

# **Saint Raphael Parish Pastoral Council Meeting Notes**

**October 23, 2023, 7:00 PM St. Ann's Church**

**In attendance:**

**Absent:** Maria T. and Tom Z.

**Opening:** Terri D. delivered the opening prayer.

## **Father John's Comments:**

Fr. provided the September financial report prepared by the financial committee. The parish has recently changed to a fiscal year reporting from a calendar year.

Fr. provided a report on the average percentage capacity of the masses. The average capacity of all the masses in September 2023 was approximately 34%. The Archdiocese guidance explains the desired percentage capacity be no less than 50% or questions must be asked about the mass schedule.

Father asked for volunteers to form a small group to study and brainstorm a new strategy to address this issue. Volunteers to review options about when and how to reduce the number of masses from 4 to 3 are: Rose Marie M.; Frank L.; Terri D., Deacon George.; John K.

Fr. shared how the Archdiocese is to consider a new policy for voluntary retirement of priests at 71. Right now, mandatory retirement is 75. The purpose of the new policy will be to create a pool of retired priests who can serve on demand. There are certain financial incentives for the priests to consider this option. Other major cities in CT have had consolidations. For example, New Haven has 8 churches in one Parish.

Father met Archbishop Coyne who will replace Archbishop Blair in April 2024.

## **Standing Committee Reports:**

### **Saint Raphael Parish Prayer and Worship Committee Report from Ann Eden:**

Celebrate Saint Raphael: Friday, September 29 (Breakfast to Go)

- It rained a bit on our parade, but our team of stalwart bag ladies did their usual stellar job filling the bags with breakfast treats on "Celebrate Saint Raphael Eve." Our team delivery van and courageous driver got the bags to the church on time (despite – or amid – the sheets of rain). The team handed the bags out after Mass, a celebration of the Feast of the Archangels. Attendance was up a bit from previous years, despite the weather. (Or perhaps some folks got washed in!). A really special event – lots of camaraderie, a real family feeling pervaded.

Healing Mass w/Anointing of the Sick: Sunday, October 1, 2:00 p.m. at Saint Ann's

- Father John and Father Steve Krugel celebrated Mass and anointed some 60 people in what was a truly beautiful celebration. Those who attended were very appreciative. People had favorable comments on the every-other-pew seating, which meant no standing in line for anointing or for reception of Eucharist, especially important for the ill and infirm.

International Rosary: Tuesday, October 10, 7:00 p.m. at Saint Gabriel Church

- Recitation of Pope Saint John Paul II's Rosary for Peace. Multi-lingual parishioners led each decade in French, Italian, German, Spanish and Vietnamese, while those who attended responded in English. Rose Cox did a lovely job, as always, in organizing this popular event assisted by Cathy Coda, who chaired the reception in Saint Gabriel Hall.

## Upcoming Events

Mass of Remembrance: Sunday, November 5, 2:00 p.m. at Saint Ann Church

- More than one hundred invitations have gone out to the families of:
  - All those who were buried /had graveside services from Saint Raphael's
  - Relatives/friends of parishioners whose names were included weekend petitions.

Many thanks to Mary Lee Frisbie, Joanne Judd and Monica Pang for their invaluable help. Parishioners and friends have been invited (via the newsletter and the weekly bulletin).

Advent: Begins Sunday, December 3

- This season's Advent booklet, *Draw Near!* from Ave Maria Press, has been ordered and will be available beginning Thanksgiving week.
- This season's weekly bulletin reflections will focus on the Sunday Psalms of Advent.

Lenten Speaker/Retreat for 2024: March 10-12 (Peter DeMarco is coordinating this event.) Sunday afternoon at Saint Gabriel's, Monday and Tuesday evenings at Saint Ann's.

## Human Concerns Committee

Meeting Notes from October 16, 2023

Attendance: Manfred J., Elizabeth S. Wally H., Rose Marie M., John M., Marie T., Al M.

Domestic Violence Initiative:

We were honored by the attendance of Rachel Schippani, Coordinator of Community Education and Volunteer Programs for BHcare.

BHcare Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services (UCDVS) provides services for victims and their children at two sites located in Shelton and New Haven. All services offered are free of charge and confidential. Services support 170 different languages 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

This was the second meeting with BHcare. In September we were blessed to have Melissa Simoni, Development Coordinator, Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services.

We had a valuable discussion with Melissa, and we challenged her with questions. She shared the questions with Rachel who wrote the following answers:

- Do we have any relationships with churches if clients would like someone spiritual to talk to or be around? For example, say a client would like to start attending church, speak to a Priest and /or head of church?
  - Our counselors help clients make connections to churches (if that is something they are looking for) depending on the area that person is from. We do not have specific connections, but work to find a connection based on the town or city our client is living in.
- Are there any patterns you see when clients come in...around holidays, economy bad, school starts, unemployed etc.
  - There are not typically any specific times we see an increase in clients. Unfortunately, there has been an increase in our number of clients over the past few years. We always say dv does not discriminate based on day, time, socioeconomic class, race, gender, religion, age etc. Mondays are typically very busy for us because we have all the clients from incidents that occurred over the weekend.
- Do you have any success rate or measurements on clients getting out of dv relationships?
  - On average it takes about 7x for an individual to leave their abusive partner for good. There are many factors that contribute to being able to leave including finances, children, a support system, pets, housing etc.

We had a valuable discussion with Rachel around these questions and answers and decided to:

- Share information to educate the community about the availability of BHcare services and invite them to reach out.
- Write a short description of BHcare services with Rachel's contact information and request it appear in the weekly bulletin.
- Display a poster about the services in each church.
- Explore the possibility of having BHcare make a presentation to our youth about building and maintaining healthy relationships.

It was decided to place a promotion for BHcare services into our bulletin as follows:

#### *Domestic Violence Services*

*The Mission of The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence provides practical assistance and support for victims of Domestic Violence and seeks to create an environment that supports individual safety and breaks the cycle of violence. If you know someone who has been a victim let them know they are not alone. The Umbrella Center can help them break the cycle of abuse by offering free services of: shelter, counseling, support groups and other services.*

*Please reach out to: CTSafeConnect (24/7 hotline): 1-888-774-2900.*

*Rachael Schippani, Coordinator of Community Education and Volunteer Programs for BHcare can be reached at 203-892-6360 (direct line) for free presentations and educational materials.*

#### Garden Project:

Bill and Mary Simonetti shared the success of the project with Archbishop Blair in an informal conversation. Archbishop expressed sincere interest. Elizabeth Simonetti (no relation?) will call Karen Avitable and ask how we can publish an article about the garden project in The Catholic Transcript.

#### Conect.org

The committee questioned the alignment of the Parish mission and strategy with Conect.org. Their focus is "on leadership development in our communities". We are recommending suspending active involvement with this group because of our experiences and apparent misalignment of priorities.

#### Order of the Holy Sepulchre

We were all excited and surprised to hear how Elizabeth was nominated in January and received her award during a recent celebration and presentation at St. Patrick's Cathedral in NYC. Congratulations to Elizabeth.

The Order of the Holy Sepulchre or Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, is a Catholic order of knighthood under the protection of the Holy See. Members serve as witnesses to the Christian faith and supporters and protectors of the Church and the living Christian communities in the Holy Land.

Human Concerns Committee's next meeting is scheduled for December 4, 2023 at St. Gabriel's Church Hall.

## **Parish Life – Cathy Coda**

When the Social Gathering team met we discussed:

November Coffee And will be to benefit The Wounded Warrior Project. The K of C will also conduct a membership drive at all the Coffee And gatherings.

Parish Christmas Fair will be held on December 2.

Several options were discussed for a parish wide function. Some suggestions included a wine tasting, a Valentine Dance, bus trip to the casino and another bus trip to Sight and Sound in Lancaster, PA. in 2024.

## **Social Gathering - Rose Marie Marmolejo [rmarmolejo@snet.net](mailto:rmarmolejo@snet.net)**

**Our annual Advent Luncheon** will be held on November 19<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon in St. Gabriel Hall. The purpose is to bring our parish family together and have a charitable event. We collect new unwrapped winter items such as hats, gloves, scarves, and socks which will be donated to various organizations including Beth El Shelter.

We also require everyone to bring a nonperishable item for our food pantry. Our pantry feeds many individuals every week.

We will also have a collection basket to donate money for the food pantry so Donna, the Director, can purchase items as needed. Michele and Mary organize all the donations.

Our Advent Luncheon team consists of friends from both churches including Michele and Tom Croteau, Mary Fedorchak, Kathleen Buchanan, Pat Pavlucik, Melvyn, Maria Tomasetti, and me (Rose Marie Marmolejo).

The menu will have 3 soups, tuna ham and cheese sandwiches, condiments, chips, dessert, coffee, tea and juice.

I am happy to report that for 20 + years we have helped our community with proceeds from this project/event. I am grateful to all who attend, contribute, and who enjoy each other's company. I am also grateful to Fr. John for his participation and his prayers.

## **Faith Formation – Maria Tomasetti**

- Our November GIFT (Growing in Faith Together) program dates are Sunday, Nov 12 and Tuesday, Nov 14. Topic: Sacraments: The Eucharist. We will have approximately 66 families participating in our GIFT program, including our Sacramental programs. Our family faith formation model includes adults, in addition to children and teens.
- Approximately 20 children are preparing to receive First Reconciliation and First Communion. Approximately 21 teens are preparing to receive Confirmation in Fall 2024. 14 teens will be receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation at the Cathedral of Saint Joseph in Hartford on Sunday, October 29.
- Three adults will be receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation at the Cathedral of Saint Joseph the evening of Tuesday, November 7.
- We have four adults and one teen participating in our "RCIA" program, now called OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) due to a recent name change by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Three are catechumens, preparing to receive the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Two are candidates, one Catholic and one Lutheran, preparing to receive the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.  
Our Teens for Service group will be packing Christmas Boxes of Joy on Monday, Nov 6, a project through Cross Catholic Outreach. The boxes will be received by children in poor and developing

countries, including Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, and Malawi. Later in November, teens will be packing Thanksgiving food bags for parish families in need.

- Our 14th annual summer "VBS" camp is scheduled for July 22 to July 26, 2024, designed for children ages 4 through 11. The theme will be SCUBA: diving into friendship with God. Volunteers are always needed, adults and teens age 12 and older. There is a role for everyone, including set-up and decorations on several weekday evenings during the two weeks prior to the camp.

### **Open Forum:**

[www.catholic.com](http://www.catholic.com) is a recommended website for answers to questions that many Catholics may ask. This is known as an apologetics website (offering reasons why we are catholic and why we believe what we believe).

The council recommended we request 1,000 copies of the free booklet entitled "Why We're Pro Life" for distribution to parishioners. Individuals can make donations to cover the cost of the booklet. The booklet clarifies the reasons why protecting life and being pro-life is justified by both science and logic.

The council expressed sincere and enthusiastic appreciation to Peter DeMarco and the St. Ann Choir for organizing and performing in the concert with Ivan Diaz.