



**DIOCESE OF SCRANTON  
PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL MEETING  
TUESDAY, MAY 28, 2024**

**Fr. Miller called Council to order at approximately 3 pm.**

- Roll Call was taken. *Present:* Bishop Bambera; Monsignors Quinn and Van Loon; Fathers Shantillo, Polednak, Albert, Bechtel, Beck, Bryant, DeCelles, Fox, Glenn, Kuhar, Kutch, Miller, Pisaneschi, Polmounter, Ricciardi, Tudgay and Wasnock. *Excused:* Fathers Czachor, Doris, Edwards, Evanko, Jeffrey, McCreary and McDougall. *Absent:* Father Quinnan.
- Prayer Intentions: The repose of the soul of William Drevitch, father of Michael Drevitch; Ed Michelini and Steve McGoff, who have pneumonia; Connell McHugh, who has cancer; members of the class of 1967, who celebrate the anniversary of their ordination today.
- Msgr Quinn led Daytime Prayer.

**Minutes from the April 23, 2024 meeting were approved.**

**1) Consolidation**

a) Corpus Christi Parish, West Pittston & St. Barbara Parish, Exeter

Fr. Tudgay introduced a resolution to suppress St Barbara Parish in an extinctive union with Corpus Christi Parish, designating Immaculate Conception Church, West Pittston as primary worship site and St Anthony Church, Exeter as subsidiary worship site. Ann Marie Cawley and Mary Hallman described the consultation process begun in 2022, which involved the formation of a transition team and joint councils, facility reports, town hall meetings and bulletin inserts. The pastor, Msgr Sempa, admitted that parishioners at St. Barbara are upset. Nevertheless, an examination of priority drivers indicates that Corpus Christi has twice as many households as St Barbara and a far more vibrant sacramental life. All three of the parishes' physical plants have deferred maintenance needs, but St Barbara's does not have enough revenue to cover operational costs. The rectory at St Anthony's is uninhabitable, while the IC facilities are meeting the

community's needs. After discussion, the question was called and Council voted unanimously to recommend the proposed consolidation.

b) Christ the King Parish, Archbald & Sacred Heart Parish, Jermyn

Council then considered a suppression of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Parish in an extinctive union with Christ the King Parish, with St Thomas Aquinas, Archbald as primary worship site and Sacred Heart, Jermyn and St. Mary's, Eynon as subsidiary worship sites. A consultation process similar to that in West Pittston and Exeter began in September with the distribution of the bishop's letter announcing the reassignment of Fr. Ruth and the linkage of the parishes under Fr. Glenn, with a view to their consolidation. Though the churches are a few miles apart from each other, they really serve just one community. Attendance has plateaued, and the current schedule of 5 Masses (4 English and 1 Spanish) meets pastoral needs and can be accomplished by one priest. Issues with the Jermyn site include a failing boiler, little parking and no handicap accessibility. The question was called, and Council unanimously recommended the consolidation.

**2) Amendment of Constitution Vote**

Fr Polednak noted that the presbyterate has overwhelmingly voted to approve the changes to the constitution of Presbyteral Council that were proposed on March 19, 2024.

**3) Wedding Outside Sacred Space Survey**

Fr Polednak sought feedback on a draft of a survey of the presbyterate on a proposed policy for weddings outside of a church. An additional question was suggested: Has anyone sought out your church for a destination wedding? Further discussion raised difficulties involved in permitting outdoor weddings for persons from other dioceses: who would prepare the couple? Would information about their preparation be available in a timely manner? Should we require that couples from outside the diocese provide their own cleric, who would prepare them himself? Bishop noted that exceptions were possible even if no policy for outdoor weddings were adopted.

**4) Announcement of New Members**

The presbyterate has elected 10 representatives who will take their seats on Council in the fall: 8 peer group reps (Fathers Wasnock, Boris, Reichlen, Van Fossen, Cirba, Petro, Polmounter and Kurovsky), one retired rep (Msgr. Bendik) and one religious order rep (Fr. McDonnell). The bishop will also appoint reps from Africa, India, and Latin America.

### **5) Recognition of Outgoing Members**

Bishop thanked for their service on Council those reps whose terms are ending: Monsignors Quinn and Van Loon; Fathers Albert, Ricciardi, Doris, Beck, and McDougall. Fathers Quinnan and Tudgay will remain on council as consultants until August 2025. Fr Wasnock has been re-elected, and Fr Fox will remain on council as a regional rep. The constitutional changes will take effect in stages; for now, Council's size will increase.

### **6) Bishop Update**

Noting that Scranton has made 34 parish modifications since 2019, Bishop Bambera thanked the presbyterate for our involvement in the Vision 2030 process. He wants to avoid linkages of more than two parishes or parishes with more than three worship sites. He also wants to know if any priest is overwhelmed by an unwieldy modified parish. In aid of this, annual visitations will involve assessment of added worship sites. The modifications seem to be working so far; he has heard very few complaints. Bishop also reiterated that deacons or qualified, designated laypersons in our parishes should be prepared to use "Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest" in an emergency.

The next meeting is scheduled for September 3, 2024.

The meeting concluded with Evening Prayer led by Fr. Glenn at 4:31 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Fr. Mark DeCelles