

# Responses from Pastoral and Finance Councils

## October 2024

### Verbatim E-mails

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What's missing? Can't think of anything. The task force did a great job on the report.  
What additions or changes would you make to the draft recommendations? None

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Question #1, my initial reaction:

I am concerned that our priests will (eventually) be spread too thin to cover all the needs of our parishioners.

I like the idea of having additional administrators, but I would like to see people other than deacons for this. I think our deacons are already stretched and would rather they focused more on outreach than administrative needs. The administrator should be a paid position as well.

Questions 2 and 3, I have no other comments.

I think that it was very well done and thought out.

Thank you for all of your hard work.

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1. **What was your initial reaction to this recommendation, i.e. how did you feel about it?**

As a Parish Council member it was initially disconcerting to hear about the possible changes that will affect us all. No one wants to have services cut at their church. There is a sense of "home" at one's home parish. The reality is that the number of available priests has been dwindling for years and all of us know that changes will have to be made. It is very exciting to hear that there are 8 men in the wings studying in seminary. The easy path is to increase the amount of people studying for vocations, but in the meantime, it is comforting to know that the Task Force is diligently working together to assure that each and every Catholic in our Community will have access to the ministries that they require.

2. **What's missing? What hasn't the Task Force considered?**

I can't think of anything that the Task Force hasn't considered. It's obvious that they've invested a great deal of time and learned from the changes already implemented while

also putting together a solid plan that will work for the good of all of our parishes. It is a work in progress and a learning process.

**3. What additions or changes would you make to the draft recommendation?**

I think that moving forward it is important that all parishes in our community be made aware of the impending possible changes and to be able to voice their opinions and offer suggestions to the Task Force. This is something that affects everyone, and each and every one of us should have the opportunity to be involved in the process.

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I attended the Task Force meeting Tuesday and here are a few of my thoughts:

#1 - Thank you for reminding those that attended that we have closed churches in the past, namely Holy Name and Our Lady of Mercy. And pointing out that the transition is difficult for "ALL" parties.

#2 - In the past week or so I have seen a flyer that lists the Seminarians that are currently studying to become priests. Gosh I hope all of them succeed. But we all know there will be some fallout. 7-8 years for some of them to complete their studies and then be assigned. And there is no telling where they will be assigned. A number of Pastors will roll into SENIOR priests in that time frame. I hope we can hold on. We need a "FAST TRACK" program for seminarian studies.

#3 - Eventually, we will have to close some parishes. Again, not an easy task. If the powers that be decide to close 1-2 parishes a couple of items I thought about:

- a.) Keeping the churches that have a larger capacity should be one item always to be considered.
- b.) It sounds like it took forever to unload the property that was once Holy Name. Meanwhile, someone needs to maintain the property and incur those expenses. Consideration should be given to which of the parishes are "Marketable" in today's real estate market. We may cringe at what the answer is to that, but sometimes decisions like this will hurt.

Lastly, I was a little surprised at what I considered "POOR" attendance at this task force meeting. St. John's had 16 parishioners in attendance, out of what I believe was about 60-65 people. the other Parishes got the same notice St. John's got. Shame on them.

God Bless

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What was your initial reaction to this recommendation, i.e. how did you feel about it?

Overall, the Recommendation Report is well thought out and succinct in its presentations. It reflects solid thought and realistic plans. While some areas are stark in presenting current and

future realities of the Charlotte/Greece/Hilton Catholic community, it is not overly dramatic or dismal in its outlook. I would like to add that the presentation of this report and the meeting on October 15 followed the same pattern, including the panelists' presentations. The feeling was collegial and unifying. However, the last impromptu presenter seemed to be more of a lecture, similar to one a principal would give to a gathering of students, which tainted the established collegial feeling.

What's missing? What hasn't the Task Force considered?

I have three points:

- 1) Evangelism: I appreciate the groundwork that has been provided, but the recommendation seems incomplete. Effective evangelism is best performed by the individual parishioners to families and friends; yet, this is not stressed in the recommendation and it is not emphasized by any encouragement, announcement or support by the community or parish. Some thought should be given to a sustained effort by individual efforts, as well as a strategic outreach by parishes to lapsed members.
- 2) Vocations: The efforts to encourage vocations in the current paradigm is laudable. However is there any thought given to vocalizing the significant concern to extend vocations to the permanent diaconate to women and the priesthood to married men and women? I realize that this change cannot be acted on locally, but it can be voiced to those who can enact change.
- 3) Prayer: Once the Report is made public, we can encourage prayer to support these recommendations and the future of our Catholic community in individual personal prayer and prayers of intercessions at Sunday Masses.

What additions or changes would you make to the draft recommendation?

I have no further comments.

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#1 The recommendation appears very thorough and your "draft" Publication is well written. Recommendation is sound.

#2 Since the "opening" of the pastoral leadership is so very important (as you indicate on page 6 of 8), the task force should list all of the current Priests in these 7 Parishes somewhere in the beginning (pages 1-3)

#3 An addition may be to add in the "conclusion" section a bit of the presumed process for a proposed clustering. If that is, for example, the task force gets community input and forwards that to the Bishop, who then makes a decision, it should be so stated.

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1 Happy we're being proactive

2 perhaps a layout of where parishioners actually reside, ie, Mother of Sorrows, St Charles and Holy Cross each have parishioners on the same street. Actually right next door to each other. that would be it a geographic layout of where the registered Catholics per parish actually live

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Here are my responses to the questions for input.

Initial reaction - I was surprised that this discussion/collaboration was going on, but glad to hear that it was. My impression was that it was well thought out with considerations of appropriate areas.

What's missing - I know the document is a recommendation of the Charlotte/Greece/Hilton parishes' vision and collaboration, but I think there should be some statements to quantify the success of these areas, increases in Mass attendance, sacraments, faith formation & enrichment classes, number of people considering vocations.

What additions - It might be useful to include timelines and/or milestone dates for implementing some of the recommendations.

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I was in attendance at the 7 Parish Task Force Draft Recommendation Presentation Meeting and wanted to send you the answers to the questions you have for us:

1. What was your initial reaction to this recommendation, i.e. how did you feel about it?

My first reaction was that it's very high level, and the potential clusters don't really seem to consider how each one will look from the point of view of the general parishioner in the pew on Sunday. My second reaction was that the 3 Shared Committees (Vocations, Evangelization and Shared Resources) were a very good idea and have already borne fruit for all seven Parishes involved.

2. What's missing? What hasn't the Task Force considered?

How any changes/clustering will affect Parishioners in the pews on Sunday (not just around Mass but sacramentally as well), esp. ones who aren't very involved in Parish Life outside of Mass attendance and maybe their kids attend Religious Ed.

3. What additions or changes would you make to the draft recommendation?

- Address how changes would affect Parishioners (esp. 'Mass only' ones), esp. in the scenarios where there are 2 or less Pastoral Leaders available.

- Talk more about the 'benefits' of clustering (better attended Masses, more robust ministries and programs, etc.)

- Explain more how a Deacon as Pastoral Administrator would need a Priest on staff as Parochial Vicar to serve at Mass and provide for the Sacramental Life of the Parish.