

Friday, November 11, 2022

DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by Bishop Taylor who led the opening prayer.

In attendance: Bishop Anthony B. Taylor, Fr. John Connell, Dcn. Matt Glover, Mr. Dennis Lee, Sr. Mickey Espinoza, MCP, Ms. Anabel Garcia, Mr. Alan Halman, Sr. Cecilia Nguyen, OSB, Dr. Karen Hollenbeck, Mr. Adrián Dominguez, Mr. Jeff Hines, Mr. Paul James, and Mr. Roberto Martínez.

Not in attendance: Mr. Greg Wolfe, Dcn. Steve Mallett and Ms. Alma Stewart.

Review and approval of previous meeting's minutes: The minutes of the August 12, 2022, meeting were approved by acclamation.

Old Business

Surveys on the wellbeing of Priests – Paul James, Chair

Paul James provided copies of “The National Catholic Priesthood Study” by *The Catholic Project* of the Catholic University of America and a local survey of Catholic Priests in Arkansas. The national study does not provide a breakdown of data by diocese which was the reason for the local survey. Paul said his law firm assisted with conducting the anonymous and confidential local survey. Bishop Taylor expressed interest in the Diocesan Pastoral Council members comparing the data in both documents to identify any common or different issues as possibilities to address. There was some discussion about the specific issue of “burnout” and concern for the wellbeing of the priests in the Diocese of Little Rock.

New Business

Synod on Synodality Topics for Discussion – Bishop Anthony B. Taylor

Bishop Taylor provided a synthesis of three (3) synod topics that were discussed earlier in the week by the Presbyteral Council: Rural Parishes, Youth and Young Adult Faith Formation, and Judgment versus Love. The Diocesan Pastoral Council members had their own discussion about each topic.

Rural Parishes: Comments included that some rural parishes feel abandoned, not all small parishes are rural, parishes in the lower southwest part of the diocese sometimes feel uninformed, and cultural competency is important in the orientation for a priest being assigned to a rural parish.

Youth and Young Adult Faith Formation: Comments included that young adults need diocesan retreat experiences, also high quality and professional faith formation and training for leaders, and work and sports compete for a young person's time on weekends.

Jeff Hines, Director of Faith Formation, shared information about Catechist training and certification that can be found on the Faith Formation Office's website: <http://learn.dolr.org>. He also explained the Formation Days that will take place on six (6) Saturdays at different parishes.

The dates can be found on the Calendar of Events on the Diocese of Little Rock's website. The first Parish Catechist Formation Day will be Saturday, January 28 at St. Benedict Church, Subiaco.

Other comments from the Diocesan Pastoral Council members included the need to be flexible with more than one way of doing things like retreat experiences, and mini retreats in parishes are worth pursuing especially since most Spanish-speaking youth are also English-speaking.

Judgment versus Love: Comments included this has to do with people feeling judged because of their circumstances, also some say they want to hear and be taught the truth while others think the church can be too strict or rigid. The idea is to proclaim the truth and be pastoral.

Future Agenda Items

These can be sent to Paul James, Chair, Bishop Taylor, or Maria Velazquez in the Bishop's office.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Friday, January 27 at 11 a.m. at St. John Catholic Center in the large meeting room in Fletcher Hall.

Closing Prayer and Blessing

Bishop Taylor closed the meeting with the Lord's Prayer and a blessing at 1:00 pm.

Respectfully recorded by:

Dennis Lee, Chancellor for Administrative Affairs