

HIGHLIGHTS OF GENERAL ASSEMBLIES AT
ST. ALOYSIUS AND ST. BRENDAN'S

SATURDAY MARCH 12, 2011

ST. ALOYSIUS: 9:00 TO 12:00

PRESENT: Fr. Paul Pomkoski, Fr. Tom Dowd, Members of the Pastoral Council, Wardens, Parishioners

Total in attendance: 24

ST. BRENDAN'S: 1:00 TO 4:00

PRESENT: Fr. Paul Pomkoski, Fr. Tom Dowd, Members of the Pastoral Council, Wardens, Parishioners

Total in attendance: 42

FATHER PAUL

- Father Paul thanked everyone for attending and read a scripture passage from St. Paul to the Corinthians followed by a prayer.
- Introduction of the Pastoral Council members present.
- Introduction of the Wardens present.
- History of how the General Assembly came about:
 - When Father Paul was named parochial administrator of St. Alq{ ukwu'Rctkuj , hg decided to "take both parishes to form an advisory group to help him look at the combined" pastoral aspects and how we can best serve both communities.
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 - For the past seven years, the Pastoral Council was looking at Stewardship and how we can live it on a daily basis.

- We wanted to reach out to those not coming and realized that we must first bring together the two communities to see how:
 - (1) We can work together to serve the church of St. Aloysius;
 - (2) Serve the community of East End Montreal (territory expanded to include 5 parishes which came under Fr. Paul as parochial administrator with Father Tom assisting);
 - (3) Ultimately, how we serve the Church in Montreal and the Church that Jesus Christ established in the world.
- In the 25 years since Fr. Paul became a priest, there have been 55 clergy deaths, 17 new priests ordained and 1 retirement. Currently, there are 33 active priests and not all serving the English community.
- With the number of clergy available to serve parishes, we either over-burden our priests or figure out how to work as a community to take some of the responsibility.
- **WE ARE ONE BODY** – the apostles’ first task was to help those in need with “lay people”. They assigned people within the community to help take care of the needs of the widows and the orphans in the community. The apostles could not personally take care of all the needs present; others within the community had to step up and help out.
- We all have a responsibility to serve our Church to the best of our abilities.
- Stewardship is giving back to God – it is having an **ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE** – by giving our Time, our Talent and our Treasure.
- We have to ask “Am I doing my fair share?” Many of us are, but we are not aware of it.

For example:

- **TIME** also includes prayer and reflection with God – praying the rosary, participating in retreats, Masses are all **Time** spent with God. Jesus went for 40 days in the desert to pray and spend time with God.

One of the things that came out in the questionnaire was the request for more retreats; afternoon Bible studies; and praying the rosary and the Hail Mary at Mass.

ACTION: We will look at offering more prayer and time with God

- **TALENT** "The choir members have a musical talent that not all of us possess; however we all have special gifts – do we come forth and use them to enhance and help our community?"

For example, there are many things that need fixing – we can ask someone in our community to do it.

There are others that have gifts as well; for example, the websites – parishioners used their time and talent and also some treasure in order to create the respective websites.

ACTION: We must ask ourselves: “Am I willing to step up”?

- **TREASURE** "Everyone thinks that the Church is always asking for money0 The church does not belong personally to Fr. Paul or Fr. Tom – it belongs to the people who come. **WE** are responsible for that community and all its aspects. Fr. Paul and Fr. Tom serve this community but **WE** must support it. It is like owning a home, we are responsible for the upkeep otherwise it is destroyed. Without **OUR** upkeep, our community will not flourish.

QUESTIONNAIRE: Where are we going to be in 5 years?

Father Paul’s answer:

“I don’t know. I cannot see the future. Today as a community, we are vibrant. Can we do better? Of course. Are we going to merge? That is downtown’s decision. We must work together to keep it strong and growing. The question is: **How** are we going to grow?”

The territory that Fr. Paul is responsible for has widened. These include: St. Brendan’s, St. Aloysius, St. Dominic’s, All Saints Mission, St. Philip Neri.

What is the best way to build community so that the Church of God is flourishing?

ACTION: We can come together on a social level to begin to work together on a spiritual level.

→ **Father Paul needs from us:**

Suggestions on what we would like to see. How can he help us to grow spiritually? He asks that we make him accountable for what he does and WE in turn must become accountable to each other.

- In the near future, each of us will be asked to distribute a letter to five individuals who we know are not actively participating in the Eucharist. We all have people in our entourage (children, spouses, friends, co-workers) who are not sharing in the Eucharist; this letter will invite them to join us in a special Eucharistic celebration where they will be welcomed back into our community.
- Father Paul is looking at giving a workshop on Stewardship in order to further delve into it as a community. We would rather have half a Church filled with true stewards than a full church of people who just come and have no connection to the community of God.
- We must realize that we need money to pay expenses. For example, great speakers cost money; good programs require funds in order to operate properly. We can combine the two parishes and share the expense.

- Father Tom explained the statistics of a report on Parish collections:

If there are 2000 families with an average household income of \$40,000.00, earning a total of \$80,000,000.00 and if they give only 1% of their income, that would equal \$800,000.00 in collections. If they give half of one percent of that figure, it becomes \$400,000.00.

Scripturally we are asked to give 10% to God. Remember, this includes donations made to charities, parishes, and communities. (See the stewardship posters in each parish).

QUESTIONNAIRE: How do we become better known within the community?

- Websites must be kept up to date;
- We can put announcements in local papers;
- Create a Facebook page;
- Hold movie nights;
- Organize bake Sales;
- Hold a game night;
- Have a scavenger hunt;
- Advertise in hospitals for baptisms=
- Put out flyers with catchy slogans around the neighborhood;

ACTION: We need volunteers to make these happen.

→ All suggestions are good; we have to work together. If many people get involved and take turns organizing the events, they may only have to organize an activity once a year. This reduces the amount of time that they must commit and it prevents the same people from always doing the events and getting burnt out.

REMEMBER: If it takes one person 10 hours to do a job, ten people can complete the same task in one hour.

QUESTION: How do we make the Eucharist accessible to all?

→ Father Tom spoke of how the Church used to be the centre of everything once upon a time. Sundays were for worship and family"ó"everything was closed. This has now changed – we are competing with many things – hockey, soccer, working on Sundays, etc. How do we work within this reality? How do we schedule our Masses so that people who wish to participate and struggle with the choices they must make can have the opportunity to participate?

QUESTION: Can we structure the Eucharist so that we can meet those who make an effort halfway?

→ This will be looked at carefully and consideration given to all the possibilities keeping in mind that the Sabbath must be kept Holy.

FINANCES ST. ALQI UKW'RCTKIJ

Sal Russo presented the income and expense statement for the year January to December 2010 as well as a summary of the budget for the 2011 fiscal year.

Wardens have made some good decisions that have helped keep St. Alq{ukw'Rctkij in the black.

The decision to convert the upstairs of the Parish House located on de Marseilles into a rental property, has helped cover expenses and thus has taken pressure off the parish to meet its financial obligations.

QUESTION : Where did the money from St-Philip Neri go?

It all went to the Diocese. It was presumed to be for St. Alq{ukw, but if it was not designated as such in the minutes of the wardens' final meeting, then it stays at the Diocese to be used for other parishes. The designation of the funds will be verified.

Father Tom explained the internal “bank” of the Diocese:

- The “Fonds d’entraide” allows parishes to deposit and borrow money and receive a better interest rate than at a regular bank. Lots of parishes invest their money there.
- Any money from a parish that has been closed must be redistributed to other parishes by law. If the funds are not specifically designated to a particular parish, then the funds can go to this fund, because its monies are always used only for parishes.

EXPLANATION OF CHURCH/'FABRIQUE/'PARISH

- Parish:** The community – if the church burns down we still have parish.
- Church:** The building.
- Fabrique:** The corporation that the government sets up in order for a church to have a bank account and to operate.

For example: In cases where territories are combined and parishes merge you can have 1 parish, 1 church and 1 fabrique or you can have 1 parish, 2 churches, and 1 fabrique.

QUESTION: What happens if St. Alq{ukwu"doesn't exist anymore as a fabrique?

- The wardens decide what happens to the money and the Diocese has to respect that. By law, we must invest the capital in a product that is 100% secure. The capital cannot be risked but the interest earned on that capital can be placed in a less secure investment that may yield a higher rate of return.

QUESTION: If St. Brendan's and St. Alq{ukwu amalgamate, which fabrique would close?

- One fabrique has to close and the other takes over the territory. The name of the fabrique can change, the name of the parish can change but Rome alone gives permission to change the name of a church after it has been officially consecrated.

ACTION: LET'S THINK ABOUT GROWTH AND NOT CLOSURE

There is approximately \$360,000.00 coming in to St-Alq{ukwu from a bequest by a deceased parishioner.

- Once money comes in (June 2011), we will look at our needs and invest the funds in a secure, high interest bearing account.

- Repairs must be made to the Parish House.
Water pressure is a pressing issue right now; other repairs will be evaluated as needed.
- Decisions will be taken by the Fabrique but any large expenses would be brought to the attention of the parishioners.

FINANCES – ST. BRENDAN’S 'RCKUJ

- David Gedeon presented the finances of St. Brendan’s for 2010.
- To date the renovations have cost \$495,000.00. In future there are estimates of an additional \$495,000.00 over the next 5 years. We raised the money we needed for the renovations so far through fundraising events and government grants that were available due to the fact that the Church is designated a historical site.
- We still need to replace the church windows (estimated \$150,000.00);
- We need to waterproof the hall foundation (estimated \$25,000.00);
- **Patrimonial grants** – the government will only fund up to 70% of the project on condition that parishioners must raise the other 30%. If the 30% is not raised, then the government will not give any funds at all – the parishioners’ portion constitutes the stewardship component that comes into effect. The hall is not part of the heritage and therefore it is not eligible for grants.
- To date, all projects have been proposed to the government;
- We still have \$18,000.00 to spend from the previous grant received in 2010 for the foundation of the Church; these funds may be used towards Phase I of the windows;
- We rent the hall to Jean Eudes. In 2011, the rent will increase by 4%. The lease is for 5 years with option to renew. We are currently in our second year of the lease.
- Investments: \$60,000.00 GIC ladder investment is at \$85,000.00
\$60,000.00 with Laurentian Bank
– Interest comes to us and capital is re-invested.
\$150,000.00 at diocese – designated by All Saints Mission
300 shares in RBC donated by a priest and we get dividends
- The catechism program has a separate account – "salaries directly related to the functioning of this program as well as all expenses incurred to operate the program are covered by this account.

Costs over \$5,000.00 need to be approved by the Diocese.

- **In order to avoid collusion and contracts going to friends, diocese will ok expense if it sees good faith.**
- **On the flip side, if wardens authorize expenses and make any illegal decisions then they are personally liable for that amount. This is done in order to protect the parish.**
- Criteria for giving contracts: If the work to be done will cost more than \$5,000.00, we must get 3 quotes; for work costing more than \$100,000.00, we must go to tender.
- In making our decision, we look at the price, the prior relationship we have with the contractor and references. All options are voted upon by the wardens and approved by the Diocese.

FATHER TOM:

WHAT IS MY ROLE IN THE LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY?

- Fr. Tom started working at Diocese in 2006. He was previously serving in parishes and hospitals for 4 ½ years and both he and the Cardinal did not want him to lose touch with parish life, so on his and Fr. Tom's behalf Msgr Harty approached Fr. Paul and asked him if Fr. Tom could substitute every 2 weeks. Then St. Alq{ukwu came under Fr. Paul's parochial administration and so now Fr. Tom does 1 week St. Alq{ukwu and one week at St. Brendan's.
- Fr. Tom does not have an official appointment at either church so at any moment he could be called to another parish as was the case when Fr. Moon died suddenly and Fr. Tom was parochial administrator for a two-week period.
- We may not have the services of Fr. Tom indefinitely because there are too few priests to meet too many needs.
- Fr. Tom feels like he is a part of both communities. He is welcomed at both our parishes and is treated as one of our priests as if he had a formal appointment. He wishes to remain in these two parishes – he loves it – but he will go where he is needed. When you are ordained you promise obedience to the Archbishop so you follow his wishes, which is what Fr. Tom has committed to do.
- Working at the Diocese gives Fr. Tom a special insight as to how things work. The shutting down parishes is definitely a concern. In theory we shouldn't be closing churches – we should be opening more because the population is growing, but there is a decline in religious practice and therefore a decline in available resources. There are big Churches but they cannot be kept open because of this decline.

In deciding which Churches stay open, the Archbishop looks for signs of life. A vibrant community will go ahead but a priest cannot do it alone; he needs the help of the community and volunteers.

Interesting Fact:

We are the last English community until we get to Quebec City .

QUESTION: WHAT IS OUR MISSION FOR THE EAST END OF MONTREAL?

THERE ARE SIGNS OF A GENUINE VIBRANT CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Father Paul will look into letting the administration at Diocese know what our parishioners do and about our stewardship activities at both parishes.

We must be the Light of Christ to our neighborhood. Let's get known for our charity

CONCLUSION:

- Both parishes wish to have a General Assembly every 6 months;
- Suggestion: Put detailed finances in the bulletin on a quarterly basis – we must also calculate time and talent as part of the needs and results. We would like to know how much time and talent are donated by our parishioners as these are just as important as the donation of treasure.
- Next General Assemblies – September 24, 2011