

**Archdiocesan Pastoral Council**  
**September 8, 2008**  
**Minutes**

Sister Marian Batho welcomed everyone to the meeting at the new Pastoral Center in Braintree at 6:30 PM. She introduced Jim McDonough, Archdiocesan Chancellor, and Joe D'Arrigo, Executive Director of the Clergy Fund Trustees.

**Clergy Benefit Trust**

Mr. D'Arrigo explained that the Clergy Benefit Trust is comprised of three funds: the clergy medical and hospitalization fund; the clergy retirement and disability fund; and the benefit trust for non-incardinated priests. Non-incardinated priests are non-diocesan clergy who work in the Archdiocese.

The crisis in the clergy retirement fund derives from the increased number of elder and disabled priests as well as the skyrocketing costs of healthcare, significant declines in investment returns and flat contributions from the Christmas and Easter collections after the sex abuse scandal. Additionally, previous actuarial assumptions did not factor in the costs of retirement and nursing care and, during the 1990's, funds were shifted from the medical fund to the retirement fund. The Archdiocese has begun to utilize the Medicare and Medicaid programs to reduce expenditures from the medical fund which ideally should have a balance of \$50M more than it has now.

The Archdiocese is also working to improve the management and oversight of this fund which otherwise will be used up by 2011. The Board of Trustees of the Clergy Fund has been expanded to 7 – 9 members, including 3 – 4 laypersons with expertise in finance, law and healthcare, the Secretary for Parish Life and Leadership, plus two pastors. This group oversees management of the funds. Mr. D'Arrigo said that an outside firm has been hired to conduct an audit of the clergy fund, in fact a study is being done going back to 1973. The Board is considering the addition of a third collection each year for the fund pending analysis of the medical claims from the last three years. Mr. McDonough mentioned the possibility of having a fundraising event to coincide with World Priest Day. An APC member suggested combining medical plans for clergy and lay personnel.

**APC Social Justice Committee**

Pat Dineen, chair of the committee, reported that they have met several times since the last APC meeting in May. Guided by Cardinal Sean and Fr. Brian Hehir, the committee initially focused on the issue of immigration in the Boston area. The committee's goals are to understand and promote Catholic teaching on social justice, to identify local issues and to facilitate action on priority issues. The committee has contacted several Archdiocesan offices, including the Office for Cultural Diversity to develop a database of social justice programs in the Archdiocese. Some parishes are already involved in offering ESL programs, refugee relocation services and mentors for political refugees. Of the 40,000 refugees accepted into the U.S. last year, the Catholic Church helps resettle about 20%. The committee would like to bring awareness of social justice issues to every parish. Modes for doing this might include courses for adults on social justice, incorporating social justice teachings into religious education for children and an annual social

justice convocation. Other resources mentioned included Catholic Charities, the Boston Cares website, campus outreach to international students, the USCCB, Catholic Relief Services and Caritas International.

### **Pastoral Planning Discussion**

Tom Nutall presented highlights from two columns he wrote on Pastoral Planning for the parishes to which he is linked. He suggested that neighboring parishes look at sharing religious education resources, holding a common Confirmation retreat, planning social events together and having priests visit each other's parishes.

Holy Family Parish in Concord was mentioned as a successful merger of two parishes which occurred four years ago. The current parish staff consists of one priest, a business manager, youth minister and pastoral associate. This seems to be working pretty well although there is still some infighting within the faith formation office. The situation of Gate of Heaven and St. Bridget parishes in South Boston was described quite differently. These churches are four blocks apart and each has a school whose enrollment is declining.. One pastor is assigned to these churches assisted by two pastoral associates and a senior priest. Parishioners feel strongly about maintaining their separate facilities.

In the discussion which followed several suggestions/comments were offered:

- In some collaboratives the priests work together but the laity will not.
- In other parishes it is a priest who holds up the collaborative process.
- Assign one priest to two parishes and let the parishioners vote whether to merge or remain separate.
- The Archdiocese needs to support collaboration by having facilitators available.
- Fr. George Evans (St. Julia's, Weston) is developing pastoral planning expertise and training others.
- The National Ministry Summit (Jan. 08) discussed emerging models of parish leadership.
- Louisville, Ky. and Cleveland, Oh. have very progressive parish leadership models.
- Pastoral planning must be focused on the mission of the Church.
- Parish Life and Leadership Committee should report again to APC.
- Pastoral planning must be rooted in prayer and building the relationships takes time.
- Parishes are different, but the same.
- The Spirit invites us to an unanticipated future.

### **What Do I Need to Hear?**

- One member praised a Respect Life DVD and advocated widespread distribution of it.
- Another suggested that Cardinal Sean supplement his communications to the people of the Archdiocese by offering a pastoral note as Advent begins.
- Cardinal Sean responded to a favorable comment about the new pastoral center by saying that he found it helpful having all the Archdiocesan offices in one place.
- Someone noted that this week's blog photo was wonderful – Cardinal Sean's high-five with a student.
- There was a suggestion to consolidate rectories to free up cash.

- The good news of the Archdiocese should be promoted such as Cardinal Sean's unprecedented efforts at financial transparency.
- Reprint the *Pilot's* interview with Cardinal Sean about his first five years in Boston for those who do not receive the *Pilot*.
- Effective action with respect to the Clergy Funds was appreciated and should help to lift the morale of priests.
- Advocate for social values in the up-coming elections.

### **Cardinal Sean's Remarks**

Cardinal Sean thanked Sr. Marian and the APC members for their work. He reported that the \$35M debt to the Knights of Columbus which had been used for operating expenses was now repaid. The \$40M deficiency in the Caritas budget has been resolved, the lay pension fund is stable and now the Clergy Funds are being addressed. Bi-Centennial celebrations have been going well. On October 1<sup>st</sup> the Bethany Chapel will open at the pastoral center. The Gift Shop will also open soon. The Pro-Life Walk will take place on October 5<sup>th</sup> followed by Mass at the Cathedral. Fr. Matt Williams is planning a Halloween Mass in the North End for young people and the Vocation Office is working to promote vocation awareness in our parishes. The closing of the Bi-Centennial Year will take place on the feast of Christ the King.

Fr. Kiley is heading a committee to review the religious formation texts used in the Archdiocese and also identify best practices in religious education. Msgr. Fay is leading a study of formation programs for catechists and lay ministers throughout the country. The Presbyteral Council may adopt the "Leave the Light On" program conducted in Brooklyn and Washington, DC during Lent. Churches publicize that they are leaving the lights on certain nights to invite people to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation.

The Arise Program is moving ahead. Some parishes need benefactors to help cover the costs of the required materials. Hopefully, participants will become more involved with the life of the Church. Some dioceses have reported an increase in collections as a result of the program.

Cardinal Sean is pleased that the Social Justice Committee has set as its first task the education of Catholics about the rich history of social justice teaching in the Church. If Catholics understand the commitment to human dignity and welfare as part of their Christian vocation, we can have a significant impact on society. He has posted information about religious freedom and concern for the common good on his blog for people to consider as they prepare to vote in November.

### **Closing Remarks**

The South region will hold their Bi-Centennial celebration Sunday, September 11<sup>th</sup> at Sacred Heart School in Kingston. Sister Marian invited everyone to a short tour of the Pastoral Center following the meeting.

Cardinal Sean closed the meeting with a prayer at 9:03PM.