

Archbishop to continue dialogue with Legionaries

Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien will continue to monitor and have a dialogue with members of the Legionaries of Christ in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, as they respond to a series of requirements he made of them in June.

"There is goodwill on the part of the Legionaries of Christ," Archbishop O'Brien said, "but at the same time there is a lot of information that we have to review with our pastors. We want to make sure that our pastors are aware of, and in agreement with, their involvement."

Archbishop O'Brien's concerns about the Legionaries and their lay branch, Regnum Christi, were made in early June to Father Alvaro Corcuera, the order's superior general, who is based in Rome.

The archbishop discussed those concerns in his column in the June 12 issue of The Catholic Review, when he wrote that "undue pressure was placed on individuals to conform to the rule of Regnum Christi and in a context of secrecy."

The column went on to state that "In addition, some youth programs tended to alienate their parents from their children, and various clubs and activities for high schoolers often presented the vocation to the priesthood and consecrated life as an obligation rather than an informed choice."

Archbishop O'Brien asked the Legionaries to propose a priest-liaison, who would have until June 30 to supply the names of its members in the archdiocese, a list of Legionaries and Regnum Christi youth programs, and the names of religious candidates who plan to attend Legion high school seminaries.

To that end, the archbishop met recently with the liaison, Father Robert Weighner, L.C. and two other Legionaries in the archdiocese, Father Raymond Cosgrave, L.C., and Father Steven Reilly, L.C., the executive director of the Springhill Center for Family Development in Crownsville and chaplain of Woodmont Academy in Cooksville.

“They gave us a good bit of information that we are reviewing, to see that the understanding is clear and that it carried it through,” Archbishop O’Brien said. “The key thing is for our administrators and pastors, how satisfied are they with the interaction? The transparency of the organizations that are represented by Regnum Christi are all key elements.”

A page on the Woodmont Academy Web site states that it “exists in large part due to the dedicated efforts of men and women of Regnum Christi.”

Scott Brown, the executive director of the school, which serves grades pre-K through 8, said that his interaction with the archbishop began in the spring.

“The archbishop asked myself and our principal, John Farrell, to come up to the Catholic Center in April,” Mr. Brown said. “It was a positive experience. The archbishop talked about his concerns. We’re grateful for the opportunity.”

Jim Fair, the director of communications for the Legionaries of Christ and Regnum Christi in North America, said “we appreciate what the archbishop has done. We want to satisfy his requirements, so that we can continue to serve the local church.”

Archbishop O’Brien’s initial letter asked for a review every six months of Legionaries and Regnum Christi activities.

“We’ll meet a couple of times a year,” the archbishop said. “It’s an ongoing dialogue. We don’t want to get in the way of anyone doing good.”