

St. Monica Facilitation Team
Virtual Meeting January 20, 2021

Attendance: Connie Chau, John Curran, Fr. Ray Fleming, Mary Fran Kolbuc and Meg Lute
Excused: Bob Passalugo

Opening Prayer followed by the *Mission and Vision Statement*: Although this is a “down” season with the pandemic and social strife, it is a time for a fresh beginning and to find news ways to turn darkness into light.

1. Approval of 11/18/20 Meeting Minutes: The proposal to accept the minutes was seconded and the minutes were approved unanimously.

2. Father Ray’s Updates:

Fr. Ray related to the team that he is sending a letter this weekend to all the parishioners informing them that he is pursuing medical treatment. The initial diagnosis last year was followed by a “wait and see” period. The course of treatment he has chosen gives him the best opportunity to continue his pastoral duties for the co-parishes. He request the prayers of the community. He is grateful for the support of the parish staff. He will keep the Facilitation Team informed.

He mentioned that our former parishioner Greg Kremer is now an ordained Episcopal minister in New York State. Although we miss Greg and his family, we know that he will share his wisdom and ministerial gifts well.

- **Coat Distribution:** The tradition, initiated by Mary Fran Kolbuc, of St. Monica parishioners handing out gently-used coats, gloves and scarves personally will continue this Sunday 1/24/21 using a drive-through format. Parish youth will play key leadership roles.

- **Distribution of the Ashes** on Ash Wednesday 2/17/21: Plans are underway to conduct a drive-through opportunity for ash distribution. We will follow the Diocesan protocol of sprinkling the ashes on the forehead of the recipient without physical contact. An outdoor canopy tent will be deployed and protective masks worn. People will enter from Genesee Street and those arriving in cars will depart via the Monica Street driveway. Ashes will be distributed by staff “on the hour” from 9:00am until 5:00pm.

- Fr. Ray announced that George Heinlein, who has been a member of the parish for over ninety years, passed away. He is remembered for teaching woodworking skills to mentally handicapped youth in his retirement years. He handcrafted a memorial music box for the St. Monica Archives using reclaimed wood from the recycled church kneelers. He served as a dependable driver for transporting Wrap & Run materials in his truck.

- **Faith Formation** activities continue on-line during the pandemic with activities for children and adults. Preparations are underway for RCIA and First Communion.

- **Technology:** There has been some difficulty getting the weekend Mass live-streamed. The YouTube format is working well.

- **Buildings, Grounds and Safety Updates:**
 - St. Monica will cooperate with its co-parishes on buildings projects to save costs. This is happening throughout the Diocese where parishes share staff.
 - New energy-efficient rectory windows have been installed with good results
 - the rectory staircase will have additional spindles installed to mitigate a safety gap.
 - Church window repairs for masonry, metal frames and better ventilation will get attention in the spring.
 - The AED (automatic external defibrillator) will have its annual check-up. There will be an opportunity in the months ahead for staff to re-certify their skills using the unit.
 - A back-up sump pump for St. Monica is under review.

- **Social Justice:** Covid restrictions have limited opportunities for interaction. The Blue Bags donations and distributions have shifted to online support for REACH Advocacy to secure winter supplies for the homeless.

- **Welcoming Committee:** Social distancing concerns have made it difficult to meet or plan for social activities.

Aside: A recent webinar hosted by Immaculate Conception raised the question whether being “welcoming” is adequate as a way to reach out to others. Simply being “welcoming” *passively*, may not seem like actually *extending oneself* towards another.

Perhaps it is time to re-think “being welcoming” from the standpoint of direct engagement. St. Monica has risen to the occasion of becoming an “*inviting* parish” during the pandemic by creating social activities that attracted people, who were hungering for a sense of community, to come to the St. Monica campus or online offerings.

In essence, we became a “church without walls” when we used our parking lot and church lawn to stage public activities. These included drive-through sacramental opportunities, three drop-offs of donated goods for distribution, celebratory parades, the Westside Farmers Market, a multicultural fair, an outdoor movie, a *Black Lives Matter* learning opportunity and a drive-through Christmas procession.

3. Old Business:

The *Saint Monica 2020: Growing the Parish* initiative is now officially ended. It began in 2013 to seek fund-raising for unaddressed parish renovation projects. Over time, it evolved to increase both the number of participants and overall finances to achieve parish growth. It succeeded in ways unimaginable when it was formed.

A parish interest group transformed the initiative in 2016 to become *St. Monica 2020*. It focused on the “building blocks” of: 1) *Spiritual Growth*; 2) *Social Aspects of our Community*; 3) *Evangelization*; 4) *Communication / Marketing*; 5) *Caring for Our Common Home* (environmental) and 6) *Living Our Mission Outside of Our Church* (outreach).

We set a goal of increasing the number of parish households to 500 by 2020 while raising our weekly plate collection. Wise stewardship among parish committees and staff paved the way for installing the deferred church air conditioning while managing energy-efficient property updates. The school building remains viable for educational and recreational purposes. Its ongoing lease provides operational funds for the parish. We managed to exceed our *Catholic Ministry Appeal* annually during the 2020 period.

We became a co-parish with Immaculate Conception - St. Bridget's in addition to Emmanuel Church of the Deaf. Practical cooperation among parishes increases steadily. The newly-organized St. Monica archives provide readable access to 123 continuous years of parish life.

Flexibility and resiliency, sustained by parishioner input, enabled the parish to navigate the pandemic creatively. Parishioners developed vibrant small Christian communities for mutual spiritual development and support. Our Faith Formation projects for children and adults expanded through technological improvements and innovative family engagement. Live-streamed liturgical services extended our virtual contact exponentially. Creative use of campus resources led to innovative drive-through and outdoor outreach experiences.

4. New Business:

- **Preparing for the St. Monica Parish 125th Anniversary Celebration:** The calendar year 2023 marks the 125th Anniversary of St. Monica Parish which was founded in 1898. Preparation for the centennial celebration, led by current parishioner Bob Mulcahy, began two years in advance. It is time now for the Facilitation Team to start the Idea-to-Reality process that will lead to the creation of a “125th Anniversary Interest Group” responsible for assembling individuals to plan and conduct the series of events leading to the 125th.

Action Items:

- 1) **John Curran will serve as the Facilitation Team liaison** (not actual leader) of the proposed Interest Group's effort. He will follow the *Idea-to-Reality* process to outline the project and will begin to enlist active Interest Group members.

- The “sunset” of the *St. Monica 2020* interest group becomes the “sunrise” for the next phase of parish growth for “future church”. A 125th Anniversary event can be a focal opportunity to address the next 125 years. Suggested activities include: commemorative events (e.g. a speaker presenting historical parish development insights; a 2022 Parish Picnic reaching out to former parishioners; archival movie viewing sessions, Open House displays of parish archives and a culminating dinner dance at a party house).

- 2) **Fr. Ray will submit a written heads-up request** to the Diocese in the near future asking for the Bishop of Rochester's presence at a weekend Mass commemorating the 125th Anniversary during August 2023 (birth month of St. Monica).

• **Enlisting new members for the St. Monica Facilitation Team** (parish council):

More and culturally-diverse members are needed for the Facilitation Team. Time commitments for attending meetings held at St. Monica have previously made it difficult to secure the long-term commitment and the follow-through needed. New virtual meeting formats might make it easier for already-busy persons to participate with less demands on work and family situations plus travel concerns.

Action Item: John Curran will prepare a list of possible candidates for Fr. Ray to consider and possibly contact to join the team initially as virtual participants. Please forward suggested names to John.

5. Closing Prayer:

The virtual FT meeting followed the peaceful Presidential Inauguration in Washington, DC. Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception is the spiritual Mother of our country. The meeting concluded with the *Hail Mary* prayer asking for peace, justice and civility.

Next virtual Facilitation Team Meeting: February 24, 2021 at 6:00pm

- Connie: please set up the virtual meeting

Draft minutes submitted 1/23/21 jec