

**Minutes of
Sonoma North Deanery Meeting
June 28, 2008
St. John the Baptist – Healdsburg**

1. Meeting Opening:

In Attendance: Mike Wall, John Gnam and Mary Ott (St. Eugene's), Colleen McMahon, Kevin Connolly and Bob Leet (Resurrection), Mel Amato, (St. John's), Brian Connolly, Jim Curtin and Pat Babb (Holy Spirit), Len Marabella (St. Rose), and Ray Pregel (Star of the Valley) and Yvette Fallandy

Excused: Helen Chapman

Absent: Ella Rozett (St. Phillip's)

Call to Order: Chmn. Mike Wall called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM.

Opening Prayer: Mel Amato delivered the opening prayer to “bring us all together” on this day at St. John the Baptist church in Healdsburg.

Introductions: Chmn. Mike Wall began the introduction portion of the meeting by announcing the presence of a “guest” by the name of Rick Norman from St. John the Baptist church.

Additionally, a welcome introduction was put forth by Chmn. Mike Wall to Father Walt Rogina of St. John the Baptist church (Fr. Walt). Fr. Walt stated that he would be present at this meeting for a short period of time as he was scheduled to attend another commitment on behalf of the church. The other DPC members continued introductions around the table.

Minutes and Agenda: Pursuant to the request of Bob Leet, the minutes of May should be revised to reflect additional information to the ‘Continuing Business’ of the May meeting agenda. Regarding ‘Report on Oakland and Fresno Programs’, Mr. Leet stated that he wishes to revise his motion “to establish a DPC Task Force to address the shortage of priests with a focus on Pastoral Ministers”, to include Mr. Marabella’s presentation which formally outlined specific ‘objectives’ so that “the output will be a report and recommendations for implementation within six months of this date”. All approved the amendment of the original motion. Therefore, the minutes of May shall be revised to reflect this amendment. After discussion, the May minutes were approved, as well as the May summary minutes.

With respect to the approval of the June agenda, Mel Amato requested the agenda be revised under ‘New Business’ (F) to add for discussion the North Coast Catholic news article Summer 2008, titled: ‘Vocations-These men want to be priests for our diocese. Can you help?’ located on page thirteen (13) wherein there is an appeal to obtain financial support for tuition from parishioners to sponsor seminarians. All approved.

Minutes and Agenda continued.

Chmn. Mike Wall made a motion to revise the June agenda under 'Other Parish Reports' to take time to express appreciation to the outgoing DPC secretary, Colleen McMahon, for her wonderful and dedicated service to the DPC. All approved.

Bob Leet requested a revision to the June agenda under "New Business" to discuss the need for a new representative from the Sonoma DPC to the Executive Committee. All approved.

Public Comment: Mel Amato stated that the visiting gentleman, Rick Norman, who participated in the 'Introduction' portion of this DPC meeting, was considering joining the DPC as a representative of St. John the Baptist church with Mr. Amato.

Father Walt took his time to convey the need for improving collection efforts for the church. He stated that he would be leaving the meeting shortly to participate in a baptism.

2. Continuing Business:

Report regarding communication to parish/pastor:

Ray Pregent shared that Star of the Valley continues to work with their Pastoral Council issues. He stated that Msgr. Keyes asked the parish to seek representatives for the DPC. They are reviewing the bylaws for the Pastoral Council and redoing the handbook. In the fall, they will revisit the plan. Their weekly bulletin has been revamped. They are seeking volunteers for various ministries. The Finance Committee, the Women's Club, and the Men's Club all got together for a meeting with a goal to improve ongoing communication. Mr. Pregent indicated that the large senior's base, within the church, is not as open to talking with one another, not from personal dislike of one another, but from an age situation and individual privacy preferences. He stated that attrition is an issue in an aging congregation. Trying to mix up the "established" groups is a challenge.

Jim Curtin and Brian Connolly of Holy Spirit stated that they sat with Fr. Bob to discuss expanding their pastoral ministries to help with the shortage of priests. They are seeking ecclesial assistance for outreach to various diverse groups so that they can inspire 'awakening the Holy Spirit' at their church. Fr. Bob suggested an outreach to families that have fallen apart. With proper instruction and help, 'evangelization' can bring these families back together again. Therefore, Fr. Bob is starting an evangelization committee. This will bring about a marketing effort to reach out to the public and the RCI program. It was stated that administrative burdens, on the priest(s), is too great, so Pastoral Ministries might take on administrative duties to help relieve the clergy so that they are free to do more important leadership assignments. Brian Connolly stated that Holy Spirit is using an 'Introduction' procedure at their church. They exchange names and tell each other their stories as to how they came to attending Holy Spirit, etc. Their priest refers to this action as a form of "witnessing" at the congregational level.

Report regarding communication to parish/pastor continued:

Len Marabella from St. Rose reported that the DPC Pastoral Ministry program, which would embrace a diverse base, is a good outreach mechanism as far as Fr. Dennis is concerned. St. Rose has a new organizational structure. The Town Hall meeting will focus on a common theme: Finances - Revamping the old Church perspective.

Bob Leet and Kevin Connolly from Resurrection reported that there is a new floor that has been put down in the parish church. They have not met with the pastor as yet. They are looking for a replacement for Colleen McMahon to represent their parish at the DPC.

Michael Wall from St. Eugene's reported that he spoke with Msgr. Pulskamp about the new introduction procedure that was implemented, at this parish, before the beginning of every mass, starting at Easter. Msgr. stated that the introduction is proceeding as planned. Michael Wall likes this new procedure, as does the Msgr. As a constitutional point: introducing oneself to another congregant helps to pull the community together and is vital to the mission of evangelization. This is an invitation to get to know one another by name and this 'invitation' is put forth to the community at every mass. Everyone has a story and getting to know one another helps with building a strong faith community.

Mel Amato reported that St. John the Baptist's Summer Festival took place. The Latino community, and others, came together for this event. Fr. Walt is planning the agenda for the upcoming 'Generation of Faith' program.

New DPC Members Information:

All new members to the DPC, Brian Connolly, Ray Pregent, and Mary Ott, have received the constitution, the bylaws, and applicable email addresses with roster. All of this information was gathered and emailed to the new members by Mr. Mel Amato. A sincere "thank you" went out to Mel Amato for assisting the new members with obtaining this pertinent information.

Report on Task Force to Address the Shortage of Priests:

Bob Leet stated that the involvement of Len Marabella and Kevin Connolly is respected and well received by the Executive Committee. It was also determined that given the level of interest and passion to this endeavor, that Len Marabella should be considered for the position of Chairman of the Task Force, and for this Task Force to determine the method of training, implement the training program, and to address the financial issues and concern that will be associated with getting this ministry program off the ground. Mr. Connolly stated that there was some consideration in the works to address the challenge of obtaining financial assistance. He stated: "Assistance could be obtained from wealthier parishes to help less stable ones."

Report from the Executive Meeting: Bob Leet indicated that Bishop Walsh was aware that every parish needs this ministry in place, but the one problem is that they usually cannot afford to retain ecclesial staff.

Report from the Executive Meeting continued:

Bob Leet also stated that the Executive Committee paid great attention to Kevin Connolly's position that there is a need for a better system of communication within the Diocese and a magazine for large communication purposes. Kevin Connolly will continue to look into a publication that will fit these needs.

Bob Leet made a motion: Len Marabella will be the Chairman of the Task Force to address the shortage of priests and to investigate of possibility of a Pastoral Minister Program. All approved.

Starting Work – Establishing the Task Force:

Len Marabella handed out a Motion Outline with bullet point objectives that the Task Force will follow. Mr. Marabella discussed ways and means to get this Task Force moving forward. Fr. Keyes will advise. Mr. Marabella indicated that this will be a "wide Task Force". Fr. Dennis is interested in this Task Force. Sr. Antonia is looking forward to helping with this cause. Good ideas can be gleaned from the '*Co-Workers in the Field*' document that Mel Amato cited at the May DPC meeting. The Ecclesial Minister will be a professionally trained position. Bob Leet stated that the ecclesial ministry is becoming more important as priests decline in our area. Len Marabella explained that this program seeks to find administrative, financial, ecclesial people to help in the absence of priests. Pat Babb indicated that this position sounds like a "program manager". Mel Amato stated that the financial aspect of this position must be considered, on a parish by parish basis, and the Pastoral Ministers must continue to work through the financial organization at each parish. Yvette Fallandy discussed how the parishes must use the ecclesial minister. Ms. Fallandy stated: "Diocesan policy is needed on professional training and salary of these 'ministers.' This may not be feasible; the change to the Task Force goes beyond what their (Pastoral Ministers) function is, but how their position will be funded."

Discussion continued on the role of the Task Force and how it will function and what the position of PM entails. If this program plan fails to bear fruit, Pat Babb asked: "What is the back up plan?" Discussed was the option to go forward *without* the 'blessing of the Bishop', obtain funding from the diocese, and/ or each parish bears the financial cost. John Gnam discussed the payment of this position to the DPC members. He stated that there are budgetary limitations for this position at St. Eugene's. However, he did indicate that the Knights of Columbus might be a possible source of funding or even the investigation of writing grants to fund this position. The DPC members concluded this discussion with agreeing that this position must be funded. It was noted that a priest is not always equipped to run everything and that delegation of tasks and specific projects is the key to meeting the need(s) of each parish.

Report on the Paulist Program:

Michael Wall signed up and attended this program. Mr. Wall stated that this was a very “nice” program. It contains a practical approach and gets parishioners back and listening to why they left and why they came back. Mel Amato stated that this program can still be accessed on the website. Rick Norman asked the DPC members the following question: “How do you answer the question(s) of the people who return so that we don’t lose them again?” Pat Babb stated that returning Catholics “need to be heard and they *want to be heard.*” In this dialogue, it was discussed, we can re-affirm for them why they feel the way they do. Ms. Babb offered to the DPC that returning to the Catholic Church is a “spiritual journey”. Bob Leet confirmed that “the church enriches the faithful and is a vehicle to the Creator”. Noted for the record was that the PNCEA or www.pncea.org/ is the internet site for the Paulist Program. Len Marabella stated that “the doors have to be very wide and welcoming to bring people back.” Kevin Connolly added: “Personal loss has a lot to do with loss of faith.” Mel Amato asked the DPC members what the next step is once they return. “Where do you send them,” he stated, “to get there questions answered?” It was noted by Mr. Amato that we must be ready to steer them to the proper source. Bob Leet offered that this is where the Ecclesial Minister can step up to the plate in these situations. Colleen McMahan stated the following: “Listening is key. Faith is in God – not in the institution. Fallen Catholics must be *reminded* of this truth: God is always there for them. Sharing faith is more important than what the priests are doing.”

Report on Diversity in the Church Seminar:

Mr. Marabella and Jim Curtin reported the following updates, indicating that there are two key points to make on this subject: 1. In view of spending a whole day in this seminar, and looking at the Hispanic & Non-Hispanic community, it is, in the final analysis: one church. It takes time to accept diversity and to integrate these two communities into a seamless fit. 2. It is the pastor who drives the integration machine for each parish. St. Rose had a follow-up meeting to discuss this topic. Mr. Curtin stated: “Acceptance must happen so that integration can move forward.” As a sidebar, to this subject, Mr. Curtin suggested that on the diocesan level, it might be prudent to determine what would make a ‘good’ ecclesiastical minister. In this determination process, diversity integration can be a part of the skill set that the ministerial position offers to each parish.

NEW BUSINESS:

DPC Executive Board Report:

To re-confirm for the record: The upcoming meetings for the Executive Board are as follows: June 7, 2008, no meeting in July or August, September 6, 2008, October 4, 2008, November 8, 2008, no meeting in December, January 10, 2009, February 7, 2008, the Plenary Session is scheduled for March 28, 2009, no meeting in April, May 2, 2009 and June 6, 2009. Pursuant to the last meeting statement, Bob Leet invited all members to attend an Executive Board meeting.

DPC Executive Board Report continued:

Regarding on the agenda, ‘Reaching Out to the Mendocino /Lake DPC Reps’, Yvette Fallandy stated that the Mendocino–Lake Deanery has a lot of people interested in the DPC. However, they are not as organized there to address the geographical issue. Therefore, Ms. Fallandy’s idea is to invite Lake Reps. to the deanery to see how they feel about it. The Executive Board wants the uninvolved deanery to be “invited to join”. In light of this expectation from the Executive Board, it was proposed that DPC invite these people here to our meetings (DPC) to get them involved and to listen to their ideas and concerns regarding distance and participation. Bob Leet feels that the Mendocino people feel left out of the loop.

Motion: Invite residents of Mendocino to the DPC meetings. All approved.

For the record, it was determined that the DPC must investigate why the Mendo-Lake area is not as involved. What is their motivation to remain autonomous? It was suggested that Mary Ott is given the roster of names for the reps. in this area so that they can be formally invited to the DPC meetings.

New Representative Needed for the DPC Executive Board:

Bob Leet stated that due to outgoing member of the DPC, the Executive Board is seeking a replacement. Therefore, two (2) motions were placed before the DPC in a consecutive manner:

Motion 1: Determine who the new executive board member will be at this DPC meeting. All approved.

Motion 2: Move to elect either Mel Amato or Michael Wall to the Executive Board, with secret ballot voting at this DPC meeting for the candidate of choice. All Approved.

For the record, it was determined that each candidate would state their reasons for seeking the position. After Mr. Amato and Mr. Wall addressed the council, the ballots were placed and the tally of votes determined that Michael Wall is the elected new member to the Executive Board. Mr. Wall indicated that he will inform the Executive Board that he is the new member. Yvette Fallandy suggested that the “news” of this should be emailed to her and she will “take it from there.”

DPC Website:

Yvette Fallandy stated that the website is moving forward. As historical background, Ms. Fallandy offered that Joe Tonkovich ran the website for sometime for the DPC. He moved to Medford, OR. St. Eugene’s wanted their own website manager. The Executive Board began looking for a replacement for Joe, and met with a potential candidate, who was hired for the position. The caveat, however, was that this new website administrator wanted a “conduit” person in place. This buffer person would verify the information, to be uploaded to the website, *before* it was put out for public dissemination. Yvette is that “conduit”. For the record, all minutes will be posted once approved.

DPC Website continued:

Brian Connolly discussed with Ms. Fallandy about the website protocol in terms of Yvette conducting “content review”, how the review might “drag” time out until Davis (the new website administrator) posts the information, and the cost (\$35.00 per hour) for this website administration. Mel Amato stated that he feels some content review is required and some requires no review at all, to his understanding. Mr. Amato stated: “A website that is not up-to-date is not as favorable as one that has current information posted. For example, the DPC Calendar on the website is wrong, along with two (2) other documents.” With no further discussion, the council moved onto the next scheduled agenda item.

DPC representative from Unrepresented Parishes: Mike Wall presented a letter he drafted to Windsor’s Our Lady of Guadalupe, for incorporation into the minutes. No response from the parish was received to date. Ella Rozett was absent for this meeting and therefore, could not update the council on her findings. It was decided that this topic be carried over to next month.

Report on Diocesan Communications:

Kevin Connolly has attended one meeting on this subject so far. Next meeting is Friday, July 18th and eight (8) individuals are scheduled to attend the meeting. He is moving along with having some “creative thinking for a publication.” Brian Connolly stated there appears to be receptivity to publications, enhancing websites, and improving communications. Bob Leet added that it would be advantageous to be able to add teleconferencing the communication loop. Council discussion ensued regarding how teleconferencing can be achieved. Pat Babb indicated that the Bishop was “amazed” at the number of people who use the computer, and that he was re-educated about how popular this ‘tool’ is in today’s world. Discussion took place regarding how a magazine would help to bridge the gap from those who use computers to those who do not. Brian Connolly asked a question to the council: “What is the new structure around the Diocese website?” He feels that this forum should be explored and solved. Most council members concurred with Mr. Connolly’s observation that we should address all avenues in the communication structure. Off the record discussion ensued regarding financial vs. personnel limitations with respect to the Diocesan website and communications. Post discussion, it was determined by the DPC that this item be carried onto the next agenda as ‘Continuing Business’.

Other Parish Reports:

Motion: A thank you to Colleen McMahon for her service and dedication to the DPC as Secretary for two (2) years. A box of See’s candies was given to Ms. McMahon for her service. All agreed.

John Gnam reported that he feels the Evangelization Program should “get going” at St. Eugene’s, and that he will personally spearhead this grassroots movement into action. He stated that this should be called a Leadership Program. It should meet once a month, then break off to parishes to get to the parish level.

Other Parish Reports – John Gnam continued:

Colleen McMahon asked for more clarity on this idea. Discussion ensued. Bob Leet suggested that a “trial” program be launched in one parish to see how it goes. Mel Amato observed that this could be a proposal to start as an interparish evangelization group. He suggested that this group start now. Discussion ensued about how to address the pastoral assembly’s to get coordination for this program and recruit members. It was concluded by the council that it would be prudent to study the material for this program under the eye of the DPC and begin a grassroots effort stimulated by the DPC that goes down to the parish level. Also, create a structure for sharing information and inviting clergy into this movement. Mel Amato stated that he has many of the materials needed for this effort in his possession.

Motion: Sonoma North Deanery to promote a bona fide Evangelization Program. This program will be led by John Gnam of St. Eugene’s church. All approved.

Seminarian Funding – North Coast Catholic Newsletter – Mel Amato:

Regarding the article in the NCCN, on page 13, Mr. Amato stated that seminarians need financial assistance to attend school. He wants to underscore the importance of this article (plea) for funding from the Bishop and suggested that fundraisers, etc, might assist with this collection effort. Mr. Amato asked the council to consider what the DPC can do to help this cause and suggested that the DPC play a role in “assisting” the Bishop with achieving this goal. John Gnam noted that St. Eugene’s is financially deficient at the present time. However, there are new people on the finance committee and they spoke before the parish. Mr. Gnam offered that the DPC can appeal for seminary financial assistance directly to the parishioners, as sometimes this direct appeal can stimulate an influx of cash flow for a cause, via a specific plate collection. Pat Babb cited that the Sonoma South Deanery has some wealthy Catholics that can gift money to this cause. Brian Connolly asked the council to what extent are financials available to the public? If a report can cite the cost for putting young men through the seminary, directly to the parish level, then parishioners might feel that they know where the money is going and might give it more freely. John Gnam ran the numbers in his head and issued the following statistic for the record: “It costs \$5.00 per year, for active Catholics, to put the young seminarians through school.” Pat Babb suggested that the seminary candidates tour the churches for sponsorship purposes. “If the people can see the faces of these men” then a result might happen. Rick Norman offered that it would be best if this issue can be broken down to a level where a parish/people can understand the importance of subsidizing the education of the young seminarians. Kevin Connolly mentioned it is incumbent on the DPC to communicate to the Bishop and the Finance Committee that they look at the ‘transparency’ in this issue so that they can sell their points to the people. Mel Amato stated that all of these financial issues are on reports already, however, a summary report that the laity can understand should be created for this effort.

Motion: Chairman to appoint a task force to make recommendations as to how the DPC can assist our Bishop in that objective. That motion was approved. As you describe the motion, it sounds quite different. While we discussed the need for financial transparency, that was not the subject of my motion. All approved.

Task Force: Mel Amato, Brian Connolly, John Gnam, and Mike Wall.

Deanery Communiqués for Executive Committee:

Bob Leet stated that there is nothing until September. Mel Amato suggested that more DPC dates be determined for the record. This will be a new agenda item at the next DPC meeting to be held at Resurrection parish.

Closing:

Reminder of next meeting place:

Our next meeting will be at Resurrection Parish, Santa Rosa, July 26, 2008 at 9:00am.

Closing prayer:

Mel Amato led us in the closing prayer.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 am.

NOTE: Visiting guest, Mr. Rick Norman, indicated to Michael Wall after the 'Adjournment' portion of the meeting that he would like to represent St. John the Baptist Church along with Mel Amato. Mr. Norman stated that this council is proactive and he appreciates the opportunity to be a part of this council. So stated, Mr. Wall welcomed Mr. Norman to the DPC.