

Notes from the Ministry 2025 meeting of the Remsen/Marcus/Oyens Parish Grouping Held April 24, 2017 at St. Mary's Church, Remsen

Notes compiled by Dn. Rick Roder and Jo Tentinger; questions are welcomed (cell 712.540.3100, email roderr@rsmschools.org). Please note that not all comments/questions/answers spoken at the meeting were audible. There were microphone issues. The St. Mary's Parish website where information will be posted is smparishinfo.org.

Father Bill welcomed everyone and led opening prayer. His introductory statements follow; he mostly read from these statements.

Ministry 2025, Pastoral Planning Meeting for the Oyens-Marcus-Remsen Parish Grouping, April 24 Meeting at Remsen St. Mary's Church

Opening Prayer for Ministry 2025

Grant, we pray Almighty God, that we the people of the Diocese of Sioux City prayerfully look into the future.

Pastoral Planning Phase

Bishop Walker Nickless has written Fr. McCarthy stating:

"Starting Tuesday June 27, 2017, I hereby appoint you Pastor of Holy Name Parish in Marcus while remaining as Pastor of St. Mary's Remsen and St. Catherine's in Oyens. I commit to you the full care of souls in those parishes with all faculties, duties, rights and privileges according to the Code of Canon Law."

Pastoral Planning Session #1

Our duty on this night is to come together as sons and daughters of Christ to begin the task of formulating a Catholic pastoral plan for our parish grouping.

To help us in this task the Diocese of Sioux City has appointed Deacon Roger Heidt from the Diocese of Sioux Falls to be our Facilitator.

Evening Agenda

6:00 – Adoration of our Lord Jesus

6:30 – Overview and Presentation by Deacon Roger Heidt

7:30 – Opportunity for Feedback

Strengths/Challenges

Ideas

8:30 (at latest) – Prayer and Adjourn

Introducing Deacon Roger Heidt

- Deacon Roger is the Director of the Office of Planning / Deacon Formation for the Diocese of Sioux Falls
- Coordinator of Catholic Cemeteries, Propagation of the Faith, Mission Appeals
- Serves St. Lambert's Parish and part-time at the Diocesan Chancery
- Married 45 years to Diane and have one son, Scott, living in Sioux Falls

Engagement and Consultation Process

- The reality: Our diocese faces a dramatic reduction in the number of priests to serve as pastors
- Our goal with the priests we have: Vibrant Parishes
- We must promote vocations to the priesthood!

Our Goal Tonight

- To begin the process of formulating a Pastoral Plan for the care of the faithful in the Oyens, Marcus, and Remsen area to be submitted to Bishop Nickless for approval
- This phase will be guided by our facilitator, Deacon Roger, along with the help of Fr. Bill, Deacon Jerry Bertrand, Deacon Rick Roder, with input from the parish leadership teams

Who will be on our Ministry 2025 Leadership Team?

Holy Name: Roger Dentlinger, Diane Rupp Klassen, Larry Rapagnani, Mic Theisen

St. Catherine's: Mark Loutsch, Wayne Pick, George Dirksen, Bill Tentinger, Monte Konopasek, Greg Schroeder

St. Mary's: Tony Loutsch, John Roling, Rick Delperdang, Richard Homan, Jeff Pottebaum, Doug Heeren

Second part of meeting was led by Dn. Roger Heidt. He stated:

It is a blessing to be with you and begin this process of pastoral planning.

I was director of pastoral planning in the Diocese of Sioux Falls.

My prayers are with you.

The process of Sioux City Diocese is very close to that of Sioux Falls Diocese.

We need to work thru this in a positive way.

It is a painful process but it can result in growth because of the more vibrant parishes that come from the process.

A company helped the Sioux City Diocese to compile information which included population demographics. This information will be available on the parish website.

Dn. Heidt then showed slides giving map and chart information regarding these demographics.

Showed parish grouping map that Bishop Nickless designated for our area.

Population grouping slide:

Heavy black lines are census blocks, where they get their data from.

Based on past growth they project population trends.

Population change chart:

Shows potential for growth; some areas of slight growth, some areas of slight decrease but overall pretty stable.

Moderate projections for the area.

Trends:

Fasting growing age cohort is 65+

Ministries: how do we take care of that group?

Population and Age Demographics by parish grouping boundary

Again, 65+ quite a bit more populous

Population change projected by age group

Shows areas of growth and decrease

Generally shows that the 65+ group is the largest growing group

Numbers of Catholic households decreasing since 2008

Also by parish; Oyens decreased 25%. Percentage is greater because numbers are smaller

Registered Catholic households distribution

Density of Catholic population quite high vs. other areas of Midwest

Percentage of Catholics attending Mass every Sunday is dropping

75% in 2008

56% in 2015 (mentioned that this is actually quite good as compared to some places in the vicinity)

Around 30% in *Sioux Falls*

Historical Sacraments Chart

Significant participation and number of sacraments in our parishes

Schools

Where are students coming from? Scattered around our parish grouping

Historical and Catholic School enrollment

Projections to 2021

Slight drop between now and 2021

Religious Education participation also showed

Potential for students

North of Remsen high

Diocese of Sioux City

Has been working on this plan for years

Phase one: carried out research, clergy consultation, etc.

Phase two: deanery design, parishes and schools

Phase three: parish grouping pastoral plan, begins this evening for this cluster

In February pastor assignments were made that take effect in June

In March discussions continued in earnest to prepare for our facilitation meetings, starting with this one.

Pastor will guide the teams in a comprehensive pastoral planning process that may last 3 months to 3 years.

Our meetings must include long term discussions and decisions aimed at bringing stability locally and in the diocese.

Leadership teams must:

Propose refinement of the parishes and send to Bishop for approval

Propose liturgy schedule for the Sundays and during week

3 year pastoral plan with current strengths and conditions, key initiatives and investments. Has to have goals to be reviewed by bishop and that can be measured for completion.

Inventory of sacred and secular goods for the current parishes.

Develop a unified structure in finance councils, pastoral council, staffing and ministry across grouping, finances and assets short and long range, support obligations for the Catholic schools

Perpetual care of cemeteries

Use and care of oratories

Deacon Heidt then turned it over to Father Bill to guide discussion.

Father Bill:

That is a lot of numbers to be thrown at you and some of this you cannot see really well but we will be posting these numbers and maps on the St. Mary's Parish website and you will be able to study it there.

We welcome your feedback and your ideas and questions at this time.

The Holy Spirit will give us what we need to build something vibrant.

[Opened up for questions and comments. Following questions and comments were posed by those in attendance.]

1. Question: Did Sioux Falls diocese Mass attendance percentage increase after their completion this process?

Dn. Heidt:

No but better participation in some of the parishes that merged, more vibrant.

Overall numbers of registered households attending did not increase.

When parishes became more vibrant they had a better use of space.

2. Question: What are projections for Catholic school attendance based on?

Dn. Heidt:

Based on 2010 Census and then number of Catholic households through analysis of data at the diocese

The handouts should help answer the question when you view them online.

3. Question: Population map showed student potentials north of Remsen and Oyens but Oyens goes oratory?

Dn. Heidt:

Maps online will explain it more in depth.

4. Question: What will happen with the students who currently go to Oyens?

Father Bill:

We need to find ways to reduce cost of operation at Oyens, they may have an inability to support the school building.

This question goes to school board; can we support the building? If not, what do we need to do?

5. Follow up question: so how is it decided where they will go?

School board will have to consider this and make decisions with help of Dr. Ryan, Superintendent of Schools.

Oyens rep: we are not doing this by choice.

6. Comment: Oyens gives approx. 55K per year. We are not going to be "Oyens" anymore. Is not Oyens' choice. We don't want to be treated as a dot on a map. All we are asking is a weekend Mass, maybe even not every weekend, let us be a part of this, not kicked off to the side. [These comments were very extensive; not all was audible, but basically the point was made of the vibrancy of St. Catherine's despite its small numbers]

7. Does Sioux Falls have a 3-Mass mandate per pastor for a weekend?

Dn. Heidt:

No, but is phasing it in. When we say three weekend Masses this does not include a funeral and wedding, etc. People must remember that often a priest is asked to do much more on a weekend than just the regular Masses, and this is where concerns come in about the priests time and effort on weekends. We have to look out for the health and viability of our priests.

8. [Note: a couple folks stated to Dn. Heidt, "I would like my comment/question to be presented to Sioux City (Bishop's office)." Dn. Heidt clarified that his role is to work with Fr. Bill and the parish representatives, not with Bishop Nickless and that it was up to Fr. Bill ultimately (after our meetings) to make presentations to the Bishop.]
9. Comment: Does Oyens want to at least keep an oratory that would be available for weddings and funerals? I think we should be thinking about what it would take to do this.
10. Question: Is there an average of how long an oratory lasts? Does it ever become a parish again?

Dn. Heidt:

Will be an oratory as long as the support is there and expenses are covered. The oratory would be a part of St. Mary's Parish.

11. Question: We have a time frame of about two months to make Mass schedules; is this to be decided tonight or more meetings?

Dn. Heidt:

Leadership team will work over the next month and years to work on these issues.

All meetings open to anyone who wants to attend; however, only parish representatives from the parishes will be the discussion.

Public comments and questions will be taken after the meetings.

People of the parishes need to let your parish representatives know what your views are.

Recommendations will go to Father Bill and then from Father Bill to Bishop Nickless, who makes final decisions.

12. Comment: I am from Marcus and we'll have only one Mass and we are not affected as much. I sure feel for Oyens. I would like to know from the school standpoint; when will there be forecast as to how this will affect the school system? Do you see the enrollment being maintained? Would there be a loss from a closing of Oyens?

Father Bill:

Just a guess; numbers will not be affected.

13. Question: When churches get closed and bishop tells us we need to go to Remsen, how many might go elsewhere?

Dn. Heidt:

I can only tell my experience. You don't have to go to the receiving parish. You will make that call yourself.

Fr. Guenther:

You can go where you want. There is no pressure to go to the receiving parish, that is your decision.

14. Comment: Diocese is dictating policy, not Fr. Bill/Remsen. The bishop has asked this. Father has to do what the Bishop asks him to do. We should be thankful for Father staying here to take care of us. Father is still there for you. (applause)

15. Comment: Oyens is not disappointed with Remsen or Father, our issue is with Sioux City, disappointed with Diocese.

16. Comment (Father Guenther): Before we throw the Bishop under the bus, let's not forget the numbers... population drives much of this. We don't have the people in rural America. We don't have the priest numbers to care for people.

17. Question: Are we losing Catholic population as much as we are losing priests?

Population is to blame, rural America is on population decline and our population is aging.

18. Comment: We need to get people attending Mass.

19. Comment (Dn. Heidt):

At this time we have more retired priests than active, 55 active and 70 retired (Diocese of Sioux City).

We did a study of our priests; projected having to close another 25 churches. Currently have 35 seminarians. (Diocese of Sioux Falls)

People have been praying for vocations, it is currently at a replacement level.

We have to evangelize ourselves, our people, our families.

We have to have Catholics attend Masses and come up with ways to get them back.

20. Comment: I want to make a couple points... we are not hit as hard in Remsen as in Oyens. Please pray for the people of Oyens, for God to give them grace. Pray for vocations every day. A rosary for vocations. The woman who went over and over to the judge got what she needed through perseverance. If we pray we can change this, it

won't happen overnight. We don't want to come back to this again. Please pray.
(applause)

21. Comment: Wondering how this will go. Even if we can't keep our children in Oyens. Who pays the maintenance? Should it be sold?

[Addressed by a parishioner] Oyens has spent a lot of money on the building. Town has expressed an interest in it. Our job as Oyens board to gather all the information. We need to get all the information and make some decisions for the people, or put it up for a parish vote.

22. Question: Can you speak to something in the Sioux Falls diocese; was there any rural area with schools supported by several parishes where one of the parishes went to an oratory? [This to see if there was any situation that resembled that of Oyens]

Dn. Heidt:

We only had one school affected but it was very small. Could no longer support 10 students. Did not have any other similar experience.

23. Comment: Let's try to work together, let's figure this out through the Holy Spirit, let's make sure everyone's needs are met. We are all good people and we are all caring people. We are a "we" group, not a "me" group. (applause)

Father Bill closed by leading a Hail Mary. He announced that the next meeting would be May 2, 6:30 to 8:30 at Marcus Holy Name.

Adjourned approximately 8:10.