

Saint Raphael Pastoral Council
Meeting Notes from January 10, 2022

Lou Servideo called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. All members were in attendance except Trish Black, Paula Demirjian and Tom Zawislinski. Kathleen Buchanan's opening prayer was an eloquent plea for God's presence, forgiveness and blessing for the Council and all those we encounter. November's meeting notes were accepted as sent.

Committee Reports:

Christian/Lifelong Faith Formation: Maria Tomasetti: **1)** 65 families are participating in this year's GIFT program. Thirteen young people received First Reconciliation in December; others will receive the sacrament once they have completed their preparation. We have twenty Confirmation candidates. **2)** Safety precautions such as face masks and social distancing for in-person GIFT attendance are now more important than ever. GIFT follows the protocols established by the Milford school system. Many of the younger participants have not been vaccinated. **3)** With the surge in COVID cases, February's Winter Family Fun Night will probably be offered in a virtual format. No decision has yet been made about a summer VBS camp. **Christmas Giving Program** (Kathleen): The modified, "gift-card-centric" program, now in its second year, once again reflected the generosity of the parish. Gift card donations totaling +/- \$5,000 went to Amistad Catholic Worker House, Beth-El Center, Bridgeport Rescue Mission, Bridges, Golden Hill Health Care, Milford Health Care, Milford Senior Center, Milford Youth and Family Services, St. Vincent's Special Needs and West River Health Care. Four Corners residents and Families in Need received gifts. Baby items went to Mary and Joseph's Place, while some parishioners made direct online donations to Boys and Girls Village. The Knights of Columbus Tinto Council made a \$500 donation to the program.

Social Justice (Human Concerns): Al May (Due to Al's anticipated late arrival, Lou read Al's report): **1)** No report in terms of Human Concerns and Social Justice, but the CONECT Core Team will meet via Zoom on 1/17 to discuss ideas/issues to present to the CONECT board for their consideration in February as part of the group's 2022 priorities. **2)** Al will meet with Father John on 1/11 to discuss the efforts of several Milford churches to support the resettlement of an Afghan refugee family in Milford. Reach out to Al for details on these topics.

Prayer and Worship: Before submitting her report Ann Eden shared notes of thanks the Council had received. Donna and George, food pantry coordinators offered "heartfelt thanks" for the \$50 gift cards they had been able to hand out to "our most needy clients" during the Christmas season and asked God to bless all those who contribute to the Food Pantry. Erika Hatch of the Wounded Warriors Project had sent a note to Cathy Coda thanking Cathy and the parish for the "continued support" that "makes a difference in the lives of veterans and their families." [\$664 was donated during November's WWP Coffee Ands, and the organization received an additional \$50 check from an anonymous parish donor.] Ann: This year's Lenten reflection booklet, *Lent with Dorothy Day*, is a publication from Franciscan Media, publisher of the popular *Advent with Saint Joseph*. Several Council members commented on how much they and others (Confirmation candidates, members of the Men of Saint Joseph, a friend Father John had visited in the hospital) had enjoyed the Advent booklet selection.

Parish Life: Lou: **1)** Laura Frutkin, money counter chair, is grateful for the new money counter volunteers. Lou noted that Council members Tom Z, Trish and Kathleen are among those volunteers. **2)** Thank you to Peter DeMarco and the Saint Ann choir for their gift of the December 26th concert. **3)** The scheduled meeting of the Social Gathering committee has been put off because of anticipated bad weather, but the group has two new members: Carrie Nocerino and Cindy Sissick. **4)** The volunteer Task Force also has a new member: Scott Nocerino. **5)** Kathleen and Pat will work on the upcoming Lenten luncheon/supper, now functioning under the umbrella of Social Justice/Human Concerns. Father John spoke with deeply felt

determination: The parish's many "wonderful projects and programs that provide assistance to people in need," these generous and often long-standing initiatives, should be filtered through SJ/HC and run as parish functions.

Rose Marie Marmolejo reported that December's Advent Luncheon was a great success. The committee received "several boxes" of winter items plus \$160 in cash donations, which went to Boys and Girls Village and the Beth-El Shelter. She thanked Maria, Pat, Mary Fedorchak, Michele and Tom Croteau, Melvyn Moral, the parish office team and "all those who donated for the dessert table" for their help.

Open Forum: **1)** Ann reminded members of the upcoming January 12 information deadline for February's newsletter. **2)** Cathy Coda rejoiced and reported that there is now *hot water* in the Saint Gabriel hall bathrooms. [Thank you, Mr. Coda.]. The hall ceiling tiles have no new leaks (Rich Coda and John Marmolejo ran tests – no leaks!) so the tiles can be replaced. It's important to plan the sequence of repairs to the hall before proceeding. **3)** Kathleen commented, and others agreed, about the beauty of the Nativity set at Saint Ann Church (a gift from Christ the Redeemer church) which came to us in the boxes that had held the pieces when they were originally shipped to Christ the Redeemer from Italy. [Thank you, Christ the Redeemer!] Discussion ensued about maintaining simplicity in the sanctuary. Deacon George expressed concern about distractions that can take away from the congregation's proper focus on Jesus and the Mass – a point Pope Benedict has addressed. From his vantage point near the presider's chair the deacon can see heads turn at any movement within the sanctuary. And Nativity sets, he noted, while beautiful, can also be a problem for priests, deacons, EMHCs and altar servers, impeding their ability to move, creating a kind of obstacle course. Saint Gabriel's Nativity set, at Deacon George's suggestion, will be in a different location next year. We should also consider where to put the Saint Ann Nativity set. **4)** The Council discussed the future of the old Saint Ann rectory building (491 Naugatuck Ave.) and talked about possibilities. Should we put it on the market? Selling it, Father John said, would mean reducing our insurance payments and our liability. It is church property and according to a stipulation in the deed a buyer cannot do anything with the building that is antithetical to the Catholic Church. Conclusion: Father will write to the Archbishop asking permission for the parish to sell the building.

Father John's Comments:

Archbishop Blair's latest memo re: COVID: We are to follow the health recommendations for masks in public places.

Church signs: The signs outside Saint Ann's and Saint Gabriel's must be updated this spring to say *Saint Raphael Parish* and include the name and Mass times of each church.

Council member selection: Council must get going on the new member selection process.

Meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Ann Eden
January 12, 2022