

## **Notes from Meeting of Bellarmine Affiliate of VOTF on May 2, 2005:**

**Present:** Christi Eisenberg, Ann Blome, Marilyn Kaiser, Catherine Miller, Jane Friel, Bob Friel, Paul Knitter, Firmin Widmer, Connie Widmer, Jane Ruhmkorff, David Ruhmkorff, Dan Averbeck, Flo DeWitt, Bob Schoettinger, Gary Brandstetter, and Karen Brandstetter

**Notes:** The meeting began with a review of the last meeting in terms of where we left off with our work on discussion of the VOTF's recommendations for structural change. We discussed the second recommendation, namely, more lay involvement in decision making and implementation. There was a sense that parishioners are involved to a great degree already, and often it is the case that folks do not know the extent of lay involvement or the work/progress/accomplishments of our different committees, task force groups or core teams. We discussed what things could increase that awareness and knowledge of what is happening in these various groups.

The following is a list of these ideas:

- Put a reminder in the bulletin that the minutes of various committees and core teams are posted on the parish website. Plus, remind all the committees and core teams to give their minutes to Liz for publication to the parish.
- A suggestion was made to keep copies in the vestibule as well, or to have binders with minutes either in the Narthex or Activity Room. This suggestion relates to the fact that not all parishioners have access to the Internet or technology savvy to negotiate the Internet.
- One great example of how laity are involved in the decision making process is our hiring process which was just used for the hiring of a new DRE. Lay involvement in this process starts from the very beginning. Pastor enters in only during actual interviews and discernment. Need to put this process down on paper to propose to other parishes who might find it helpful. How could we bring folks together to explain these things? Karen volunteered to do an outline of the process that Dan and Sue could then "flesh out" for our internal purposes and to present to others.
- The idea of a "parish forum" was discussed, perhaps twice a year, with food, to have folks present from the different committees and core teams, to speak of work done, goals accomplished and direction possibilities for the future.

- This would be especially helpful in the area of finances, and the parish financial reporting. This would help to provide an open opportunity for parishioners to ask questions to enable us to be more financially transparent as a parish.
- In the area of finances, the question of staff salaries, benefits and policy for increases came up with interest on the part of those present to make sure that the staff continues to be adequately compensated for their ministry
- In discussing the Advisory Committee and the upcoming need for recruitment of new members, it was mentioned that there is an effort made to have representation from each of the three Sunday liturgies. Some discussion took place about the process for recruitment and the fact that the criteria for selection is somewhat vague and folks (esp. those who are not chosen) do not know what the basis for choice is.
- Perhaps it would be helpful to assess what the Advisory Committee needs to serve the parish well, and recruit from that point of view (e.g., do we need an attorney, a P.R./Marketing person, an engineer, a musician?, etc.) Perhaps it would be good to look at how the group functions, also, especially in relation to other groups in the parish, if applicable.
- In the area of communication, we discussed the announcements during the liturgy on Sunday, as this topic had come up at a recent meeting of the 9:00 liturgy coordinators. It was felt that the announcements are only a problem when they can not be heard or are not done well. Perhaps it would be best if staff members did them as they know what the events/topics are or at least we should train the others who volunteer for that. Jane R. volunteered to do this training.

What else is Working:

- The letters that Richard writes to the community, they are well written and address the important issues and questions, inviting anyone to give input. The frequency of the letters is also good for the parish---it is a regular means for increasing lay involvement.
- What bothers us sometimes about lay involvement is that the laity don't get involved!
- Perhaps it is the way we approach the ministry---we need a way to succinctly let folks know what the work of our different committees is. The recent social mission fair is one way to do that.

- On the other hand, we have about 60 volunteers from the parish who work on Habitat for Humanity in one way or another, and 60-70 folks signed up to volunteer in the new Community of Care Network
- There was mention of a parish in Cleveland where you have to sign up to help in a ministry when you register.
- The question was asked how ready is the staff to function when there is only a part time pastor or a change in pastor? With the hiring of a new DRE, we have the opportunity to prepare our staff as a new team, full compliment, to work towards this. The new staff members bring new ideas, energy and enthusiasm to the job and this can be a real plus for just such a situation! Attention will be paid over the next few months to bringing the new person onboard and also to bringing the staff together as a team for the service of the parish!

**Forum for Dialogue between clergy and laity:**

The ad hoc committee working on this met and will be meeting again, so they will present at our next meeting due to shortage of time at this meeting.

**Next two meetings: Monday, May 23rd & Monday, June 13<sup>th</sup>: 7:00 p.m.**