

Am-Pol Eagle
Thursday August 2, 2007
Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

I have read all the articles published in the Am-Pol Eagle with great interest and have to commend you on your fair and balanced reporting. I am proud that you give the Polish people a forum to express their views regarding the "Journey in Faith and Grace."

I fully agree with your statements and those of Mary Ann Herrington of The Dunkirk Connection. Also, I support Dave Franczyk's statement on ethnic cleansing. In this case it's cleansing of ideas, rituals and customs practiced by the Polish people. Mr. Franczyk has always been a staunch supporter of the East Side of Buffalo.

One thing that comes across again and again is that this is a journey in futility, secrecy and hidden agendas. Obviously no regard was given to the individual parish members spiritual needs.

As stated by the strategic planning commission, they expect to lose 15% of its members. Oh well, they couldn't contribute financially, so who cares about their souls and their ability to have access to a church and a priest in their twilight years. Many are old and infirm and have a difficult time getting to their neighborhood church. Of course, if they had money and would care to assign their estates to the diocese it would be another story. You can never tell if someone is rich or poor. This may be a callus remark, but that is what the commission is stating.

Who determined that 15% is acceptable? Is it temporary or after the "committee" does its work, is 15 on the low side? Who does the 15% represent - the disenfranchised poor, old, young?

Some other important concerns that should be addressed are:

1. How will the financial assets of the doomed parishes be distributed? Will audits be made of the finances of all the churches before and after the mergers? Especially after the distasteful news of \$450,000 missing at St. Christopher's Church.

2. No effort has been made to advise affected members as to the disposition of "furniture" other than the new pastor will administer the selling of property. Can members of the parish "bid" on any of the artifacts, especially those donated by their families? Can members of the closed

parish transfer some paintings, statues or special items to their new parish? The message that the "committee" puts forth is "who needs it, sell it all," we don't need a museum.

3. What will happen to the displaced pastors? How many will retire? Is a mass exodus expected and will the diocese be at square one again? It seems that the committee has a good idea because they allude to all the support ministries. Shouldn't the parishioners have answers to these questions before the exodus?

The commission identifies key areas of the mission such as: Spiritual Revitalization, Parish Life, Lifelong Faith Formation and Administration. I urge your readers to look at and carefully read the strategic plan located in the July issue of the Western New York Catholic (available in the foyer of the church) and see if they get a warm and fuzzy feeling that everything is under control. It seems the opposite is true.

They are closing parochial schools and ethnic churches and THEN they will see what will happen and propose a plan. The time-lines on the first page of the plan extend into the year 2009 and we all know timelines move out more than they move in. The commission is still creating materials and preparing resources and rituals. I wonder what kind of rituals?

I especially liked the goal on page 2. "To foster an environment within the diocese that supports and facilitates parish-based life-long faith formation" with a time-line of December 2007 and they will designate a person responsible for this faith formation by June 2008. Shouldn't this have been in place before the merge? However, the timeline to merge/close parishes and dispose of assets and liabilities is right on the button for June 2007.

They plan to secure professional consultants on disposition/reuse of property by January 2008. Who will be the consultants? Favored contractors who bid low on stained glass windows etc. and then resell at 100 profit?

My personal favorite is goal #3: "Ensure that Diocesan Board and Commission are gender inclusive and culturally diverse and members must possess the appropriate expertise/background to fulfill their duties." This sounds like it came direct from a women's lib, politically correct association, perhaps by a nun (priest wannabe). The commission has closed parochial schools and will restructure elementary schools and

set up regional schools with timelines out to September 2008. They lose one whole school year.

One important issue that seems to be OMITTED in the strategic plan is the teaching of public school children or CCD classes. We have NO STANDARDIZED PROGRAM IN THE DIOCESE. Maybe that's why we have so few young people interested in the church. We are going from "The Greatest Generation" to "The Lost Generation."

How does the plan figure to replenish the pews and become vigorous, because they consolidated churches? Sooner or later the same thing will happen when the bottom hue is money. I hope the great and energetic sermons start flowing soon and that the August edition of the WNYC will have some positive input as to the results of all the goals.

The strategic plan also points out the need "to develop and provide an on going program for foreign born priests that will help them understand the American culture and to enter effectively into the American church ministry." I have found that the priests from Poland and Africa have a good sense of who they are and who they are working for and why, and I don't think we should spoil them.

Bishop Kmiec, please reconsider and put a moratorium on the closings of St. Adalbert's, St. Ann's and the Dunkirk parishes. Also, why has the merging of Precious Blood, Holy Apostles Peter and Paul and St. Rita's been changed to merging with St. Stephen's?

Change is necessary and expected, however, once we lose our architecture and identity it will be impossible to retrieve. The churches like St. Adalbert's and St. Ann's can be used as historical and architectural structures for years to come. They could never be rebuilt in today's dollars. To sell them to a Muslim community would, be an insult. They build magnificent mosques and we cower and close churches.

Sincerely,
Sophie Osika
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