

# **Archdiocesan Pastoral Council**

## **September 10, 2009**

### **Summary**

Sr. Marian Batho opened the meeting at 6:30PM. She introduced several guests attending the meeting: Fr. Tom Foley, Secretary for Parish Life and Leadership; Fr. David Couturier, Director of Pastoral Planning; Janet Benestad and Mary Ann McLaughlin from the Office of Spiritual Life; Sr. Honora Nolty, OP and Sr. Terry Rickard, OP, both from Renew International.

#### **Opening Remarks**

Cardinal Sean spoke of his recent trip to Cuba. The new seminary for the 65 men studying there is almost complete, an effort of ten years. This year the two seminaries in Boston have a combined enrollment of 100 students. The Cardinal expressed his optimism about the efforts to strengthen the Catholic schools in the Archdiocese. The new South Boston Academy opened in September and a new peer-to-peer ministry program, FOCUS, is being piloted at MIT this year.

#### **Social Justice Convocation**

Pat Dineen asked that APC members publicize the Convocation in their assigned parishes. Volunteers are needed on the day of the convocation. Fr. Bryan Hehir will be the keynote speaker followed by two sets of breakout sessions on various social justice issues as well as a screening of the film, "Scenes from a Parish".

#### **Update on the Arise Program**

Sister Terry Rickard distributed a report on the status of the Arise Program. Currently more than half of the parishes in the Archdiocese sponsor Arise. The program this fall focuses on social justice. RENEW is working with the APC to make the convocation a success in October. Season Four of Arise next Lent features a specific outreach to youth and young adults. Season Five, next fall, is designed to target alienated Catholics and "sometimers". There is already discussion about continued efforts for "beyond Arise".

#### **Parish Life and Leadership Committee**

A summary report was distributed by Herb Lynch, chair of this APC committee. Notably, significant misconceptions exist about the role of a Parish Pastoral Council (PPC). The committee proposed the following recommendations:

- The directive to PPCs of developing an overall mission plan for the parish needs to be explicitly promoted by the vicar foranes, regional bishops and the Archdiocese.
- The schedule of PPC meetings should be published in the bulletin and on the parish website, together with the names and contact information of PPC members.
- Meeting minutes should be available online and on the parish bulletin board.
- PPCs within a vicariate should meet at least annually to discuss common goals and plans, foster cooperation among parishes and to reflect prayerfully upon the mission of the Church.
- The process of selecting PPC members should be open and inclusive, guided by the Holy Spirit.

- Candidates should undertake a vibrant, contemplative discernment process and understand the commitment of time and talent required as a member of the PPC. Pastors may need to appoint additional members in order to ensure representation of the full diversity of the parish.
- The guidelines for PPCs should be reviewed, possibly revised and republished.
- Revive the practice of the annual Archdiocesan PPC convocation to promote sharing of resources and best practices and to foster a sense of who we are as the Church of Boston.
- Establish a commission to more fully investigate the status of PPCs.

Following Herb's remarks, APC members gathered by region to discuss the report. The following comments were offered.

All regions described the report as good or excellent.

Pastors need guidance from higher authority about the role of the PPC.

Mandate ongoing education of parish pastoral council members, including the pastor.

Provide formation for PPC members.

Vicariates should convene meetings of its PPCs (or a subset of each one) at least annually.

Establish regular communication between PPC and PFC. Designate an official liaison.

Update the 1989 guidelines.

Clarify how agenda is to be set.

Specify requirements for the regular evaluation of PPC work.

Fr. David Couturier, Director of the Office of Pastoral Planning, remarked that the current PPC guidelines were out of date. Among other things, specifications are needed for the management of PPCs that do not work well. New guidelines will be part of the pro-active culture of planning he envisions for the Archdiocese.

Cardinal Sean would like PPCs to address the issues of how to get people back to church and how to instill in Catholics a sense of ownership in the church. PPC members should work together to discover what God's will is for us.

### **Closing Remarks**

The Cardinal expressed his gratitude for all the work of the Social Justice Committee and Arise team in organizing the Social Justice Convocation. He reported that 1400 people attended the recent Clergy Recognition Dinner, making it a very successful fundraising event. In November, the USCCB expects to release a pastoral letter on marriage. Here in Boston, an excellent new Marriage Preparation Course has been developed. As Lent begins in 2010, the Archdiocese will participate in the "Leave the Light On" initiative offering the sacrament of Reconciliation on Wednesday evenings.

Cardinal Sean closed the meeting with prayer at 9:05PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Suzanne Robotham  
Recording Secretary