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So who's doing what, when and how?

*A continuing commentary on the
Diocese of Buffalo's Journey in Faith and Grace
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So, where were we. Oh, yes the "Journey."

The Diocese of Buffalo's Journey in Faith and Grace took me to the St. Florian/Pavonia Block Club meeting recently at the St. Florian parish center on Hertel Ave. in Buffalo.

And it went something like this: The block club was concerned with the impact on the neighborhood if St. Florian Church and two other parish buildings are unused after its "merger," so they asked the bishop to attend their meeting.

The bishop sent Msgr. Albert Clody of All Saints to the meeting and a letter stating: "It is with Msgr. Clody's parish that St. Florian Parish will merge, and Msgr. Clody will be responsible for the disposition of the property."

Msgr. Clody during the course of the meeting said it is not he, but the transition team of the newly merged parish which will decide what will happen to the property.

There were about 50 people attending the meeting and I'd say by the questions most were St. Florian parishioners. And having covered Black Rock and Riverside for the Riverside Review years ago, I know people who attend Block Club meetings are typically the most informed people in the neighborhood.

So, I was a bit surprised when these folks started asking who was on their own transition team. Some didn't know who was their parish representative attending the meetings that resulted in their church's demise. "The average parishioner didn't know it. We didn't know, we found out afterwards," said one man who was no novice. He'd lived there for over 60 years.

One woman said: "People are confused as to what is going on. Our pastor says the Mass schedule is going on to next year. The transitional team - who's going to appoint it? I wish that this would come down to us in the pews. If we do sell this, where will the money go? Who is going to decide all this?"

"People will," Msgr. Clody responded to that question and to answer how will people decide which church to attend. "People will use a variety of methods as to where they will go," he said.

One woman looked at her neighborhood west of Delaware Ave. and another east of Delaware. And she rhetorically asked, "How does one church stay open and another close?" She answered, "To me, and a lot of people in this room, I'm sure there is a lot of back room political dealing to keep one church open versus another one (this was interspersed with a "hear, hear" from another woman). And, I think this is where the trust issue comes in."

Msgr. Clody said financial, spiritual considerations and the future (number of children) were all examined in a "serious effort." Plus, he said there has been no announcement yet on what's happening "up there" - the other side of Delaware.

So, who's doing what to whom and how or when is not really answered... yet. The meeting was very affable. And, Msgr. Clody did his best to answer the questions. But there was one question that was as interesting as the response.

A block club member wanted to know if the neighborhood could have input on who would buy parish buildings.

He said, "If there is an offer for one, would that be run by the transition teams or would people in the neighborhood have input or any say as to who the buyer would be? Or, is that out of our hands?"

Msgr. Clody replied: "That is a question you would need to ask of an attorney." He said lawyers might have to get involved "because there are certain discriminatory laws that you have to watch out for."

So now the diocese's priests turned Realtors have to be concerned with selling their properties before the tax man comes (give to Caesar what is Caesar's), selling it to a "reputable" buyer, and not discriminating against a potential buyer in the process.

Oh, and in the meantime, they have to address the spiritual concerns of their flock and maybe recruit a new priest or two... I hear there's a shortage.