

## Parish Council and Finance Committee Meeting

The Youngstown Diocese directed that each church meet with the Parish Council and the Finance Committee to discuss the Regional Plan for Pastoral Services. Accordingly our two groups met separately on April the 23<sup>rd</sup> and April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The Diocese presented an outline for discussion and questions.

1. Clearly a diminishment has taken place in our Catholic presence. In the eighteen years from 2000 to 2018, the total population of our area has decreased by 5%, the number of Catholics by 37%, the number of priests by 37% and the weekend Mass attendance by 63%. The secular seems to be winning out. There are now approximately 88 Catholic churches in our Diocese and by the year 2025 there will be an estimated 55 priests. The Regional Plan presented by the Diocese seeks to increase the number of people at each of the services, reduce the number of Liturgies to three per priest on weekend, and to consolidate or achieve better cooperation between parishes that are closely aligned geographically.
2. St. Joseph Parish, Randolph is aligned with St. Peter of the Fields Parish and Holy Spirit (Uniontown) in Region 3. St. Joseph and St. Peter of the Field are rural. Holy Spirit views itself as better aligned with the Canton area. These three parishes in Region 3 would have 2 priests serving three parishes. Holy Spirit reported through their Parish Council they would prefer to be associated with Stark County, Region 5. There has been some but limited collaboration between the three parishes of Holy Spirit, St. Joseph, and St. Peter of the Fields. St. Joseph has the highest number of people registered, probably has the largest average attendance on weekends, and has a school as well as an outdoor Grotto.
3. The priests of the Portage Deanery met on March 28<sup>th</sup>. They discussed Option A, B, and C for our three parishes of Region 3.

It will be the decision of the Bishop whether Holy Spirit stays in Region 3. **Option A:** If Holy Spirit is not in the mix, St. Joseph, Randolph and St. Peter of the Fields remain separate parishes but have one pastor. Fr. Pentello, (Dean) had noted that St. Patrick's Parish with a school must keep three Masses since the parish must support the school with a financial subsidy. What he presented for St. Patrick's is the same situation for St. Joseph. Our Committees recognized the need for us to maintain three Masses noting also that the Grotto in the summer is a point of pilgrimage for many people.

4. **Option B.** St. Peter of the Fields is only 4 miles from St. Joseph. The people in general come from the same heritage. Consider making St. Peter of the Fields a Pastoral Center for the entire Diocese and the parishioners from St. Peter of the Fields would then disperse to Immaculate Conception in Ravenna, St. Patrick in Kent, and St. Joseph in Randolph. The Pastoral Center would be used for retreats, Diocesan meetings, an educational center, and days of reflection. This received strong support from our Committees.
5. **Option C.** St. Peter of the Fields joins Region 2 and St. Joseph is left on its own. This is clearly a decision that rests with the Bishop.

The Parish will work with whatever plan the Bishop uses. Option 2 with its Pastoral Center made the most sense to the Committee to fulfill the desires of the Bishop to increase the people at the Sunday Masses and to reduce the number of Masses each priest must say on weekends. The question continued to surface why Bishop Tobin decided to build St. Peter of the Field when it is only 4 miles from St. Joseph Parish. Several noted the attendance figure at St. Peter of the Fields on weekends seemed abnormally high and may well be a typo or a miscount.

All three items are collated into four pages and will be sent on to the Diocese as directed by May 17<sup>th</sup>.