

## MONTHLY UPDATE • Faith in Our Future

### February 2016

The Parish Self-Study Phase of the Diocese-wide pastoral planning process, **Faith in Our Future**, is well underway with parishioners across Burlington, Mercer, Monmouth and Ocean Counties invited to offer their input about their faith communities.

Parish core teams have been engaging their fellow community members in a number of different ways, including the posting of online surveys, leading “town hall” style meetings, setting up task forces or work groups and a series of interviews with parish leaders. Whatever the method or methods selected by the parish, the aim is to inform parishioners about the process, and to collect their observations, experiences and hopes for the future, particularly in connection with aspects that reflect the vibrancy of local parish life, such as its commitment to evangelization, the Eucharist, life-long faith formation and outreach to those in need.

Across the Diocese, presentations from pastors and core team members have served to highlight the importance of **Faith in Our Future**. During a Feb. 18 town hall meeting in St. Benedict Parish, Holmdel, Father Garry Koch, pastor, told his parishioners that the initiative is a very important undertaking for the Diocese because “we are responding to the shifting realities of the contemporary American Church.”

“We need to understand this study as a positive step in vitalization and growth and not as a contraction or loss. We have to be flexible to be vibrant. It is with much foresight that Bishop O’Connell has pushed this forward at

tion and growth and not as a contraction or loss. We have to be flexible to be vibrant. It is with much foresight that Bishop [David M.] O’Connell has pushed this forward at this time,” said Father Koch.



this time,” said Father Koch. (See story, this page.)

### What happens from here?

The Parish Self-Study Phase is the first of eight phases that will unfold over the 18-month process. The core teams will spend the next few weeks digesting and interpreting parishioner input, considering it within the realities of parish statistics and financial data, as well as the larger mission. Each core team will complete several key reports that summarize evaluations and verify statistical data about the community, all of which will be used in the next phase of the **Faith in Our Future** process – when parishes come together as cohort groups.

The cohorts have been formed by grouping several neighboring parishes, which will share the findings from the parish studies and make suggestions about ways that the parishes in a given area might work together and respond to the goals of the initiative as set forth by Bishop David M. O’Connell, C.M., in December. Twenty-five cohorts have been formed, ranging in size from three to six parishes. All 107 parishes of the Diocese belong to a cohort. (See list below.)

The cohort groups will first come  
See **Monthly** • 33



**A FAITHFUL FUTURE** • At a town hall meeting held in St. Benedict Parish, Holmdel, core team chair Mike McCahill, at center, was joined by team members John Kurowski, Dan Ryan, Betty Martin and Lynn Hoffman. John Batkowski photo

## Town hall meetings are chance to share information, insights

Standing before 50 parishioners in his community’s Feb. 18 town hall meeting, Father Garry Koch, pastor of St. Benedict Parish, Holmdel, said the goal of Faith In Our Future is about responding to the question, “How can the Church best respond to the needs of the 21st century?”

The strategic planning process is very important for the Diocese because “we are responding to the shifting realities of the contemporary American Church,” said Father Koch.

“Knowing that going forward, we have fewer resources...it is essential for us to redistribute those resources in an exercise of stewardship. Instead of the traditional parish set-up, new paradigms of parish life must be explored,” he said.

“We need to understand this study as a positive step in vitaliza-

tion and growth and not as a contraction or loss. We have to be flexible to be vibrant. It is with much foresight that Bishop [David M.] O’Connell has pushed this forward at this time,” said Father Koch.

In addition to Father Koch, the parish core team members, Mike McCahill, chair, Lynn Hoffman, secretary, John Kurowski, Betty Martin and Dan Ryan, spoke about the area of study for which they are responsible and how St. Benedict Parish and School fared in each category.

Martin sees Faith in Our Future as providing “an opportunity to be pro-active and forward-thinking as we consider what lies ahead for our parish community and the Diocese as a whole.”

“It is my firm hope that the Spirit  
See **Town** • 33

## Assigned into cohorts, parishes will work together through next phase

### Burlington County

COHORT 1: Corpus Christi, Willingboro; Jesus the Good Shepherd, Riverside; Resurrection, Delran

COHORT 2: Sacred Heart, Riverton; St. Charles Borromeo, Cinnaminson; Our Lady of Good Counsel, Moorestown; Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Maple Shade

COHORT3: St. John Neumann, Mount Laurel; St. Isaac Jogues, Marlton; St. Joan of Arc, Marlton; St. Mary of the Lakes, Medford; Holy Eucharist, Tabernacle

COHORT 4: St. Andrew, Jobstown; Assumption; New Egypt (Ocean County); St. Ann, Browns Mills; Christ the Redeemer, Mount Holly; Sacred Heart, Mount Holly; Our Lady Queen of Peace, Hainesport

COHORT 5: St. Katharine Drexel, Burlington; Sts. Francis & Clare, Florence Township; St. Mary, Bordentown

### Mercer County

COHORT 6: St. John the Baptist, Allentown (Monmouth County); St. Vincent de Paul, Yardville; Our Lady of Sorrows-St. Anthony, Hamilton; St. Gregory the Great, Hamilton

Square; St. Raphael-Holy Angels, Hamilton

COHORT 7: St. Ann, Lawrenceville; Church of the Korean Martyrs, Trenton; St. Paul, Princeton; St. David the King, Princeton Junction; St. Anthony of Padua, Hightstown; St. Hedwig, Trenton; considering Princeton and Rider Universities

COHORT 8: St. Alphonsus, Hopewell; St. George, Titusville; St. James, Pennington

COHORT 9: Our Lady of Good Counsel, West Trenton; Blessed Sacrament-Our Lady of the Divine Shepherd, Trenton; Incarnation-St. James, Ewing; considering The College of New Jersey, Ewing

COHORT 10: Our Lady of the Angels, Trenton; Divine Mercy, Trenton; Sacred Heart, Trenton; St. Mary of the Assumption Cathedral, Trenton; St. Joseph, Trenton

### Monmouth County

COHORT 11: St. Veronica, Howell; St. William the Abbot, Howell; St. Catherine of Siena, Farmingdale

COHORT 12: St. Robert Bellarmine, Freehold; St. Rose of Lima, Freehold; St. Joseph, Millstone; St. Thomas More, Manalapan

COHORT 13: St. Mary, Colts Neck; St. Gabriel, Marlboro, St. Benedict, Holmdel; St. Catharine, Holmdel

COHORT 14: St. Clement, Matawan; St. Joseph, Keyport; Jesus the Lord, Keyport; Holy Family, Union Beach

COHORT 15: St. Ann, Keansburg; St. Mary, Middletown; St. Catherine Laboure, Middletown; Our Lady of Perpetual Help—St. Agnes, Atlantic Highlands

COHORT 16: St. Leo the Great, Lincroft; St. Anthony of Padua, Red Bank; St. James; Red Bank; Nativity, Fair Haven; Holy Cross, Rumson

COHORT 17: Precious Blood, Monmouth Beach; Christ the King, Long Branch; St. Michael, West End; St. Mary of the Assumption, Deal; St. Jerome, West Long Branch; St. Dorothea, Eatontown; Immaculate Conception, Eatontown; considering Monmouth University, West Long Branch

COHORT 18: St. Anselm, Wayside; Mother of Mercy, Asbury Park; Holy Innocents; Neptune; Ascension, Bradley Beach

COHORT 19: St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Avon-by-the-Sea; St. Catharine-St. Margaret, Spring

Lake; St. Rose, Belmar; St. Mark, Sea Girt

### Monmouth/Ocean County

COHORT 20: St. Denis, Manasquan; St. Martha, Point Pleasant; St. Peter, Point Pleasant Beach; Epiphany, Brick

### Ocean County

COHORT 21: Sacred Heart, Bay Head; St. Pio of Pietrelcina, Lavallette; Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Seaside Heights; St. Catharine of Siena, Seaside Park

COHORT 22: St. Dominic, Brick; Visitation, Brick; St. Mary of the Lake, Lakewood; St. Anthony Claret, Lakewood; considering Georgian Court University, Lakewood

COHORT 23: St. Monica, Jackson; St. Aloysius, Jackson; St. John, Lakehurst; St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Whiting

COHORT 24: St. Maximilian Kolbe, Toms River; St. Luke, Toms River; St. Justin, Toms River; St. Joseph, Toms River

COHORT 25: St. Barnabas, Bayville; St. Pius X Parish, Forked River; St. Mary, Barnegat; St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Brant Beach; Theresa Parish, Little Egg Harbor



# Town hall meetings provide information on Faith In Our Future

Continued from • 13

will enlighten and motivate all members of our Diocese, the Bishop, clergy and the laity to come together in prayer and action to secure a vibrant future for the Diocese of Trenton," she said.

## Looking Ahead

Parishioners at the meeting said they appreciated hearing insights to questions and the thinking behind how parishes were grouped in their respective cohorts.

Jeanne Gillen, a 30-year parishioner, said she realized that changes need to be made in how parishes minister to their faithful.

"The days when there would be churches on every street corner and filled are not there anymore," said Gillen.

Kathy Lo Bue said that two town hall meetings were held Feb. 16 in St. Robert Bellarmine Church, Freehold, — one in the morning and one in the evening. With the hope of eliciting the most honest and open discussion, Lo Bue, parish core team chair, noted that it was decided that Msgr. Sam Sirianni, pastor, not be present for the meetings.

Lo Bue reported that based on completed surveys and town hall meeting discussions, many parishioners



Father Garry Koch speaks during the Feb. 18 town hall meeting. John Batkowski photo

were surprised by the overall statistics, namely the outstanding \$60 million debt the Diocese holds for parishes, the number of priests who will retire in the next 10 years, the low numbers of people contributing to their parishes and the amount of their contributions.

Parishioners are looking for more social engagement, family education and community outreach offerings, such as making available counseling for career, alcohol and substance abuse and the divorced; ways to engage youth and their families to participate in the celebration of Mass and in parish life, and on how homilies should "be well delivered, down-to-earth and [delivered] with inspiration," she said.

## A Broader Perspective

Anthony Coticelli is one of several diocesan appointed facilitators who will be actively engaged in working with the parish cohorts. He is also a core team member in Visitation Parish, Brick, where he has belonged for about 20 years.

In his facilitator role, Coticelli was present for the Feb. 18 town hall meeting in St. Martha Parish, Point Pleasant, where he found the parishioner participation to be "respectful, fervent and relaxed."

"I was incredibly pleased and humbled by the participation and the response," Coticelli said adding that "people can listen prayerfully and respectfully even when they have concerns and anxiety about the future."

Questions and concerns addressed

by St. Martha parishioners Coticelli noted were primarily about the short time frames for decisions and developing collaboration among the parishes in the cohort.

Reiterating the need for parishes to work together for Faith In Our Future to be successful, St. Benedict Parish core team chair Mike McCahill said, that in his career as a business professional, "I have seen smart leaders plan in decades, think in years, work in months, live in days and celebrate in moments."

"Faith in Our Future is an important step in the right direction," McCahill continued. "Let's face it. The numbers are bad. We all need to step up our game. We need to brainstorm and prepare for what our future is going to look like."

## Monthly update for February 2016, cont.

Continued from • 13

together in mid-March for sessions that will prepare them for the next phase. From March to May, they will review the parish self-study reports and dialogue beyond the parish level as to what developments might be possible.

In June, the findings of each cohort will be submitted to a planning commission, whose role will be to issue preliminary recommendations as to how parish life within each of the cohorts would best be strengthened. The cohorts will then consider those recommendations and return their feedback to the commission.

## Stay Informed

Any parishioner who is interested in learning more about how to get involved in his local self-study process is encouraged to check his parish website or contact the pastor or parish core team members.

To learn more about **Faith in Our Future**, visit [www.DiocesefTrenton.org/FaithInOurFuture/](http://www.DiocesefTrenton.org/FaithInOurFuture/) or [www.TrentonMonitor.com](http://www.TrentonMonitor.com). For questions about this UPDATE, write to [dotcomm@diocesefTrenton.org](mailto:dotcomm@diocesefTrenton.org).

## Divine Designs in Holmdel parish

Divine Designs will serve as the theme of a Lenten Scripture and prayer experience through painting to be held March 13 at 3 p.m. in the Father Anderson Library of St. Benedict Parish, Holmdel. Fee is \$4 per person and covers the cost of all painting

materials and canvas. Participants should bring their own snacks. Admission will be collected at the door.

Reservations must be made no later than March 6.

**For more information, contact Ashley Albro at [ashleyilana@gmail.com](mailto:ashleyilana@gmail.com).**

## Women's Day of Prayer for Lent

The Women's Ministry in St. Mary Parish, Barnegat, will hold a Lenten Day of Prayer March 9 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the parish center.

Speaker will be Mary Margaret Yula of St. James Parish, Basking Ridge, who will speak on forgiveness and mercy. Another witness will be given by Louise Hammell.

The day will include time for prayer, singing

sharing and conclude with Mass.

Fee is \$20 that includes hot lunch. Make checks payable to St. Mary Church and mail to Peggy Kinahan, 33 Fifth St., Barnegat, N.J. 08005.

**For more information, contact Kinahan at 609-698-3220. Deadline to register is March 14.**

## Parish mission in Hamilton

Our Lady of Sorrows-St. Anthony Parish, Hamilton, is offering a mission from March 13 to March 16. The mission will be held each evening in Our Lady of Sorrows Church, 3816 Whitehead Road Ext., beginning at 7 p.m. and will be led by Augustinian Father Francis A. Sirolli. The theme is "Made in the Image of God: A Spirituality of God's Presence within Us."

Father Sirolli is stationed at Villanova Monastery, Villanova, Pa., and his ministry includes presenting parish missions, retreats (religious and lay), adult faith formation and

presiding over Forty Hour devotions.

Father Sirolli was ordained Nov. 5, 1965 while in his last year of studies at the Augustinian Theological College. He taught for eight years at Archbishop Carroll High School, in Washington, D.C. after which he served in parish ministry as parochial vicar and pastor.

Father Sirolli holds master's degrees in religious education and English literature. He has had studied and received training in spiritual direction and group dynamics, including a 100-day program of study and direction at Sangre de Christo Center in Santa Fe, N.M.

Enjoy Freedom of Mobility!

Buy or Rent • Stay in Your Home • Ride Your Stairs



- FREE In-Home Evaluation
- Senior Citizen Discount
- Family-Owned Company for Over 40 Years

Rent for as low as \$5 a day! IMMEDIATE INSTALLATION!

Interstate Lift

The Stairlift Specialists



Call Day • Night • Weekend!

1-800-248-8800 • 215-335-7940

[www.rideastair.com](http://www.rideastair.com)

MORRIS HALL  
ST. MARY'S ASSISTED LIVING  
ST. JOSEPH'S SKILLED NURSING CENTER

ST. MARY'S ASSISTED LIVING  
HELPING EACH RESIDENT EXPERIENCE LIFE TO THE FULLEST  
GRACE GARDEN  
A MEMORY CARE COMMUNITY



Morris Hall One Bishops' Drive, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648  
609-896-0006 [www.morrishall.org](http://www.morrishall.org)

St. Mary's is part of Morris Hall, a nonprofit organization of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Trenton that provides health care and related services in an assisted-living and skilled-care environment. Our services are provided without discrimination by race, religion, sex, or physical or cognitive disability.