

Archdiocesan Pastoral Council
May 6, 2010
Summary

Opening Remarks

Sr. Marian Batho opened the meeting at 6:30PM. Cardinal Sean is unable to be at tonight's meeting because he is in Florida giving the commencement address at Ave Maria College.

Opening Remarks

Fr. Rich Erikson announced that the Archdiocese has signed an agreement with Steward Healthcare LLC for the management of the Caritas hospitals. The agreement calls for Steward to adhere to Catholic principles, maintain the hospital chapels and continue to employ Catholic chaplains.

Draft of New Policy on Funeral Rites

Amy Strickland, Archdiocesan canon lawyer and member of the Tribunal, presented highlights from the new Policy on Funeral Rites which was made available (online) to the APC in advance of the meeting.

Fr. Erikson clarified that a person who has concerns about the protocol followed during a particular funeral should speak with the pastor before bringing the matter to the local Vicar Forane.

Continued Conversation on the Public Disclosure Project

An APC member recommended that the Archdiocese reconsider its decision to release the names of priests credibly accused of sexual misconduct with minors. Fr. John Connolly, Director of the project, felt that the Church could not move forward without publicly acknowledging the full extent of the problem.

The release of names will probably not occur until the fall. Plans are being made to support the survivors and their families after the announcement. There will also be outreach efforts to accused priests and the families of accused priests who are now deceased. Meetings will be held prior to the announcement with personnel in the parishes where abuse occurred so that they will be prepared to answer questions from the media and the public.

Fr. Connolly predicts that reaction to the disclosure will be mixed. No matter how the announcement is greeted, the approach of the Archdiocese will be one of humility and repentance. An APC member advised that the announcement clearly distinguish between pedophilia and homosexuality.

Consultations about the release of names have now taken place with the Presbyteral Council, the APC (twice), Archdiocesan Cabinet, regional bishops, the New England bishops, and the Vicars Forane.

Conversation on Archdiocesan Priorities

Fr. David Couturier, the Director of Pastoral Planning, asked the council members to write down two or three things they felt the Cardinal needed to know. The comments included:

- Building vibrant parishes should be a top priority.
- Catholic schools should be more affordable.
- Improve communication (authentic dialogue!) between the Pastoral Center and parishes, the Cardinal and priests, and the Cardinal and the APC.
- Develop educational programs on parish governance and effective management of parish services for the ‘one priest per parish’ model.
- There should be a workshop for new APC members to prepare them for working with their linked parishes.
- There is much inconsistency among Parish Pastoral Councils. The role of these councils needs to be clarified for both pastors and PPC members.
- The APC is not being supported by the Presbyteral Council.
- The APC needs to receive follow-up information about feedback it has given. This will help minimize the sense of disconnect between meetings.
- A day of retreat would help the APC focus on spirituality.
- The APC should meet more frequently for working sessions or for specific tasks.
- Radical change is needed in the priesthood.
- A long-time APC member noted that angry voices were often heard at early (2004) APC meetings. Recent meetings seem like a love fest in comparison. He suggested that the APC needs to challenge itself again and develop new goals.
- A committee of laity and clergy should be formed to explore ways to resolve the concerns of a growing number of Catholics who believe in the articles of faith but are frustrated by the internal problems of the organizational Church.
- One person expressed surprise that Catholics would leave the Church after hearing the news of clergy sex abuse in Europe. The recent media reports seem to her a small thing compared to all the good work of the Church.

Closing Remarks

Fr. Erikson voiced his appreciation for the comments offered at the meeting. He noted that the Steering Committee of the Presbyteral Council meets monthly to review what has happened as a result of the previous meeting and that they provide this information at the next council meeting. It may be helpful for the APC to also receive such a report. He promised to look into this.

Cardinal Sean has completed the ten vicariate meetings to discuss the proposed pastoral priorities with priests. A meeting on May 26th will focus on the next steps in articulating a vision for the Archdiocese.

The next APC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 30th. The December meeting will be held on Saturday, December 4th beginning at noon.

Fr. Erikson ended the meeting with prayer at 8:56PM and wished everyone a safe trip home.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Robotham
Recording Secretary