

**St. Francis Parish Council Minutes**  
**Regular Meeting; Brunsman Hall**  
**Tuesday, May 7, 2019**

Fred Bermudez, excused  
Francine Freitas, present  
Jo Gonsalves, present  
Darrin Greer, vice chair, present  
Margaret Healy, present  
Linda Hill, present  
Melba Hinojosa, present  
Bob Lavelle, excused  
Dennis Mahoney, present

Kent Meyers, excused  
Emer McKenna, present  
Gary Myrick, present  
Fr. Des O'Reilly, pastor, present  
Bob Reid, chair, present  
Tom Sweetman, present  
Janet Vitt, secretary, present

Also attending were Beth White and J.D. Warrick of the parish staff and parish member Doug Thompson of the Pathways for Justice Committee.

Chair Bob Reid opened the meeting at 6:03 p.m., and Francine Freitas led the room in prayer.

The minutes of the April 9, 2019, council meeting, upon motion by Darin Greer, seconded by Margaret Healy, were approved unanimously. They will be posted on the parish website.

### **Staff Report**

Beth White, staff liaison to the Parish Council, briefed the council on several matters on behalf of the Parish Staff:

- Parish records shows 2,025 registered households and 1,594 unregistered households, totaling roughly 3,600 households in the parish. An average week sees 4 new households registered each week.
- Outreach ministries are preparing for the sale of roses to benefit the Sacramento Life Center after each Mass Mother's Day weekend. About 300 people are expected to be fed at the Iftar dinner the parish is hosting on May 19 at SALAM Islamic Center. Volunteers to help serve and donations to help underwrite it are being solicited.
- The parish continues to do daily outreach to homeless people beyond the Steps Ministry, giving out sock, shoes, jackets, toiletries, water, etc. The rainy spring displaced a lot of people who normally are living in camps near the rivers.
- The Parish will sell fireworks near the Safeway on Alhambra again June 28-July 4. Last year the effort brought in \$15,000.
- Children's Faith Formation is ended for the school year; it will resume in autumn. The part of the liturgical cycle that includes baptism, first confession, first communion and confirmation is nearly finished for children who have been in the programs this year.

- All volunteers who work with children have been fingerprinted and cleared through California Dept. of Justice, and all have completed Safe Haven Training before they interact with children. The parish is in compliance with diocesan policy on this matter.
- Fifteen infants/toddler were baptized April 27, and more will be baptized on June 1. Parish members are invited to attend the ceremonies. In addition to the baptisms in the church building, 21 at-risk infant patients at nearby Sutter General Hospital have been baptized by priests at St. Francis since the hospital opened there a few years ago. The hospital calls St. Francis Parish because of its proximity to the hospital.
- Eight adults are preparing for confirmation this year.
- An open house was offered to parish members after the release by the diocese of the list of priests with credible accusations of abuse. A handful of people showed up at the Parish Center, some seeking comfort and some seeking information. Beth said the open house had been “well worth the effort.”

### **Pastor’s remarks**

Father Des gave his report:

- He was grateful for all participants in making the Easter ceremonies successful.
- Bishop Soto prepared a letter and video for use by parishes after the release of the list of accused priests and gave each parish a choice of which it would use. Our parish opted to make use of both. The parish staff and offices received very little reaction to the list beyond comments made after Masses. Three Franciscan priests were included on the list, but only one of those had served in this parish, and the accusations did not include the time that man served here.
- He said the California Attorney General will investigate all 12 dioceses in the state to see how church hierarchy handled abuse allegations. Thirteen other states have such investigations being done now. Some states already conducted such investigations.

### **Chair’s Report**

Chair Bob Reid briefed the council on these topics:

- He asked for volunteers to scout out possible locations for a portrait of Sister Claire Graham being donated by Malcolm and Virginia Hotchkiss. Janet Vitt and Francine Freitas will tour the church, Brunsman Hall and the Parish Center and report back to the council.
- He reminded council members to wear their name tags at Masses on May 18-19

**Parishioner Input** – Doug Thompson of the Pathways for Justice Committee, addressed the council about the St. Kateri Habitat Program, a faith-based program to inspire Catholics and others to restore backyards, gardens, farms, parks, vacant lots, forests, grasslands, streams, wetlands, and Catholic-owned lands into healthy habitats for people and wildlife. The Committee would like Council approval to proceed with efforts to designate parish and school grounds and the friary garden as St. Kateri Habitat.

A motion by Darrin Greer, seconded by Janet Vitt, to approve the Committee's efforts passed unanimously.

### **Council Member comments**

Jo Gonsalves said a parish member pointed out the need to address problems caused by the blower in the men's restroom in the walkway to the south of the church building. It can easily be fixed now, but could lead to mold if not addressed. Janet Vitt will make sure this is brought to the attention of the staff.

### **Old Business**

- **Parish Directory** – Francine Freitas said the directory committee was to meet May 20 with the photographers to choose photos for the book. The staff photo had not been scheduled.
- **By-Laws Revision** –Dennis Mahoney has distributed the approved revision of the Bylaws.
- **Parish Council Brochure** – Melba Hinojosa said the new brochures will be available near the doors of the church and will be ready before the council elections.

### **Committee Reports**

- **Finance Council liaison** –Dennis Mahoney said the Finance Council has been told the boiler repair is 90% finished and that a maintenance contract has been signed for the heating and air-conditioning systems. New bids are being sought for the repair of the church roof because the job is not so complex as was feared and thus is too small a job for the first contractors who were contacted. Applicants are being sought for the job of parish business manager.
- **Membership** – Darrin Greer said the council elections will be June 8-9. Posters and bulletin notices will start being used after Easter, and announcements will begin mid-May. There are at least five seats up for election. The application is live online.
- **Parish Safety** – Gary Myrick recapped his brief presentation delivered the weekend of May 4-5 at all Masses. He will report again at the June 11 council meeting and soon thereafter to the staff and to the parish as a whole on June 15-16. The committee will prepare a brochure with the main safety points and make sure they are available in the church.
- **Liturgy Committee** – Francine Freitas said Triduum services overall went smoothly and prayerfully.

- **Outreach-Steps** – Margaret Healey said the Steps Ministry continues to go well and has attracted some new volunteers, although there is room and work for more. She felt the group was working well together.
- **Faith Formation** –Emer McKenna reiterated that the Children’s Faith Formation will resume with the fall school term.

The next Council meeting will be at 6 p.m., Tuesday, June 11, 2019, in Brunsman Hall. Bob Reid and Linda Hill will provide the opening and closing prayers, respectively.

There being no more business, Emer McKenna led the Council in a closing prayer after which the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Vitt, secretary

See attached documents for presentations or reports

## Handout from Pathways to Justice

Presentation to St. Francis Parish Pastoral Council by Doug Thompson

From <https://www.kateri.org/saint-kateri-habitat-2/>

### Saint Kateri Habitat

**Creating and restoring healthy habitats for people and wildlife.**

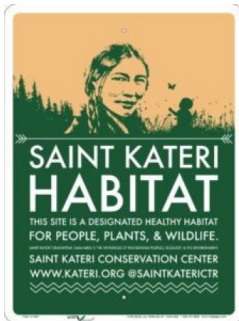
**Anyone can transform a backyard, roadside, church, school, farm, or Catholic-owned land into Saint Kateri Habitat.**

### Background

In 2015, Pope Francis released the first papal encyclical devoted entirely to the environment, *Laudato Si'* ("Praise Be to You"). Pope Francis issued an urgent challenge to protect Sister Earth, our common home. The encyclical covers a range of concerns, such as climate change, water quality, biodiversity, land conservation, Indigenous rights, and global inequality. Pope Francis reminds us that "everything is connected," and points to an integral ecology that sees the interconnectedness of social, environmental/natural, and spiritual concerns.

Ecology has a long history in the Church, going back to the first pages of the Bible, where humankind is called to "cultivate and care for" creation. In 1990, Saint John Paul II said, "Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person also extends to the rest of creation, which is called to join man in praising God" (*1990 World Day of Peace Message*). In the tradition of Saint Francis of Assisi, John Paul II referred to animals, plants, and minerals as our "brothers and sisters" (*Post-Angelus Greeting*, 1982). In 2011, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, known as "The Green Pope," said, "The Church has a responsibility towards creation, and she considers it her duty to exercise that responsibility in public life, in order to protect earth, water, and air as gifts of God the Creator meant for everyone" (*If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation*).

### The Saint Kateri Habitat Program™



The Saint Kateri Conservation Center offers a faith-based program to inspire C

and others to restore backyards, gardens, farms, parks, vacant lots, forests, grasslands, streams, wetlands, and Catholic-owned lands into healthy habitats for people and wildlife. We do this close to home, where we live.

The Saint Kateri Habitat Program encourages individuals, parishes, schools, religious orders, and working landowners to restore their natural homes in a way that praises God and fosters a greater connection between people and nature.

With a special focus on Catholic faith and social teaching, the Saint Kateri Habitat Program provides living, sacred spaces for people to engage directly in the care of God’s creation at home and in their communities. By restoring habitats with reverence for our Creator, the program draws people closer to God and his Church while protecting the integrity of creation.

Anyone can transform their site into healthy habitat. It can be as simple as planting a tree or growing wildflowers for bees and butterflies.

Typical participants include families with children, gardeners, farmers, homeowners, renters, religious orders, parishes, and schools.

### **How it Works**

Designated Saint Kateri Habitats should provide at least three of the following six elements, plus one religious expression:

Food, water, cover, and space for wildlife, including habitat for pollinators (e.g., bees) and other terrestrial and aquatic organisms

Native trees, shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers, such as milkweeds and goldenrods for monarch butterflies

Food, water, cover, and space for people, including vegetable gardens, flower gardens, community-supported gardens, indoor gardens, and farms

Ecosystem services, such as pollination, clean air and water, carbon storage for climate regulation, and religious faith arising from interactions with the “Book of Nature”

Clean energy; sustainable practices of gardening, landscaping, and farming; or removing aggressive weeds.

Sacred spaces for worship, prayer, and contemplation, including Mary gardens, prayer gardens, and rosary gardens. Any kind of garden, natural area, farm, or green space can be a sacred space and treated as such.

At least one Catholic religious expression is required, which may include crosses, wayside shrines, grottos, stations of the cross, Saint Kateri Habitat signs, or statues of Mary, and angel, or a saint, such as Saint Francis of Assisi. This religious expression reminds us that the Holy Spirit is active in every corner of creation.



Applicants for the Saint Kateri Habitat designation submit an online registration form demonstrating at least three of the six elements listed above, plus at least one religious expression.

The program is flexible, for example, participants may plant one tree or an entire forest, or tend a container garden on a patio or a 100-acre farm. One tree, for example, can absorb as much as 48 pounds of carbon dioxide per year and can sequester 1 ton of carbon dioxide by the time it reaches 40 years old.

Participants receive guidance from the Center’s professional ecologists, a personalized certificate, recognition on our online Esri Story Maps, and an option to purchase yard signs officially designating their site as Saint Kateri Habitat. Participants are asked for a suggested donation of \$20 to support the Center’s mission.

Saint Kateri Habitats provide the benefits of increasing faith in God while preserving wildlife, saving energy, reducing climate change, and protecting land and water for future generations. Our habitat program provides opportunities for evangelization, education, and recreation, while establishing places of peace and beauty.

The program takes aim at the very heart of today’s ecological problems and addresses the profound moral crisis of which the destruction of the environment is but one troubling aspect. Ultimately, ecological problems are not in the first place environmental, nor can the solution to them be found in technology, economics, or politics alone. They are rather profoundly theological and moral.

Our initial objective is to have at least one Catholic person or family in every parish in the USA participating in the program. There are more than 70 million Catholics in the USA. That is a lot of potential Saint Kateri Habitats! Catholics around the world are also invited to restore healthy habitats.

### **Saint Kateri Tekakwitha**

The program is named in honor of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, the patron saint of Native Americans, First Nations Peoples, ecology, and the environment.

Saint Kateri was born in 1656 and lived much of her life around the present-day [Saint Kateri National Shrine and Historic Site](#) in Fonda, New York.

Saint Kateri and the Indigenous Peoples had, and have, an extensive knowledge of natural habitats, acquired over thousands of years of direct contact with nature. This knowledge includes relationships between our Creator, people, plants, animals, landscapes, natural phenomena, and the timing of events used for fishing, hunting, agriculture, and forestry. Saint Kateri is an eyewitness of the land before much of it would later be damaged or destroyed. Saint Kateri is known for her heroic faith, virtue, and love of Jesus, in the face of adversity and rejection.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has said, “Our Earth is talking to us and we must listen to it and decipher its message if we want to survive.” The Saint Kateri Habitat Program brings people closer to nature so that we can better hear this message. Saint Kateri herself heard this message many years ago, together with the Gospel, in what is now upstate New York, and asked, “Who will teach me what is most pleasing to God, that I may do it?”

### **Saint Kateri Habitat Registration Form**

To designate your yard, garden, church, school, farm, Catholic-owned land, or other site as Saint Kateri Habitat, please submit the application form. The form will ask you to confirm that you have provided the required number of elements for a healthy habitat for people and wildlife.

When you register you will become a member of our Saint Kateri Habitat community, receive a personalized certificate, have the option to share your story and photos on our online story map, and have the exclusive option to purchase attractive Saint Kateri Habitat yard signs.