

#1. Presenting the rationale for restructuring the parish to parish leadership. Please ignore the formatting issues generated by conversion of the old file.

Parish Council Presentation:

Small Christian Communities and Pastoral Council

by Rev. James Faluszczyk

Methodology of Parish Ministry

Everything that happens in the parish should be considered to be ministry. Every action for the sake of the parish should be seen as a response to Christ's presence in our lives. Every good deed should have this as its foundation and should have the spread of Jesus' Good News as its goal. The work of the volunteer, the Christian family, the paid staff, the priests should be an expression, at least in its origins, of our common baptismal calling.

We who are part of Pastoral Council should be conscious of Christ's presence in our lives and of his desire that we communicate his presence to those around us. But, as we reflect on this shared commission of Christ probably ask ourselves from time to time the simple and complex question of "how?" How will this happen? And so, we must find a methodology for our shared ministry, a "method to our madness" as the saying goes.

A. A Brief History

If we ever hope to find a method for ministry, we must stand with the church Jesus established some two thousand years ago in order to get an idea of how to communicate him in today's world. There are similarities with this church and there are differences. In the early church ministry we done in community. This wasn't simply Jesus' idea, though; not an innovation at all.

The precedent came with the covenant between Yahweh and the Israelite people. This was not simply an agreement between a king and his subjects, disparate individuals; but, rather, with a group of individuals, a community. The success of the covenant rose and fell on the commitment of the entire people, not on an individual. We see evidence of this in the way the Israelites were often addressed: "Hear, O Israel." As Moses stood on the verge of the Promised Land, as presented in the Book of Deuteronomy, he speaks to the people as a nation.

Since we see in Jesus the fulfillment of so many Old Testament hopes, we should not be surprised that he would, naturally, see community as the key to the New Covenant. Not only did he say that love of God was of primary importance, but that love of neighbor was much like this first covenant. In other words, he adopted this notion of community as an integral facet of his church. Community, then, when coupled with sacrificial love, is what constitutes the New Covenant. As we are a people of the New Covenant, we must be people of community.]

While the liturgy is the sign of this *par excellence* of this reality, it cannot be the only sign of this, or at least not when viewed as exclusively something that happens once per week. Just as what we believe about the Eucharist is not confined to adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, but begins and ends with the communal celebration of the Paschal Mystery in the Eucharistic liturgy, community must pervade our lives. Tied up intimately with the Eucharist, it forms the life blood of our faith.

The early church adopted this vision by means of house churches. This vision of community, then, was commonplace.

#2. I drew together a core group providing leadership in establishing 12 house churches where parishioners meet regularly. This organizational team drew from local educators, business people, and those with prior experience of small church groups.



Among the dedicated and effective members of the Core Team, everyone considered us to be lucky to have RADM (Ret.) Joseph C. Strasser as a member of the team. Joe was a good friend, and I was lucky to work with him early in my ministry.

#3. I regularly taught continuing ed courses at multiple sites to religious education teachers in the eastern end of the Diocese of Erie, and assisted in rewriting course content for some of these.

Memo

To: Nancy Fisher

From: Jim Faluszczyk

Date: November 19, 1996

Re: Notes on "Church"

If you get a chance, you might want to take a look at the notes you gave me for the enrichment class on Church: The Sacrament of Jesus. If this is an introductory course on the nature of the church, then the notes are probably insufficient. They focus on the following:

1. Current trends
2. Developments of Vatican II
3. Models of the Church

The first and third sessions really deal with trends. The second sessions deals with models (an *interpretation* of Models of the Church). While I can see the importance of discussing trends and implications of Vatican II, maybe it would be best if they were saved until the last session; maybe even as a conclusion to the course. The discussion of church models seems important and worthwhile for the second session. Some quotes from Vatican II would help here.

What I think is really lacking is a detailed presentation of the theology of Vatican II, especially that which is found in Lumen Gentium. The course gives a thumbnail sketch of things, but could do more with the time allotted. For example:

1. People of God is such a significant chapter in LG
2. Membership and relatedness to the church (LG art. 16)
3. Priest, Prophet, and King trilogy, found throughout, as it relates to lay and ordained ministry
4. The Bishop

I hope you don't mind the critique, but it seems like the notes for this course are weaker than most. I hope you didn't write them. For that matter, I hope Fr. Orbanek didn't, either. The notes, in general, seem very interpretative. They tend to focus on a person's perception of trends rather than on theology. If you would like me to rewrite the notes for you, I'd be happy to.

#4. Sr. Nancy Fischer supervised my teaching of adult continuing education, and the establishment of small church communities at St. Catherine's. This is her 2005 recommendation of me to the faculty of Duquesne.



Diocese of Erie

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Robert L. Furman, Ph.D.
School of Education
Canevin Hall
Duquesne University
Pittsburgh, PA

Dear Dr. Furman,

I am writing on behalf of the Reverend James Faluszcak, a student in the School of Education at Duquesne. I have had the privilege of working with Fr. Faluszcak over the last seven years. Since his ordination, he has been generous in teaching in the Diocesan Lay Ministry Training Program. He has taught courses in various areas of theology at sites through out the diocese of Erie. During that time his evaluations have been outstanding and he is in demand as an instructor. He is a valuable asset to our program.

I have also worked with Father in the other area of my position and that is in the development of small communities. At his first assignment he organized and over saw the building of communities at St. Catherine's Church in DuBois. The sign up for membership in those groups was the largest ever recorded in the diocese. His vision continues to influence that parish today.

Fr. Faluszcak would be an asset to any educational endeavor in which he would serve.

If I can be of further assistance do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Sister Nancy Fischer, S.S.J.
Director of Community Formation and Lay Ministry Training
The Diocese of Erie

#5. Portions of my final evaluation, edited for space, by Pastor Richard Siefer prior to my ordination as a priest.

PRE-ORDINATION EVALUATION

Rev. Mr. James Faluszcak
St. Catherine of Siena Church
116 S. State Street
DuBois, PA 15801

1) Jim's greatest strength **PERSONALLY** are:

- He has a great personality.
- He is comfortable with himself at this stage of his life.
- He is intelligent (educationally & common sense)
- He is a morally sound person.
- He has a good sense of humor.
- He is a prayerful and discerning person.

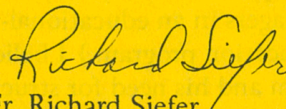
Jim's greatest strengths **MINISTERIALLY** are:

- He is a good preacher.
- He is a good teacher.
- He is a good listener.
- He attempts to meet people where they may be at a given moment in their lives.
- He deals well with teen-agers in an educational-setting {More so at CCHS than the parish religious education program.} I believe the day-to-day routine in the Catholic school helps Jim and his need for structure in his life. His experience at CCHS was a positive one for him, and presumably for the students.
- He has very fine organizational skills, i.e. his work in developing Small Christian Communities in the parish.

2) Jim needs to develop the most **PERSONALLY** in the following ways:

- Even though he has a good sense of humor, he needs to *lighten* up somewhat when people joke with him. This also includes when the pastor jokes with him.
- He is somewhat of a procrastinator, as is the pastor.
- Dealing with people when they disagree with him.

4) I do recommend Jim for ordination to the Order of Presbyter. I feel he has been prepared well academically during his seminary years. His time in the Continuum has been a valuable learning experience and has given him a good *taste* of parish life. There is much more to experience and learn in parish ministry for him in the years ahead.



Fr. Richard Siefer
Pastor
2/29/96

Portfolio Artifacts:

St. Catherine of Siena
Church & School

#6. Investiture at St. Catherine's during my ordination to the transitional diaconate by supervisor Rev. Richard Siefer, and Msgr. Jan Olowin of my home parish of St. George in Erie, PA.



#7. Upon assignment to St. Catherine's as a seminarian, I was entrusted with conducting an assessment of the vitality of the outreach of the parish to the community. This Vitality Study of the Diocese of Erie was commissioned by Bishop Donald Trautman. Ignore the formatting issues generated by conversion of the old file.

VITALITY STUDY

St. Catherine of Siena Church

Social Concerns / Evangelization / Missions

Outreach Commission

I. Introduction

St. Catherine of Siena Parish accepts the mission of Christ in specific ways. While it has numerous forms of outreach, there is still room for growth. Over the past two years we have begun a program which, ultimately, will serve the needs of our parish and community in a more effective manner. The two major components of this undertaking include a radical restructuring of existing programs as well as the introduction of Small Christian Communities as the life-blood of all outreach ministry in the parish.

II. Existing Ministries

These are ministries which are well-established in our parish. They are able to function without a great deal of management from the pastoral staff of the parish.

RCIA - The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is one of our parish's means of evangelization. It includes the areas of religious education and liturgy. In reference to outreach to non-Catholics, this ministry invites any interested party to learn more about the Catholic faith. It does so through advertisements around town, word of mouth, and invitation by the pastor. Each year, approximately 10 people embark on a process of deepening their faith which usually results in their entrance into the church at the Easter Vigil. One area of concern of this ministry is that retaining people after the Vigil seems to be a problem. It is possible that screening of candidates is inadequate and that support during, and especially after, is less than it should be. Possible solutions to these problems include earlier screening to assess motivation and the involvement of Small Christian Communities as a mechanism of support. There are 8 parishioners who are actively involved in this ministry.

Homebound visitation - monthly visitation of the sick which includes the distribution of communion; 69 people being served; 4 regularly involved; 2/3 substitutes. This is a ministry which is greatly appreciated.

#8. Communicating with the parish about an opportunity to learn about the spiritual traditions of the Catholic Church historically enshrined in some of its major religious orders.

The Parochial Vicar's Corner

Rev. James Faluszczak

"Lord, teach us to pray."

There is a yearning within each one of us for communion with God. We are made in such a way that our basic orientation is toward him. We are created in God's image and invited to cooperate in his plan for salvation. Ministry in Jesus' name is our shared responsibility. While this may be so, there is still this underlying desire to be one with God. The disciples expressed this hunger when they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1). As individuals living on the verge of the third millennium, we have this same yearning within us.

Throughout the history of the church, people have sought to fill this ache for God in a number of positive ways. Consequently, religious traditions have arisen which seek to answer this basic desire. Many of the great saints of the church founded religious communities centered around a specific charism or ministry. Their ministry might have been one of prayer or a ministry to the poor. Vincent de Paul, for example, founded his community, the Vincentians, on a deep concern for the poorest of the poor. John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, together, reformed the Carmelite order, one which concerned itself with a ministry of prayer and spiritual direction.

Particular ministries and prayer forms are often geared to certain types of personality. A person who is extremely outgoing might feel restricted in a cloistered community while a person who is comfortable listening to God in the silence of the heart might feel completely free there. A person who is an analytical thinker would probably feel comfortable with the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, but a person who makes decisions based on intuition might not.

Regardless of our make-up, though, we all have the same hunger for unity with the God who made us. In our present time we have so many different concerns. We wonder who should be elected to public office. We worry about financial security. We are concerned about our young people learning Christian values. In the midst of all our concerns and desires, hopes and expectations, we try to find God in our lives and become closer to him.

Since I've been here at St. Catherine's, people have been asking me if we could have some sort of adult education class. Upon reflection, it seems to me that it would be best if we could have some sort of opportunity to examine the wealth of our Church's spiritual heritage. *"Lord, teach us to pray"* is a phrase which still speaks to us. It is with this in mind that I will be offering a six-week class in Catholic Spirituality beginning November 11. It will focus on the major spiritual traditions of the church as well as on the people who influenced them. In addition to a presentation, these meetings will include, where possible, an experience of prayer in accord with the tradition being presented. This class is open to all members of the parish as well as anyone from the DuBois area. If you would like more details, please refer to the advertisement on the inside back cover of this *Dialogue*.

Let us, together, pray that we will become more closely united to God through this experience.

#9. An outline of the mini course I developed and taught first at St. Catherine's.

1. Foundations of Catholic spirituality in the Early Church
 - a.) The liturgy: Anamnesis/ Remembrance
 - b.) The imitation of Christ (cf. Thomas a Kempis d. 1471)
2. Ascetical/Desert Spirituality - Martyrdom
- B. Discussion of personality types
 1. Apophatic - Intuition
 2. Kataphatic - Senses
 3. Heart
 4. Mind
- IV. Examination of major religious/spiritual traditions
 - A. Monastic Spirituality
 1. Benedict d.547
 2. Scolastica d.543
 - B. Contemplation and Study - Augustinian and Dominican Spirituality
 1. Augustine of Hippo d.430
 2. Dominic d.1221
 - C. The Mendicant Tradition - Franciscan Spirituality
 1. Francis d.1226
 2. Clare d.1253
 - D. Christ and the Imagination - Ignatian Spirituality
 1. Ignatius of Loyola d.1556
 - E. The Mystical Tradition - Carmelite Spirituality
 1. John of the Cross d.1591
 2. Teresa of Avila d.1582
 - F. Finding Christ in the poor and abandoned - Vincentian Spirituality
 1. Vincent de Paul d.1660
 2. Louise de Marillac d.1660

#10. My first Christmas homily, delivered to the children of the parish on Christmas Eve 1995.



NB: I have 100+ supporting documents from my tenure in this first parish assignment.