

**Minutes of St. Anthony of Padua Parish Council Meeting
November 16, 2009**

John Zarrella opened the meeting by welcoming the three new members of the Council who are: Betty Anderson, Denis Thibodeau and Donna Uusitalo. John also thanked Jo Belli, Kevin Maynard and Lori Pandiscio for their terms of service which expired at the end of September, 2009.

Fr. Bob updated the Council on the future church closings. Fr. stated that he Rosalyn Piro and John Zarrella, as parish representatives, attended a meeting in October with representatives from all of the other parishes in the City of Fitchburg. Lori Pandiscio was also there as a member of the Diocesan Pastoral Planning Committee. The representatives ended up presenting two recommended models to the diocese.

Plan A: Madonna of the Holy Rosary and Sacred Heart would close and the parishioners would be invited to attend St. Joseph Church; Immaculate Conception Church would close and the parishioners would attend St. Anthony of Padua Church; St. Camillus Church would be free standing, and St. Bernard Church would close and the parishioners would be invited to St. Francis Church.

Plan B: Similar to Plan A with the exception being that St. Francis Church would close and the parishioners would attend St. Bernard Church.

The Diocesan Pastoral Planning Committee will meet on November 23, then again on December 1, 2009 to review the proposed plans. Fr. Bob stated that ultimately it's the Bishop's decision, but the Bishop will take the committee's proposed models very seriously.

Fr. Bob also stated that the real driving force behind the closings is the shortage of priests to serve these parishes. He stated that the median age of the priests in the Diocese of Worcester is 66 yrs. old. This June two priests will be ordained, but one of them will be going back to Rome. We will be informed how the parishes in Fitchburg will be reconfigured during the month of February, and we will be informed of the personnel changes during the month of June.

The Principal of St. Anthony Elementary School, Jack Ginnity, informed the Board that the students in the school are presently sponsoring four Haitian children's schooling for a mission project. Mr. Ginnity also stated that on November 9, 2009, representatives from the school attended a gala at Oak Hill Country Club for the St. Paul consortium. Many new and good ideas were shared by all, but especially the keynote speaker who was from the Boston Archdiocese.

Also, for Veterans Day a flag which had been flown in Iraq was donated to the school and used in a ceremony at St. Anthony School.

Fr. Bob read an update from Ellen DePatie, Religious Education Director, stating that there will be a series of three workshops before Confirmation. Also, this year's Confirmation ceremony will take place at St. Francis Church and this will include candidates from St. Francis, Immaculate Conception, St. Anthony and St. Joseph Parish. Also, thirteen children are presently being prepared for the sacraments of Baptism and First Communion.

Amy Walsh reported on the Hospitality Committee and stated that the weekend of Nov. 21 - 22 will be the hospitality weekend instead of the weekend after Thanksgiving. She also stated that the hall and kitchen are reorganized and everything is running very smoothly. She informed the Council that the annual pot luck supper and cookout is again planned for 2010.

Kathy Cullinan reported that the next MIHN weekend to host is on December 6th. The Montachusett Chorale will be presenting a concert on December 6th, at City Hall in Leominster and the proceeds will benefit MIHN.

Jo Belli reported that there are 23 ministers to the homebound and 140 parishioners are serviced every week.

Fr. Bob informed the Council that during 2008 three parishioners passed away and left money to St. Anthony Parish. The first left \$50,000; the second left 25% of his estate therefore St. Anthony Parish will be receiving \$59,200 before the end of the year. The third person left a portion of her estate and \$212,541 is our share of this. The receipt of these funds most likely will come sometime during 2010 because it is presently in the form of stocks, and the attorney is waiting for the best time to sell the stocks for the best return on this money.

Fr. Bob stated that the Finance Committee decided on three projects if St. Anthony Church will remain open in the future. The first priority is the addition of an upstairs bathroom which, hopefully, would be complete by June 1, 2010. The second priority is the change the downstairs bathroom into two separate bathrooms. These would include one men's room and one ladies room. The third priority is to install a removable ramp in the hall. Father stated that this project is recommended even though we are not required to install a ramp because churches are "grandfathered" therefore we would only be required to install a ramp if we were making structural changes to the building, such as adding an addition. Denis Thibodeau mentioned the idea of a "lift" instead of a removable ramp, and he will get information for this to the committee at a later date.

The future church closings were mentioned once again, this time with the realization that if St. Anthony Parish remains open we will need to reconsider our present Mass schedule for the weekends. A possible schedule would be as follows: The 4:00 p.m. Saturday Mass would possibly change to a different time - maybe 6:00 p.m. on that same day. The Sunday Mass times most likely would be 8:00, 10:00 and 11:30 a.m. Fr. Bob stated that there is not a need for a Sunday evening Mass because there is one at St. Joseph Church which is usually attended by approximately 150 people each week.

A recommendation was made by Fr. Bob and accepted by the Council that Jo Belli continue as a Council member by being an At-Large member representing the Homebound Ministry.

The next St. Anthony of Padua Parish Council meeting will be held on January 18, 2010.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Cronin
Recording Secretary