

Pastoral Council Retreat September 28, 2024

In attendance: Fr. Andy, Colin Hayden, Heather Garcia, Patrick Green, Connie Bonner, Vanessa Santiago, Christine Wiegman and 5 invited guests: Blanche Landry, Bassell Franks, Gerry Fitzgerald, Cate Hershey, Anna Bledsoe

Theme of retreat: Where have we been and where are we going as a parish?

Colin and Christine welcomed everyone and talked about entering into retreat/sacred space with openness to where the Spirit is leading us. St. Agnes mission statement and the pastoral council vision statement were read.

Fr. Andy led reflection on Gospel Luke 5: 1-11.

Fr. Andy initiated conversation around the gospel and the changes that the world, nation and we all have been through in recent years and how we can't go back and must move forward. He asked the following questions of the group:

What draws you to St. Agnes?

- Acceptance/feel safe
- Community/family/a place to call home
- Welcoming attitude
- Inclusivity
- Options for serving
- Beauty of the Mass and the building
- Being met where we are in our faith journeys

How have we experienced the healing presence of Christ in the community?

- Mass intentions and ability to participate in that
- Educational component of homily
- Wording used – i.e. “given for all” and “He became human”
- Inclusivity – all are welcome – children especially welcome
- Eucharist
- Music
- Church building design
- Nothing hidden – facing our fellow parishioners

How are we called to bring healing and hope?

- Ministries (hospitality, lector, B&C, feeding the homeless, picnic committee, etc)
- Welcoming the stranger
- Encourage participation in the Mass, especially prayers of the faithful
- Music – culturally integrated
- Presentations offered through St. A
- Intergenerational activities
- Ecumenical activities and Lent/Advent services

What obstacles prevent healing?

- Shame around learned/experienced judgement and exclusivity of Catholic religion/Church
- Different understanding of teachings or traditions

- Our church building or way of doing things can be off putting to Catholics seeking a more traditional experience
- We may have sent negative messaging to our more traditional brothers and sisters
- Time constraints and distance challenges with our parishioners

After lunch Fr. Andy presented theologian, Bill Heusch's definition of synodality:

Acting in a synodal spirit means that we agree to walk with each other as parishioners to lead the parish and shape how we announce the good news. It means that we agree to both speak up and listen well as we share in decision making through our parish and finance councils in the parish. We agree to seek more and better ways to bring the gospel to the modern world. We each agree to participate in such parish wide communal discernment asking what God wants for our parish. A synodal church is a church that listens and which everyone has something to learn.

We reread the pastoral council vision statement:

We respond to the hopes and aspirations of our church community in our contemporary ever-changing world. As representatives of the parish, we strive to empower the gifts of our diverse parish community in support of the spiritual life of the whole person. We also support the growth and relationship with Christ through all stages of life so we can live our life in faith, listening and responding to the voice of our community in today's world the 21st century.

And read Pope Francis' statement in Evangelii Gaudium:

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Questions/sharing:

What can we do about the obstacles?

- Listen and learn to respond to each other with authenticity
- Education about our faith and traditions with an awareness of paradigm change
- Learn a new way to ask questions – greater openness and receptivity to listening

How can we become more synodal?

- As Pope Francis – see the church as “everyone.”
- More intergenerational masses and activities
- Greater awareness and openness to the different stages of faith – and hold space for those
- Paradigm shift in thinking – whose church is this?
- Attitude of stewardship for others and care for our common home
- Clarity of vision and purpose of our ministries
- Enlarging our tent into our daily lives and the community

Potential new members of the council who attended the retreat were encouraged to ask questions about what is involved in being on the council.

Closing prayer.

Next PC meeting: Wednesday, October 16th at 6:30