



**DIOCESE OF SCRANTON
PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2023**

Msgr. Van Loon called council to order at 3:05 pm.

- Roll Call was taken. *Present:* Bishop Bambera; Monsignors Quinn and Van Loon; Fathers Shantillo, Polednak, Albert, Bechtel, Beck, Bryant, DeCelles, Edwards, Evanko, Fox, Glenn, Jeffrey, Kuhar, Kutch, McCreary, McDougall, Miller, Quinnan, Ricciardi, Tudgay, Wasnock. *Excused:* Fathers Czachor, Doris, Polmounter. *Absent:* Fr. Pisaneschi.
- Prayer Intentions: The mothers of Kevin Miller, Michael Bryant, Bill Corcoran, and Dave Cramer; Phil Rayapan; John Petrasko, on the anniversary of his death; Dan Yankevich, who is not doing well.
- Council proceeded to pray Daytime Prayer at 3:07 pm.
- Minutes from the August 1, 2023 Meeting were corrected to note that Fr. Jeffrey was present. Minutes were approved as amended.

I. Parish Posting and Application Process in the midst of Vision 2030 modifications: Fr. Polednak

Fr. Polednak asked for feedback on the parish posting and application process. Almost no one applied for openings posted this year. One contributing factor may be the hassle of submitting an application for an assignment one is not likely to receive. Another may be the priest's reluctance to leave a parish he likes, prior to the end of his term, in order to accept a linkage. Perhaps the priest wonders if postings accurately reflect the difficulties involved in parish modifications. In general, council members seem to appreciate the parish profiles in each posting. Some would like a second notice if no one initially responds to a posting. It was also suggested that the diocese survey priests to gauge their satisfaction with their assignments and their willingness to move, and use this information to inform future appointments.

Council also discussed how Vision 2030 is going in general. A major theme of the discussion was transparency: what information about future modifications would be helpful to the people? One priest, who is currently leading a capital campaign, said that his people would revolt if they knew the parish would be consolidated with another in 2030. Another noted that in his linkage, because the people knew that consolidations were coming to their area, they (or at least the younger ones) were able to begin sooner to imagine how a future, regional parish might best be organized to enable them to carry out the mission of the Church.

The bishop asked whether linkages were preferable to consolidations. Comments seemed to discourage a one-size-fits-all approach. A linkage seems to be working in Susquehanna County, for example. Modifications might still be possible; people there are used to driving a distance to church. But in the Valley, the number of parish churches in close proximity to one another is creating unnecessary burdens on pastors right now. One priest asked if deacon PLCs could help bear the burden; the bishop noted the challenge of finding sacramental ministers, but is open to this.

II. Religious Education Programs: Rev. Kevin Miller

Fr. Miller led a discussion on best practices in religious education. Especially since the pandemic, several different models of catechesis have emerged: besides traditional in-classroom instruction, parishes are using online learning, homeschooling, a “home base” model where catechism is offered in family “clumps” or “clusters,” hybrid models, and more. Only four parishes represented at council are using newer models. Experiences with these models have been mostly positive.

III. Outdoor Wedding Policy Interim Report: Msgr. Quinn

Msgr. Quinn reported on the outdoor wedding task force’s ongoing study. Most Pennsylvania dioceses do not permit weddings in secular spaces. The exceptions are Philadelphia and Harrisburg, which have an application form, and Altoona-Johnstown, which encourages the faithful to contact the bishop directly. It was noted that deacons could play an important role in this area.

IV. Holy Days of Obligation: Msgr. Van Loon

Msgr. Van Loon asked how we might address declining attendance on holy days of obligation, such as the Ascension. The bishop explained that the matter of moving Ascension to Sunday would have to be addressed by the bishops of the province. Coordinating Mass schedules on a deanery level might also be helpful. Confusion over the rules is a noteworthy factor. Council members

disagreed over whether funerals were permitted on Ascension; clarification is needed here.

The meeting concluded with Evening Prayer at 4:40 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 10, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,
Fr. Mark DeCelles