

January 26, 2021

DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m. via video conference by Adrian Dominguez, Chair, and Fr. John Connell opened the meeting with prayer.

In attendance: Bishop Anthony B. Taylor, Sr. Mary Clare Bezner, Lloyd Cambre, Fr. John Connell, VG, Adrian Dominguez, Sr. Mickey Espinoza, Dcn. Matt Glover, Dr. Karen Hollenbeck, Paul James, Dennis Lee, Roberto Martinez, Cynthia Solis, Alma Stewart, Greg Wolfe and Fr. Erik Pohlmeier.

Not in attendance: Jeff Hines and Dcn. Efrain Vargas.

Review and Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the November 13, 2020 meeting were accepted as written by acclamation.

OLD BUSINESS

Update on Latin Rite Parish in NWA

Fr. John Connell reported that he filled in for Bishop Taylor and blessed Our Lady of Sorrows Church in Latin. It was well attended and the people are very happy. The church is small and there is one Mass for now.

Confirmation Modifications

Bishop Taylor said all is fine. He is working on an addendum that is not ready yet. The goal is to shorten the time everyone is in a common space. All priests have been very supportive.

Update on Diaconate Formation Program – Fr. Erik Pohlmeier, Director

Fr. Pohlmeier said the current group of aspirants are making progress and working on homiletics. Ordination is anticipated in June of 2022 for 37 English and 11 Spanish candidates. They are adjusting to meeting in person with the Covid safeguards in place. Dc. Mark Verkamp is the new Associate for Diaconate Formation. His primary focus is organizing the next diaconate formation class. He will conduct informational classes this fall in four or five locations around the state. A nine (9) month discernment period will begin in January.

Update on Parish Emergency Plans

Lloyd Cambre said the next step is to get together some individuals from NW Arkansas to join his team and come up with a layout/template for an emergency plan that will address tornados, fires, etc. The goal is to get something into the hands of the priests and their parishes. He asked Fr. John Connell if he could provide a name or two from his parish to join the team. Dcn. Matt Glover suggested a person he knows who works for the City of Little Rock and has experience with marathons, crises planning, etc.

New Business

Update on Seminarian Program – Bishop Taylor

Bishop Taylor reported there are 29 seminarians: Four are in their 4th year at St. Meinrad; 11 are studying theology at Assumption in San Antonio; and 14 are college level at the House of Formation. Five are scheduled to be ordained in May in Little Rock and they prefer to be ordained together. They

are looking at the Barton Coliseum to accommodate everyone who would like to attend because physical distancing can be observed.

Two seminarians are to be ordained transitional deacons in May plus possibly another one in the fall. Currently one person has applied for the seminary this fall and three others are in discernment. The "Come and See" weekend that usually occurs between Christmas and New Year's was cancelled because of Covid. This has been a difficult year for recruitment. Many youth activities such as "Search" have been cancelled or have been very limited.

Fr. Jeff Hebert is the Prefect at the House of Formation and also the Assistant Director of Vocations. Msgr. Friend has been Vocations Director for 16 years.

A question was asked about an updated poster of seminarians. The answer was that it is usually updated once a year right after school starts. There is also a poster for religious vocations.

Update on CASA 2020 – Greg Wolfe

Greg reported good news for CASA in 2020. The goal was \$2 million and Catholics in the diocese donated \$2,059,321. The year before \$1,925,000 was raised through CASA.

One Church parish 2020 update and new for 2021 – Greg Wolfe

Greg Wolfe reported this is the third year for a diocesan-wide boost to help a smaller struggling parish. St. Bartholomew in Little Rock is this year's One Church parish. The goal is to help them build a new parish hall. So far they are off to a good start with \$35,639 in One Church donations. The first year \$163,000 was raised for St. Luke in Warren. The second year \$108,000 was raised for Holy Spirit in Hamburg. Greg said he hopes at least \$100,000 will be raised for St. Bartholomew.

Bishop Taylor said the One Church recipient for 2021 that will begin in the fall has not yet been chosen. The Presbyteral Council advises him. Factors Bishop Taylor said they take into account are need and timing. St. Bartholomew's parish hall project, for example, was ready to launch and close to having enough funds.

Canon law on lectors and acolytes – Bishop Taylor

Bishop Taylor said that for centuries lectors and acolytes were stepping stones to the priesthood. The diaconate remained as separate and not leading to the priesthood after extensive preparation. Pope Francis is looking for ways to involve more people which is why women and men can be considered for lectors and acolytes. Since this is so new, there are no plans yet to what our diocese will do. It is expected, though, that since lector and acolytes are permanent ministries for life, those installed will receive extensive preparation.

Sr. Mickey commented that in very rural areas of Mexico sisters of her order have officiated at baptisms and marriages because of the lack of priests. Dc. Matt Glover commented that lots of places in the world do not have permanent deacons.

Diocesan Pastoral Council member rotation plan

Adrian led a discussion about how to rotate members. There are 10 positions that are not *ex-officio*. There are five representatives from organizations in the diocese and five representatives appointed by Bishop Taylor from geographic areas. Bishop Taylor was in favor of staggered terms. Adrian asked each member for at least two names for consideration in the future that they submit confidentially to Bishop Taylor. Each member was also asked to let Bishop Taylor know how long they'd like to serve. The Council does have a constitution and bylaws and membership is renewable indefinitely.

Meeting Wrap-up

Bishop Taylor's remarks

Bishop Taylor expressed thanks and said he values the advice and input he receives from the Council and the way they support the life of the church in their parishes and all those they work with. He said he finds their perspective valuable, especially as he faces decisions that will impact parishes.

Future Agenda Items

Please send future items to Adrian

Next Meetings

Friday, April 23 – 11:00 a.m.

Friday, August 13 – 11:00 a.m.

Friday, November 12 – 11:00 a.m.

Closing Prayer and Blessing

Bishop Taylor closed the meeting with a prayer and his Blessing.

The meeting ended at 12:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Adrian Dominguez, Chair of the Diocesan Pastoral Council,
and Dennis Lee, Chancellor for Administrative Affairs