



In Attendance: Lou Agosto, Rick Bonen-Clark, Jeannie Buckner, Scott Campbell, Tom Donahue, Tom Fox, Eileen Gallagher, Arelis Herman, Eric Kennedy, Jeff Sumeracki, Christopher Tucci, Msgr. Richard Bellow, David Hains, Dave Hynes, Teri Liuzzo, Deacon Robert Murphy, Deacon Louie Pais, Deacon Ron Sherwood, Father James Stuhrenberg, Donna Smith, Stacey Wackerman.

Absent: Joyce Zagrobelny

Formation: Tom Donahue gave this month's formation talk. The touching story Tom read was about "The Mystery Flu" where an unknown strain quickly spreads throughout the world causing distress and panic. Within a short time, it appears that this flu could cause the end of civilization if a vaccine is not made. The cure for this flu can only be made from the blood of someone that has never been infected. If it turns out that person is your only son, do you look him in the eye and choose to sacrifice his life for the better good of humanity? Read more at <http://www.geocities.com/heartland/bluffs/7139/flu.html>.

Minutes: The December, 2006 meeting minutes were accepted by the council with one minor correction: A typo in the Family Life Commission section "coupe" should be "couple".

Why Catholic Program: Deacon Louie Pais provided the council with a summary of the upcoming "Why Catholic" program. This is a program that will help lay persons gain a much deeper understanding and appreciation for the roots of our Catholic faith. The program is based on the study of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and will consist of two 6-week sessions per year (during Lent and preceding Advent) lasting 4 years. Each home based session will last about 90 minutes. There will be sessions offered during the day and night as well as limited sessions at the church.

First, petition cards were passed out to the congregation during Mass requesting prayers and support for the program. These cards will be posted on two large wooden crosses in the front of the worship area, located on either side of the altar, reminding us of our commitment to the program. Two weeks later, there will be a sign-up Sunday where parishioners will hear a talk after the homily and be offered an opportunity to participate. Families will be asked to volunteer their homes to a small group of 8-10 adults for 6 weeks at a time. A facilitator (not a teacher) will be assigned to each group to help lead the course. At this time, there are 45 trained facilitators. We expect this will be enough, but if we receive an unexpectedly large signup, we'll have to train more (a good problem to have!)

The goal is to have everyone stay with the same group for the entire 4-year series. LifeTeen will also be participating in the program. We're off and running and very excited about this program! We will be led by the Holy Spirit in all we do and pray for success. Many parishes throughout the Diocese are conducting this program at the same time. The Why Catholic team will try their best to keep people close to or within their own neighborhoods and desired time slot. Why Catholic has the support of Bishop Peter Jugis. Thank you Monsignor Richard Bellow for bringing this program to St. Mark!

Pastoral Council Constitutional Amendment: Lou Agosto re-capped the proposal to move the Pastoral Council officer elections from the beginning of each term to the May meeting, thus allowing members to get to know each other prior to voting on executive committee membership. With 11 members present, 1 absent, quorum was reached. The vote was cast and 9 were in favor, 2 opposed; change was accepted.

Thank You Notes: The Pastoral Council proposed this month's recipients of thank-you cards. Laura Hogan was suggested for her hard work and dedication behind the scenes with the Why Catholic planning. Donna Smith also reminded the secretary to please send the 3 related to last month's Angel Tree program. The hand-written cards will be sent prior to our next meeting.

Commission Reports

Liturgy Commission: Dave Hynes reported that preparations are underway for Lent which begins with Ash Wednesday on February 21st, 2007. Training continues and the commission will review the efforts of assigning ministry members to the Christmas and New Years Masses and how to improve that activity in the future. Liturgy Commission operating procedures will be presented to the Council for approval when completed and reviewed by the Liturgy Committee.

Education Commission: Teri Liuzzo reported that things have slowed down a bit in order to fully support the "Why Catholic" program. The "Church Through History" Part III will be held May 3, 10, 17 and 24th. The commission is considering a Spring and a Fall Speaker (1-day event) as well as a "Divorced / Blended Families" program for our parishioners. The proposed 2007 programs will not conflict with the Renew Program.

Stewardship Commission: David Hains reported that the Stewardship Commission had recently conducted their meeting where they reviewed the success of recent fund raisers and emphasized the need to limit small fund raisers and frequency. Also discussed were upcoming stewardship witness talks which will be recorded and posted on the St. Mark website as podcasts. Specifically, the treasure related talks will emphasize the importance of sacrificial giving as the church cannot afford to lose any offertory revenue. We need to grow a sense of ownership in OUR church. The Stewardship Commission is still looking for volunteers to prepare "want ads" for the church bulletin.

Family Life Commission: Stacey Wackerman reported that the upcoming Walks for Life in Charlotte and Washington, D.C. should be well attended and that there are new chair persons for Couples Dining In, Neighborhood Care and a new secretary for the Children's Playgroup. Some ministries have been removed from Family Life for organizational reasons. The website needs an updated contact list as well as policies and procedures.

Open Forum: There were several suggestions related to improving the St. Mark website as well as a suggestion from Teri Liuzzo that a section related to Why Catholic be added to the bulletin during Lent and Advent seasons.

Pastor's Comments: Deacon Ron Sherwood will coordinate the Hispanic Ministry for now as Angeles Murphy retires. Deb Lemmon has resigned her position as LifeTeen Coordinator; Melissa Annechino takes her place. Melissa studied at the Franciscan University in Stubenville, OH for 7 years and has a Bachelor's in Theology and a Master's in counseling. She has been singing in the LifeTeen band since she joined the parish 6 months ago. Father James will be the LifeTeen coordinating priest.

Monsignor will announce building plans very soon, but only after being informed of the real numbers. We will not proceed until our goal is achievable. There is also a book for sale. It was written by our own David Hains called "Voices and Places of the People of God — The Diocese of Charlotte." The 160-page coffee table book includes colorful photographs, graphics and spiritual reflections on Catholic life.

Closing Prayer: Deacon Robert Murphy led the closing prayer.