the Senegal Well project tomorrow. The Alfred Shelter is asking for help with their spaghetti supper fundraisers.

Communications: Everyone congratulated Steve and his committee for the first consolidated 7 parish bulletin on Easter Sunday. Steve then gave the credit to Nancy McClintock and the bulletin editors. Steve reported that 2 out of 3 tasks assigned to the Communications committee are now complete (naming the parish and the consolidated bulletin) and they will now work on the Good Shepherd website. The new Mass schedule will be in the 3 local newspapers this weekend. It was apparent that if people read the new cluster bulletin, that they will find a great deal going on. We are awaiting possible complaints regarding the Mass intentions since the name of the person who paid for the Mass is no longer being published. Between identifying the time, place where the Mass will be held and the number of Masses that are still being said, all agreed that keeping Mass intentions into one column made more sense. Steve reported that there will be a different cover every week until the Good Shepherd weekend a few weeks from now. All were in agreement that Easter weekend was a good time to have the first issue of the 7 parish bulletin due to the increased attendance at the Masses.

Evangelization: Fr. Greg reported on the Disciples in Mission program for Lent. There were 200 adults, 50 teens and 50 families who participated plus students and staff at both schools. At the next meeting, the evangelization committee will determine a date, place and time for a Reflection Day which will include everyone who participated this year and all who are interested to get their feedback of the Disciples in Mission program and to set goals for next year. Steve indicated that his DM group would have like to continue after Lent but no one knew how to go about it. Msgr. explained that that is what the reflection day is all about. There are many programs that can go throughout the year, i.e. bible studies, new catechism study, etc.

Buildings & Ground: Jean reported that the B&G committee has one more meeting scheduled and should finalize their recommendations which will be presented at the next cluster transition meeting. Jean admitted that she personally struggles with the political overtones in the original report. If St. Andre's tower can be repaired for \$250,000 instead of the million dollars as estimated by Dicon, why do we need a large church in Saco when we have 2 large ones in Biddeford? Parking at St. Andre is still an issue and the committee's recommendation may include tearing down the rectory for more parking. She feels that once people start going to other churches, there should be less resistance in which buildings we keep open. She does feel that we should still invest in the future by buying land.

Because of rising oil prices, Msgr pointed out that the Finance committee will be looking at what buildings to keep open next winter especially for daily Masses. Anne inquired if St. Mary's would be closed due to the expected increase in the price of oil. Anne feels people are now almost ready for the closure and delaying it is making it harder for all the parishioners. If closure is going to happen, maybe it could possibly coincide with the opening of St. Brendan's this summer as this might make things easier for the parishioner to accept.

Msgr is also concerned to see how the response will be this upcoming weekend after cutting 2 Masses in Saco. Decreasing Masses had to affect Saco this time since Biddeford was hit so hard a few years ago. The Notre Dame Saturday 4 pm Mass is usually standing room only and the 8:30 am at MHT was followed by a monthly KC pancake breakfast so both parishes are hurting. The two parishes decided on their own to express their sadness. Fourteen parishioners attended a meeting at MHT to vent their frustrations with the recent changes. Notre Dame parish hosted a thank you breakfast for all the volunteers and participants of the Saturday 4 pm Mass. Fr. Kent attended the MHT meeting and Msgr attended the breakfast.

Steve said that there was a big difference between how the Biddeford Masses were cut and the way the Saco Masses were reduced. There was much more participation from the parishioners this time around. All hope that we have learned from these past experiences and hopefully the next the reduction of Masses will be a little easier on parishioners and volunteers. Those involved expressed that they would have like to know before everyone else that their Mass was being cut, and if other arrangements are available then that would have softened the blow, i.e., the organist and choir of the Notre Dame Saturday 4 pm Mass were asked to provide music at the new 4 pm Saturday Mass at St Andre.

It is apparent that these changes are most difficult for the people who are in charge. Msgr celebrated the last 4 pm Saturday Mass at Notre Dame since he is still the pastor there. He also announced that Helene Fortier, who no longer has to play at the St Andre's 5:30 pm Mass, will provide music and direct the 8 am French mass at Notre Dame. Msgr emphasized that the differences between each parish is unique but there is room for all mind sets – each has their own strengths and gifts – we can learn a lot from each other.

It was wonderful to see everyone work together on the 3 days of the Triduum. Msgr believes that the pillars of the church attend the Triduum and if it was a joyful experience for them then they will spread the word. It is very intense to plan all of these services so that they will run smoothly and by Saturday night, all who were involved were exhausted. Holy Thursday and Good Friday were well attended with 600 people at St Joseph for each ceremony and it was very moving to see parishioners from every parish involved. Holy Saturday with the 30 catechumens at St Joseph was attended by about 450 people and there was a full house at Notre Dame. Msgr also said that the Cluster Lenten penance service was well attended by mostly St Philip parishioners and it was very nice to meet with them as well.

All agreed that the next meeting will be to review and re-educate ourselves with the original report that was sent to the bishop and review the B&G recommendations and then set a timeline for what should be done. Msgr said that 2010 is coming fast and if we lose a priest before then, more Masses will have to be cut. Msgr was hoping that Fr. Labarre who is now retired would continue to help us out but he has now been assigned to Houlton until July. We cannot always count on the retired priests since they may be asked to help out where needed in the Diocese. Jean will ask Paula Moses to attend the next meeting. Jean asked if B&G should continue considering new ideas that may come up like a recent offer from the Town of Old Orchard to purchase some of the ballpark land for a new church. Norm feels that all proposals should be brought to the transition committee.

Fr. O'Toole is concerned about repairs to the outside stairs at St Margaret - do we spend money on repairs or are we selling? All agreed that since the repair of the stairs is a safety issue, then the repairs are needed.

Next meeting, Monday, April 14 at 7:00 pm at Most Holy Trinity Conference Room. Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm after closing prayer.

Minutes submitted by: Louise Beaulieu