

Sister Marian Batho opened the meeting at 6:30PM. She welcomed new members Deacon Louis Sheedy and Lynn Zofchak. Michael Richards, recovered from an accident last January, was welcomed back and thanked for again providing a wonderful meal for the meeting. Sister Marian announced that Phil Walsh and Dr. Kwasi Sarkodie Mensa accepted appointments to the Steering Committee. Fr. Richard Erikson could not attend this meeting due to illness.

Opening Remarks

Cardinal Sean thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. He announced the Eucharistic Congress to be held March 28-29th sponsored by the Office for the New Evangelization of Youth and Young Adults. Scot Landry is working on the Men's and Women's Catholic Conferences which will take place at Boston College on April 18th and 19th. On April 20th, three thousand people from the Boston area will travel to New York City for the Pope's Mass at Yankee Stadium. The Cardinal noted that a recent survey by the Knights of Columbus reports a very positive attitude about the Pope's upcoming visit and a generally positive attitude towards the Catholic Church.

Braintree Moving Plans

Mr. Kevin Kiley, the Director of Planning and Projects, spoke about the Chancery move to the Braintree Pastoral Center this summer. A four or five-day transition is planned for late June through early July. The building is now being readied with help from the Flatley Company, WB Mason and the architectural firm of Cramer/Levine.

Mr. Kiley described the center as "professional, but not ostentatious". The new four-story center will be modern with plenty of natural light and up-to-date facilities. The chapel on the first floor is designed as the focal point. It will comfortably seat 150 people and it incorporates stained glass windows from several of the closed churches in the Archdiocese. Other features of the pastoral center include:

- state-of-the-art conference rooms
- grand meeting room (accommodating 200 people)
- reception area with security features and a Catholic TV display area
- full-service cafeteria
- media room
- new phone system
- on-site computer servers
- print shop
- archive and additional storage areas
- religious goods store
- vestment preparation and repair service
- employee shuttle from the MBTA.

Mr. Kiley identified the Archdiocesan offices which would be on each floor. (This information is in the February Archdiocesan employee newsletter.) Employees will be able to tour the new center prior to the move. Both a final liturgy at the Brighton site and an opening liturgy in Braintree are being planned. It is hoped that the pastoral center will be used for regional convocations, strategic and pastoral planning meetings as well as training programs for parish personnel.

During the question and answer period, Mr. Kiley mentioned that a large cross on top of the building would be illuminated at night, that flexibility in the floor plan would allow expanded use of the building and that naming rights for certain areas of the center would be available to donors. Although the ten-year old building was not designed to be 'green', the HVAC systems have been completely renovated and there may be a reduction in the operating expenses for the Archdiocese as a result of consolidating many offices into a single building.

Pew Charitable Trust - U.S. Religious Landscape Survey

Fr. Bryan Hehir was asked to comment on this report. He began by describing the Pew Charitable Trust as a Protestant-oriented research center. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life released the results of a large study on the role of religion in the United States on February 25th.

This report reaffirmed that the U.S. is a predominately religious society. It noted an increased fluidity of affiliation in recent years; more than 25% of the U.S. population has left the religion in which they were raised. This trend is most evident in the statistics cited for Catholics. About one-third of those raised Catholic, no longer identify as Catholic. However, the total percentage of Catholics in the U.S. population has remained fairly constant because a high number of recent immigrants are Catholic.

Fr. Hehir identified two pastoral challenges arising from these findings. What can the Church do to retain its current members? And how do we minister to an increasingly immigrant Church? Several comments were offered in the discussion which followed.

- People are often looking for a community, more than for a belief system.
- The Roman Catholic Church should stress its uniqueness, the riches of its theology, spirituality and mysticism, as well as its long history of providing social services to the needy.
- Catholic core beliefs should be emphasized so that Catholics pass on their beliefs faithfully.
- The biggest challenge is caused by the discrepancy between a person's level of secular education and their level of education about the faith (attributed to Pope John XXIII).
- The accomplishments of Catholic social institutions should be promoted in the media.
- If we know what people want from their religious affiliation and provide it, they will come.
- People want to belong to a church with people like themselves. Catholic African immigrants are an exception because the majority of African-Americans are Baptists.
- Deacons and priests need to learn a second language to minister to immigrants.
- Several possible reasons for people leaving the Catholic Church were mentioned. These included: fallout from the clergy abuse crisis and Church embezzlement cases; more acceptance of other Christian churches due to ecumenism; and Catholic college graduates feeling let down by local parishes after experiencing more dynamic liturgy on campus.

Cardinal Sean reflected that we need to turn Catholics into better evangelizers. He noted that we may focus on people's material needs at times more than their spiritual needs. Due to time constraints, this segment of the meeting was concluded. Sr. Marian would like Fr. Hehir to return at another time to continue this important discussion.

Archdiocesan Marriage Initiative

After the Archdiocesan Committee on Marriage reported in May 2007 that Catholic marriages declined 61% in the last 21 years, the Archdiocese launched an initiative to promote the Sacrament of Matrimony. Sponsored by the Massachusetts Catholic Conference, Drs. Angela and David Franks are coordinating the initiative entitled, "The Future Depends on Love". This project brings together current social science research and Church teaching to educate Catholics on the importance of marriage as a Christian vocation.

The educational materials include seminars for clergy and laity, a multi-part Catholic TV series on marriage (in Fall 2008), a DVD and a CD, PowerPoint presentations and parish bulletin inserts. Some of the topics covered are the Theology of the Body, the Benefits of Sacramental Marriage, Cohabitation vs. Marriage, and Skills for a Successful Marriage. Pro-Marriage programs are also being prepared for high school and college students to guide them as they develop intentional friendships and begin dating.

Www.MassCatholicMarriage.org features many of these materials. Catholics are encouraged to view the website and to participate in an online survey. Following the presentation, feedback sheets were distributed to APC members to solicit suggestions and comments.

What Do I Need to Hear?

An APC member requested an update on the Archdiocesan healthcare system after a friend was dismissed from Carney Hospital without warning. He described this tactic as un-Christian. The Cardinal answered that the Human Resource department should have acted in accord with Catholic values. He added that this does not always occur in an institution with thousands of employees. At this time, there is no written Human Resources Manual for the Archdiocese.

- The Archdiocese should continue to actively publicize its achievements in the media.
- St. Mary's in Lynn has had a great response to their program which encourages parishioners to bring someone to Church who hasn't attended recently.
- The Boston Chinese Catholic community is pleased with the good work of the priest at their church.
- The multi-media launch of the 2008 Catholic Appeal received praise.
- A recommendation was made to update the email addresses of Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Committee representatives.
- An APC member asked that a list of suggested summer reading be composed for the purpose of developing effective lay adult evangelizers.

Closing Remarks

Sr. Marian announced that after the APC meeting adjourned, there would be an optional discussion about how APC members might contact their assigned parishes. She expressed gratitude for all the wonderful things happening in the Archdiocese as a result of Cardinal Sean's leadership.

Cardinal Sean explained that many people have helped bring about positive changes in the Archdiocese. He mentioned the Marriage Committee and their Chastity formation program. The Master of Arts in Ministry (MAM) program has prepared many people to serve as lay ministers, especially in catechesis and faith formation. Faith formation texts and programs have been reviewed to identify the most effective ones. He commended the many Catholics who have offered their help in these and other efforts throughout the Boston area.

Cardinal Sean adjourned the meeting with a prayer at 9:12PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Robotham
Recording Secretary