



**DIOCESE OF SCRANTON
PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2024**

Fr. Evanko called Council to order at 3:00 pm.

- Roll Call was taken. *Present:* Bishop Bambera; Monsignor Bendik; Fathers Polednak, Bechtel, Boris, Bryant, Cirba, DeCelles, Edwards, Evanko, Feliz-Sena, Fox, Glenn, Kuhar, Kurovsky, Kutch, Lakra, McCreary, McDonnell, Miller, Paisley, Petro, Pisaneschi, Reichlen, Van Fossen and Wasnock. *Excused:* Fathers Shantillo, Bosomafi, Czachor, Polmounter, Tudgay and Father Quinnan.
- Prayer Intentions: Father Pisaneschi, who injured his heel; the late Fathers Sarnecki and Rafferty; those affected by recent hurricanes and storms; Monsignor Bendik, who celebrated his birthday.
- Council prayed Daytime Prayer at 3:03 pm.

Minutes from the September 3, 2024 Meeting were approved.

1) Consolidation

Fr McCreary, pastor of St Boniface Parish, Williamsport and St Lawrence Parish, South Williamsport, presented a proposal to modify St Boniface into a territorial parish, with territory in Williamsport's east end, and to suppress St Lawrence into St Boniface, effective November 3. The parishes have been linked since 2009 and already share a business office, religious education, music ministry and RCIA. The proposal was communicated from the pulpit and in bulletin inserts, and a listening session was held on September 4. No objections reached Fr McCreary.

In discussion, Council addressed reasons why some parishes change names during a consolidation while others don't, as well as the merits of the modification of a personal parish followed by the suppression of a territorial parish, as opposed to a simple suppression of the personal parish. The question was called, and Council voted unanimously in favor of the proposed consolidation.

2) Inculturation Workshop

Fr. Polednak led a discussion on the Acculturation and Accent Workshop held July

15-17 at the DPC. The workshop aimed to help international priests overcome barriers to communication with American English speakers. It focused on idioms and pronunciation. It also addressed cultural differences in parish management. Similar workshops will likely be held semi-annually. Discussion addressed the extent to which international priests spend time together; strategies for bridging the understanding gap, such as writing out and distributing homilies; parishioners as a welcome resource for language learning; challenges regarding food and diet; and concerns raised by immigration rules, both currently and in the future.

3) Holy Days of Obligation

Bishop Bambera asked Council to weigh in on the question of transferring the Solemnity of the Ascension to the Seventh Sunday of Easter. Of all the ecclesiastical provinces in the United States, only New York, Hartford, Boston, Omaha, and Philadelphia (our province) still celebrate Ascension Thursday. After discussing waning attendance on Ascension Thursday and its causes, the symbolism of forty days, the desire to promote a solemn celebration of the Ascension, the (lack of) importance of Holy Days to the people, and the desire to retain credibility and avoid confusion, Council voted 19-6 in favor of transferring the solemnity. Bishop will take this recommendation to the next provincial meeting.

4) Vision 2030

Fr. Evanko invited Fathers Kuhar, Wasnock and Glenn to continue the conversation started last month by OPL's Vision 2030 Update. While facing distinct challenges at their respective parishes, all seemed to appreciate the Vision 2030 process for allowing time for broad consultation and emotional processing, leading to less pushback. They also found diocesan involvement through OPL helpful. All agreed that the process could be improved, perhaps by firming up certain tentative steps in the blueprints to motivate pastors to begin working together earlier, or by assembling a robust set of best practices, or by appointing a Vision 2030 "czar" (preferably a priest) to oversee the process and keep pastors on task. Bishop Bambera appreciated the suggestions and expressed his desire to continue the conversation, noting that he and OPL and Communications are open to revising the process to make it more palatable to all stakeholders. Fr Evanko intends to work with Fathers Kuhar, Wasnock and Glenn to refine and concretize their suggestions.

The next meeting is scheduled for November 19, 2024.

The meeting concluded with Evening Prayer at 5:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Fr. Mark DeCelles