

[6/8] Toward Becoming One Parish (I)

By Fr. Steven Lewis, Parochial Vicar

As a result of the deliberations at the Council of Nicea in 325, we have the Nicene Creed which is most commonly professed together during more solemn celebrations of the Mass. In it, we profess belief in the “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.” In other words, one of the ways we can be sure to be part of the Church that Christ founded is that we are united as part of that one Church, from Christ through the Apostles and their successors through the ages to us, and not a religion of some other origin.

To be part of the Church is to say our Catholic faith is *personal* but not *private*. As the Most Holy Trinity (the Solemnity of Whom we celebrate this weekend) is a communion of persons in the one Godhead, we, too, are meant to be in communion with one another. Our journey of faith is not meant to be walked alone. The parish community, in a small way, is a symbol of the greater reality that is the universal Church.

Prior to my arrival in western Wayne County, a pastoral planning effort took place here. While I missed that work, I did benefit from service on the diocesan Presbyteral Council, which received a report of the group’s work on May 14, 2024. Preparing to write this column series, I went digging through some of the history.

I found references to a steering committee in our community’s bulletin on Nov 5, 2023, which spoke of focus groups, town hall meetings, and surveys as the models for collecting information from the community. The town halls were conducted on Jan 22 & 24, 2024 – which were livestreamed and may still be available on YouTube. Some 254 surveys were returned about the scheduling of Masses (as reported in an update Feb 18). A final report was published in the bulletin on June 16 – shortly before my arrival. Noting the many ways we were already working together, the planning recommendations accepted and approved by the bishop (and published on that date) were:

- The cluster will continue to have two priests, and keep the current Mass schedule.
- The parishes will merge into one parish when it is feasible (probably sometime after the diocesan bankruptcy is settled).
- In the meantime, the parishes will continue the work of unification of shared services, cooperation between parish and finance councils and buildings and grounds committees, and other opportunities for cost savings.
- The two parishes will work together **now** so that any future changes will go smoothly.

(Emphasis in the original bulletin.) The Bishop added a recommendation of his own:

- The parishes should “pray for and encourage vocations to the priesthood.”

Indeed, as that bulletin column noted, that is a duty of every parish.

More next week.