

Friday, January 27, 2023

DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by Paul James, Chair, and Bishop Taylor led the opening prayer.

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

Not in attendance: Mr. Alan Halman

Review and approval of previous meeting's minutes: The minutes of the November 11, 2022, meeting were approved by acclamation.

Old Business

Eucharistic Revival Update – Bishop Anthony B. Taylor

There will be two Diocesan Eucharistic Revival Days: Saturday, June 3, Trinity Sunday weekend, at St. Raphael Parish in Springdale, and Saturday, June 10, Feast of Corpus Christi weekend, at Christ the King Parish in Little Rock. These will be full day events that conclude with Mass. More information can be found on the diocesan website.

On Sunday, June 11, the Feast of Corpus Christi (Body and Blood of our Lord), the Diocesan Shrine of Divine Mercy being established at St. Edward Parish in Little Rock will be inaugurated beginning with a Mass at 12:30 p.m. at the Cathedral of St. Andrew followed by a Eucharistic Procession to St. Edward Catholic Church. An associate pastor has been assigned to the Cathedral so the priests there can help with confessions at St. Edward.

There was some discussion about the types of indulgences that would be available for people who visit the Diocesan Shrine of Divine Mercy. The plan for indulgences will be finalized later and published in *Arkansas Catholic* and other places.

Next Synod Topic Synthesis “Desire for Faith to be Taught from the Pulpit” – Bishop Anthony B. Taylor

Members were provided with a handout that summarized a discussion on this topic at a previous Presbyteral Council meeting. After taking a few minutes to read the synthesis, members shared their comments on the topic of “Desire for Faith to be Taught from the Pulpit” with Bishop Taylor that included: We cannot presume what people in the congregation believe and accept about church teaching. The homily is intended to teach the Gospel and there are some truths of the church that never come up in the Gospels. The culture we live in is not supportive of the faith, some see the teachings of the church as abnormal. It is not possible to address a list of topics if the homily is to preach the Gospel. Some priests might avoid topics that are controversial. People want to hear what the church teaches

and why in response to the cultural shift in the United States. The homily is the primary teaching moment for many Mass attending Catholics. Young adult Catholics prefer teaching that comes from one's life experiences.

Next Synod Topic Synthesis "LGBTQ Issues" – Bishop Anthony B. Taylor

The same handout also had a synthesis of a discussion on the topic of "LGBTQ Issues" at a previous Presbyteral Council meeting. After taking a few minutes to read it, the members shared their comments on this topic. Bishop Taylor mentioned that there is a priest and a parish looking at offering Courage and EnCourage support groups. Courage is a Roman Catholic apostolate for men and women who experience same-sex attraction. EnCourage is a ministry within Courage dedicated to the spiritual needs of parents, siblings, children, and other relatives and friends of persons who have same-sex attractions. Both groups use discussion, prayer and fellowship to support one another and their loved ones.

Study of Catholic Priests (Arkansas) – Bishop Anthony B. Taylor

Members were asked if they had any additional comments to make about this study that was discussed in depth at their previous meeting. There were no additional comments.

New Business

Mass Count Numbers – Bishop Anthony B. Taylor

Bishop Taylor provided a summary of the October Mass Counts in the Diocese from 2010 to 2022. They were broken down by deanery and language. The last page had the total Mass count for each year: 2010 – 59,581; 2011 – 55,807; 2012 – 53,749; 2013 – 54,946; 2014 – 55,853; 2015 – 55,625; 2016 – 53,920; 2017 – 53,094; 2018 – 52,638; 2019 – 51,433; 2020 – 30,427; 2021 – 40,823; 2022 – 45,855. Bishop Taylor noted that Mass attendance was declining at the English-speaking Masses. He said we lost people during the pandemic who were on the margin who have not returned. He also noted that the long-term trend from 2010 to 2022 is fewer people attending Mass.

The members commented on what they thought was causing the decline in Mass attendance and shared their ideas for ways this might be turned around that included: People are motivated less by a sense of duty and more by what gives them a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. We need a culture of evangelization in our parishes. Catholics need to learn how to share Christ. This goes to mission of the Church ... to know Christ and build the Kingdom of God. Jeff Hines, Director of Faith Formation, said a goal for his office is to help create a culture of evangelization in our parishes. The Eucharistic Revival will have an impact. Maybe there is something to neighborhood and small groups. How many would come back if someone contacted them and invited them back? Not everyone is alienated, but there are people joining other churches. Being in a mixed marriage can lead some to stop attending Mass and go to another church.

There was general agreement that more can and needs to be done to reach out to people who have stopped coming to Mass on Sunday.

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, April 21 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 12:11 p.m.

Respectfully recorded by:

Dennis Lee, Chancellor for Administrative Affairs