PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL MEETING

Catholic Diocese of Erie, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, November 19, 2025
St. Mark Catholic Center, Erie
10:30am

Members in Attendance in Person:
Most Rev. Lawrence T. Persico, Very Rev. Andrew M. Boyd, V.F., Rev. Benjamin Daghir, Very Rev. John J. Detisch, V.F., Very Rev. Michael P. Ferrick, V.F, E.V., Very Rev. Scott W. Jabo, V.F., Rev. Brandon M. Kleckner, Rev. Matthew J. Kujawinski, Rev. Ian McElrath, Very Rev. Justin P. Pino, V.F., Very Rev. Michael P. Polinek, Rev. James P. Power, Very Rev. Nicholas J. Rouch, V.G., Rev. Msgr. Richard Siefer, E.V, Rev. Christopher Singer, , V.F.

Members Excused: Very Rev. V. David Foradori, Very Rev. Richard C. Tomasone

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:33 and began with Mid-morning Prayer led by Fr. Ferrick and was followed by prayers for Deacon Joseph Cicero and Msgr. Casimir Bogniak who died since the last meeting.

2. New Dean of Oil City Deanery
    a. Fr. Brandon Kleckner has been appointed Dean of the Oil City Deanery.
    b. Because Fr. Kleckner was already a member of Council and the Bishop has asked Fr. Polinek, the previous dean, to remain on the Council, there is no change to the makeup of the Council.

3. Review and approval of minutes of September 16.
    a. One grammatical error was noted by Msgr. Siefer.
    b. Msgr. Siefer made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Fr. Pino seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

4. October 15 Meeting
    a. The Council met by Teams on October 15 to review proposed updates to the Priest Personnel Policy.
    b. No formal minutes were taken, since the meeting was the evaluation and editing of a text.

5. Diocesan Matters
    a. Episcopal Transition
        i. Fr. Singer gave the update.
        ii. Bishop Persico turns 75 on November 21, and a new bishop is expected some time in 2026.

iii. A team has been working for over a year to prepare for the transition.
iv. Fr. Singer reminded the Council that we will have approximately 6-10 weeks from the time the new Bishop is announced to the time he takes possession of the See.

b. Eucharistic Revival and Congress
    i. Fr. Rouch gave the update.
    ii. Following conversation at St. Marks and consultation with several pastors, the Diocese is delaying the public announcement of a Eucharistic Congress in the Diocese.
    iii. Some elements that need to be considered further include:
        1. The support of the new bishop for the initiative
        2. The funds available for the initiative
        3. The high levels of work needed on the part of diocesan staff and others.

c. Elimination of St. Mark Catholic Center PO Box
    i. Fr. Rouch reminded the Council that all mail to St. Mark Catholic Center must be sent to the street address, not to the PO Box.

6. Request for the Relegation of Holy Family Church (Erie)
    a. Fr. Chris Singer and Ms. Maria Caulfield presented the information.
    b. Fr. Jason Glover as pastor of Our Mother of Sorrows parish, Erie, has asked Bishop Persico to relegate Holy Family church to profane but not sordid use.
    c. Ms. Caulfield reviewed the history of the parish for the Council.
        i. The parish was formed in 2009 from the extinctive union of Holy Family, St. Casimir, and St. Ann parishes.
        ii. It was unclear which church was the parish church until Bishop Persico arrived and clarified the canonical situation in 2017.
    d. Ms. Caulfield reviewed the condition of the Holy Family church with the Council.
        i. At the pastor's request, the Diocese sent its Director of Facilities to inspect the Church, who determined that it is impractical to determine a list of needs for the Church since virtually every aspect of the building must be repaired.
        ii. The parish has run a deficit nearly every year since 2009.
        iii. The parish is deeply in debt to the Diocese of Erie.
        iv. The documentation provided to the Council outlines the dire financial circumstances of the parish.
    e. Discussion followed among Council members about the safety of the Church building, the problems with recent break ins in the school and convent located next to the Church, the dire financial circumstances of the parish, and the like.

f. Fr. Detisch made a motion to recommend to Bishop Persico that he accept the pastor's request to relegate Holy Family Church, Erie, to profane but not sordid use. The motion was seconded by Msgr. Siefer. The motion carried unanimously.

7. Request for the Relegation of St. Brigid Church (Meadville)
    a. Fr. Petrone made the presentation.
    b. Fr. Petrone reviewed the history of the Meadville situation:
        i. The Epiphany of the Lord was erected as a new territorial parish in Meadville in 2021(?) combining the prior personal parishes of St. Agnes, St. Brigid, and St. Mary of Grace.
        ii. As part of the local pastoral planning process, the parish retained the Weber Murphy Fox firm to evaluate its facilities. St. Brigid's Church was determined to be most in need of repairs.
        iii. Fr. Lucas asked contractors to present bids to make the most serious repairs to the church, full details of which were included in the documentation which the Council received by email in preparation for this meeting.
        iv. The funds necessary to repair St. Brigid Church would completely exhaust the unrestricted assets of the parish, and would exhaust the funds set aside for facilities maintenance, making it difficult or impossible for the parish to maintain the parish church, the parish school, St. Mary's Church, or its other facilities.

    c. Discussion followed.
        i. Fr. Singer noted that it is not merely the condition of the Church building that makes this situation grave but the building's connection to the rectory and the social center.
        ii. Fr. Petrone and Fr. Kujawinski – both formerly assigned to Meadville – report that there are no expectations that parishioners would appeal the relegation of St. Brigid church.
        iii. Fr. Kujawinski expressed concern that the facility is still used regularly for Mass.
        iv. Fr. Rouch asked details of the restricted funds and whether the repairs could be covered by any of these funds.
        v. Fr. McElrath asked what is involved in "bringing the building up to code," and if this is necessary.
        vi. A discussion followed on these matters, and consensus was reached that the Council had sufficient information to make a motion.

    d. Msgr. Siefer made a motion to recommend to Bishop Persico that he accept the pastor's request to relegate St. Brigid Church, Meadville, to profane but not sordid use. The motion was seconded by Fr. Detisch. The motion carried with 13 ayes, 1 nay, and 0 abstentions.

8. St. Columbkille, Stoneboro
    a. Bishop Persico asked Fr. Boyd to update the Council on the status of St. Columbkille parish.

        i. Since August, Fr. Boyd has been administrator of the parish during the pastor's illness.
        ii. Fr. Boyd quickly discovered that Mass intentions have not been tracked – either when received or when fulfilled – for many years, with about $20,000 currently in the Mass Account.
        iii. A Mass trust has also been paying $2,000 per quarter for Masses but these funds have been deposited into the parish's general accounts and not the Mass account.
        iv. Mass attendance has been averaging between 25-50 people.
        v. Fr. Manning has indicated his intention to retire to Erie for health reasons.

    b. The Bishop has discussed with Fr. Boyd and Fr. Trocchio, the new pastor in Greenville, the possibility of merging St. Columbkille into St. Michael parish, Greenville, as a secondary church with mission status, and is seeking the Council's input on the matter.
        i. Discussion followed about whether it was more logical to associate Stoneboro with Greenville or with Mercer.

    c. The members of the Council are unanimously in favor of suppressing the parish of St. Columbkille but feel that they need more information before recommending whether the merger be with Greenville or with Mercer.

9. Parish planning
    a. Updates from St. Marys Deanery
        i. Msgr. Siefer gave the update.
        ii. Deacon Marty Eisert and Msgr. Siefer met with the priests and parish leadership on September 9 to hear their thoughts and concerns about pastoral planning.
        iii. They will meet with the groups again on December 3 to have another discussion.
        iv. The plan is to have a final preliminary meeting in February 2026 to finish gathering information so that Deacon Eisert and Msgr. Siefer can present their findings to the Bishop in the Spring.
        v. The Vicar and the Dean have the sense that the people are prepared to enter into the planning process.

    b. Parishes impacted by retirements and health concerns
        i. Fr. Rouch gave the update.

ii. He first noted that once October Count 2025 has been compiled, the information will be shared with the people.
iii. He noted the following parishes that have temporary administrators:

1. St. Eusebius
2. All Saints
3. St. Columbkille
4. St. Timothy

iv. Fr. Tom Tyler has stated publicly his intention to retire in July 2026, leaving Holy Cross, Fairview, without a pastor.
v. Fr. Rouch is waiting to hear from a number of other priests who are eligible to retire so that it can be part of personnel discussions in January.

10. Update regarding investigation of St. Jude Parish finances
    a. Bishop Persico gave the update.
    b. The District Attorney is still investigating the financial situation at St. Jude's and has recently begun reviewing financial records from when Fr. Micelli arrived at St. Jude's.
    c. Fr. Polinek is preparing to update the people of St. Jude's with additional information on the car raffle once the statement has been vetted by the Diocesan attorneys and the District Attorney.

11. Parish finance responsibilities
    a. Bishop Perisco and Fr. Rouch made the report.
    b. Fr. Rouch reminded the Council of the discussion about an oath of office and statement of responsibilities that the Council reviewed in October.
    c. Following discussion with some pastors, the Diocese is continuing to evaluate the oath.
    d. Fr. Rouch also noted that there are three levels at which problems can occur in parish finances:
        i. With the pastor
        ii. With the finance council
        iii. With Diocesan oversight
    e. The Bishop would like to update the Diocesan Financial Policy to make it more user friendly, and a small *ad hoc* committee is being assembled to assist with this.
        i. The committee will include at least 2 pastors, 2 parish finance council members, and the Diocesan CFO

12. Catholic Services Appeal
    a. Donor Receptions
        i. Fr. Rouch informed the Council that the donor appreciation receptions in Ridgway and Erie went well.

        ii. The intention is to hold these receptions annually in September for donors who contributed $2,000 or more.
    b. Calculating the Parish Assessment
        i. Jim Hubert reminded the Council of the formula used to calculate CSA.
            1. Based on the previous two years of parish finances.
            2. Formula
                a. Two year Offertory average
                b. minus 80% Catholic School Support expenses
                c. minus 70% net Religious Education expenses
                d. minus $2,500 standard deduction
                e. With a parish's CSA increase capped at 5% per year
        ii. The 2026 CSA Assessments will be released in the next few weeks.

13. *Priest Personnel Policy* revisions
    a. Fr. Rouch gave the update.
    b. The October meeting highlighted a number of modifications needed, as well as reformatting.
    c. The work on making those changes has taken longer than expected but the new proposed policy will be presented at the February meeting.
14. Update regarding International Priests
    a. Fr. McElrath gave the updates.
    b. First Round of Priests
        i. Two priests from the Diocese of Ekwulobia, Nigeria, are expected to arrive in Erie around January 12.
        ii. They will do about 2 months of orientation with Fr. McElrath at St. Luke's, Erie
        iii. The Bishop is working with the Personnel Board to finalize their assignments.
        iv. An email should be going out to the priests soon.
    c. Second Round of Priests
        i. The Bishop is in discussions with the Archdiocese of Cape Coast, Ghana about sending 2 priests in summer 2026.

15. Update from the office for Divine Worship
    a. Fr. Kujawinski distributed a letter to the Council encouraging the use of the Prayer for a New Bishop beginning the First Sunday of Advent.
        i. The Deans are asked to take the prayer cards for their deaneries and to distribute them as quickly as possible.
    b. Fr. Kujawinski advised the Council that the new translation of the Liturgy of the Hours will go into effect for Lent 2027 and that there will be group rates for bulk purchase but that information is not available yet.
    c. The new books for Anointing of the Sick will be available January 1 and will go into effect on February 11 and becoming mandatory Divine Mercy Sunday 2026.

d. The Bishops voted at their November Plenary to consecrate the United States to the Sacred Heart of Jesus; catechetical information will be forthcoming from the USCCB.

16. Update from St. Mark Seminary & Vocation Office
    a. Fr. Jabo gave the update.
    b. St. Mark Seminary
        i. There are currently 9 seminarians but it is expected that 1 man from another diocese will be discerning out at the end of the semester.
        ii. There is an upcoming discernment weekend at the seminary on December 6-7, and another on Palm Sunday weekend.
        iii. On December 9, the Seminary will host an Advent Prayer Service based on the O Antiphons.
    c. Seminarians at Other Seminaries
        i. All the men are doing quite well.
        ii. The rector of St. Mary's Seminary & University, Baltimore, is actively encouraging dioceses to consider sending college-aged men to St. Mark's.

17. Updates from Clergy Office & Vicar General's Office
    a. Fr. Rouch gave the updates.
    b. New Pastors Seminar
        i. The Diocese conducted an in-house seminar for new pastors in October.
        ii. Feedback from the three men who participated was positive.
    c. Fundraising 101 Seminar
        i. About 16 pastors signed up.
    d. Cheryl Krolczyk Retiring
        i. After 5 years in the Clergy Office, Cheryl is retiring to spend more time with her new granddaughter.
        ii. Chery will continue to work on special projects in 2026 but will not be working in the office.
    e. Reminder to Deans
        i. It is presumed that the annual parish visits are now wrapping up.
        ii. Any deans who have not conducted their visits should speak with Fr. Rouch.
        iii. Fr. Rouch thanked the deans who have contacted him with concerns that were raised at their parish visits.
        iv. Mileage for parish visits is due to Fr. Rouch by December 15

18. Deans' Reports
    a. Fr. Pino – St. Marys Deanery
        i. A clear policy on Mass stipends should be disseminated to the parishes about perpetual Mass intentions, excessive numbers of Mass intentions, and the like.
        ii. Pastors also need to be reminded not to record First Penance or to issue certificates, worship aids, etc.

b. Fr. Detisch – Dubois Deanery
    i. Father encouraged creative solutions for administration of parishes in rural parts of the Diocese.

19. Proposed meeting dates for 2025
    a. Wednesday, February 4 – St. Mark Catholic Center
    b. Tuesday, May 19 - St. Tobias, Brockway
    c. Wednesday, September 16 – Immaculate Heart, Mercer
    d. Wednesday, November 11 – St. Mark Catholic Center

20. Upcoming Dates

- Spring Priests' Day of Recollection – Wednesday, March 11, 2026
  Presenter: Rhonda Gruenewald
  Location: St. Mark Catholic Center

- Chrism Mass – Monday, March 30, 2026

- Emmaus Convocation
  June 22-25, 2026
  St. Vincent College and SpringHill Suites, Latrobe, PA
  Presenter: Archbishop Bernard Hebda, Archbishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis

- Priest Retreat – working on date which will work for retreat director and Villa Maria

- Fall Priests' Day of Recollection – October 13, 2026
  Presenter: Fr. Kyle Schnippel
  Location: TBD

21. Adjournment
    a. A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 2:00 by Fr. Boyd and seconded by Fr. Pino.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Ian McElrath