

CLUSTER 28 TRANSITION COMMITTEE

St. Joseph Parish, St. Patrick Parish, St. Pius X Parish, St. Brigid School

The Cluster 28 Transition Committee met again before Thanksgiving to continue its consideration of the issues ahead of us as we move towards our more formal union next summer. In this and our other regular reports, we seek to moderate fears that the members of our community must inevitably have about the changes ahead of us and to underline our desire to move forward with clear-sightedness and transparency.

Central to our conversation was the continuation of our discussion of how best to centralize and consolidate the administration of our cluster. Previously, we announced our plan to inaugurate a single business office for the cluster at the start of the new fiscal year in July. The diocesan model for this kind of a consolidation calls for the hiring of a single business manager for the operation of the cluster. Most clusters in the diocese have appointed such a manager as a part of the clustering process. A single cluster business manager has clearly brought some financial stability to these clusters, but we have heard that pastoral needs have sometimes suffered as a result.

As we have continued to reflect on this model in regards to our own needs, we have begun to expand our thinking about this matter. We want to ensure that in improving the business efficiency of the cluster school and churches we do not short-change the more important pastoral needs of our community. To its credit, along with a single business manager, the diocese advocates the hiring of a “Pastoral Life Coordinator” to oversee the pastoral needs of the cluster such as religious education, sacraments, ministry training, and so forth. We are imagining the possibility of combining some of these responsibilities with some business responsibilities so as to avoid compartmentalization, keep pastoral needs at the forefront of our planning, and ensure that we have cluster administrators who are not just efficient business managers. Such a model of course presents its own challenges in terms of hiring individuals who have skills in both areas. We are still weighing our options, but we intend nonetheless to have a firm plan for your approval by sometime in March.

Also previously announced was our intention to have a cluster-wide town meeting on the Mass schedule. ***This meeting has been scheduled for Sunday, January 24 at 2pm at St. Pius Church.*** Previously, we had suggested these questions to help guide you in your prayer and reflection in preparation for this meeting: 1) What creative ways do you see that we can reduce the number of Masses and still serve our cluster’s needs?, 2) What Masses do you attend regularly and how would the elimination of one or the other of them affect your ability to practice your faith?, 3) Are there particular Masses you think it would be more important to preserve than others, why?, 4) Would you be open to traveling to one of the other cluster churches for Mass at least occasionally?, 5) Are there particular characteristics of a certain liturgy (such as music) that should be preserved, even if the times of the Masses were changed?, 6) Experience suggests that the elimination of a Mass can affect the financial support of the parish – how can we avoid having this happen? The meeting will provide opportunity to ask questions and for an open discussion of this important issue for our community. After the meeting, we will go to the parish hall for some refreshments and socializing.

Speaking of socializing, which is one of the most important ways we can get to know each other, we are beginning the planning of a cluster-wide celebration of the Capuchins’ great gift of themselves to St. Joseph Parish these past many years. We know that the people of St. Joseph (and St. Brigid too!) will need to plan their own more intimate celebrations to give thanks to Frs. Peter, Don and Jim for their generous service, but we believe a larger celebration, perhaps a more informal cluster cookout in the summer, would be a wonderful way to come together as a community. In the midst of all the changes that are coming upon us in this process, what better sign of hope might we have than celebrating the faithfulness of these good men.

As always, the members of the transition committee pledge to communicate with you in a regular and transparent manner about our planning. We will utilize the bulletin, school news notes/letter, and websites as the first means of this communication. If at any time you have input you wish to share, please feel free to speak with one of the committee members – you can call your parish or school office for contact information. Please continue to keep us and this process in your prayers.