

Archdiocese forms archbishop's council

In a June 10 gathering of Catholic Center employees, Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien announced the formation of an archbishop's council that will provide guidance on setting a course for the future of the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

The new council combines previously-existing management and strategy teams, and will be made up of the auxiliary bishops, the chancellor and the heads of major archdiocesan departments. It will meet approximately every 10 days.

The council's formation comes in the wake of a recently completed study of Catholic Center operations, conducted by SC&H Group, a Maryland-based management consulting firm.

In the coming months, the archbishop said he will also meet with department heads to discuss their department's mission and his three top priorities: promoting vocations, defending life and building up the city. The presbyteral council and the faithful of the three vicariates will also be included in the conversation, he said.

Quoting Pope Benedict XVI, who said the future of the Church of America must begin to rise on the "solid foundations" of the Mother See of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Archbishop O'Brien said he felt "personally challenged" by the Holy Father's reflections.

"To begin the journey toward a New Pentecost and a New Evangelization, we might challenge ourselves in Central Services to promote a greater unity of the church of Baltimore," he said.

Archbishop O'Brien challenged Catholic Center employees to think of their work not merely as a job, but as a ministry. He praised them for their long history of hard work and dedication, while also asking them to think about ways to promote a greater sense of vocation.

"You are the face, the voice of the archbishop of Baltimore - and Catholics as well as

others should expect us to be one in vision, one in action,” said Archbishop O’Brien, noting that he has been “impressed and even inspired” by the goodness he has witnessed in parishes, schools and works of charity throughout the archdiocese.

“But to be evangelizers, we must first be evangelized individually and as the community of service that we are,” the archbishop said.

Archbishop O’Brien asked employees to consider whether their work complements their own personal spiritual life and whether it strengthens their family and social relationships.

“Make no doubt about it, we are minimizing and failing in our purpose, we are cheating ourselves of the graced satisfaction that should rightly be ours if we refuse to see what we do each day – quietly and often anonymously – as a direct Christ-like service to that parish secretary in Cumberland, to the second-grader in Hagerstown, to our volunteers in the Esperanza Center and to the hungry hearts and souls in line at Our Daily Bread,” he said.

The archbishop noted that the word “silo” appears in the SC&H study, “suggesting that we might work more effectively if we would better coordinate the many good programs emanating from this building,” he said.

Chris Helmrath, a management consultant with SC&H, highlighted the many achievements of Cardinal William H. Keeler – including the more than \$250 million raised for parishes, schools and institutions, the restoration of the Baltimore Basilica and establishment of programs for renewed spirituality.

The archdiocese now has an opportunity to build on Cardinal Keeler’s legacy after his retirement, Mr. Helmrath said.

“Effective change in leadership is key to any organization’s survival,” said Mr. Helmrath, whose consultant team interviewed 40 archdiocesan employees over three weeks.

Comparing archdiocesan operations to a business, Mr. Helmrath said a key to a successful organization is a willingness to modify its management style to promote its interests “in a world that rewards flexibility, transparency, interconnectedness

and broad-based information.”

The archdiocese will explore ways of making the Catholic Center more efficient and more effective, Archbishop O’Brien said. He emphasized that no one is being laid off, but that the archdiocese is putting a “modified hold” on hiring.

“Our budget could be tightened a bit,” he said.

Responding to questions about promoting a greater sense of unity at the Catholic Center, the archbishop said plans are in the works for establishing a chapel at the Catholic Center.