

## “A NEW DIRECTION”

In January I received a call from the chairperson of the diocesan Priest Personnel Board. The board has one job, to recommend to the bishop assignment changes for priests. At the time, he said it was possible we would be down to 2 priests in Parishes on the Prairie ACC. That possibility became a certainty at the end of March.

To be proactive, in February our ACC Pastoral Council began praying about it and made a timeline for discerning a weekend Mass schedule. Since then we have been having listening sessions, reading written comments, receiving phone calls, and hearing people’s ideas in general conversations. Weekly the council has been discussing the many challenges from every angle.

Early in the process our council adopted three primary goals. First, we hope to lead as many people as possible to heaven. Second, we want to foster full conscious active participation when celebrating the Eucharist. Third, we desire to build stronger communities by becoming more grateful, faithful, and generous together.

Bishop Patrick Neary made it clear he expects a Sunday morning Mass on the southern border of the diocese (on Hwy 55). He has also given permission for one year to have a 7th Mass for the weekend. After a year, based on his discernment for the whole diocese, he will inform us if we can keep the 7th Mass or not. In light of his direction, all your input, and the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, the ACC Pastoral Council has discerned the following weekend Mass schedule beginning July 1st, 2023.

### Saturday

4:00PM - St. Paul’s in Sauk Centre (priest A)

6:00PM - Our Lady of the Angels in Sauk Centre (priest A or B)

8:00PM - Sts. Peter & Paul in Elrosa (priest B)

### Sunday

8:00AM - Our Lady of the Angels in Sauk Centre (priest A)

8:15AM - St. Alexius in West Union (priest B)

10:30AM - St. Francis in Belgrade (priest B)

10:30AM - St. Paul’s in Sauk Centre (priest A)

With sorrow, St. Donatus will not be having a Sunday Mass. That said, it will remain a parish of our ACC. They will have a daily Mass on Wednesdays, continue their committed times of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and have funerals, weddings, baptisms, and other important special events, including some Holy Days of Obligation Masses.

## REFLECTION

We are headed in a new direction. When I think of an old fashioned ship at sea — the kind with multiple sails, large cargo holds, hammock bunks, and a captain’s wheel — it brings a sense of adventure. There are a lot of unknowns. Will the wind stop blowing to make us stall, become stormy and test our seaworthiness, or blow calm for smooth sailing? How long before we make

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it again to dry land? Who or what will we encounter — pirates, whales, islands, or navies of friendly nations? Will we have enough provisions of food and supplies? Along with these anxieties there can also be a sense of new hope, thoughts of new dreams, and reasons for wonder and awe.

Staying with the ship analogy, there are three parts of a ship that make change of direction possible — the rudder, the anchors, and the sails. The wind is a huge factor. The wind cannot be controlled, but it can be harnessed. So too the number of priests in our ACC is not under our control. And the Diocese of St. Cloud is giving us a new heading.

It is my job to take the captain's wheel to move the rudder and point us in the new direction. It is the job of all of us to lift up the anchors and adjust the sails. With the blessing of Bishop Patrick Neary and the support of our Pastoral Council, July 1st we are setting a new course for our ACC. Together we will need to overcome the obstacles (anchors) that hold us back from sailing our ship successfully. And together we will need to adjust parish life (sails) in order to catch the wind (Holy Spirit). It is now for us to harness as much wind as possible for moving forward.

### MOVING FORWARD

The weekend Mass schedule was the most important thing to figure out because it effects all parishioners who seek Jesus in the Eucharist. There are several other things to discern as well. What will the daily Mass schedule be? How will our ACC staff and volunteers need to adjust? How will we do faith formation and support our Catholic school? In short, how can our ACC become more efficient in its operations in order to become more effective in its mission — to lead people, especially those who stray, to Jesus Christ our Good Shepherd?

There are 2 overarching principles I want to inspire in our ACC. To move in this new direction we will have to develop the spirit of TEAMWORK. As parishes we need to come together, support one another, and work in partnership. That begins with the amazing people who work for the church, continues with our dedicated volunteers, and trickles into every member of our ACC. Teamwork is needed within each parish and our school as well. That is the best way to ensure the identity of each faith community.

Secondly, we need to dive deeper into a STEWARDSHIP WAY OF LIFE. We will need time to mourn the things we miss about how things “used to be.” We will also need to find the gifts of God in all these changes with gratefulness, faithfully develop our Catholic way of living as “One Flock, One Shepherd,” and generously share our blessings with others.

Lets see what God can do with our new direction. Together lets keep praying for our ACC. May God bless you and all your loved ones!

In our Father's hands,

 Fr. Greg Paffel

Pastoral Council: Dennis Schmitz, Deb Frie, Mike Mastey, Danny Borgerding, Janet Zenzen, Darron Nelson, Meghan Middendorf, Adam Saltmarsh, Fr. Mark Botzet, and Fr. Jeremy Theis.