



**Diocese of Green Bay**  
**DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**  
**January 30, 2016**

**Attendees:** Bishop David Ricken, Very Reverend Daniel Felton, Pat Kosuth, Julie Birr, Michael Witte, Judi Gosenheimer, John Reilly, Patrick Hart, Jan Clark, Steve Parent, William Graf, Cindy Massey, Deacon Chuck Schumacher, Elizabeth Kostichka, Deacon Lincoln Wood, Sister Natalie Binversie

**Excused/Absent:** Stuart Gruszynski, Steve Vanden Heuvel, Debbie Griem, Deborah Schmidt, Paula Freimuth, Deacon Randy Haak, Very Reverend James Baraniak, O. Praem.

**Opening Activities**

- Meeting opened at 8:55 a.m.
- Bishop Ricken led the assembled in the Liturgy of the Hours.
- Mission Statement was recited by Council members.
- A motion was made to approve and adopt the meeting minutes of October 3, 2015 as written. Motion was seconded and approved unanimously.
- A motion was made to approve the agenda as presented. Motion seconded and approved unanimously.
- Self-introductions were made by all present.

**Opening Comments**

Bishop Ricken reported that the *Disciples on the Way* journey is catching on. He is asking parishes to continue to offer Holy Hours and to call people together to pray for themselves, their parishes, their families, and to embrace the New Evangelization. He asked the members of the DPC to encourage their pastors to promote a Holy Hour in their parish. Many opportunities for prayer are offered to the Diocesan Curia staff including daily Mass, monthly Holy Hours, and reconciliation.

During this Jubilee Year of Mercy, Bishop has designated a Holy Door of Mercy at the Cathedral, the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help, and the Shrine of St. Joseph (located at Old St. Joseph Church on the campus of St. Norbert College). Information on the plenary indulgence associated with passing through one of the Holy Doors is posted on the diocesan website: [www.gbdioc.org](http://www.gbdioc.org).

Bishop realizes changing attitudes about prayer and discipleship will take time but is a praiseworthy mission and focus for the Diocese.

Bishop informed the Council members there will be no increase in the diocesan health insurance premiums for 2016/17. Over the past 10 years, diocesan health insurance premiums have increased an average of 2.5%. For comparison, national health insurance premiums have increased an average of 211%. Bishop credited St. Luke Corporation, our Catholic hospitals and clinics, and Deacon Tim Reilly for creating this partnership which is a win-win for the hospitals, clinics, and for the Diocese.

Bishop introduced Peg Vande Hey, Family & Married Life Coordinator. Before Peg's presentation on marriage enrichment, Bishop asked her to give the members a report on her personal experience at the World Meeting of Families last September.

Peg attended with the diocesan pilgrims and said the entire experience was incredible. The pilgrims varied in age from the very young to people in their 90's. The conferences and talks were very affirming of life, families, and marriages. There were wonderful speakers with thousands of people in attendance from all over the world.

### **Marriage Enrichment**

Deacon Tony Abts, at the request of Bishop Ricken, met with the deacons of the Diocese to request their involvement with marriage enrichment in our parishes. Diocesan data indicates there were 50% fewer weddings in 2013 than in 2000 but the actual number of Catholics in the Diocese has increased since 2000.

Sociologist David Lapp, who has researched millennials and their attitudes toward traditional marriage, spoke to a gathering of our deacons. Research done by he and his wife, who is also a sociologist, has shown that what prevents many millennials from entering into marriage is a lack of trust which comes from previous hurts they have experienced (divorce among family and friends, broken relationships, lack of trust in institutions). However, many of them still believe in marriage but do not think it is something they can achieve for themselves and are settling for less.

Peg presented information about four marriage programs she would highly recommend for use by the parishes:

- *Beloved*
- *The Choice Wine: 7 Steps to a Superabundant Marriage*
- *Covenant of Love*
- *Intimate Graces: How Practicing the Works of Mercy Brings out the Best in Marriage*

We have the opportunity to build off of the enthusiasm from the World Meeting of Families and the Holy Father's visit to our country. Peg can be reached at 920-272-8315 or [pvandehey@gbdioc.org](mailto:pvandehey@gbdioc.org) for more information.

Also, the Diocese has launched a new website for Natural Family Planning: [www.ournaturalfamily.org](http://www.ournaturalfamily.org). Couples have become much more interested in this method of family planning and the Diocese now has approximately 15 teachers trained in NFP methods. NFP is also very helpful for couples dealing with infertility.

Training for Hispanic couples to facilitate marriage preparation in Spanish is scheduled for March 5.

Bishop commented the family is the home of discipleship, where we learn the faith from our parents and grandparents. Where there is prayer in the family, church attendance and living the life of a disciple is more likely among family members. He also mentioned the abortion clinic in Green Bay has been closed and the clinic in Grand Chute is temporarily closed. The diocesan Living Justice Department has recently sponsored the first "Celebrate Life" Mass in the Diocese.

Bishop thanked Peg for a very informative presentation.

## **Discussion on Discipleship I and Continued Household Prayer**

### *Bishop's Comments:*

- Disciples on the Way journey continues in the Diocese. A letter from Bishop was sent to all Catholic households at Christmas encouraging families to dedicate their homes to the Holy Family.
- There are many outstanding programs offered in our Diocese but maybe we are going in too many directions. He would like to concentrate our efforts for families on becoming households of prayer. Bishop also announced we will have a great partnership with the Knights of Columbus who have recently undertaken a new initiative: *Building the Domestic Church While Strengthening Our Parish*. The Knights have made prayer and the domestic church, parish life, and parish-based youth ministry priorities of this new initiative.
- Bishop met with the priests and pastoral leaders of the Diocese last fall and again in January. The most common concern expressed was a need to reduce and simplify the programs coming from the Diocese. They also thought *Disciples on the Way* is moving too quickly. Many did not feel personally prepared to bring missionary discipleship to their parishioners. They suggested the next two years be reserved for formation of the priests, pastoral leaders, and diocesan Curia suggesting it can take a decade to form disciples. After hearing their concerns, it has been decided the years 2016-2018 will be used for the formation of priests, pastoral leaders, and diocesan Curia. The next phase will be formation of deacons and parish staff followed by formation of volunteers and parishioners.

### *Input from Council members:*

- Good not to be tied to a 6-year timetable to form disciples. It is a shift in understanding of who we are and is a lifetime commitment for how we live our lives.
- If we focus on our personal prayer lives, prayer within our families, Holy Hours, and reconciliation, discipleship will come naturally.
- Many Catholics have no foundational understanding of Church teachings. If there is no basic understanding to begin with, why would you go on for more?
- Thanks for taking a step back, for listening to the feedback, and for being willing to make changes. Otherwise it creates frustration in the parishes. Let's take our time.
- Takes time to develop life of prayer; millennials' experience is to have instant results.

## **Update on Meitler, IT & Foundation Strategic Planning**

Through the lens of discipleship, Bishop has chosen to focus on our Catholic schools. Some of them are struggling. Nationally, 60% of our priests come from Catholic schools. The Meitler group of consultants has been hired to conduct an in-depth study of our schools and Bishop has asked them to propose a unified vision for the future. This study will not be funded by the Bishop's Appeal or the Cathedraticum. Our hope is to revitalize and embrace our Catholic schools and to provide better leadership to them.

Computers and social media are major ways we connect with our parishes. Presently, our IT (Information Technology) system is severely outdated. It has not been updated for years and has become a major source of frustration for our parishes. Our IT staff is also overextended. The Diocese has recently contracted with an outside company to conduct an assessment of our IT infrastructure. This study also will not be funded by the Bishop's Appeal or the Cathedraticum.

Bishop emphasized there are no major crisis in the Diocese but with the transition of leadership he is taking this opportunity to re-examine programs and processes.

## Q & A

- Projections for ordinations over the next few years: There will be two ordinations this spring, five in spring 2017, and four in spring 2018. Numbers of seminarians are up statewide except for the Diocese of Superior. The recent Year of Consecrated Life has borne the fruit of increased interest in women religious communities.
- 2018 is the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Diocese. It is also the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Diocese of La Crosse. It will be a time to pause with hearts of gratitude for our many blessings.
- Update on Men's Conference: Going very well. Realistic goal of 2000 participants. Esto Vir and the Norbertine Center for Spirituality is partnering with the Diocese. Excellent speakers are scheduled to present. There are currently 17 men's ministries in the Diocese.
- Will the Diocese address the upcoming presidential elections: Diocese will promote the Bishops' *Faithful Citizenship* document through our Living Justice Department.

## **International, National, Diocesan Multiple Program Themes**

Due to time constraints, this agenda item was tabled.

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m. with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,



Terri Wickman  
Recording Secretary