



Diocese of Green Bay
PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
September 9, 2021

Attendees: Bishop David Ricken, Very Reverends John Girotti, Luke Ferris, Philip Dinh-Van-Thiep, Mathew Simonar, Jerome Pastors, Dennis Bergsbaken, Dennis Ryan and William O'Brien, Reverends James Lucas, Adam Bradley, Tom Long, Bill Swichtenberg, Carl Schmitt, Daniel Schuster, Doug LeCaptain, Joel Sember, James Baraniak, O. Praem., and Barry Metzentine
Excused: Very Reverend David Beaudry, Reverends Bill Hoffman and Larry Seidl

Opening Activities

- Meeting opened at 10:04 a.m.
- Bishop Ricken led the opening prayer
- A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda. Motion approved unanimously.
- A motion was made and seconded to approve and adopt the meeting minutes of the February 4, 2021 meeting as written. Motion approved unanimously.
- Mission statement was recited by Council members.

Bishop Opening Comments

I hope we can continue to find ways to share the mission with the parishes. I want to talk about the Chrism Mass. It is a major event, a lot of planning and cost. Many of you said that you enjoyed the simplicity of just the priests being there. I do think we need a broader base of discernment. I would like to take my time with this. With the synod, there might be some opportunities to listen to the people. With the Chrism Mass, the Divine Worship office needs to know fairly soon what direction we want to take. With Covid, we could keep it with the priests and then discern in the future what the Chrism Mass looks like. We are supposed to have a Diocesan Eucharistic Congress and a National Eucharistic Congress. I think there might be opportunities to thank our laity, encourage them to be involved. The group had a quick discussion on the Chrism Mass.

Bishop's Appeal Report/2021 Billing/2022 Goal—Tammy Danz, Josh Diedrich and Mike Speel
The Bishop's Appeal 2021 currently has raised \$6,219,154 from 27,212 donors. The average gift is \$228. The Crozier Society members represent 55% of the amount raised for the Bishop's Appeal goal.

We have 118 parishes that have exceeded their goal. The refund for those parishes is currently at \$326,308. The number of parishes to be invoiced, as of today, is 38 parishes. Twelve of those parishes are within \$1,000 of their goal.

A motion was made and seconded to recommend the approval for St. Therese of the Little Flower on behalf of the Diocese of Green Bay, Inc. to invoice no more than 38 parishes that are short of their 2021 Bishop's Appeal goal in November. These billings will not exceed \$121,668. Motion carried unanimously.

This group discussed whether to raise the Bishop's Appeal goal or keep it the same.

A motion was made and seconded to keep the Bishop's Appeal Goal for 2022 the same as last year. Motion carried unanimously.

Cathedraticum—Mike Speel

The current Cathedraticum assessment of \$2.1M is unchanged from the prior year which was reduced from the approved \$2.278M for that year due to Covid-19. Paul's recommendation for 2022-2023, is to go back to the level previously approved for fiscal 2020-21. The current assessment of \$2.1M is not covering the canonical costs of the Diocese which is currently absorbing the shortage. Fr. Schuster commented that Paul wrote a great letter explaining the Cathedraticum and hopes that a similar letter will be sent this year.

Fr. Joel stated that the last time the Presbyteral Council discussed the Cathedraticum the data sheet did not adequately explain the expenses for what it was supporting and repeated his request for more useful information for future discussions. Mike responded that the Cathedraticum covers the operating costs of the Chancery, Chancellor, Safe Environment, Marriage Tribunal, and aspects of unassigned and international priests. These costs include Virtus training, USCCB/WCC dues and the Holy See. Bishop added that the international priests have processing costs to get them here and the training and dues are not optional disbursements. Mike also indicated his willingness to work on a report to respond to Fr. Joel's request.

A motion was made and seconded for Cathedraticum to be \$2,780,045 for the coming year. There were 5 yes and 3 no.

Josh gave an update on the one by One campaign. The goal is \$70M. We have already received \$26.7M. Cash already received is \$14.2M. We have simplified the goals: bringing Christ to those in need, growing priestly vocations, strengthening parishes and helping others discover Christ. There is a Block 2 relaunch. We are close in Oshkosh to building a new school. Bishop is working hard at his \$15M goal.

Update on Synod—Tammy Basten

Bishop—The Holy Father wants the diocese to do a synod on synodality. Look at ways to listen to people. Some of this literature is very similar language, such as discipleship and accompanying. Tammy is looking over the information to see what we can do.

Tammy—We received two documents that will assist us for the synod in 2022-2023. It is very much something that we can incorporate in some of the things that we are already doing. The idea is that the opening session for the Holy Father will be October 9, 2021. Then the diocesan opening will be Bishop Ricken on October 17, 2021 along with all of the churches will be doing it on the same day. Bishop will be doing his at the cathedral. It will be at the regular Sunday Mass, and it will be recorded to use on social media and other ways. It can be part of the televised Mass on that day. The synod is incorporating wide-spread listening. Reach out to those who you normally hear from, want wide participation. Give special care to those who are excluded. Take the listening sessions and dialogue and gather information by April 2022 and share that information with bishops. A lot of the themes tie in with what you are already doing. Pull in areas and voices that we have not heard from. The diocesan phase will be having local gatherings regionally. There are ten themes that have been outlined and tools that you can use. Initiate listening, dialogue and

community discernment. The idea is that everyone has something to learn. The themes: journeying companions, listening, speaking out, celebrating, co-responsible in the mission, dialogue in church and society, with the other Christian denominations, authority and participation, discerning and deciding, forming ourselves in synodality.

Bishop—The opportunity could be to have listening sessions with the laity regionally. Begin the vicariate discussion. This is designed for bishops where there is a synod every five years. Pope Francis is all about mission and responding to the community. Let's discover as a church how can we be in a better relationship with the world and the church.

Update on Priests/Report on Priests who are Ill—Fr. Luke Ferris

Fr. Luke reported on priests who are ill. We are asking parishes to have people wear a mask when giving communion and also have a section where people can social distance.

Foundational Catechetical Certification Program and its Role in Diocese—Dr. Peter Murphy and Maximus Cabey

Peter—This is an opportunity to dive into our diocesan goals. It can enhance discipleship with our catechists as well as vocations. Franciscan University serves children but they also really try to reach the entire family. Every parishioner will have access to the tools. This platform is for those who form others.

Maximus—Thanks to a grant from Catholic Foundation, it is free to our parishes. As a diocese, we are partnering with the Catechetical Institute – The Franciscan University. We have a list of the tracks that are free for the next year. You can do a workshop.

Maximus—We have different tracks for different people. They do not need to take the workshops in any particular order. Each workshop takes about an hour to complete. With each workshop, there are two hours of tasks that they need to do. It generates an email to a mentor, so they will follow up with this person to accompany them in the process. This is a great tool for in-services.

Peter—The workshop is specifically based on what position the individual is going to do in the school. They constantly have new tracks for formation. There is a track for Hispanic Ministry. We designed our tracks and we worked with Franciscan University to create the tracks that we needed.

Reduction of St. Boniface Church to Secular Use—Bishop Ricken

Fr. Girotti—Reviewed the canon law on churches with the group. Catholics have rights. One of those rights, before a church building is closed the Catholics have a right to know why and there has to be a compelling reason for why it is closing. Souls have to be taken care of. The challenge here is that St. Francis of Assisi was established as a church in 2005, six parishes merged. Four parishes remained and now only three are being used. St. Boniface has not been used. Bishop has to hear from the Presbyteral Council before he makes a decision. There is a group in Manitowoc that do not agree with the closure of St. Boniface. Before we advise Bishop of this, we will hear from Fr. Doug and his team.

Fr. Doug—Dcn. Mark Legreve and Pat are here from the parish.

Dcn. Mark—This is a consolidation from six down to one in 2005. At that time, it was decided there would be no more weekend Masses at St. Boniface. It has been 8 years since there was a Mass at St. Boniface. The proxy was approved by Bishop and then there was a letter that gave the group five years to raise money to save St. Boniface. In November 2019, we met with Bishop and shared our pastoral plan with the community. We wanted to pursue a resolution with St. Boniface. Covid hit, things slowed down. In January 2021, we had our annual meeting virtually and we stated we

were ready to move forward with our proxy. Fr. Doug gave the group 90 days to give a proposal. In February 2021, there were multiple delays. In June 2021, they gave a proposal and the plan lacked details. Nothing was committed to, only thoughts of what it could be. They proposed that they would do nothing until after the parish built a new school. The cost to operate St. Boniface is about \$1,000 per month. Our vision, we are going to have a discipleship center at Waldo site, have our administrative site at Grand. We would like to invest in Grand and Waldo. We would also like to address the lack of Hispanic Ministry.

Fr. Girotti—The Presbyteral Council has been through this about 6 years ago. The Presbyteral Council approved for Bishop to go ahead and reduce St. Boniface Church to secular use. The group formed to oppose. Bishop agreed to listen to the group and give them time to give a plan. The counter argument, the group would say they have a viable plan to raise \$2M. Lee Kummer was most recently president of the Catholic Foundation.

Fr. Doug—There were six letters originally and now we have probably 12 families.

Fr. Girotti—The group believes that it can be used for Hispanic Ministry or other types of ministerial outreach. There are possibilities, but the challenge is where the money will come from. If they do appeal the closure, this will probably be the first appeal that could head to Rome. If Bishop decides to offer a decree to close the parish, any parish member has the right to appeal. Then the group has a set amount of days to appeal Bishop's decision and send their appeal to Rome. Then we may have about 3 years in a holding pattern to go through the process.

Bishop—Have you had a personal sit down with the group?

Fr. Doug—The group has shared their voice at the pastoral council.

Pat—While that group was putting the plan together, we did meet with Lee and some others from their group.

Fr. Schuster—Does that group know you are here?

Dcn. Mark—Yes they know that we are going to the Presbyteral Council. We published the letter to Bishop it was in our bulletin last week and was posted on social media.

Barb—If Bishop moves forward with this, it will be posted at their worship sites and then they will have a set amount of days to appeal.

Fr. Joel—If their appeal fails, then what?

Fr. Doug—Demolish is one of the options and other options.

Dcn. Mark—It would cost about \$500K to tear it down.

Fr. Schuster—If this is rejected, is the group willing to buy it?

Pat—They are not willing to buy it if it is not a church.

Dcn. Mark—It has not been used in 8 years.

Fr. Swichtenberg—If this goes their way, do they want the parish to be responsible for the building?

Dcn. Mark—We would be coordinating all of the ministerial things at that location.

Fr. Swichtenberg—It would be nice if the homeless shelter or someone else could use it.

Pat—Dcn. Mark was the lead that helped create the men's homeless shelter in Manitowoc.

Fr. Bill—The decision was made 6 years ago?

Bishop—The group appealed. So, I put a hold on it to see if the parish could work through a plan. The parish has so much infrastructure. Another possibility is if we were then to turn that into an oratory and a special group of priests assigned to that oratory and promote Hispanic Ministry. It is pretty remote that this would happen.

Fr. Doug—My sense is that Lee is getting people to believe that Manitowoc will be growing and that they will need that location as a worship site.

Fr. Tom—Could an option be to propose that we reduce it to secular use and that this group creates an organization that could specify how they can use the building where we could possibly offer a few Masses per year?

Fr. Doug—I told them that if it is reduced to secular use, then we would no longer do any Masses.

Fr. Carl—The group seems to want more time again and then they would make a decision. They are not making any action. That is another delay tactic to not step up and do something.

Dcn. Mark—That is the challenge that we are working with. The individual has the means to create an organization.

Fr. Doug—It could cost \$100K to cover salaries to maintain the church with no auxiliary space.

Dcn. Mark—There is no basement. I don't see the commitment from Lee.

Barb—We don't want fundraising to happen during the one by One campaign. But Josh mentioned that Lee could pull from outside donors from the diocese.

Fr. Girotti—To his defense, he might say that he is holding off until the school fundraising is done.

Barb—The parking lot needs to be done at St. Boniface. They are saying that they have not been able to get estimates because of Covid. But they have had a good amount of time to get estimates.

Dcn. Mark—It was \$2.1M to bring it up to code years back.

Barb—The group is saying \$1M for renovations and \$1M for endowment. I don't have the estimates because they were supposed to be getting estimates.

Bishop—If we were able to get a religious community in there, is the rectory livable?

Dcn. Mark—It is not livable.

Fr. Girotti—Has there been adequate conversations with the group and have they been heard?

Fr. Doug—Yes, they were able to come to the Pastoral Council and speak. We had new members, so I had to go back over the scenario and the Pastoral Council wants to move forward with the reduction of St. Boniface Church for secular use.

Fr. Baraniak—How does the other church site affect with this situation?

Dcn. Mark—Yes it will affect. One Mass per weekend is used at St. Mary site. It seems to be maintaining four sites to maintain the past. We have presented and listened.

Fr. Joel—Once you close a church and then sell it or demolish it, the problem does not go away. The monthly bill goes away, but it never goes away. Some of the churches go to other church denominations such as Protestant or wedding venues. We just voted to close Langlade. I went back to Chambers Island and it is demolished. It dawned on me that it is not something else. I have a hard time reducing a church to secular use when I don't know what it is going to be used for. If it needed to be demolished, then I would support that. When there is not a demolition, I would like to see the plan for what it would become when it no longer is a church. We burn it, bury it or consume it with other items that we reduce to secular use. The problem does not go away once you reduce it.

Barb—This also goes to the College of Consultors. A demo or a sale has to go to the College of Consultors.

Dcn. Mark—We have to do two separate proxies. The reduction has to be done first. Once that proxy is approved then we can do a separate proxy for what to do with the building.

Fr. Joel—This group only votes on reducing it to secular use.

Fr. O'Brien—Is it not available for use?

Fr. Doug—It is not usable right now. The pews have been pushed back, there is cleanup.

Bishop—I tend to agree with Fr. Joel, using the churches for other businesses is hard.

Fr. Girotti—There are legal things that can be put on the sale of the building. The practice of this was to tear it down. We all know how expensive it is to tear it down.

Fr. Luke—Is the group able to react in the second stage? Could they wait to see what the parish is going to do with the building?

Fr. Girotti—This is the stage where they need to appeal. Once it no longer is a church, then they cannot appeal.

Fr. Lucas—The group has a desire to keep it going. The intention is that you want to be done with responsibility. Can they buy it at a smaller price, trusting that they would take care of it?

Fr. Joel—It sounds like they want it to be a church. Reducing it to secular use stops it from being a church.

Fr. Lucas—I am trying to see the real commitment of the group.

Fr. Doug—The group wants to see it as a church. But they don't have long-term commitment for responsibility.

Barb—They want the parish to be responsible for the church site, but they want to establish an endowment where they would have a committee.

Fr. O'Brien—Has that ever been discussed?

Bishop—There is such a thing as an oratory, but the same challenges are there. We would have to get people in there. The rectory needs renovation which could be \$700K.

Fr. Carl—Where is his thread in appealing?

Dcn. Mark—Lee would appeal and expects the process.

Fr. Joel—The appeal is not going to cost him anything.

Fr. Schuster—Do they have any money in a foundation now?

Dcn. Mark—We have seen no evidence that there is a foundation.

Barb—When they presented to the Parish Council, did they challenge the challenges of the plan?

Fr. Doug—No. My goal is to get the church site off the payroll.

Fr. Girotti—Once you get rid of a church site, you never get it back. Can the Catholic Church do anything?

Dcn. Mark—There is a need for housing or apartments.

Fr. Dinh-Van-Theip—What are we afraid of if they appeal to Rome?

Fr. Girotti—We are not afraid. It will take time for the appeal. In the past ten years, many of the church closings in the United States have been reversed to keep the church site.

Fr. Girotti—I have a motion.

Fr. Tom Long gave motion and Fr. James Baraniak so moved and Fr. Carl Schmitt seconded.

A motion was made and seconded that since the church of St. Boniface in Manitowoc, already part of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, has become a financial burden to the parish community, is no longer needed for divine worship because of a shrinking parish population, and in its current state of disrepair poses a safety risk to worshippers, and since the care of souls is well provided for by the current three churches which comprise St. Francis of Assisi Parish, the Presbyteral Council recommends that the church be relegated to profane but not sordid use. Motion carried unanimously.

Regional Vicar Role—Bishop Ricken and Fr. Girotti

Bishop—We will be talking about the role of Vicar Forane. We are going to be talking next month with the vicars. The dioceses that I have served in all have had active deans and the vicars were a critical role with this. The deans coordinated with parishes and outreach. I want to rethink the role of vicar forane.

Vicar Forane:

1. To serve as a representative of the Bishop in the field.

2. To know the pastors, parochial vicars and pastoral leaders in their territory.
3. To know the strengths and weaknesses of each parish in their jurisdiction.
4. To work with and through the Vicar General for external matters to be connected to the Curia according to the needs in each parish and/or in their territory.
5. Through the Vicar General to connect to the Curia in a way that really assists their area.
6. To assist the parishes in their area to establish the Diocesan vision, mission and goals in a plan for the parish.

Bishop—Most of the relationships here are each parish connecting with the Diocese for their needs. It may work better if we work together to resource better. There might be a way that we can ask the vicar forane for more robust in your vicariate. It might be a quarterly meeting. I would like to examine the job description with the vicar forane. Maybe have the vicar forane come up with three areas that your vicariate collectively need so that the Curia can provide what is best. It is going to take time and patience and really listen to one another. The Vicar General for external services Fr. O'Brien has been in 25 parishes so far. It helps Fr. Girotti and myself, and Fr. O'Brien's visits helps to recognize needs. We also need to eventually look into the document on pastoral conversion. Do we have too many Masses in a vicariate? Can some parishes be treated like missions? Is there another way to service the community? Mission models have priests come to the parish once per month or less. The important thing is to care for the people. We cannot do that from here. The vicars will need to help with studying the parishes. I want to be able to support you and with the plans that you have. And Barry is already doing mission planning.

Vicar General (external):


1. To work closely with the Bishop and the Moderator of the Curia/Vicar General to help the Curia to serve the Vicars and Vicariates, matching needs to services.
2. To help the Bishop in coaching up the Vicars in their role of shepherding their pastors and parish leadership.
3. To assist the Bishop in choosing the Vicars Forane and in developing a more formal job description for them.
4. A monitoring of the Vicariates with regard to size, function, etc. And recommend possible revisions.

Bishop—Fr. O'Brien gets to see firsthand the challenges of the parishes and the needs. We will be doing ongoing discussions. We need to keep the priests healthy. We need to be realistic. We need to pray for priests. Help the people embracing raising up priests.

Bishop closed with prayer.

Meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Jami Duvall

Recording Secretary