



**Archdiocesan Pastoral Council
Feb. 26, 2022
Minutes
Zoom Meeting**

Present: Archbishop William E. Lori, Mr. Richard Babbitt, Ms. Chelsea Baranoski, Ms. Anita Cain, Ms. Elaine McCubbin, Ms. Stephanie Clancy, Ms. Sara Miller, Ms. Gloria Olivares, Ms. Consuelo Petro, Ms. Camilla Rawe, Mr. Larry Simmons, Mr. Alexander Wright

Excused: Ms. Uju Okwesili, Mr. Jesus Eusebio Perez

Guests: Bishop Bruce Lewandowski, Ms. Jenny Kraska, Ms. Yvonne Wenger, Deacon Christopher Yeung

Archbishop Lori called the meeting to order shortly after 10 a.m. He thanked the members for their service and led the group in prayer for peace in Ukraine. He updated the Council on the Archdiocese's efforts to support Ukrainians, including by his visit to St. Michael the Archangel on Eastern Avenue in Baltimore and donations for humanitarian purposes from the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the Knights of Columbus.

Topics Addressed:

I. Mental Health First Aid training:

Yvonne Wenger, the Archdiocese's director of community affairs, gave members an overview of the Archbishop's Mental Wellness Initiative and the effort to train 1,000 people throughout the Archdiocese in Mental Health First Aid by June 30. The training provides a 3-year certification that allows participants to spot the warnings signs of mental distress and substance abuse and respond appropriately. Ms. Wenger asked the Council for advice and guidance on how to get parishioners and church staff signed up.

Members Responded:

- Circulate information among parish councils and church bulletins. Priests can also make an announcement from the pulpit.
- Make sure school communities are notified and offered opportunities for training.
- Initiative is very meaningful given how disconnected some individuals feel and the dramatic rise in overdose deaths.
- Youth ministers should be approached specifically about this opportunity, given the acute need among young people.
- Archbishop Lori advised that parish business managers are a good channel for information, as well as the Emmaus teams.
- Archbishop Lori acknowledged that while this training deadline represents a short-term goal, the initiative itself is long-term. Mental health challenges have been prevalent and growing before the

pandemic and only made worse by it. This initiative is one of the intersections of faith and life. If we can truly evangelize, we must meet the needs of our parishioners.

- Members requested information to help find more volunteer instructors and spread the word about the trainings in their networks.

II. Legislative update

Jenny Kraska, executive director of the Maryland Catholic Conference, provided an update on legislation being considered by the General Assembly. She also briefed the Council on the Archbishop's recent visit to Annapolis.

- More than 3,000 bills have been introduced during the session and more are expected. The Conference team has been very busy as they review the bills and offer testimony.
- The Conference is closely tracking a number of abortion-related bills, including a proposed constitutional amendment that, if approved, would appear on the ballot in the fall. It would enshrine abortion in the state constitution. Currently, no state has taken such an action, but others are considering similar legislation in light of the Supreme Court's consideration on Roe.
- The virtual advocacy day turned out significant numbers, including 2,000 people who contacted their legislators on abortion-related legislation. Other issues included juvenile justice and other matters of life.
- The Conference hosted informational sessions on environmental justice, featuring Archbishop Lori and Cardinal Gregory. This was well-received by the public and legislators. A number of climate-related bills have been introduced.
- Archbishop Lori also headlined a webinar on juvenile justice, timed to coincide with a legislative package on the topic.
- Redistricting is another big issue this session.
- While there has been a steady movement over the years to pass physician-assisted suicide in Maryland over recent years, so far this session, there has not been movement on the topic. Efforts are expected to continue at some point.

Members Responded:

- Discussion about the status of individual abortion-related bills and what each would do.
- Chair of the Bishops' Pro-life Committee, Archbishop Lori offered comments about the national landscape related to abortion. Maryland has some of the country's most expansive access to abortion.
- The Catholic Church offers extensive compassionate care for mother and child – at all stages of life, including Walking with Moms in Need, prolife pregnancy centers and Project Rachel.
- Funds for Catholic schools, including through the Boost scholarship fund.
- Parishes that want to get involved can go to the Conference's website to find a toolkit to guide their advocacy.

III. Members' terms and interest in renewing

Archbishop Lori expressed gratitude for the service of each member of the Council and encouraged each to consider whether they would like to continue serving. Yvonne Wenger asked what advice the members would offer to generate applicants for the Council when the new term begins in June.

Members Responded:

- Work with parish-level pastoral councils to get input on recruiting members.
- Advertise in parish bulletins, social media and, importantly, by personally inviting people to apply.

- The shift to Zoom during COVID has made it much easier for people from more remote areas to join.
- One of the most valuable features of the current Council is the diversity in ages, backgrounds and locations.
- Archbishop Lori encourages the Emmaus teams to also be involved in recruiting applicants.

IV. Synod update

Bishop Bruce offered an update on the Synod process. So far, 35 parishes have provided feedback. A great number of people are engaged in the process, including Bishop Denis Madden who is reaching out to ecumenical groups. Universities, hospitals and seminaries are being engaged. In March, regional consultations will be underway. He compared the process to panning for gold, by continuing to go back to the river and offer every opportunity for people to engage. Some people have been concerned by censorship and how much the feedback will have to be consolidated. The final report to the Holy See can only be 10 pages and will offer a thematic summary of the findings and feedback.

Members Responded:

- Grateful for the update and awaiting further information.
- Bishop Bruce said the final document will be vetted by different groups of people that represent the Archdiocese.
- Archbishop Lori stressed that the final report will consolidate the results by themes. You cannot go from idea to implementation. You need discernment.
- Parishes can begin using the feedback to implement changes before report is finalized.

V. Open discussion

Members offered discussion on items for the April 30 meeting, including an update on the Journey toward Racial Justice, a full update on the Synod and more information on priestly formation.

VI. Future meeting dates

Yvonne Wenger announced dates for the Council's quarterly meetings.

- Saturday, July 16, 10 a.m. to noon
- Saturday, September 17, 10 a.m. to noon
- Saturday, November 5, 10 a.m. to noon
- Saturday, February 18, 2023, 10 a.m. to noon