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The three Catholic parishes in the city of Ashtabula enjoy a truly cooperative relationship. Many of our programs, policies, and Sacramental celebrations are done together, as is our support and dedication to Catholic education through Saints John and Paul School.

Parishes of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Youngstown, Ohio

The Mission of the "Transition Team" is to preserve the integrity, autonomy, and traditions of each of the three Catholic Parishes in Ashtabula, while working to ensure that the faithful of the entire Catholic Community are pastorally well-served.

**MINUTES OF THE TRI-PARISH TRANSITION TEAM MEETING
HELD ON NOVEMBER 28, 2007**

Fr. Ruggieri called the meeting to order at 6:00PM.

During the opening prayer, we remembered Transition Team member, Maureen Smith, who has been ill, and Mother of Sorrows (MOS) staff member, Al Santill, whose brother recently passed away.

- 1) Fr. Ruggieri encouraged as many of us as possible to attend the retreat at MOS next week.
- 2) Due to Maureen Smith's health issues, and no one else available to organize the social hour on New Year's Eve, the Team decided to move the New Year's Eve Mass at MOS from 10:30PM to 5:30PM. The New Year's Masses are now:
12/31/2007 4:00PM at St. Joseph Parish
12/31/2007 5:30PM at Mother of Sorrows Parish
01/01/2008 10:00AM at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish
- 3) A question was asked about the status of the rectory at Mother of Sorrows. No definitive action has been taken. The Mother of Sorrows finance council is still looking into possible uses for the building.
- 4) Concerns were voiced about the two priests ability to handle the strains and stresses of the three parishes. Both Fr. Ruggieri and Fr. Miller stated that physically, they feel fine and the schedule, as it is now, does not tire them out. They both said that they miss the fact that they cannot always stay after the Masses speaking to the congregations. Both feel that is important – especially at the parishes where they have not traditionally served. They think that is a very good way for them to get to know the other members of the tri-parish community and for the parishioners to get to know them.
- 5) Sr. Dorothy spoke about the Spanish ministry. She reported that the Spanish community does not feel connected without a regular priest to say their Masses. Sr. Dorothy indicated that we have an opportunity now to be creative in making the Spanish community feel more welcome. She will make proposals for the Spanish ministry at our transition meeting in January.

6) A discussion of finances occurred. Monetary collections are down in all three parishes, especially at Mother of Sorrows. People who travel to other parishes for Mass do not always contribute as much money as they do when they attend Mass in their home parish. The Christmas collections may tell us a great deal about the intent of the people to support the three parishes.

The priests were asked to have the administrative staff at all three parishes provide us information on collections. If we can determine how many parishioners were contributing regularly from January 1, 2007 through August 31, 2007 and how many parishioners are contributing regularly now, we may be able to tell how many people have actually left the parishes. We did not ask for names of parishioners, just numbers. The collections have decreased yet the bills keep coming in and must be paid.

7) The Christmas Mass schedule is as follows:

4:00PM on Christmas Eve at St. Joseph Parish

4:00PM on Christmas Eve at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish

5:30PM on Christmas Eve at Mother of Sorrows Parish

7:30PM on Christmas Eve at Mother of Sorrows Parish (Spanish)

11:00PM on Christmas Eve at St. Joseph Parish

12Midnight Mass at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish

9:00AM on Christmas Day at St. Joseph Mission

10:00AM on Christmas Day at Mother of Sorrows Parish

8) We discussed the future of the Transition Team. It is felt that we should stay together for at least one full year and review our decisions at the conclusion of that year. This could even evolve into tri-parish council to manage the three parishes. If that occurs several members from each parish would be chosen to form a tri-parish council. It all hinges on what Bishop Murry decides to do. It was suggested that a mid-winter satisfaction survey be taken in all three parishes.

9) The transition team has accomplished its mission of helping the two priests organize parish schedules so they may serve the three parishes as efficiently as possible. The question is, "Where do we go from here"? We have done about as much as we can do and now need Bishop Murry to give us guidance and direction. Linda Coblitz and Donna Timonere were asked to compose a letter to Bishop Murry. They will ask him to visit us during one of our meetings or receive a delegation from the transition team in his Youngstown office. (Bishop Murry's schedule has become more full because in addition to his Diocesan duties, he has just been appointed as Secretary of the Bishop's Conference.) Linda and Donna accepted the responsibility and will prepare a letter to the Bishop and circulate it for approval before it gets mailed.

10) There will be no transition team meeting in December.

11) In January, our task will be to evaluate the Christmas activity and discuss how it will affect our decisions for Easter. We will also hear a report on the Spanish ministry from Sr. Dorothy and, hopefully, we can evaluate data on the number of parishioners who were regular contributors prior to the transition who no longer are financially supporting the parishes.

Respectfully submitted

John Shouvin