



**DIOCESE OF SCRANTON
PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2024**

Fr. Evanko called council to order around 3 pm.

- Roll Call was taken. *Present:* Bishop Bambera; Monsignor Van Loon; Fathers Shantillo, Polednak, Bechtel, Beck, Bryant, DeCelles, Edwards, Evanko, Fox, Glenn, Kuhar, Kutch, McDougall, Miller, Pisaneschi, Polmounter, Quinnan, Tudgay and Wasnock. *Excused:* Monsignor Quinn; Fathers Albert, Czachor, Doris, Jeffrey, McCreary and Ricciardi.
- Prayer intentions included several priests facing health challenges: Fr Connell McHugh, Fr Tom Maloney, Fr Tom O'Hara, C.S.C., and Fr Mark Ward, C.P.
- Fr. Wasnock led Daytime Prayer.

Minutes from the November 7, 2023 Meeting were approved.

1) Consolidation/Relegation

a) ***Simpson***

Fr. Tudgay led a discussion on the proposed relegation of St. Michael Church, Simpson, to profane but not sordid use. Fr. Wasnock, with assistance from the Office of Parish Life, consulted extensively with the parishioners and the pastoral and finance councils of St. Rose Parish, Carbondale, and the councils concur with a relegation of St. Michael's, one of their secondary churches. Mass attendance is shrinking, due in part to its remote location, and collections will not cover operating costs or deferred maintenance. The bishop noted that no one has complained to him about the proposal, despite his connection to the church. After discussion, council voted unanimously to recommend relegation.

b) ***Carbondale***

Fr Tudgay introduced the question of suppressing and merging Our Lady of

Mount Carmel and St. Rose of Lima parishes in Carbondale. While there has been tension historically between the two communities, that tension has diminished, and they have been cooperating under the care of a single pastoral team, effectively functioning as one community. After consultation with the people, Our Lady of the Rosary was selected as the name of the consolidated parish. It will comprise the territory of St. Rose Parish, and with its combined resources, it will be in a better position to serve the Carbondale area. Following brief discussion, council unanimously recommended the consolidation.

2) Amendment of By-Laws

The bishop raised two questions: Should we reduce the size of presbyteral council? and, should we create a separate candidate category for international priests, in order to increase international representation? Council currently comprises 25% of the presbyterate but includes no Latin American, African, Indian, or other international priests. Council seemed generally agreed that limiting size promotes better discussions. Issues raised in discussion included: What qualifies as adequately representative? (Peer groups? Regions?); Who knows the international priests well enough to select good reps? (the international priests themselves, or the bishop); How much of council needs to be elected rather than appointed? (at least half); and, By what means should council size be limited? (Fixed percentage of presbyterate? Periodic ad hoc reductions/increases?) Further discussion was postponed until council has had a chance to review the roster and by-laws.

3) Deanery Realignment

Fr. Tudgay noted that deanery boundaries are being realigned in response to parish modifications taking place in the Vision 2030 process. St Rita, Gouldsboro, will move from the Stroudsburg deanery to Wilkes-Barre or Dunmore; St Mary's, Waymart, moves from Honesdale to Carbondale; Prince of Peace, Old Forge, from Scranton to Pittston; St. Monica, West Wyoming, from Pittston to Kingston; and Holy Trinity, Susquehanna, from Sayre to Carbondale.

4) Neo-Catechumenate

Fr. Miller led a discussion on the Neo-Catechumenal Way. A couple has asked his permission to form a Neo-Cat community in Hazleton. In the Dominican Republic, Fr. Neftali has seen increased vocations and other good fruit from the Neo-Cats, who operate there under strict diocesan guidelines. Two council members expressed appreciation for the Neo-Cats, but many others regard them as insular and divisive, despite their promises to the contrary. They attract people, but only to their own distinctive Masses. They ask more and more of the parish. One said

their teachings were not orthodox. In light of this, council could not recommend that the Diocese reconsider its position on the Neo-Catechumenate at this time.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 23, 2024.

The meeting concluded with Evening Prayer led by Fr. Fox at 4:53 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Fr. Mark DeCelles