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Dear Parishioners & Friends of Holy Trinity Church & Church of the Holy Spirit,

Greetings to you and your loved ones as we begin our trek into the upcoming festivities that are associated with the summer (graduation ceremonies, Father's Day BBQs, etc).

I am writing this letter to you for two main purposes.

The first is to invite our shared communities for an afternoon and evening of adoration and the opportunity for the sacrament of reconciliation.

This will take place on Thursday, July 11th, from 2 pm – 7 pm at Holy Trinity Church (Johnstown). I will be available for the sacrament of reconciliation in the front pew for anyone who wishes to have their confession heard. The format will be the same as the Advent 2023 and Lent 2024 extended hours for confession. Please consider joining our neighbors and me for some quiet time with the Lord in the church with his Eucharistic presence.

The second purpose is to inform/remind our communities of the shared pastoral council meetings that are held throughout the year. As you may or may not know, the council meetings are open to all parishioners to attend. This letter is intended to extend an invitation for those who are interesting in dialoguing with the council to please join us at an upcoming meeting.

The council consists of members from Holy Trinity Church and Church of the Holy Spirit. As of now, council members are appointed by the pastor after meeting with him and discerning together if they would like to share their gifts and talents with the council. Meetings are normally held on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:30 pm. The meeting location rotates between the Holy Trinity Church Hall and the Church of the Holy Spirit Hall. The council meets in September, October, November, January, February, March or April (depending on which month Easter falls that year – the “Easter” month is considered a month off from meeting), and May.

As you may or may not know, the council minutes are regularly posted on our respective parish websites and facebook pages for our communities to see. The pastoral council is an advisory committee that helps the pastor make decisions that are intended to serve our shared parish mission statement:

“Inspired by the words of Holy Scripture and committed to serving others with love, our communities are called to be a light to the world.”

On a related note, there is a photo directory of the council members posted to both of our parish websites so you can identify who is currently serving our communities in this specific ministry.

To be more direct – the pastoral council is an advisory council where ideas are shared and vetted to help the staff, volunteers, and pastor carry out many of the activities and services that benefit our communities. Some of the recent topics include the 2023 revised weekend Mass Schedule, the 2023 revised Holy Day Mass Schedule, the shared office location, and other needs. Other topics include opportunities for seasonal faith sharing (Advent and Lent), holiday themed events, outreach to the poor and marginalized, parish dinners, and more.

I am sharing this information with our communities so that interested members who would like to attend a pastoral council member as a guest may know that they are invited to do so. Meetings usually include a “round robin” opportunity for members to speak about projects they are currently working on and would like feedback, help, etc. If guest attendees would like the opportunity to dialogue with the council and work together on a project, their feedback would also be welcomed during an upcoming meeting’s “round robin.”

It should be noted that not every request or idea can be accommodated due to some of the usual limitations (limited parish funding, available staff/volunteers, demands on the pastor’s time, etc). The requests that can be accommodated more often than not are ideas that the volunteer is able to be the point of contact for and is able to recruit whatever help might be needed to make the event, idea, etc a success. For instance, if a guest suggests bringing in Pope Francis for a private audience and Mass, I would have to remind everyone gathered that I do not have that sort of influence at the Vatican! A more realistic suggestion would be “Can we have a bible study that meets at one or both parishes each month? I can work with a team of volunteers from the parishes that can promote the bible study, make provisions for any necessary supplies, and lead the events.”

On a candid note, I am aware that our parishes have gone through quite a few changes and developments in just the last six years. We have faced COVID-related difficulties, a shared staff re-organization that took place in the Fall of 2021, a new weekend Mass schedule in 2023, a shared office relocation of sorts in 2023 (the permanent location being the Holy Spirit office space for both communities), and others. Most of the major announcements made during my six year tenure as pastor were made in consultation with the pastoral council (with exceptions that include the COVID mandates from the governor’s office and the 2021 staff reorganization that required the assistance of an outside consulting firm, DnP Solutions, LLC, and our four parish trustees). I am also aware that not every decision can or will be met with unanimous approval.

“New normals” can often be intimidating as well as a source of sadness and anger. Both of our communities have weathered major developments over the years (church closures/consolidations). When changes or updates are announced from the pulpit, bulletin, and/or letter, some folks have asked volunteers or me “does this mean that our parish is now closing?” I try to keep that in mind when I am presented with a response that comes across as perhaps a bit over the top for what the circumstance is truly calling for.

With this being said (in 10,000 words or less!), the September 2024 Pastoral Council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 18th, 6:30 pm at the Holy Trinity Church Hall. Parishioners from both Holy Trinity and Holy Spirit are welcomed to attend (note: Attendees are kindly asked to please use the courtyard entrance so we can avoid having an excessive number of doors opened – it is a security concern).

Thank you for all that you do to make our communities places where the gospel message is generously shared. We are at our best when we embrace our shared mission statement: ***“Inspired by the words of Holy Scripture and committed to serving others with love, our communities are called to be a light to the world.”***

Sincerely,

Rev. Matthew Wetsel

Fr. Matt Wetsel

Pastor