

Welcome Aboard

The Catholic Review

Transitions, while inevitable and necessary, often bring about uneasiness in a community as large, diverse and dispersed as is our Archdiocese. Challenging enough to receive a new Archbishop – a New Yorker with military connections, no less! – but barely a year later to take on a new Vicar General and a Chancellor, is asking a lot of our Archdiocesan family.

So let me set the scene, if I may.

By the time you read this column, Monsignor Richard Woy and Doctor Diane Barr will have assumed their offices as Vicar General and Chancellor, respectively. Each was chosen by me after thorough consultation, personal reflection and prayer. I did not need the on-going global financial collapse to signal the Catholic Church in Baltimore that institutional change is in the offing. Demographic shifts and allocation of resources are among the pressing and immediate issues challenging the vitality of our parishes and schools, as well as our charitable endeavors.

Monsignor Woy and Doctor Barr have the commitment, fresh perspective, experience and skills to advise me in the charting of our future. I do appreciate their willingness to undertake the task.

As soon as I arrived in Baltimore 13 months ago, I was immediately encouraged by the administrative insights and sage advice of our Auxiliaries, Bishop W. Francis Malooly, Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski and Bishop Denis J. Madden. Now that Bishop Malooly has transitioned to Wilmington, Delaware, we have created a two-vicariate division of the Archdiocese replacing the three-vicariate system. Bishop Rozanski and Bishop Madden each now ministers to half of the Archdiocese instead of one third. They both remain on the front lines, deeply trusted and respected by our pastors, principals and staff members throughout the Archdiocese. They will remain my primary “eyes and ears.” My role along with that of all of us in central leadership, will be to support our vicar bishops’ efforts to have Christ’s Gospel

proclaimed with ever increasing zeal and effectiveness in every community of this, the Lord's vineyard.

So critical to achieving our pre-eminent goal of evangelization are our Priests' Council, composed of priests representing every region and special ministry of the Archdiocese, and our Archbishop's Council, composed of principal staff members of our Catholic Center, to whom I regularly turn for wisdom and guidance.

Last week, I was greatly encouraged by the Religious FORUM—the leadership of our women and men in consecrated life— who came together at my invitation to offer their unique perspective on the Church here and to discern how we can collaborate in serving the people of God. So valuable is the involvement of our religious communities in the daily life of this local Church, I will seek their on-going advice through frequent interaction with their FORUM Executive Committee as we go forward.

All this consultation might seem terribly cumbersome and bureaucratic. It need not be, nor do I think it will be. Countless decisions are made every day that require very little collaboration and input from others. However, when more complex and far-reaching decisions need to be made, it is a great blessing to have so many able people of good will providing insight. To that end, I will also be relying on the people we serve—our laity—who represent the past, present, and future of our Church. I am totally sold on the idea that there is profound wisdom “in them thar hills” and neighborhoods, villages and towns that make up the Archdiocese of Baltimore, and I have seen it first hand during my first year.

Changes there will be, there must be, for the strength and growth of our Archdiocese, but not without first listening to and respecting that wisdom. And I am ever-conscious as to “where the buck stops.”

I am pleased and grateful to have Monsignor Woy and Doctor Barr on hand to assist in that effort and join those already on the job to serve God's people I ask for your prayers at this time and always that our service may give glory to God.