

ARCHDIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL

September 6, 2007
Minutes

Sister Marian Batho opened the meeting at 6:20 PM and introduced Sister Suzanne Fondini, a Missionary Sister of the Immaculate Conception in Newton. Sr. Suzanne is completing the assignment of Sr. Eileen Burns, SND who resigned last May to take on another role in her community.

Cardinal Sean O'Malley welcomed APC members to the meeting. He announced that Fr. Matt Williams and Mr. Steve Collela of the Archdiocesan Committee on Faith Formation of Youth and Young Adults would be giving an interim report to the Council.

Interim Report of the Committee on Faith Formation of Youth and Young Adults

Father Matt stated that the mission of this committee is to look at how we as a Church can effectively keep the faith alive in the hearts of young men and women, through their high school and college years and beyond.

Citing studies on the mindset of the "millennial generation" (born 1980-2000), Fr. Matt noted that this group has grown up in a world very different from their parents and grandparents. While most teens feel positively about religion, religion is not a very important part of their lives. Many other activities and organizations take precedence. Mormons and Evangelical Protestants appear to do the best job of handing down their faith to their children. Both value the participation of youth in the life of their communities, transmit the core doctrines of faith and provide opportunities to put those core doctrines into practice. From this, young people receive a knowledge of spirituality and a set of practices that give their lives a moral significance. This moral significance becomes their way of contributing to God's ultimate transformation of the world.

Steve Collela addressed the second part of the report on effective methods to inform and form our young people as mature Catholics. The committee researched many Catholic and non-Catholic programs for youth looking for the common elements of the most successful ones. These 'golden threads' of ministry included:

- An evangelizing community seeking to transform individual lives, the community and the wider culture with Gospel values is the required fertile ground for growing disciples.
- Effective leaders ('animators') who are dynamic witnesses of their faith are visible role models inspiring others to seek relationship with Christ.
- Fruitful and on-going training for adults ministering to youth as well as for training upcoming young leaders.
- Meaningful liturgy and prayer experiences are crucial to all phases of youth and young adult ministry.

- Understanding and valuing the distinct subcultures young people inhabit today allows the Church to relate to them where they are on their life journey. Utilizing communication technologies popular with this age group is critically important.
- Nurture vocational discernment. Young people need guidance in discerning religious vocations and secular careers. By assisting in this major life task, the faith community shows young people how valuable they are.
- Effective program tools include large Catholic gatherings such as World Family Day, World Youth Day, Proud2bCatholic, Steubenville East, March for Life, Men's and Women's Conferences, etc. Current local programs include Eucharistic Adoration, Christian Service, Theology on Tap, Life Teen, pizza and prayer, etc.
- Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body is a gift to guide Catholic teaching on human sexuality and relationships. This resource can be incorporated into many programs structured for young people.
- Coordinated programming that views faith formation as an unbroken continuum which intentionally meets every young person and walks with them from youth to teen to college to young adult and adult is the goal.
- Effective and regular communication is crucial among all who minister to young people, within and between the diocesan offices, regions, vicariates, clusters and parishes.
- The parish pastor is the most important factor in Catholic youth ministry. Pastors must be on board for youth ministry programs to be successful!

After the presentation, evaluation forms were distributed. Discussion followed. One member commented that teens liked the Gospel Road program and craved opportunities to serve their communities. He also advised that youth and young adult ministry be closely linked to a rigorous religious education program.

Another member spoke highly of the Adoration, Community and Theology (ACT) program at St. William's Parish and noted the critical importance of the adult leaders authentically living Christian lives. The last commenter advised that programs emphasize their Catholic character, rather than Christian character.

Arise Together in Christ – Update

MaryAnn McLaughlin reported that the RENEW representatives have met with people from several Archdiocesan offices and have received survey responses from over 500 Catholics throughout the Boston area. RENEW has adapted the program for Boston to reflect ideas and concerns from this feedback. The three-year program will be called 'Arise Together in Christ'. MaryAnn urged APC members to attend one of the upcoming information sessions and to consider volunteering to lead a small faith sharing group during the Arise program. She also mentioned that the Sisters of St. Joseph in Baden, PA are already praying for the success of 'Arise Together in Christ'.

Proposal for a New Committee on Social Justice

Pat Dineen related that Johnny Ip, Philip Walsh and she had discussed with Sr. Marian the possibility of forming of a Social Justice Committee last spring as part of the APC. The group met several times and then presented their work to Cardinal Sean in July. Cardinal Sean endorsed the idea and gave the group valuable advice. Since then, they have drawn up a list of proposed objectives (see handout). The group is eager to have new members.

Cardinal Sean spoke in approval of the new committee. He reminded APC members about current social action initiatives in the Archdiocese. The Pro-Life March takes place on October 7th. He also urged everyone to call their local state representatives in support of abstinence-only sex education programs. He emphasized the need to make changes in our society in order to bring about a more just world. He wants the Archdiocese to play an important role in this.

Sister Marian added that the new committee could help coordinate social action activities and responses to issues as well as being a model for parish-based programs.

Parish Life and Leadership Committee Follow-up

Herb Lynch reported that the committee produced an interim report in August on best practices for parish pastoral councils. This was based on the results of the survey which the committee developed and distributed for all parishes to complete. It would be helpful if APC members urged their assigned parishes to respond to the PPC survey if they have not already done so or if their information has changed. The committee expects to finalize its report in December.

Report on the Boston Catholic Chinese Community (BCCC)

Cardinal Sean asked Johnny Ip to report on recent developments in the Catholic Church in China including responses to Pope Benedict's letter last May to the Church in China. Johnny distributed copies of his report and explained his findings.

Johnny belongs to the BCCC. It was established in 1967 to provide religious services and spiritual formation to the Chinese Catholic community in Boston and to enhance collaboration and evangelization among the Asian communities in the area. Beginning with only a few families, it has grown to serve over 400 families totaling about 1000 members. BCCC meets at St. James the Greater Church in Boston offering liturgies in both Cantonese and Mandarin.

He described some of the recent history of the Church in China. When the communists took over mainland China in the early 1950's, the Chinese government closed many Catholic churches, deported foreign clergy and jailed many local priests and laity. In the late 1950's, the government established the state-controlled Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA) whose purpose was to monitor activity in the Catholic Church. The CPA ordained two bishops without receiving Vatican approval. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) all religious organizations were suppressed. 3,600 churches and many Buddhist temples were destroyed.

Since the rise of Chairman Deng in 1980, a more liberal approach has been adopted allowing the revival of religious practices. There are now two Catholic Churches in China: the CPA Church in defiance of the Vatican and the underground Catholic Church approved by the Holy Father.

On May 27, 2007 Pope Benedict sent a letter to the Catholic Church in China offering pastoral guidelines concerning the life of the Church and the task of evangelization in China. The Pope emphasized his wish that the Chinese Church not be separated from the rest of the Church. The Vice-chairman of the CPA called the letter "positive". The Cardinals of Hong Kong and Taiwan both praised the Pope's letter. The BCCC responded with gratitude for Pope Benedict's concern for China giving them renewed hope for future of the Church there.

Cardinal Sean thanked Johnny for his excellent work. He hoped it helped the APC better understand and appreciate the rich diversity of the Church in Boston. He clarified that the Pope does not consider the CPA a schism church, but sees it as a church existing under duress.

Sr. Marian thanked Cardinal Sean and Fr. Erikson for leading the Archdiocese so well. She asked if anyone had additional comments for the Marriage Committee or the Parish Life and Leadership Committee which reported to the APC last May. There were none.

Closing Remarks

Fr. Erikson encouraged APC members to participate and volunteer in the RENEW program quipping that they were looking for both veteran and rookie volunteers. He requested prayers for the Day of Reflection for Priests scheduled for September 14th and also the Priests' Convocation on November 20th.

Cardinal Sean asked members to pray for the success of the RENEW program which is to be the centerpiece of the Archdiocesan Bi-Centennial Celebration in 2008. He was happy to report that enrollment in St. John's Seminary doubled this year including some seminarians from other dioceses. He commended the new Social Justice Committee and expressed hope that they would work along with the Massachusetts Catholic Conference in raising the consciousness of parishioners to live more fully as Catholics.

The Cardinal announced that implementation of the Catholic Schools Study has begun in Brockton. \$7 million has been raised and buildings are being renovated. The 2010 Initiative is looking to begin work on schools in other regions with help from the Catholic Schools Foundation.

In late September, the Cardinal will be part of a Roman Catholic – Orthodox pilgrimage which will meet with Pope Benedict and the leaders of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church. He asked the APC to pray that the Churches be lead to unity.

Cardinal Sean ended the meeting with prayer at 9:00PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Robotham
Recording Secretary