

Archdiocesan Pastoral Council

March 11, 2010

Summary

Opening Remarks

Sr. Marian Batho opened the meeting at 6:30PM.

Cardinal Sean described his recent trip to Haiti as a member of the USSCB commission assessing the needs of the people following the earthquake. Approximately 60,000 people are now living in tent cities set up by Catholic Relief Services and other aid organizations. \$2 million has been contributed by churches in Boston.

Report on Marriage Preparation

Kari Colella, Mary Finnegan and an implementation team have developed a new marriage prep program entitled "Transformed in Love". The program seeks to catechize engaged couples and help them develop the fundamental skills for building healthy marriages. It includes a 'teaching Mass' that many participants rate as one of the best parts of the two-day program. Surveys of pilot participants indicate a strong positive response to the program as well as renewed interest (76%) in their Catholic faith.

A training program for priests, deacons and parish Marriage Prep teams will be offered this summer. Council members are welcome to serve as volunteers.

Public Disclosure Project

Fr. John Connolly, Special Assistant to the Cardinal, directs the Public Disclosure Project, also known as 'Healing the Church of Boston'. Fr. John explained that this project is conducting the necessary research to compile an accurate list of Archdiocesan priests involved in sexual misconduct with minors. Twenty-seven other U.S. dioceses have already released the names of priests known to be credibly accused.

Presently, any new allegations of clerical sexual misconduct involving minors results in the immediate removal from ministry of the accused priest. The Archdiocese must report the alleged incident to the local law enforcement agency, making this public information.

There will be five categories for disclosure:

1. Priests credibly accused, cases concluded canonically or criminally;
 2. Cases concluded by voluntary laicization (priest appeals to Vatican for release from vows);
 3. Deceased priests, credibly accused;
 4. Publicly accused priests (living or deceased), case still in progress; and
 5. Deceased priests, publicly accused, cases incomplete (cannot be verified).
- Several groups need to be consulted before the list of names is released: the survivors, accused priests who are living, and the families of the accused priests.
 - Meetings will be held for parish personnel and key religion reporters prior to the disclosure so that they can respond accurately.

- It's likely that disclosure will happen in June, however the Presbyteral Council has not yet heard this report and their feedback is important.
- There will be an introduction by the Cardinal followed by stories from survivors and their counselors and perhaps from a few accused and guilty priests.
- 155 names will appear, of which 40 may be new names. None of these will be members of religious orders because the members of religious orders are not accountable to the Cardinal.
- For priests who have been wrongly accused, there is a public announcement when they return to ministry and usually their parishioners, and former parishioners, are very supportive of them.
- Unfortunately, this may not be the end of this problem because not all victims are ready to come forward now. For example, if an abuser was a friend of the victim's now elderly parents, that victim may wait until their parents are gone.
- A council member suggested finding a new name for this project, because "Healing the Church of Boston" puts the focus on the Church, rather than on the victims where it really belongs.
- If the abuser is deceased, the investigation requires a preponderance of evidence confirming very serious complaints and all the facts must be in concordance. Fact finding is difficult because the Archdiocese lacks the authority to subpoena witnesses or conduct trials.

Closing Remarks

Cardinal Sean thanked Fr. Connolly and his team for their work on this difficult issue. Then he gave an update on recent Archdiocesan events. The Lenten program, 'The Light is On for You', is going well. The Women's Catholic Conference, held at the Cathedral this year, was a big success and the Men's Conference is coming up on April 18th. Preparations are already underway for next year's 'Catholics Come Home' program. A welcome result of the Arise program is the outreach to many inactive Catholics and also the development of new lay leadership in parishes.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Robotham
Recording Secretary