

Parish Partnership Meeting – November 12, 2013  
St. George, New Baden & St. Mary, Trenton IL

The Pastoral leadership, trustees and parish pastoral council chairpersons of St. George and St. Mary parishes continue to meet to discuss implementation of the Diocese of Belleville Pastoral Plan for Parish Partnerships in preparation for the day when only one priest may be available to serve as pastor of both parishes. The most recent meeting took place at St. George in New Baden on November 11, 2013. Previous meetings have discussed and agreed that there shall remain two independent parishes. A plan for Mass schedules, how to share compensation for the shared pastor, and the need for an additional lay or professed religious staff member (Pastoral Associate for Parish Life) have also been agreed upon between the parish representatives.

At the most recent meeting, the role of the lay pastoral associate and shared Deacon were the main topics of discussion. This person would not take over the responsibilities of the currently serving parish Deacon who also serves as parish Director of Religious Education at St. George nor the Coordinator of Religious Formation at St. Mary, but work in collaboration with existing staff members and pastor. No detailed job description was decided upon. It was agreed that the description for this position should include the general statement:

*The Pastoral Associate collaborates with the Pastor in the overall process of parish administration, including pastoral planning, decision-making, financial management and the implementation of parish ministries and operations.*

The duties of the Pastoral Associate should include overall responsibility for establishment, recruitment of members, formation and coordination of various committees and ministries necessary for the vitality of parish life and community. This person would also serve as ex officio member of parish advisory councils, boards of cemeteries and be given some administrative duties and authority allowing the pastor more time for pastoral care, sacramental and overall pastoral leadership of the parish. Ideally, a pastoral associate would be hired at the same time as the sharing of a pastor commences, but this position might be filled sooner once the parishes' financial situation becomes clearer after the Wesclin School District ceases to rent both parishes' school buildings. It was agreed any candidate for the associate position should possess a graduate degree in theology or pastoral studies.

The committee decided that it would be advantageous to petition Bishop Braxton in the next few months to assign Deacon John Fridley, currently serving St. George Parish, to be assigned to serve both parishes as soon as possible. This might be after his first year anniversary of

ordination to Holy Orders. His duties and division of time between the parishes will be discussed and mutually agreed between pastors and deacon.

The committee recognizes that the changes in staff and parish life being discussed might require a corresponding change in parish income and allocation of resources. It was agreed that a discussion about increasing parishioner's awareness of responsible discipleship through stewardship of time, talent and treasure will take place by members of the joint committee at a future meeting. A joint effort in stewardship education and implementation of a plan may be a possibility at some point in the future.

A brief discussion of possible activities that could be shared between the parishes both now and in the future was held. Specifically mentioned was a suggestion that the current pastors begin to "exchange pulpits" and celebrate Mass in each other's parish on a periodic basis and that Deacon Fridley begin performing limited liturgical and formational duties (such as preparation of parents for infant baptism) at St. Mary.

The report to the Diocese required to be submitted by December 13, 2013 will be prepared by Fr. Rascher and sent to committee members for review. Fr. Neff will provide a copy for members to sign at St. George on the weekend of December 15, forward the copy to Fr. Rascher who will have St. Mary members sign the report the following weekend at the latest.

Any questions or concerns about the process of determining how our parish partnership with St. George / St. Mary will be implemented should be addressed to any member of our parish staff or members of the committee. They desire to know the opinions of parishioners and seek their input.