

**Summaries of Implementation Committee Meetings**

**Report to St. Peter Joint Parish Leadership Meeting**

**May 19, 2011**

**Submitted in Response to Cardinal Rigali's Pastoral Letter**

***Call to Conversion and Holiness***

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*Call to Conversion and Holiness***

Committee agreed there is ongoing need for education, and that direct personal contact is what encourages our involvement in the Church.

To encourage community-building in the parish and greater Mass attendance, the Committee voiced a variety of promotional means including advertisement of liturgical, social and educational opportunities, especially in local media; also through direct mailings and personal phone contact to invite people in. Ongoing catechesis is needed particularly with regard to the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the gift of developing personal prayer habits and growing spiritually.

Many Catholics may not recognize the Sacrament of Reconciliation as an opportunity for God's grace, strengthening them in living more fully-centered on gospel values, the spiritual benefits of confessing one's sins to a priest, or of the necessity to fulfill their obligation as faithful Catholics. People need to be better educated about sin, repentance, forgiveness and mercy. Offering additional Penance Services, and opportunities for individual confession, may encourage a greater appreciation of this sacrament.

St. Peter Church can become more committed to vocations awareness and promotion by outwardly praying for vocations, by openly examining or offering opportunities for vocations awareness and discernment, particularly for our youth, and by recommitting as a parish to bringing together our parish families and children in combined social and spiritual activities, centered on prayer and the Eucharist, at all age levels.

## ***Call to Conversion & Holiness***

### **St. Peter Parish Implementation Committee Meeting - January 20, 2011**

#### **In Attendance:**

Harry Neill	Ted Mirenda
Sharon Boyd	Kathleen Dovidio
Phil Altringer	Robin Burckhardt
Sharon Bowman	

#### **Meeting Minutes:**

1. Opening Prayer
2. Introductions
3. Overview of next 3 meetings, relating to Cardinal Rigali's Pastoral Letter
  - a. Follow-up agenda in September
  - b. In-depth analysis
  - c. To become part of Pastoral Council, Finance Council agendas
4. Focus on question 2: Challenges and Blessings of St. Peter Parish
  - a. Only 1/3 registered parishioners attend Sunday Mass
  - b. People are over-committed; time constraints
  - c. Many PREP students/ families don't attend Sunday Mass
  - d. Do PJPII families attend Sunday Mass?
5. Sharon (Boyd): new parishioner (~8 mos.) personal testimony: St. Peter is a very welcoming community
  - a. Begins with ushers and greeters
  - b. Warm and welcoming within the congregation; eye-contact, personal welcome
  - c. Very friendly rapport among those seated nearby at Mass
  - d. Encourages involvement
6. Blessings of our parish include
  - a. Education: many opportunities, good programs
  - b. Adult faith formation is well-received
  - c. Have the programs reached many new parishioners?
  - d. Suggestions: welcome wagon, home visit or phone call to new parishioners
    - i. Elizabeth Ministry tried hosting social for families with Baptisms in the last 6 months: poor response
    - ii. Stewardship Fair: 2/3 of parishioners are missing the message
7. Personal experiences:
  - a. Ted:
    - i. When first registered (former) pastor encouraged involvement
    - ii. Met fellow parishioners at a social function
    - iii. Received personal invitation: "why don't you join?"
  - b. Kathleen:
    - i. Husband signed up (Knights) but did not follow through
    - ii. Got on an email list then received personal contact with a personal invitation

- c. Sharon (Bowman)
  - i. Pastor is always welcoming; people are not judged by what they have going on in their personal situations; encourages a connection
  - ii. Does the parish collect email addresses?
  - iii. People feel threatened by sacrament of Reconciliation; there may not be a mature understanding
- d. Phil:
  - i. Welcome flows down from Pastor
  - ii. Homilies about relationship most important
  - iii. Highlight ministries: makes people feel wanted and 'plugged in'
  - iv. Parish body needs to pick up the ball
    - a. Get to know 6 people seated nearby at mass
    - b. Grow relationships: create opportunities to hang out as a group
  - v. Non-threatening events; direct phone contact
  - vi. Youth events: make it interesting
- 8. Other thoughts / ideas
  - a. Greatest assets / key points
    - i. Educational opportunities / catechesis
      - a. Fledgling library is a good start; include availability of reading materials, in chapel, in pews
      - b. Importance of homilies - opportunity to help people move past a 'sixth grade' perception of God, sacraments; explain sacraments at different levels to reach different learners
      - c. Chapel open for personal prayer any time although Tuesday evening prayer group is currently poorly attended
      - d. Several meeting members regularly attend St. Joseph Adoration Chapel, use loaner library
    - ii. Personal touch / 'Connectedness'
      - a. Ministry representatives available to interact
      - b. Occasionally have tables set up in narthex to invite participation? (In addition to Stewardship Fair)
      - c. Personal witness at masses?
  - b. How do we as parishioners get one another - ourselves - to encourage this?

**Summary:**

Committee agreed there is ongoing need for education, and that direct personal contact is what encourages our involvement in the Church.

**Action Items:**

1. Review Second Meeting Agenda
  - a. Visit archdiocesan website to review statistics
  - b. Prepare to discuss in light of Cardinal's Pastoral Letter
2. Define "Conversion" and "Holiness"
  - a. What does this say or mean to me?
  - b. How to impart to fellow parishioners?

## ***Call to Conversion & Holiness***

### **St. Peter Parish Implementation Committee Meeting – February 17, 2011**

#### **In Attendance:**

Harry Neill	Ted Mirenda
Sharon Boyd	Kathleen Dovidio
Phil Altringer	Bonnie O'Brien
Tom Chmielenski	Dave O'Brien
Sharon Bowman	Robin Burckhardt

#### **Meeting Minutes:**

- 1. Opening Prayer**
- 2. Overview of January meeting, and of Pastoral Council meeting**
  - a. Determined St. Peter Parish is doing better than trend
  - b. "We do a lot already"
    - i. Active participation
    - ii. Good preparation for liturgies
- 3. How to reach out as a parish to non-participating Catholics**
  - a. Seize opportunities presented by attendance at Easter & Christmas liturgies when attendance is high (see section 7 below)
  - b. External methods
    - i. Some parishes use radio commercials at the holidays, i.e., "Going Home"
    - ii. Great opportunity with *Community Courier*
      1. free news, wide distribution
      2. cost associated with being listed in the Church Directory section
      3. community paper may be useful to promote faith formation opportunities
    - iii. *Daily Local* or other newspaper 'ads'
  - c. We don't hear of anything outside of Mass, only negatives (i.e., *Daily Local*)
  - d. If people are not coming in the door they don't know what we have to offer
- 4. Methods discussed**
  - a. Capital Campaign provided opportunity for direct phone contact
    - i. Would not have to be about money
    - ii. Some parishes have welcoming teams who call or make visits
  - b. 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary saw good participation
    - i. 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary presents many openings for reaching out
    - ii. Harry shared *Liturgy & Worship Commission* ideas for 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary that had been presented at Pastoral Council meeting
    - iii. We need events that are welcoming to people
      1. First reach out to people for non-liturgical events
      2. Promote community-building
  - c. Formerly the parish hosted semi-regular social events, i.e., spaghetti dinners, dinner dances
    - i. Provided opportunity outside of Mass to be welcoming
  - d. St. Benedict has annual chicken BBQ, large draw
  - e. Summer picnic / music festival at St. Peter was well-received
    - i. These events could be advertised in local papers
- 5. Many different methods must be used to appeal to different groups**
  - a. Seek ways to reach out to single persons outside of Mass

- i. Single persons, or divorced, separated people need to feel welcomed
  - ii. Some social activity / support needed specific to this demographic
  - iii. Opportunity to reach out to those who may feel disconnected, some sense of “not good enough” (as divorced or separated from spouses)
- b. Teen / youth
  - i. Kairos retreats / Steubenville – not offered to public school children?
    - 1. Bonnie & Dave: young people react well to these spiritual opportunities
    - 2. Spiritual bonds / good connections and friendships are formed
    - 3. Do we host or co-host youth retreats?
  - ii. Sharon Boyd: former teacher at Bishop Shanahan, asserts teens’ interest and involvement
    - 1. Attended a 5-hour Mass
    - 2. Youth spent the night over: Adoration at midnight
  - iii. Reach out to youth by advertising in local paper to as we transition to more contemporary Worship & Praise liturgy
  - iv. Teen Light was struggling to keep youth engaged
- c. Family Movie Nights: family or teen-oriented opportunities
- d. Lenten reflection / liturgies; upcoming Forty Hours devotion
- e. Cards in pews during major holidays to collect names, addresses, interests; greeters handing out mail-in cards for a call back or visit: personal contact

**6. Why people don’t come to Mass**

- a. Too busy; don’t know the Truth
- b. Mixed religion families
- c. Last generation, or current generation of parents never taught their children
- d. Fallen-away Catholics often go to Evangelical churches
- e. There’s a hunger; people are looking for something
- f. Some people are angry with the Church

**7. What can we do to draw people in**

- a. Develop our own St. Peter Parish prayer to be prayed before Mass
  - i. Prayer of welcome - ask visitors to stand up
  - ii. Prayer of healing for our Church
- b. Personal invitation
  - i. Most effective method
  - ii. Extend warm welcome at Christmas / Easter liturgies
  - iii. Postcard mailings - “Have you been away for a while?” / “We miss you”
    - 1. invite to Easter / Christmas liturgies
    - 2. invitation to Special Events (see sections 4 & 5 above)
    - 3. currently mailing *The Vision* to about 700-800 families
  - iv. Phone chains
    - 1. effective during campaigns
    - 2. prayer-request e-mail lists
      - a. recommended by Liturgy & Worship Commission
      - b. Harry: Mike Altschuler willing to manage
  - v. New registrants receive letter - what about follow-up phone call?
- c. More catechesis before / during Mass; speakers give personal witness at end of Mass
- d. Educate via the Bulletin
  - i. “Factoids” from the Catechism printed each week
- e. Divine Mercy Sunday: Pope John Paul II beatification: offer live on big screen at church

## **8. Eucharistic Adoration**

- a. Strong need to educate people on the Real Presence
- b. Being reflective in prayer in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament makes people more aware, more open to the movement of the Spirit within their lives and life around them
  - i. Evening Prayer & Benediction not well-attended
    - 1. Gethsemane Prayer Group has 6-8 regular attendees
    - 2. Educate the parish about what it is, how prayed; more emphasis on finding time for personal and communal prayer
    - 3. Encourage ministry groups to attend as a group
- c. Extended hours of Exposition on a Feast Day or Sunday afternoons
  - i. Move Blessed Sacrament to chapel after noon Mass since people are already here and may spend time in silent prayer
  - ii. Is the chapel currently open on Sunday afternoon?
    - 1. Additional burden on Pastor; highlights shortage of priests
    - 2. Would deacons be available or needed to 'lock-up' later in the day?
- d. Does the average parishioner understand Eucharistic Adoration?
  - i. Perhaps additional opportunities on Saturdays or Sundays in Lent
  - ii. St. Joseph Holy Family Chapel not listed in bulletin
  - iii. Personal witness: speaker (parishioner / member of prayer group) after Mass to share conversion story
  - iv. Likely many people have no experience with the practice
- e. Sunday morning rosary group, small faithful group
  - i. Ted: sons forming friendships in prayer
  - ii. Small attendance at personal prayer opportunities
- f. PJPII children have opportunity to learn silent prayer; PREP children maybe not so much

## **9. Other topics**

- a. Revised Roman Missal: opportunity for education of parishioners
  - i. Harry shared handout from Pastoral Council meeting, insert for missals
  - ii. Good informative booklet was shared at Pastor's liturgy workshops
- b. Bonnie: Parish Library
  - i. Organizing purchased and donated books for a sign-out borrowing system
  - ii. Children's books in basket in Shrine Room for sharing during Mass
  - iii. Collecting CDs & DVDs for borrowing also
    - 1. Theology of the Body - Christopher West; Scott Hahn; Father Corapi
    - 2. Catholic Catechism, Saint videos
  - iv. Some conflict on use of the space since Mo needs the Library on Sunday mornings
  - v. Consider Literature rack in Narthex / Chapel vestibule, more visibility
    - 1. Catechesis for parishioners, visitors and for parents of PREP children who may wait for children, i.e., week night Holy Day, Ash Wednesday masses

## **Summary Statement:**

To encourage community-building in the parish and greater Mass attendance, the Committee voiced a variety of promotional means including advertisement of liturgical, social and educational opportunities, especially in local media; also through direct mailings and personal phone contact to invite people in. Ongoing catechesis is needed particularly with regard to the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the gift of developing personal prayer habits and growing spiritually.

## ***Call to Conversion & Holiness***

### **St. Peter Parish Implementation Committee Meeting – March 17, 2011**

#### **In Attendance:**

Harry Neill	Kathleen Dovidio
Sharon Boyd	Bonnie O'Brien
Tom Chmielenski	Dave O'Brien
Sharon Bowman	Ken Slavik
Ted Miranda	Robin Burckhardt

#### **Meeting Minutes:**

##### **1. Opening Prayer**

##### **2. Overview / Introductory comments**

- a. Harry noted ideas from prior Implementation Committee meetings on recent Pastoral Council meeting agenda
  - i. Council acknowledged benefit of utilizing variety of methods for sharing information, in particular, new technology
- b. Noted that the bulletin is offering instruction: recent article on reverence in church
- c. Review of CARA statistics
  - i. When considering regular Mass attendees, about one-quarter make use of the sacrament of Reconciliation
  - ii. When considering all Catholics, calculates to barely 15% ever go to Confession

##### **3. Why do so few people take advantage of this opportunity?**

- a. People don't know what sin is
  - i. Young people especially have little or no idea
  - ii. Parents are not teaching this in the home
- b. Misunderstanding about what benefits are received from Confession
  - i. Missed opportunities for grace
  - ii. Builds up your armor
- c. People don't understand what grace means
  - i. When young people are offered Reconciliation on retreat, they are very moved by the grace of the experience

##### **4. Catholic teaching in context of today's culture**

- a. Confessing to a priest totally unique to Catholic faith
  - i. Protestant faiths, some Catholic members confess directly to God
  - ii. Magisterium teaches that absolution is granted through the sacramental action administered by the priest
- b. People are too busy on Saturday afternoon
  - i. Consider expanding times available for reception of the sacrament
  - ii. When people are already there or already coming there
    1. Probable intention of offering Reconciliation at 3:30 Saturday
      - a. before Saturday 5:00 mass

- b. families coming to evening Mass anyway
    - c. some families just too busy with activities
  - iii. St. Elizabeth, St. Joseph offer Reconciliation after/ before morning masses
- c. How is society molding mindsets?
  - i. Don't claim anything as being your own fault
  - ii. World teaches us not to put ourselves into a vulnerable position
    - 1. Asking for forgiveness is being vulnerable
    - 2. Especially awkward if have not been to Confession in a long time
    - 3. People who have not gone in awhile may not appreciate the benefit of the opportunity for God's grace
    - 4. Some experienced 'rough response' from a priest in a confessional at one time or another; makes people uncomfortable about coming back
- d. Opportunities
  - i. Teach people about Mercy
  - ii. Confessing to a priest that you don't know may be easier for some people
    - 1. Have option of kneeling at the screen, or sit face-to-face to engage in dialog
      - a. Some have had the experience that a confessor only wants a laundry list of sins
    - 2. Impossible for pastor to be a spiritual director for so many parishioners
      - a. we challenge ourselves spiritually by confessing
      - b. although some people choose to do so, people should not have to go to a neighboring parish for confession unless they want to
    - 3. Personal spiritual direction hard to come by
  - iii. St. Peter Parish Penance Services typically well-attended
    - 1. Consider holding more than twice a year
    - 2. Although General Absolution is practiced in some parts of the country, is it not valid in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia?
  - iv. Feast of Divine Mercy and other special feasts in the church year may be opportunities for Penance Service, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, or any variety of prayer services
    - 1. Liturgical celebrations that move people in Spirit
  - v. Promote evaluation / examination of consciences among one's family to better the family
  - vi. Offer spiritual retreats through Lent: "Complete" or "General Confession" as the concluding liturgy
  - vii. Include more links, resources on parish website
    - 1. Sacraments should be explained on Sacrament pages
    - 2. Include links to *YouTube* videos about examination of conscience, Fr. Corapi, other learning aids
  - viii. Parish Library offerings are expanding
    - 1. More new material including Marion Foundation CD's, Scott Hahn
    - 2. Currently hosting another Book Fair

## 5. Creating a better understanding of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

- a. Series of Questions and Answers in the bulletin
  - i. Focus on one of the commandments at a time
  - ii. Catechesis every week in the bulletin; send the same message through all media
- b. Recognizing the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a benefit not an obligation

- c. Recognizing how many sins we commit against the commandments
- d. People need to believe it in their heart to act on it
- e. Archdiocesan initiative
  - i. Cardinal asks for sacrament to be offered every Wednesday night
  - ii. Highlights shortage of priests in our parish
  - iii. Easier to publicize if uniform throughout the archdiocese
    - 1. Our parish times are well-publicized and remain the same
    - 2. Fairly steady number of people coming for the sacrament relative to the number of priests available
- f. Consider offering additional times such as before or after masses if priests available
- g. General Absolution
  - 1. Some view it as a bridge to personal confession, and would like to have the option
  - 2. Presents potential for imperfect contrition
  - 3. Does it encourage developing a personal relationship with God?
  - 4. Is it true to the Magisterium?
- h. Some people may supplement with the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick it is offered monthly
- i. Families should be encouraged to celebrate their children's reception of the Sacrament of First Reconciliation as they do First Holy Eucharist

## **6. Where we are and where to go**

- a. Families with only one Catholic parent, or less than committed Catholic parents, may not be handing on the traditions of our faith and our religion
  - i. Priorities must be questioned
  - ii. How to help people understand Grace as an infusion into one's soul
- b. Need to be ever-committed to offering people a variety of avenues to grow in grace amidst our noisy, busy, appointment-driven world
  - i. More opportunities to "pencil God in"
  - ii. Blessing one another; giving and receiving a blessing
  - iii. Opportunities to feel blessed sparks a desire for more
  - iv. Doing for one another moves others in grace
- c. Not going to be one thing that works for everyone
- d. The heart that is open is the one that will receive
- e. Invite someone to go to confession
- f. Organize / lead one another in programs, i.e., "Woman of Grace," or start prayer chains
- g. Have a "jubilee of forgiveness"
  - i. Retreat opportunities: it gets something on the calendar
  - ii. Thanks and praise worship service with Eucharistic Exposition
- h. Provide many, varied opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration, personal prayer

### **Summary Statement:**

Many Catholics may not recognize the Sacrament of Reconciliation as an opportunity for God's grace, strengthening them in living more fully-centered on gospel values, the spiritual benefits of confessing one's sins to a priest, or of the necessity to fulfill their obligation as faithful Catholics. People need to be better educated about sin, repentance, forgiveness and mercy. Offering additional Penance Services, and opportunities for individual confession, may encourage a greater appreciation of this sacrament.

## ***Call to Conversion & Holiness***

### **St. Peter Parish Implementation Committee Meeting – April 14, 2011**

#### **In Attendance:**

Harry Neill  
Sharon Boyd  
Sharon Bowman  
Ted Mirenda

Bonnie O'Brien  
Dave O'Brien  
Robin Burckhardt

#### **Meeting Minutes:**

##### **1. Opening prayer**

##### **2. Introductory comments**

- a. As a follow-up to earlier discussion about Holy Eucharist, some on Committee offered additional comments
  - i. Would be nice to have the option of receiving Eucharist kneeling, or under both species, even if limited availability at certain masses
  - ii. Questions came up regarding reception on tongue without use of paten
- b. Since this is the last scheduled meeting, Harry detailed next steps
  - i. Will summarize outcomes of these meetings to present to Pastoral Council
  - ii. Was advised that Fr. Fitzpatrick will form Pastoral Advisory Committee to assist with discussions on re-structuring and renewal of parishes

##### **3. Discussion questions assessing the present reality regarding priestly vocations**

- a. St. Peter Parish has areas of opportunity for fostering vocations
  - i. Little mention in our parish community of praying for and encouraging vocations
    1. Several parishes have adopted a prayer for vocations that is prayed aloud before or after every Mass
    2. Circulated sample prayer that could be used from USCCB website
    3. Could be prayed together before or after final blessing
  - ii. Few activities related to vocation awareness or encouragement
    1. Seminarian visited PJPII classrooms during Catholic Schools Week
    2. Some PREP classes have few or no visits from priests, deacons or religious
- b. Primary occasion for hearing from or about seminarians is when they visit for annual monetary appeal

##### **4. Discussing current reality / ideas for improvement**

- a. Appoint / establish a parish Vocations Director or Vocations Committee

- i. Provides a channel to foster vocations
  - ii. May provide ways to support our current seminarians
- b. Assessing new generations of youth
  - i. Formation begins very early: boys as young as 5, 6, or 7 years are at a good age to have the seed planted
  - ii. Today's seminarians are engaged in the world; our youth need to know and see that
  - iii. Waiting to discuss among high-school students may have missed the opportunity; need dialogue before mindset has been formed
  - iv. Are parents discussing with children?
    - 1. Parents may need suggestions for asking a child if they've ever thought about becoming a priest; some parents may not be onboard with the idea
    - 2. Confirmation candidates at parish mini-retreat had little or no response at all to having given thought to any future vocation or mission in life
  - v. Need to send the message that priests are mainstream people, "regular guys"
    - 1. Provide opportunities for youth to be around priests and seminarians
  - vi. From the Archdiocese: get the seminarians out in the public eye
    - 1. Boys' choir is another opportunity for children to relate spiritually to dedicated holy men; having the presence of priests there who support it is what maintains encouragement
  - vii. Seminarians have limited free time
    - 1. Going to visit parishes can be energizing for older seminarians
    - 2. Younger seminarians are still being formed
      - a. a period of discernment is necessary
      - b. may need to step away from the world
  - viii. Parish or social activities where youth can see and interact with priests, seminarians
    - 1. CYO involvement is a good opportunity for boys to see seminarians as everyday young men
      - a. regional all-star games against seminarians

## 5. Potential activities at the parish level

- a. Opportunities exist at **St. Charles Seminary**
  - i. Tours or pilgrimages
  - ii. Boys' and men's retreats
- b. Opportunities for a parish Vocations Committee or Director
- c. Adopt and implement a Parish Prayer for Vocations
- d. Acquire and adopt a travelling statue, i.e., Our Lady of Fatima, to spend a week at parishioners' homes
- e. Designate a parish day each month to pray for vocations
- f. Parish youth

- i. High school age - Kairos retreat: teaches them to learn how to pray; how to build a personal relationship with God; enables common spiritual connections
  - 1. Invite kids who have been through Kairos to come and speak to our youth
- ii. Promote bus to Steubenville youth activities: draws in parents and families
  - 1. Attach to St. Joseph's for trips such as this?
  - 2. Attach to other parishes for their youth events? (i.e., St. Norbert's, Sunday Night service)
- iii. Gap noted in engaging youth after middle school, Confirmation: encourage coordinated activity for families of those age-groups
  - 1. Family game nights, movie nights; fun and fellowship
  - 2. Chapel for adoration
  - 3. Children are bonding, forming like-minded friends
  - 4. Parents and families may not yet have had conversion experience
  - 5. Every event centers on time spent with Jesus in the Eucharist
- g. Discernment needs to be emphasized at all ages: how to put this into action for our families?
  - i. People are too busy: need to get an appointment on their calendars, such as Divine Mercy Sunday
  - ii. Opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration and personal prayer to be made a priority for families: what would get it on their calendars?
    - 1. Contemplative opportunities
    - 2. Praise and worship liturgies

**Summary Statement:**

St. Peter Church can become more committed to vocations awareness and promotion by outwardly praying for vocations, by openly examining or offering opportunities for vocations awareness and discernment, particularly for our youth, and by recommitting as a parish to bringing together our parish families and children in combined social and spiritual activities, centered on prayer and the Eucharist, at all age levels.