



Town Hall Meeting Tuesday, July 16, 2024 St. Paul's Church

The first Town Hall meeting regarding the future plan for the Rome parishes was held on Tuesday, July 16, at 10:00 AM at St. Paul's Church. Approximately 100 people were in attendance representing St. Paul's, St. John the Baptist/Transfiguration, St. Peter's/St. Mary's, St. Leo & St. Ann's, and St. Joseph's Churches.

Fr. Kelly, Fr. O'Brien, Fr. Angelicchio, Fr. Emmanuel, Danielle Cummings (Chancellor) and Fr. Seibt (Vice Chancellor) were present. Fr. O'Brien explained the purpose of the Town Hall meeting was to listen to the parishioners regarding their concerns related to the necessary changes that will need to be made by July 1, 2025. It was repeated that Bishop Lucia announced that by July 1, 2025, the City of Rome, Lee Center, and Holland Patent would become one (1) parish with four (4) worship sites served by two (2) priests. Danielle Cummings noted that the Pastoral Planning process was initiated in 1988-1989. Over time we have seen a decline in the number of priests and the number of Parishioners in our pews. It was made clear that decisions have not been made about the use of the church buildings including mass times, ministries, or personnel. It is Bishop Lucia's intent that the process be transparent and inclusive. Committees have been formed to address each of these issues.

Fr. Seibt shared the canonical (Church Law) process for Parishes coming together. The first step in pastoral planning is to discern whether certain parishes need to be modified (e.g., merged) for the pastoral care of the people. If parishes are merged, the churches retain their names and share resources. When merged, discussion may take place to assess if all buildings are needed and can be financially supported. If it is deemed buildings are not needed, the parish submits a request to relegate (close) the building. Once closed, the building may be sold (alienation). Fr. Seibt shared his experience of completing this process at Divine Mercy with the Mission of St. Bernadette and St. Mary's Oratory.

Parishioners in attendance shared their concerns regarding Mass times, liturgical practices, such as adoration, building usage/capacity, and opportunities to participate in the committee work.

- The future of St. Paul's: Several questions and statements revolved around this issue. It was stated that in our process of building one parish, we may determine that it is not possible to have weekend Mass at St. Paul's, but it could become an Oratory, where baptisms, funerals, weddings, novenas, or other forms of worship could be held.

There is certainly no direction from the Bishop to close, lock the doors, and sell St. Paul's. Fr. O'Brien reminded attendees that it took 13 years to arrive at the decision to sell St. Mary's.

- What is the future of the Adoration Chapel and Novena at Transfiguration?
Fr. O'Brien stated that he and Fr. Angelicchio are exploring possible options for supporting these liturgical practices.
- How will fewer priests and worship sites effect memorial masses?
Fr. O'Brien stated that he was aware of the problem and would be working on a solution with the Diocese.
- Can the Gold Star window at Transfiguration be saved?
Fr. O'Brien also reported he is working on a possible solution.
- Will parishioners be able to go to whichever worship site they desire?
Yes, however, the schedule for services is far from determined, so some flexibility might be necessary.
- Could we get priests from other countries?
Fr. Seibt stated that it is possible, and the Diocese is trying, but it is not that easy or quick. Although we do need priests, the big need is for people to come to or return to the Church. Fr. Seibt also emphasized that we should not just work to maintain the parish, but that we are called on an Apostolic Mission to evangelize and welcome parishioners back.

In closing, the attendees were reminded that there is much to be accomplished to reach our goal of becoming one Parish by July 1, 2025.

Future Town Hall meetings are scheduled for:

- Thursday, August 22, 6:30 PM at St. Joseph's Church
- Saturday, September 14, 2:00 PM at St. Peter's Church
- Monday, October 21, 6:30 PM at St. John the Baptist Church

(This summary of the Town Hall was derived from the minutes prepared by a member of the Communications Subcommittee and Danielle Cummings, who were both in attendance.)