



**Regional Vicariate Assembly  
Minutes  
Tuesday, April 29, 2008  
Meeting held at St. Paul Albanian Parish**

**Welcome**

Vicariate Pastoral Council Chair Lew Elbert welcomed everyone to the Assembly. He introduced Fr. Anton Kcira, pastor of host parish St. Paul Albanian and thanked him for providing the meal and facilities for the large gathering. Fr. Kcira gave a brief reflection on the history and community of St. Paul Albanian Parish.

Lew explained the planning process and history of this first-ever regional assembly of vicariate leadership. The Blue Water, Thumb, North Macomb, Pontiac Area, and Southwest Vicariates not only share Bishop Daniel Flores as their auxiliary bishop, but also many other concerns and initiatives. The theme, "Discerning Ministry in the Church Outside Our Window," was chosen to help emphasize what all Catholics have in common and provide a framework for collaboration and sharing. One of the goals for the evening is for people in ministry to meet their counterparts from other vicariates and share best practices and problems.

**Opening Prayer Introductions**

Fr. Jerry Brzezinski, vicar of the Pontiac Area Vicariate, welcomed the attendees and thanked them for coming. He emphasized that all areas of the vicariates gathered, including parishes, schools, agencies, and institutions, are partners in the work and vision of the Church. Fr. Jerry introduced Bishop Daniel Flores.

**Bishop Flores Remarks**

Bishop Flores thanked those who worked to plan and execute the assembly. He also thanked everyone for coming, especially those who had to travel far to reach St. Paul's. In his remarks, Bishop Flores stated that it is an occasion of grace when people gather to share their faith. Having attended the installation of a new bishop in Lansing earlier in the day, he said both events showed the Body of Christ manifested in its members.

He asked for a show of hands as he named each vicariate in his region. There were people present from every vicariate, representing a wide geographic, demographic, and economic range. Despite the differences from one end of his region to the other, Bishop Flores said the common unity in Christ unites us. He cautioned against the "orbit syndrome" which keeps people focused on things close to home at the expense of the larger mission. In closing, he asked that everyone carry what is learned at this assembly back to their parishes and to remember that the mission of Jesus is to the world.

Fr. Jerry thanked Bishop Flores for his comments. He then introduced Dr. Patricia Cooney-Hathaway to give the keynote address.

**Keynote Address**

Dr. Cooney-Hathaway spoke first on the topic of Christian Spirituality and how spirituality informs ministry. She said the manner in which one responds to God forms the context of how we respond to others. As Jesus was a funnel for wisdom to enter the world, she suggested we are also a funnel to share God's wisdom with others.

Dr. Cooney-Hathaway shared stories and personal experiences of ministry. Opportunities arise when we listen and recognize the need and respond to others. Spirituality is foundational for all ministry and comes as a result of a personal love of God. She cautioned that we need to be mindful of maintaining rhythm and balance between family/work/ministry.

Directly addressing the topic of a wider definition of church, she talked about table fellowship. This can be useful in considering, "Who is welcome at the table in our parish?" When we invite others to share a meal, we are inviting them to share their lives. Cooney-Hathaway offered many examples where Jesus shared meals with others.

Moving to the structure of the Catholic Church, she explained the Concentric Circles model of ministry developed after Vatican II. The emphasis here is on the people of God and evangelization. Recognizing and utilizing the many gifts and talents that people have allows for all to be "workers in the vineyard of the Lord." She then went through challenges and opportunities for clergy, deacons, lay ministers, school staff, and volunteers. Some of the

obstacles to successful collaboration are struggles for power and prestige and turf wars. Keeping the purity of intention always foremost in our minds will help keep us on track.

She concluded with the thought that ministry is not a gift we give ourselves but a gift of the Holy Spirit to us.

**Table Discussion and Feedback**

Working together at their tables, attendees discussed ideas they had heard in the presentations that were useful to their ministries. They also offered ideas on what contributions a vicariate could make to them and their parishes, schools, organizations. A few shared their ideas with the entire audience.

**Conclusion**

Bishop Flores said that the evening had provided a lot of food for thought. He thanked Dr. Cooney-Hathway for her insightful reflection and all present for their engagement in their vicariate. He reminded everyone that it is a gift from God to be able to serve others and that today as in the past, the message of the gospel is communicated person to person.

The program concluded at 9:05PM with closing prayer and song.

**Attendance**

There were approximately 250 people in attendance representing the Blue Water, Thumb, North Macomb, Southwest, and Pontiac Area Vicariates as well as the Archdiocese of Detroit.