

November 13, 2020

DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m. via video conference by Jeff Hines, Chair, and Bishop Taylor opened the meeting with prayer.

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

Not in attendance: Sr. Mary Clare Bezner and Roberto Martinez.

Election of Officers (Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson)

Jeff Hines asked for nominations for Chairperson of the Council. Adrian Dominguez was nominated for Chairperson and approved. Jeff then asked for nominations for Vice-Chairperson. Lloyd Cambre was nominated for Vice-Chairperson and approved. Starting with the next meeting, Adrian will serve as the Chairperson and Lloyd will serve as the Vice-Chairperson. Both were congratulated by the council members.

Review and Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the August 14, 2020 meeting were accepted as written by acclamation.

OLD BUSINESS

Report on Black Parish Communities

Jeff asked about any follow-up on this topic from the previous meeting. Sr. Mickey Espinoza said she met with Fr. Warren Harvey, Alma Stewart and Rosalyn Pruitt with the Diocesan Council for Black Catholics (DCBC). She said they had a good conversation about all being more aware of racism in each of us and in the country as a whole. Cynthia Solis expressed concern about not being able to find anything on the diocesan website regarding Black Catholic Ministry, and she indicated a desire to see more resources listed there. Bishop Taylor commented on the DCBC's presentation with the seminarians. He was present as the seminarians listened to people tell their stories, and he believed the experience had a positive impact on them. Bishop Taylor looks forward to the DCBC visiting parishes around the diocese for similar presentations, and the council members expressed their strong support and encouragement for the DCBC's plans to do this. On November 25 the DCBC is scheduled to meet with Sr. Mickey's community. Cynthia closed the discussion on this topic by highly recommending the USCCB's resources on cultural diversity.

Faith Formation Classes and Covid-19

Jeff also asked about any further discussion on this topic from the previous meeting. Bishop Taylor mentioned recently giving a one hour presentation to a parish RCIA group that was all on line. He said there are challenges to talking to a computer screen instead of in person. Jeff commented that remote learning is in our future; it is not going away, and it will be a part of how we learn even after Covid-19. Fr. John Connell said every parish will have to decide for itself how to proceed with their Faith Formation

classes, and the main thing is being able to adapt. He said his parish has not yet started in person PRE because of the high prevalence of Covid-19, opting instead for PRE to take place in the home or on line.

Jeff said he finds on line groups work best when a smaller number of people are involved – perhaps four to six at a time. He also observed that it is strange when someone in the group does not have a camera on. The discussion on this topic ended with Bishop Taylor commenting that virtual meetings allow people to participate who might not be able to be physically present.

Covid-19 Precautions Update

Bishop Taylor said the Bishops of Region 10 met and consulted with each other because the Covid-19 cases are so high in El Paso and Amarillo. Arkansas has taken all precautions, and our diocese seems to be doing well with requiring masks to attend Mass. So far there has been no evidence of any transmission at Mass because of the excellent cooperation with all the safety protocols that are in place. He said you really have to compliment the people in our diocese, and he mentioned how well the priests have been supportive of each other. Masks and social distancing are very important – sanitizing is not as much of a concern as it was in the beginning because transmission by contact is apparently less a threat than originally thought. Parishes have adapted with shorter Masses, limited singing, more Masses on the weekends and in some cases parking lot Masses. Bishop Taylor commended all the priests for their creativity to provide public Mass in our diocese.

Deacon Matt Glover told the group about Fr. Erik Pohlmeier speaking at the Governor's press conference on Wednesday about the faith community's response in this time of Covid-19. A link to Fr. Erik's remarks was sent to all the council members after this meeting.

Paul James said that with all the precautions in place he feels very safe going to Mass, and he attributed this to Bishop Taylor's leadership and the precautions being taken in our diocese. He said there are places where people do not wear masks, but that is not the case in our churches and he appreciates it.

Alma Stewart asked what to do about a person who won't wear a mask and the church doors are being left open. Jeff and Dc. Matt were to talk with Alma after this meeting about the situation she described.

NEW BUSINESS

New Latin Mass Parish in NWA

Bishop Taylor said the Latin Mass Community that has been meeting at St. Joseph, Tontitown has bought a Lutheran church building in Springdale. They surveyed their attendees and 60% want it to be named Our Lady of Sorrows. Bishop Taylor has consulted with the Presbyteral Council and they have approved the formation of this new parish. He will bless the Church building on December 12 when it will become a chapel. They won't become a "personal parish" (as distinct from a "territorial parish") until July when a priest can be assigned by the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter order. With the social distancing protocols in place, they will need to have two Masses because the church building is small. Fr. John Connell has been working with them, and for now they will continue to have their Sunday Mass at St. Joseph in Tontitown because the church is large enough for everyone to come together for a single Mass. Besides Cabot and Springdale, the Latin Mass is also celebrated at El Dorado, Mountain Home and Cherokee Village.

Modification of Confirmation Practices

Bishop Taylor used this meeting to consult with the council members on the following modifications related to providing the sacrament of Confirmation. He said before Covid-19 sometimes there could be as many as 275 people to be confirmed and with a Mass it could take three (3) hours, which is not a

good idea right now. He said that with Covid-19 it is not safe to have a large group together inside for an extended period of time. Some options under consideration include:

- Instead of presenting each candidate by name, the parish can present them as a group. Their names will be in the booklet.
- Confirmation is not required within the context of the Mass, so an option is no Mass with Confirmation. With the Latin Mass Confirmation is done before or after, not during Mass.
- In places where there are bilingual Masses, a monolingual Confirmation could be done.
- Since it is now no longer necessary for the presider to sanitize his hands between anointing each candidate, the number of those who can attend is only limited by the capacity of the church building.
- Bishop Taylor mentioned that in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City they are lowering the age for Confirmation from high school to 6th or 7th grade, and he asked the council members what they thought about this for our diocese which has 14 as the minimum age for Confirmation. Most did not like the idea. There was some discussion about the average age that children decide if they will continue going to church, which is believed to be around the 5th grade. Dr. Karen Hollenbeck suggested looking at what the educators in our Catholic schools think about what would be an appropriate age for Confirmation.

Bishop Taylor's Remarks

Bishop Taylor said that every month there are new decisions to be made that are driven by Covid-19. For example, he cited a directive he sent out about what cannot be done for Our Lady of Guadalupe celebrations this year - no choir, no procession, no fiesta afterwards, and no Posadas or "house to house visits." He said that because we are in the desert at this time, we need to have low-key, humble celebrations this year.

He expressed appreciation for how adaptable Catholics in our diocese have been, and he views their compliance with the Mass guidelines as exceptional. He reiterated that we know wearing masks and maintaining physical distancing works because so far there have been no known transmissions from attending Mass.

Future Agenda Items

Council members with any suggestions for future agenda items may submit them to Bishop Taylor, Adrian Dominguez or Lloyd Cambre.

2021 Meeting Schedule

Tuesday, January 26 – 11:00 a.m.

Friday, April 23 – **Note: 10:00 a.m.**

Friday, August 13 – 11:00 a.m.

Friday, November 12 – 11:00 a.m.

Closing Prayer

Bishop Taylor closed the meeting with a prayer for the end of Covid-19 followed by a blessing.

The meeting ended at 11:55 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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