

St. Mary Parish Pastoral Council

Abridged Minutes, 14.1.23

The Pastoral Council met and continued the process of understanding and reconfiguring our role in assisting Fr. Faustino in the mission of evangelization. To that end, we have taken some steps and made some progress:

1) We have gone through the exercise of revamping the constitution and bylaws of the Pastoral Council. By this means, we now know with some precision the job of the council. We exist as an advisory and consultative board to help our pastor in spiritual matters of the parish. We represent the concerns, frustrations, needs, and joys of the parish, but we are not to be confused with a political voting block. We vote, but our vote is advisory and our pastor listens carefully, but our vote is not binding.

2) We have begun, at Father's request and according to our bylaws, to shift our attention from the administrative activities of St. Mary's and refocus on the spiritual life of the parish. We will be reserving thirty to forty-five minutes of our future meetings this year for open conversation on the topic.

3) Our next step is to formulate, in alignment with Diocesan recommendation, a strategic plan for enhancing the spiritual life of the parish.

We discussed the need for silence in our sanctuary, both as a sign of respect for the holy place and from a desire not to distract those in prayer before the altar. There is talk about building a "Ring of Silence," a transparent or semi transparent wall that would separate the sanctuary from the entrance and that would allow socializing after Mass without disturbing the tranquility of those wishing to pray. The council unanimously likes this idea, although there is of yet no plan, let alone funding, for its implementation. We hope to hear more on this idea, and hope to be included in discussions if it enters a design phase, since beauty has a spiritual character that influences the character of our faith.

We also discussed the desirability and character of some sort of "Silence Please" signs at the entryways (at least until a physical structure can be built) to remind us, as we enter the church before Mass, to leave secular things at the door and not to disturb people who are already caught up in prayer. The Liturgy Committee is developing signs, and the council enthusiastically encourages them to bring those into being as soon as possible.

Father encouraged us to continue to think of things that will help build the spiritual growth of the community.

Since our meeting was cut short last night, we have decided to hold our next meeting on February 27th, and plan to go deeper into the discussion of the council's role.

Above all, the Council is proceeding in the confident knowledge that our Lord is leading our parish. If we cannot always clearly see our path, it is a glorious indication that God is working in and through us, and that we should continue to pray for guidance, giving thanks that God encourages our participation, even in some small way, in salvation history.