

**January 17, 2020**

**DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL**

**MEETING MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m. in the Biltz Room in Morris Hall at St. John Catholic Center and Fr. John Connell led the council in an opening prayer.

**In attendance:** Bishop Anthony B. Taylor, Paul James, Lloyd Cambre, Adrian Dominguez, Dcn. Matt Glover, Dennis Lee, Dr. Karen Hollenbeck, Cynthia Solis, Alma Stewart, Fr. John Connell, VG, Sr. Mary Clare Bezner, Greg Wolfe, and Jeff Hines, Chair.

**Not in attendance:** Sr. Mickey Espinoza, Roberto Martinez and Dcn. Efrain Vargas.

**Review and Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the November 8, 2019 meeting were accepted as written.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS:** Jeff Hines and Cynthia Solis were nominated and approved by unanimous acclamation to serve another year as the Chair and Vice-Chair.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Church Security:** Lloyd Cambre reported on the plan that is in progress to serve as a template for parish security. The next step is to meet with Jim Driedric, Diocesan Property Services Manager, and make contacts in parishes. Lloyd pointed out that the current *Arkansas Catholic* editorial page had a cartoon on church security, illustrating that this is a timely topic.

Bishop Taylor said there was discussion on the topic of security at yesterday's Presbyteral Council meeting where it was mentioned that security concerns vary from parish to parish. Violence is not the only threat. Bad weather, such as a tornado, was an example given. Lloyd said local law enforcement is willing to help with security and safety advice, and he recommended engaging their services, especially for rural parishes with limited resources.

Fr. John said there needs to be a balance between awareness and not creating a sense of fear. The goal is to create a sense of security. Bishop Taylor said we cannot protect against everything. Sr. Mary Clare said it would be helpful for people to know what to do. Jeff said "Church Security" will remain a topic under Old Business.

**Young Adult Ministry:** Cynthia Solis reported on a meeting of Young Adult Catholics at St. John Catholic Church in Russellville in November. Eighteen (18) young adults from different places gathered to share what they were all doing in their parishes and to plan for the future. They discussed successes and areas for improvement; faith-sharing, mentoring, Bible studies, theology speakers, etc. There are several new ministry groups getting organized in some of their parishes. Fr. Jon Miskin, Associate Pastor at St. Raphael in Springdale, and Liz Tingquist, Diocesan Director for Catholic Youth and Campus Ministry, were also present to advise. The group received permission to create a Commission for Young

Adult Ministry and they worked on a mission statement that will help guide their efforts. They also elected four (4) members from their group of eighteen (18) to serve on the commission.

Fr. John Connell shared his vision for the Commission for Young Adult Ministry of having a diocesan-wide event to promote community and friendship among young adult Catholics, providing resources, leadership, and programming, including a retreat. Fr. John said he would like to present his ideas at the next Presbyteral Council for further discussion.

The next meeting of the Commission for Young Adult Ministry will be in February.

Lloyd Cambre mentioned that a new Knights of Columbus Council had been formed at UCA in Conway. He asked how the young adults in this new council could become more involved in young adult ministry, and he and Cynthia agreed to talk further. The discussion on this topic closed with Fr. John saying that Fr. Miskin is looking for strong leaders and he has sent an email to priests asking them to identify candidates with strong leadership ability for the Catholic young adult ministry group (ages 19-39).

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils:** Dcn. Matt Glover, Chancellor for Canonical Affairs, reported on parish pastoral and finance councils. He said he often receives calls asking about policies, procedures, etc., related to parish councils. He said in 2017 new policies for parish pastoral and finance councils were issued by Bishop Taylor and circulated.

As background, Dcn. Matt said that previously quarterly training was provided for new council members, but this was discontinued after the diocesan staff member who conducted the training passed away. After Dcn. Matt became Chancellor, he started doing training on an ad hoc basis as requested. This past summer he hosted a training session in Little Rock and filmed it. This training video can be viewed on the Chancery Office's page on the diocesan website, [www.dolr.org/chancery](http://www.dolr.org/chancery). It has been circulated and made available to parishes. It is not password protected, and anyone can view it. It is an overview of the policies, however, it is only in English, which is a weakness.

Dcn. Matt said he was open to ideas for how to improve training for the parishes, and this was followed by a discussion during which some of the following comments were made.

The council structure at parishes parallels the structure used for diocesan councils: there is both a "pastoral council" and a "finance council." The right name to use is "parish pastoral council" as opposed to simply the "parish council." A misunderstanding that occurs from time to time is when council members view their role as more than advisory and consultative, and more like a "board of directors" that run their parish. The proper role of a parish's "finance council" and "pastoral council" that they share equally is to advise the pastor on matters of parish life on which they are consulted.

Within the diocesan guidelines there is some flexibility for how pastors engage their councils. Options for membership include by election, by appointment, or by a combination of the two. Some really small parishes use a town hall format after Mass. The discussion concluded with everyone being encouraged to view the training video and encourage others to do the same. Again, the link to it is [www.dolr.org/chancery](http://www.dolr.org/chancery).

**Diaconate Formation Class:** Dcn. Tim Costello, Minister to Deacons, shared the following information. The Presbyteral Council at their meeting yesterday discussed starting another diaconate formation class as soon as possible. Bishop Taylor said the plan is to have another class in formation right after the current class is ordained to the diaconate in June 2022. There are 130 parishes and missions in our diocese. Fifty (50) have deacons and eighty (80) do not, so there will be an emphasis on trying to identify potential candidates in parishes without a deacon. This will involve current deacons visiting these parishes to explain the ministry of a deacon and encourage potential candidates to consider whether they might be called to serve as a deacon. The process will begin with a discernment period in 2020 that all candidates must go through prior to making an application. The application process takes about nine (9) months to complete, and the total formation time leading up to ordination is about six (6) years. Bishop Taylor reiterated that the focus will be on parishes without deacons.

Dcn. Tim explained that the current diaconate formation class is split into two (2) groups: one in English and one in Spanish. The English group meets at St. John Catholic Center and the Spanish group meets at Subiaco.

The discussion concluded with council members at a parish without a deacon being encouraged to talk with their pastor about how they might help identify potential candidates. Fr. John Connell suggested identifying lay men who are active and close to the Lord, and asking them if they have ever thought about becoming a deacon. He said there is a role for lay people in helping identify these candidates. Bishop Taylor also mentioned that anyone who starts the diaconate formation program is told up front that they could be assigned to a parish other than their home parish if there is a more pressing need.

**BISHOP TAYLOR'S REMARKS:** Bishop Taylor commented on the following items that have come before the Diocesan Pastoral Council in previous meetings.

#### **Catholic Arkansas Sharing Appeal (CASA) – An update on the new targets for the parishes.**

Bishop Taylor reported that the Presbyteral Council supported going forward with the new parish targets that have been revised for the first time in ten (10) years. The targets are more realistic because they are based on best three (3) of the past five (5) years for a parish, excluding any exceptional situations. The Catholic Arkansas Sharing Appeal begins the first weekend in February, and this year's audio message from Bishop Taylor will also be provided in a video format with photos of ministries funded by CASA.

#### **One Church Project**

For the first time an application was sent to all the parishes. This will give any parish that applies the opportunity to provide more information about their need. The One Church recipient selected for next year (that begins this fall) will come from the returned applications.

#### **St. Boniface School in Fort Smith that Closed**

St. Boniface is leasing their school building to the Community School of the Arts. They provide art programs that are funded by fees, grants and donations. St. Edward School in Little Rock that closed could use a similar type tenant.

#### **Catholic Radio Station for Central Arkansas**

This was discussed in yesterday's Presbyteral Council meeting. The diocese produced Catholic radio programming years ago that was expensive for its small reach. There are other options, such as podcasts, so it was decided that the diocese will not pursue a Catholic radio station.

**Upcoming Ordination of Bishop-elect Francis I. Malone in Shreveport**

His episcopal ordination will be at the Shreveport Convention Center so that anyone can attend, including people from Arkansas. Everyone is invited, welcome and encouraged to attend.

**Ad Limina Visit to the Vatican**

Bishop Taylor will leave tomorrow for his Ad Limina visit to the Vatican. *Ad Limina* means "to the threshold" and it is a pilgrimage to the four major basilicas in Rome, including a meeting with Pope Francis with the other bishops in our region because there are too many bishops for him to have an individual meeting with each one.

**Future Agenda Items:** Please submit any suggestions for future agenda items to Bishop Taylor, Jeff Hines or Maria Velazquez.

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting originally scheduled for Friday, April 24 at 11 a.m. at St. John Catholic Center in Little Rock has been **rescheduled for Friday, May 1 at 11 a.m. This will be a video conference and login information will be sent to all council members in advance.**

Bishop Taylor thanked everyone for their time, and the meeting was closed with everyone praying the Lord's Prayer together followed by his blessing.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Jeff Hines, Chair of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, and Dennis Lee, Chancellor for Administrative Affairs