

Saint Raphael Parish Pastoral Council Meeting Notes

December 18, 2023, 7:00 PM St. Ann Parish House

In attendance:

Absent: Tom Z.; Deacon George; John A.

Opening: Rose Marie Marmolejo delivered the opening prayer.

Acceptance of November 2023 meeting notes was completed.

Father John's Comments:

We will delay any decisions about changing the mass schedule.

Feedback on the financial audit has not yet been received.

Standing Committee Reports:

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

Advent:

- Parishioners have taken the *Draw Near!* booklet from Ave Maria Press. Very few are left.
- We have published weekly bulletin reflections on the Sunday Psalms of Advent.
- In this shortest of all Advent seasons, we will decorate for Christmas following the last Masses on Sunday, December 24th and before the 4:00 p.m. Vigil Masses for Christmas.
- Peter DeMarco has arranged a brief Advent reflection for Friday evening, December 22nd at Saint Ann Church. Archdiocesan Director of Vocations and gifted speaker, Fr. Anthony Federico, will speak on *Growing in Understanding and Love of Jesus in the Eucharist*. The Saint Ann Choir will sing.

On the big screen:

- Rose Cox and her committee presented a screening of *The Chosen Christmas* on Sunday afternoon, December 17th to an enthusiastic group of 30+ people. The committee plans to screen *The Chosen*, Season 1, Episode 1, *I Have Called You by Name* in the Parish Center Hall on Sunday, January 7th. 2:30 p.m. Presentation of additional episodes (Season 1 and beyond) is possible, depending on parishioners' interest.

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. The facilitator is looking to schedule a meeting for late January.

Human Concerns Committee

Meeting Notes from December 4, 2023

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

Absent: Al M. (quit the committee), Manfred T.

Committee Membership

We discussed reasons for Al's departure. We will look for a replacement and ask for ideas from the Church Council about a replacement.

Scope of Our Work

As a new team we decided to re-confirm the scope of work and align our priorities. With Al May leaving under somewhat of an emotional reaction it is important we avoid any future damaging conflicts. We reviewed the description provided in the bylaws and agreed we are on the right track.

Domestic Violence Initiative:

There was some concern among some member(s) about the quality of the decisions made in October and November on this project. The members at this meeting confirmed we made the correct decisions and had a comprehensive approach based on our agreed upon committee responsibilities. We are proud that our new partnership with BHcare will demonstrate measurable results for our parishioners who require their services.

In addition, asking BHcare to educate the youth in the church on how to develop effective and respectful relationships and how to resolve conflict constructively will yield very positive results in ways that cannot be measured. Maria has plans to organize this early 1st quarter 2024.

Protect Connecticut's Children Initiative

We discussed the issues surrounding this initiative. The consensus was the committee can likely support this initiative if more information is collected. Maria will canvass her contacts in the Milford School system to confirm the depth and seriousness of this issue in the Milford schools.

Wally will invite all committee members to the December 7th Zoom meeting for Protect Connecticut's Children.

The committee decided there are other practical actions upon which we can focus (see below).

Supporting Prisoners and Their Relationships

Elizabeth offered an idea to provide Mother's Day cards (and stamps) to prisoners to encourage them to reinforce and/or renew their family relationships which can help reinforce their rehabilitation.

Wally will contact a resource who used to be the Bridgeport Prison Warden and ask his advice, opinions, and his resources to start this (Ed Davies, former warden in Bridgeport).

The committee will continue to assess how to implement this idea at our next meeting.

Facilitate the Baby Box option in Connecticut

To support pro-life activities with our parish and in our archdiocese the committee discussed the possibility of facilitating the opportunity to have Baby Boxes in CT.

Baby Boxes prevent illegal abandonment of newborns by raising awareness, offering a 24-hour hotline for mothers in crisis and offering the Safe Haven Baby Boxes as a last resort option for women who want to maintain complete anonymity while keeping their baby alive (<https://www.shbb.org/>).

Right now, CT Laws require a mother to surrender her baby to an emergency room nurse. A baby Box provides an anonymous method to surrender their baby to a safe facility.

The committee will discuss this further at our next meeting and decide actions.

Human Trafficking

Elizabeth shared the opportunity to attend a fundraiser for the Newly Established Local Safe Home which helps victims heal from human trafficking. The fundraiser is scheduled for December 6th from 6 PM to 11 PM at The Boston Newton Marriott with a Jim Caviezel meet and greet (Sound of Freedom).

The committee will discuss this issue at our next meeting. We will explore how to support and/or partner with The Underground New England which exists to end sexual exploitation in Connecticut (www.theundergroundne.org).

Our next meeting is scheduled for January 8, 2024 at St. Gabriel's Church Hall.

Parish Life – Cathy Coda

Coffee And had good attendance.

January 16th the social gathering committee will meet St. Ann's Parish Center 6:30PM.

Social Gathering - Rose Marie Marmolejo rmarmolejo@snet.net

No report

Faith Formation – Maria Tomasetti

- Seventeen children/teens received the Sacrament of First Reconciliation at Saint Gabriel Church on Saturday, December 9 with Fr. John. Three additional children will be receiving First Reconciliation in 1Q 2024.
- Our GIFT Advent/Christmas activity open house and celebration is scheduled for Tuesday, December 19--anytime between 6:00 pm and 8:00 pm. There will be activity centers for children, teens, and adults. Location: Saint Ann Parish Center...with pizza.
- Our Child Lures and Teen Lures personal safety programs will be offered on January 21 and January 23. All children/teens registered in our GIFT program are required to attend with a parent/guardian.
- Classes for Confirmation candidates also resume in January (Topic: The Nicene Creed).
- Weekly RCIA/OCIA classes continue for our three catechumens and two candidates preparing to receive Sacraments of Initiation.
- Our Summer VBS Camp is scheduled for Monday, July 22 thru Friday, July 26 from 9 am to 12 noon. The theme will be SCUBA, diving into friendship with God, an amazing undersea adventure where kids will experience the ever-flowing, never-ending love of God. Registration begins in January. Thanks for helping to spread the word!
- Approximately 30 to 35 people attended "Christmas with The Chosen: The Messengers and The Shepherd" films on Sunday, December 17. On Sunday, January 7, we are planning to show Season 1, Episode 1 (I Have Called You By Name) and Episode 2 (Shabbat

Open Forum:

- Parking lot repair for St. Gabriel's Church was discussed and Joyce will connect us with someone who can help revisit the project.
- Paula will be invited to participate with the Human Concerns Committee.
- FBI is targeting some Catholics and there is an article from Newsmax about how the FBI is doing the targeting.

The next Council meeting will be on January 22 at 7PM at St. Gariel's Hall.