

FRIENDS OF SACRED HEART UPDATE

Lexington, Massachusetts

www.sacredheartappeal.org

February 3-4, 2007

Joint Parish Council Meetings Still Closed

Over the past two months, the joint parish pastoral councils (JPPC) of Sacred Heart and St. Brigid parishes have continued to meet. Despite requests to hold open meetings from several Sacred Heart PPC members, they have not been open to parishioners. At the Dec. 3, 2006 meeting, according to minutes, "Fr. Colletti stated he felt that the closed session was productive, with more Council Members talking more, since there was no audience." At the Jan. 21 council meeting, Fr. Robert McMillan, S.J., who has been sent by the RCAB as a facilitator at these meetings, agreed that members spoke more freely without an audience.

Topics discussed by the JPPC in their December and January meetings included a history and description of parish councils and their role within the parish, a general review of the current financial state of both parishes, a discussion of possible options for celebrating the Triduum, and updates from Fr. Colletti about his recent contacts with the Cardinal and RCAB. In addition, individual council

members have provided their thoughts about parish and community concerns, how we can move ahead, the lack of progress in many areas, and attempts to find common ground. Frequently, portions of these meetings have been contentious. In December, four of the eight St. Brigid's

PPC members offered their

resignations, and three of these four were convinced to remain on the council.

Regarding the future governance of the Lexington Catholic Community, the JPPC remains deeply divided along parish lines. In general, the members from St. Brigid strongly favor a merger of the

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Working to Preserve Our Parish

Being ever mindful of the importance of working within the appropriate channels to communicate with the Archdiocese, individuals and small groups of parishioners have been in touch our pastor and with various levels of the Archdiocesan administration. The message of all of these efforts is the importance of keeping the parish fully open and functioning as a vital part of the Church in this western suburban area of the Archdiocese. Ongoing appeals are being made to Father Colletti about the dismantling of our parish. In addition, discussions have taken place with our Vicar, Father John Bova Conti, and with our Regional Bishop, Bishop Walter Edyvean. In addition, extensive written materials have been distributed to His Eminence Cardinal O'Malley and to the 45 members of the Archdiocesan Presbyteral Council, to which Fr. Colletti also belongs. There have been many individual discussions by telephone and e-mail with Archdiocesan administrators, as well as more formal discussions about the rights and responsibilities of parishes and the spiritual and temporal contributions that Sacred Heart Parish makes now and, God willing, will continue to make to the Church in Boston. All of our parishioners should be heartened by these efforts that are active and ongoing, but are also done in a prudent way that is out of the glare of the spotlights. We hope these seeds of communication will bear the fruit of preserving Sacred Heart Parish into the future.

S.H. PPC Seeks Financial Transparency

Since December, the Sacred Heart Parish Pastoral Council has asked several times to meet with the Sacred Heart Parish Finance Council. Robert McNamara, the Finance Council chair, has agreed to meet individually with the Sacred Heart PPC whenever Fr. Colletti can schedule a meeting. A time has not been set.

Fiscal transparency has been promised by Cardinal O'Malley over the last few years, and has taken on a more pivotal role in light of his reconfiguration of the Archdiocese.

Parishioners continue to ask questions concerning the Sacred Heart budget, past contributions for specific funds, the status and balance of the Promise for Tomorrow Fund, lack of access to parish buildings and records, and building maintenance costs for Sacred Heart Parish.

The lack of financial transparency and the continued dismantling of Sacred Heart Parish are raising questions for parishioners who are financially supporting their parish. Questions from parishioners have increased since the

financial reports from both Sacred Heart Parish and Saint Brigid Parish were mailed to parishioners' homes last fall. With no responses to their queries, and an uncertain future for Sacred Heart, many parishioners have reduced or held back on donations to Sacred Heart Parish.

Bob McNamara told the joint PPCs in January that Sacred Heart income is more than \$10,000 above expenses for the first half of the fiscal year 2007. However, he added that income and expenses are below budget for this period.

Closed Parish Council Meetings Raise Ire

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parishes, while those from Sacred Heart want to retain Sacred Heart's status as a parish. Fr. Colletti has frequently stated his preference for a merger. St. Brigid PPC members have stated their frustration and suggested that until the Cardinal makes a decision on governance, further efforts are not fruitful.

There are many ongoing issues still to be resolved. These include overturning recent limitations and restrictions on PPC involvement into ongoing parish activities, programs and decisions; a more open exchange of parish information regarding finances, Mass attendance, commission membership and activities;

openness and transparency in decision-making; and more collaboration between the pastor, PPCs and staff. Often, concerns and issues brought up by Sacred Heart Council members are either challenged, redirected or ignored. Requests for a separate meeting of the Sacred Heart PPC and meetings with our Parish Finance Council have been routinely taken under advisement by Fr. Colletti, but have not been granted. Communications among PPC members from each parish are limited. Attempts to build connections between individual council members have met with minimal success.

The PPC is to be a structure

in the church for collaboration, cooperation and participation, according to Fr. McMillan. He said at the Dec. 3 JPPC meeting, according to the minutes, that the PPCs are asked to "encourage, enhance or help the pastor and the staff to facilitate the sanctification of the people of God and the growth of the community, helping the pastor with his leadership role..." PPC members are trying to maintain a hopeful attitude. However, there is a high level of frustration regarding how the meetings are run, what they are about, and how little seems to be accomplished.

The next JPPC meeting, which is closed, is scheduled for next Sunday, Feb. 11.