MONTHLY UPDATE • Faith in Our Future
February 2016

The Parish Self-Study Phase of the Diocese-wide pastoral planning process, *Faith in Our Future*, is well underway with parishioners across Burlington, Mercer, Monmouth and Ocean Counties invited to offer their input about their faith communities.

Parish core teams have been engaging their fellow community members in a number of different ways, including the posting of online surveys, leading “town hall” style meetings, setting up task forces or work groups and a series of interviews with parish leaders. Whatever the method or methods selected by the parish, the aim is to inform parishioners about the process, and to collect their observations, experiences and hopes for the future, particularly in connection with aspects that reflect the vibrancy of local parish life, such as its commitment to evangelization, the Eucharist, life-long faith formation and outreach to those in need.

Across the Diocese, presentations from pastors and core team members have served to highlight the importance of *Faith in Our Future*. During a Feb. 18 town hall meeting in St. Benedict Parish, Holmdel, Father Garry Koch, pastor, told his parishioners that the initiative is a very important undertaking for the Diocese because “we are responding to the shifting realities of the contemporary American Church.”

“We need to understand this study as a positive step in vitalization and growth and not as a contraction or loss. We have to be flexible to be vibrant. It is with much foresight that Bishop [David M.] O’Connell has pushed this forward at this time,” said Father Koch. (See story, this page.)

What happens from here?

The Parish Self-Study Phase is the first of three phases that will unfold over the 18-month process. The core teams will spend the next few weeks digesting and interpreting parishioner input, considering it within the realities of parish statistics and financial data, as well as the larger mission. Each core team will complete several key reports that summarize evaluations and verify statistical data about the community, all of which will be used in the next phase of the *Faith in Our Future* process – when parishes come together as cohort groups.

The cohorts have been formed by grouping several neighboring parishes, which will share the findings from the parish studies and make suggestions about ways that the parishes in a given area might work together and respond to the goals of the initiative as set forth by Bishop David M. O’Connell, C.M., in December. Twenty-five cohorts have been formed, ranging in size from the consolidation of two parishes. All 107 parishes of the Diocese belong to a cohort. (See list below.)

The cohort groups will first come See Monthly - 33

Standing before 50 parishioners in his community’s Feb. 18 town hall meeting, Father Garry Koch, pastor of St. Benedict Parish, Holmdel, said the goal of *Faith In Our Future* is about responding to the question, “How can the Church best respond to the needs of the 21st century?”

The strategic planning process is very important for the Diocese because “we are responding to the shifting realities of the contemporary American Church,” said Father Koch. “Knowing that going forward, we have fewer resources…it is essential for us to redistribute those resources in an exercise of stewardship. Instead of the traditional parish set-up, new paradigms of parish life must be explored,” he said.

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In addition to Father Koch, the parish core team members, Mike McCahill, chair, Lynn Hoffman, secretary, John Kurowski, Betty Martin and Dan Ryan, spoke about the area of study for which they are responsible and how St. Benedict Parish and School fared in each category.

Martin sees Faith in Our Future as providing “an opportunity to be pro-active and forward-thinking as we consider what lies ahead for our parish community and the Diocese as a whole.”

“It is my firm hope that the Spirit See Town • 33

### Assigned into cohorts, parishes will work together through next phase

#### Burlington County

**COHORT 1:** Corpus Christi, Willingboro; Jesus the Good Shepherd, Riverside; Resurrection, Delran

**COHORT 2:** Sacred Heart, Riverton; St. Charles Borromeo, Cinnaminson; Our Lady of Good Counsel, Moorestown; Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Maple Shade

**COHORT 3:** St. John Neumann, Mount Laurel; St. Isaac Jogues, Marlinon; St. Joan of Arc, Marlton; St. Mary of the Lakes, Medford; Holy Eucharist, Tabernacle

**COHORT 4:** St. Andrew, Jobstown; Assumption, New Egypt (Ocean County); St. Ann, Browns Mills; Christ the Redeemer, Mount Holly; Sacred Heart, Mount Holly; Our Lady Queen of Peace, Hainesport

**COHORT 5:** St. Katharine Drexel, Burlington; Sts. Francis & Clare, Florence Township; St. Joan of Arc, Browns Mills; Christ the Redeemer, Mount Holly; Sacred Heart, Mount Holly; Our Lady Queen of Peace, Hainesport

#### Mercer County

**COHORT 6:** St. John the Baptist, Allentown (Monmouth County); St. Vincent de Paul, Yardville; Our Lady of Sorrows-St. Anthony, Hamilton; St. Gregory the Great, Hamilton

**COHORT 7:** St. Ann, Lawrenceville; Church of the Korean Martyrs, Trenton; St. Paul, Princeton; St. David the King, Princeton Junction; St. Anthony of Padua, Hightstown; St. Hedwig, Trenton; considering Princeton and Rider Universities

**COHORT 8:** St. Alphonsus, Hopewell; St. George, Titusville; St. James, Pennington

**COHORT 9:** Our Lady of Good Counsel, West Trenton; Blessed Sacrament-Our Lady of the Divine Shepherd, Trenton; Incarnation-St. James, Ewing; considering The College of New Jersey, Ewing

**COHORT 10:** Our Lady of the Angels, Trenton; Divine Mercy, Trenton; Sacred Heart, Trenton; St. Mary of the Assumption Cathedral, Trenton; St. Joseph, Trenton

#### Monmouth County

**COHORT 11:** St. Veronica, Howell; St. William the Abbot, Howell; St. Catherine of Siena, Farmingdale

**COHORT 12:** St. Robert Bellarmine, Freehold; St. Rose of Lima, Freehold; St. Joseph, Millstone; St. Thomas More, Manalapan

**COHORT 13:** St. Mary, Colts Neck; St. Gabriel, Marlboro; St. Benedict, Holmdel; St. Catherine, Holmdel

**COHORT 14:** St. Clement, Matawan; St. Joseph, Keyport; Jesus the Lord, Keyport; Holy Family, Union Beach

**COHORT 15:** St. Ann, Keansburg; St. Mary, Middletown; St. Catherine Laboure, Middletown; Our Lady of Perpetual Help-St. Agnes, Atlantic Highlands

**COHORT 16:** St. Leo the Great, Lincroft; St. Anthony of Padua, Red Bank; St. James; Red Bank; Nativity, Fair Haven; Holy Cross, Rumson

**COHORT 17:** Precious Blood, Monmouth Beach; St. David the King, Princeton; Sacred Heart, Trenton; St. Mary of the Assumption Cathedral, Trenton; St. Joseph, Trenton

**COHORT 18:** St. Anselm, Wayside; Mother of Mercy, Asbury Park; Holy Innocents; Neptune; Ascension, Bradley Beach

**COHORT 19:** St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Avon-by-the-Sea; St. Catharine-St. Margaret, Spring Lake; St. Rose, Belmar; St. Mark, Sea Girt

**COHORT 20:** St. Denis, Manasquan; St. Martha, Point Pleasant; St. Peter, Point Pleasant Beach; Epiphany, Brick

#### Ocean County

**COHORT 21:** Sacred Heart, Bay Head; St. Pio of Pietrelcina, Lavallette; Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Seaside Heights; St. Catharine of Siena, Seaside Park

**COHORT 22:** St. Dominic, Brick; Visitation, Brick; St. Mary of the Lake, Lakewood; St. Anthony Clare, Lakewood; considering Georgian Court University, Lakewood

**COHORT 23:** St. Monica, Jackson; St. Aloysius, Jackson; St. John, Lakehurst; St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Whiting

**COHORT 24:** St. Maximilian Kolbe, Toms River; St. Luke, Toms River; St. Justin, Toms River; St. Joseph, Toms River

**COHORT 25:** St. Barnabas, Bayville; St. Pius X Parish, Forked River; St. Mary, Barnegat; St. Luke, Toms River; St. John, Lakewood; St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Brant Beach; St. Theresa Parish, Little Egg Harbor

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_A FAITHFUL FUTURE • At a town hall meeting held in St. Benedict Parish, Holmdel, core team chair Mike McCahill, at center, was joined by team members John Kurowski, Dan Ryan, Betty Martin and Lynn Hoffman. John Bakowski photo_
Town hall meetings provide information on Faith In Our Future

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will enlighten and motivate all members of our Diocese, the Bishop, clergy and the laity to come together in prayer and action to secure a vibrant future for the Diocese of Trenton,” she said.

Looking Ahead
Parishioners at the meeting said they appreciated hearing insights to questions and the thinking behind how parishes were grouped in their respective cohorts.

Jeanne Gillen, a 30-year parishioner, said she realized that changes need to be made in how parishes minister to their faithful.

“The days when there would be churches on every street corner and filled are not there anymore,” said Gillen.

Kathy Lo Bue said that two town hall meetings were held Feb. 16 in St. Robert Bellarmine Church, Freehold, – one in the morning and one in the evening. With the hope of eliciting the most honest and open discussion, Lo Bue, parish core team chair, noted that it was decided that Msgr. Sam Sirianni, pastor, not be present for the meetings.

Lo Bue reported that based on completed surveys and town hall meeting discussions, many parishioners

A Broader Perspective
Anthony Coticelli is one of several diocesan appointed facilitators who will be actively engaged in working with the parish cohorts. He is also a core team member in Visitation Parish, Brick, where he has belonged for about 20 years.

In his facilitator role, Coticelli was present for the Feb. 18 town hall meeting in St. Martha Parish, Point Pleasant, where he found the parishioner participation to be “respectful, fervent and relaxed.”

“I was incredibly pleased and humbled by the participation and the response,” Coticelli said adding that “people can listen prayerfully and respectfully even when they have concerns and anxiety about the future.”

Questions and concerns addressed by St. Martha parishioners Coticelli noted were primarily about the short time frames for decisions and developing collaboration among the parishes in the cohort.

Reiterating the need for parishes to work together for Faith In Our Future to be successful, St. Benedict Parish core team chair Mike McCall said, that in his career as a business professional, “I have seen smart leaders plan in decades, think in years, work in months, live in days and celebrate in moments.

“Faith in Our Future is an important step in the right direction,” McCall said. “Let’s face it. The numbers are bad. We all need to step up our game. We need to brainstorm and prepare for what our future is going to look like.”

Monthly update for February 2016, cont.

Stay Informed
Any parishioner who is interested in learning more about how to get involved in his local self-study process is encouraged to check his parish website or contact the pastor or parish core team members.

To learn more about Faith in Our Future, visit www.DioceseofTrenton.org/FaithInOurFuture/ or www.TrentonMonitor.org. For questions about this UPDATE, write to dotcomm@dioceseoftrenton.org.

Parish mission in Hamilton
Our Lady of Sorrows–St. Anthony Parish, Hamilton, is offering a mission from March 13 to March 16. The mission will be held each evening in Our Lady of Sorrows Church, 3816 Whitehead Road Ext., beginning at 7 p.m. and will be led by Augustinian Father Francis A. Siroli. The theme is “Made in the Image of God: A Spirituality of God’s Presence within Us.”

Father Siroli is stationed at Villanova Monastery, Villanova, Pa., and his ministry includes presenting parish missions, retreats (religious and lay), adult faith formation and

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