**Minutes for Sept. 18, 2017, Holy Comforter Pastoral Council Meeting**

*Chair Cassidy, Secretary Pannone and council member Battistone are not present. All others are present, including Father Joseph Mary.*

- Councilmember Howard Mitchell opened the meeting with a prayer.

- Architect Erik Bootsma from Richmond delivered a presentation on the proposal to renovate the sanctuary.

- Today we are in the foretaste of Heaven and there are seven ways in which Christ is present with us today. However, the way that is most perfect, is the Eucharist. To that end, this proposal seeks to move the altar to the center of the sanctuary and put the tabernacle on the same axis. This reminds us that Christ is truly present at Mass and we are offering our prayers to God.

- Rugo Stone, the planned contractor, just completed the main dome that did the Basicilia in Washington D.C. Mr. Bootsma described them as "very competent and good artisans." He then proceeded to show members of the council the sanctuary setup from the 1960s and 1970s, which had an altar in the middle and a lectern/ambo situated similar to that of the new proposal. He also provided step-by-step guide through the new design.

- Mr. Mitchell inquired as to why the altar is in its present off-center location.

- Mr. Bootsma replied that there was a notion that perhaps the Word and the Eucharist should be "co-equal" and this actually started in the 1950s. But it was more or less an "experiment" that the Second Vatican Council fathers did not really mention at all. In fact, one of the priests at Vatican II who was given charge of many liturgical changes thought off-centering the altar was a "step too far." The Word helps us understand the Eucharist, Mr. Bootsma said, but the altar and its Sacrifice should be the center.

- Father Joseph Mary said that our predecessors were thinking as if the priest was the center of the worship process. This was common thinking for a short period of time, but it is not correct. He reinforced that Christ is at the center.

- The budget for this project is approximately $100,000. Mr. Bootsma noted that other parishes have spent upwards of $200,000 for a similar project.

- Mr. Mitchell noted that Holy Comforter might have additional space challenges down the line, and that additional beautification might be desirable. Charlottesville is growing and it is likely that the Catholic community will do so as well. Father said he has received several responses about the "Holy Comforter 2020" campaign and he hopes to put all of them together at year-end. One such response was about the sanctuary, incidentally.

- Mr. Bootsma acknowledged that St. Mary's in Lovingston is growing at a rapid rate as well and will be looking to expand. He said that the hope for this project at Holy Comforter is that the new sanctuary will last for the life of the church. The council agreed that this project is worth undertaking. Mr. Bootsma will return for town halls for the parish as a whole.

- Vice Chair Matt Blumenfeld plugged the Oct. 7 Fatima procession and there was discussion about how to promote this event. Mr. Mitchell said he would come up with a press release of sorts to distribute to the media. Council member Theresa Lynch suggested inviting members of Casa Alma. The parish office is sending promotional material to all 10 parishes in the central Virginia location to encourage them to come. We have received permits for the march, which will take place around 9:30 am.

- The Pastoral Council retreat is still set for October 28, though the location is up in the air. Suggestions for the location included space at St. Peter and Paul in Palmyra, meeting rooms at the Jefferson Library, new space at Our Lady of the Angels and Alumni Hall at UVA.

- The courtyard renovation was completed quickly, and members of the council agreed that it looks good and its safe. There was discussion about how to further beautify the space and make it prayerful. Suggestions included statues of the Blessed Virgin or St. Francis. In the latter case, council member Michael Marshall noted that Holy Comforter actually started as a mission church to St. Francis in Staunton. Ms. Lynch suggested a weather-proof bulletin board of sorts with Mass times, prayers, information about the liturgical season or a holy image.

- Council member Lynch recently attended a symposium on pornography held by the Diocese of Richmond. Changes in society make it easier for people to engage in pornography and it has become more available, even to very small children. The average age a child is exposed to porn is 6 to 8 years old now.

- The Diocese is ramping up efforts stop the snowballing effect of people becoming addicted to pornography and how to bring it out in the open. You can't treat it unless you admit it is there.

- One thing that propels people into addiction is a feeling of inferiority or inadequacy. Because of that, the Diocese is asking us to rethink our New Evangelization and Christian Formation efforts us that we need to change our whole approach to New Evangelization. We presume that children have self-esteem and if we just explain parts of the Faith, they will be fine. But the Diocese wants us to go further and stress that we believe they really are capable of being good Catholics, which wil make them more likely to stay.

- Often young people do something and they think they cannot be forgiven, which is not the case. When you have the overall picture of the value of who we are, it keeps us here in the Church. Ms. Lynch shared her experience with Sue Dougherty and she is working to add this information to our Christian Formation program.

- Council member Ed Walendowski brought up the fact that there is a lot of gateway-type material on television and called pornography an "elephant in the room" that no one discusses.

- Father said that bottom line is that the parents and Church need to work together to counteract what the world exposes to them. It's a complicated issue. These are very real spiritual battles we are dealing with. Everything starts from the home, and parents can end up exposing the children to things that are improper.

- Ms. Lynch said the Diocese is going to gradually train therapists to work on this in a Catholic fashion.

- Moving on to other business, Mr. Walendowski said getting greeters and altar servers for the 5 PM Mass is very difficult. He said that the church missing some of the fundamental and we need to re-emphasize how it is critical to get people to get engaged.

- Ms. Lynch said that the head of the music ministry, Daniel Kirkland spoke well about how participation in music among the congregation helps deepen their faith. Perhaps he or someone else could speak about getting involved as a server or bringing up the gifts. Getting volunteers to assist in the celebration of the Mass will need to be a bulletin item once again.

- With no other business to discuss, Mr. Mitchell closed the meeting with a final prayer. The next meeting of the pastoral council will be the retreat in October.