



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

Fr. Evanko called Council to order at 3:01 pm.

- Roll Call was taken. *Present:* Bishop Bambera; Monsignor Bendik; Fathers Shantillo, Polednak, Boris, Bosomafi, Cirba, DeCelles, Edwards, Evanko, Feliz-Sena, Fox, Glenn, Kuhar, Kurovsky, Kutch, McCreary, McDonnell, Miller, Paisley, Petro, Pisaneschi, Polmounter, Tudgay, Van Fossen and Wasnock. *Excused:* Fathers Bechtel, Bryant, Czachor, Lakra, Quinnan and Reichlen.
- Prayer Intentions: Msgr Esseff, who was hospitalized; the late Fr Gunning; Fr Dorsa's father and Msgr Kirby's mother, who have also died.
- Fr. Kuhar led Daytime Prayer at 3:04 pm.

Minutes from the October 15, 2024 meeting were approved.

1) Relegation

Fr Tudgay led discussion on a proposal to relegate St. Mary's Church of the Immaculate Conception, Wilkes-Barre, to profane but not sordid use. St. Mary's is the secondary worship site of St Nicholas-St Mary Parish, which formed when St Nicholas and Our Lady of Fatima Parishes were consolidated on October 7, 2023. Fr Verespy, pastor, noted that insuring St Mary's costs \$80 K, yet it hosts only one Sunday Mass (average attendance 172), as well as a CSS homeless shelter, which is moving. The parish ran a \$43 K deficit in its first year, with greater deficits projected. The finance council recommended relegation. A town hall meeting was held, surveys distributed, and news stories run on the topic; parishioners showed little resistance to a closure.

In discussion, members of Council asked about future Mass schedules, Fr Terry's retirement, the process of dispossessing church property, collaboration with the city, and the Hispanic community at the parish. Bishop Bambera asked for reactions to the projected relegation of two historic churches in our Diocese. Some expressed sadness as well as a desire to establish and preserve monuments to our history, perhaps with

the assistance of the Order of Alhambra. Others felt motivated to let go of the past and look toward the future by emphasizing evangelization. The bishop pointed to Forest City and North Scranton as signs that modifications can lead to vibrant parishes. The question was called, and Council unanimously recommended relegation.

2) Convocation review

Fr Glenn debriefed Council on October's convocation of priests. The convocation got positive reviews generally; survey respondents liked the accommodations and the buffet. Dr Westman's talk and the Bishop's "state of the Diocese" address were well received. Several said they appreciated Fr Roche's presentation on vocations and the revised PPF. Many are asking for presentations on priestly spirituality and ministerial best practices, including homiletics, youth groups, and parish administration. Prices will increase over the next three years, but OPF will try to compensate through cost-cutting measures. Dates of future convocations will be published in advance, and a translation service will be employed. In discussion, Bishop Bambera noted that the convocation provides an opportunity to call people's attention to Vision 2030 priority drivers (fewer priests) by publicizing reduced Mass schedules.

3) Bishop's Update

The bishop commented on the topic of synodality, which was raised at the fall plenary meeting of the bishops' conference. At its core, synodality is about tapping into the collective wisdom of the people of God. It is a practice that we can all appreciate; we are all already doing it in some way or another. The Vision 2030 process has evolved because the Diocese is trying to listen to collective wisdom. The Diocese is working to listen better by implementing a diocesan pastoral council. It will support parishes in developing their pastoral and finance councils. The bishop is also willing to explore how the input gained in our listening sessions can inform our pastoral planning.

No new business was raised.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 25, 2025.

The meeting concluded with Evening Prayer led by Fr Boris at 4:27 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Fr. Mark DeCelles