

## Second Post-Synod General Session- April 16, 2016

Jamie Dance

Bishop Caggiano called the meeting to order at 8:15 a.m. and began with morning prayer. Bishop announced that much has happened and that what we envisioned in the Synod process is coming to reality. He is particularly anxious that we delegates continue our role as consultants so that honest, frank, and respectful dialogue may continue and help the diocese as it moves forward. Bishop said that three words animate the Synod process: Discernment, Patience, and Perseverance. He envisioned a living process of implementation, not a static mandate. Discernment requires us to be obedient and open to the Holy Spirit, while doing things that are coherent with what the Synod determined. Patience, he said, was not one of his strong points, but it is important that what we do be done right, even though it may take longer. Perseverance is a gift of the Holy Spirit and allows us to be focused, attentive, and firm in the process. Bishop Caggiano likened this process to creating a mosaic, not a road map, saying that each piece has its own character and beauty. These initiatives will require tweaking as we progress so that, in the end, we will have created a harmonious mosaic picture, what he described as “a springtime of renewal for the Diocese of Bridgeport.”

Patrick Turner, Director of Strategic and Pastoral Planning, led the rest of the meeting, as Bishop had a Funeral Mass to celebrate. Patrick then introduced Rose Talbot-Babey, the new Office of Faith Formation member in charge of Elementary Formation for the diocese. After visits with 69 of the 82 diocesan DRE's and CRE's, she has identified seven needs: (1) educational formation for DRE's and CRE's; (2) establishment of faith formation and sacramental policies, procedures, and standards; (3) creation of a Diocese of Bridgeport information directory; (4) creation of a yearly calendar for the diocese; (5) re-introduction of the Faith Formation Board; (6) special needs ministry and training in regional or vicariate parishes; and (7) regional training sessions and spiritual enrichment for catechists.

Patrick Turner then introduced Kim Quatela, Coordinator of Family Formation. Among her duties are the Marriage Prep Program, Sacramental Preparation, Youth Ministry, and World Youth Day (Krakow 7/22 to 8/1). After listening and assessing the current programs, she said that her biggest challenge is revamping our faith formation programs. Kim pointed to marriage preparation as one area that has already been revamped. There were three tasks involved in this: finding the best program and training, “rebranding” and standardizing the program, and recruiting couples. It was important to update this program and make it relevant to couples, so that the main objective, “sharing Christ's vision of married love with engaged couples, including the theology of marriage, communication, intimacy, and married spirituality,” would be central to the formation program. This new program will be an all-day (8 a.m. to 8 p.m.) marriage conference focusing on formation and education.

The day will include three meals, Mass and confession, and beautiful study materials. The cost per couple is \$200 and each session will accept 50 couples. In January, there will be a program for Spanish-speaking couples. Kim finished her presentation by announcing the programs that Faith Formation will be offering in the future: Women's Conference (11/12), Men's Conference (Spring 2017), Ministry to Divorced and Separated Catholics, Parenting Resources, NFP and Fertility Awareness, and RCIA Formation and Resources.

Evan Psencik, the newly named head of the office of Faith Formation's Youth and Young Adult Formation and the Catholic Service Corps, was unable to attend the meeting.

Patrick Donovan, head of the Diocesan Leadership Institute, is also the new chairman of the Catechetical Task Force, and will be coordinating the catechesis programs across the diocese and identifying concrete ways to reform our catechetical methods and programs. There are four groups on his committee: Assessment (survey), Research (what's working), Encounter (also called "Dreamers," the 10-15 things parishes can do to encounter Christ), and Accompaniment (also called "Travelers" with one another in the journey of faith). Patrick says that his job is to ask questions relating to catechesis for the very young to the very old. There will be a full report issued in June.

The Catholic Service Corps had its charter document approved on March 8, 2016. Its mission statement reads: "The Catholic Service Corps of the Diocese of Bridgeport provides opportunities for all the faithful, especially young people, to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ and broaden their faith by inviting them to embrace a life of Christian service and the call to be a missionary disciple." Among its purposes are to help participants make Christian service an enduring life-long choice, to connect young people with the Catholic Church and its teaching in a meaningful and relevant manner, and to engage in work that seeks to bring about a more just society. Patrick said that the next steps are to implement the approved communications strategy, begin the search for a part-time coordinator, and plan for the inaugural Mass and Day of Service on September 9, 2016.

Under Patrick Donovan, the Diocesan leadership Institute is focused on liturgical ministry, youth leaders, and clergy, and hopes to clarify what each brings to the table. Patrick identified four steps in the path to active ministry: the call to ministry, initial formation, authorization for ministry, and ongoing formation (necessary to maintain authorization). He made clear that formation at any level must be rooted in hospitality, recognize local experience, and be manageable and relevant. All are called to ministry, but each must determine how to serve Christ and others by discerning his or her personal gifts. The Institute has identified five ways in which to educate catechists: online, individually, in person, in groups, and in a variety of languages.

Next, Patrick Turner introduced Fr. Michael Dogali, vicar of the Strategic and Pastoral Planning Commission, who explained its four areas of study:

Communications, Procurement, Information Technology and Database Management, and Human Resources. The commission has four objectives: to foster servant leadership in the work of the curia; to allow the curia to be more efficient, responsive, and cost effective; to oversee pastoral planning; and to position the curia to respond more efficiently to needs of parishes as they implement the Synod recommendations. Area experts have been asked to serve on the study committee, and their investigation will begin with the Catholic Center. What the Commission is striving for is to put forward a long-term plan (2+ years) for parishes. To assist in this plan each parish will be asked to perform a self-assessment and evaluation.

Patrick Turner continued the presentation on the Pastoral Planning Process, describing the four major steps necessary to make planning an integral part of our diocesan and parish life: (1) data review of sacramental and financial trends, (2) parish self-assessment and evaluation, (3) "Disciple Maker Index" results, and (4) creation of a pastoral plan. Pastoral trends are especially relevant to this study as they entail Mass counts, sacramental trends, faith formation trends, parish registrations, engagement in parish and diocesan life, and Annual Catholic Appeal and parish giving. For the parish self-assessment and evaluation, the commission has identified four areas of study: Parish life (liturgy, worship, family life, evangelization, leadership development, catechesis, and education), finance, buildings and facilities, and community life.

Patrick also gave us an update on the Diocesan Marriage Tribunal. It is fully functional and new forms are in downloadable files. There are currently about 100 open cases before the Tribunal. He also announced that the Diocesan Pastoral Council is up and running, as is the Presbyteral Assembly.

The meeting was adjourned at noon.