



**Archdiocesan Pastoral Council  
April 30, 2022  
Meeting Minutes**

**Church of the Nativity in Timonium, 20 E. Ridgely Road in Timonium**

**Present:** Archbishop William E. Lori, Mr. Richard Babbitt, Ms. Chelsea Baranoski, Ms. Stephanie Clancy, Ms. Elaine McCubbin, Ms. Uju Okwesili, Ms. Gloria Olivares, Ms. Camilla Rawe, Mr. Larry Simmons and Mr. Alexander Wright.

**Excused:** Ms. Anita Cain, Ms. Sara Miller, Mr. Jesus Eusebio Perez and Ms. Consuelo Petro.

**Guests:** Ms. Jenny Kraska, Mr. Sean Caine, Ms. Yvonne Wenger and Father Erich Camenzind of Switzerland.

Archbishop Lori called the meeting to order shortly after 10 a.m. He offered welcoming remarks and led the group in prayer for the beatification of Mother Mary Lange. Asking whether there were any corrects or additions, the council officially adopted the minutes from the Feb. 26 meeting.

**Topics Addressed:**

**I. Synod**

Sean Caine, former communications director for the Archdiocese of Baltimore and principal of Caine Communications, joined Jenny Kraska, executive director of the Maryland Catholic Conference, to offer an extensive update on the Archdiocese's Synod process.

Beginning about nine months ago, the Archdiocese embarked on the Synod process as a far-reaching effort to collect input from each of our churches and as many parishioners, of all ages, as possible. The feedback will be distilled into a 10-page document and submitted to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops by August and, ultimately, turned into the Holy See within a few years. The Archdiocese's finalized report will be published.

Parishes have until late May to provide their reports to the Archdiocese of Baltimore. This follows regional and church-level listening sessions that began in November and continued through April. The sessions have been facilitated primarily by Bishop Bruce Lewandowski, Sean Caine and Jenny Kraska.

In response to the Synod's overarching question – *"How can the Church journey together in an effective way to achieve the mission of evangelization?"* – parishioners, church communities, clergy, religious

orders and ecumenical partners shared an array of opinions, challenges, highlights, concerns and successes. Many said they were very happy to have been asked to offer feedback.

Nearly 70% of the reports from the listening session have been submitted to the Archdiocese and every response is being logged and indexed. So far, this includes 136 reports and 1,152 comments. From that, 17 topics and themes emerged on the question of how we are journeying well together and 48 topics stood out tied to the Church's challenges.

The most common topics associated with Journeying Well Together were:

- The liturgical and Sacramental experiences, including homilies, music and the Sunday experience at Mass.
- Parishes as welcoming centers.
- Church-level leadership and Pope Francis.
- Communication, specifically the ability to watch Mass online during the pandemic.

Regarding the Challenges on the Journey, common topics were:

- The Catholic Church is not welcome enough.
- Young people should find more opportunity for fellowship and engagement. The church must find ways to adapt its outreach and activities to this generation of youth.
- Communication and listening: People expressed a desire to have more channels for the laity to have their voices heard and play a role in decision-making.
  - Of note, this is an area for the APC to discuss and examine ways to promote existing avenues for laity to express their opinions and wishes.
- The role of women in the church – from wanting women to be ordained to holding more leadership positions.
- Governance of the Church, including dissatisfaction with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and, in some cases, the Holy See.
- Laity involvement in the running of the parishes and business operations.
- Catechesis and clarification on Catholic teachings.
- Liturgy and homilies, including homilies that are shorter and reflect more of an average life experience.
  - “You can’t live it if you don’t understand it.”
- Abuse of minors.
- Outreach to marginalized communities, including people who are divorced or gay.
- COVID impact and the desire that we have a full return to features of the Mass pre-COVID, including the Sign of Peace and Communion from the cup.
- Divisions that leave many feeling like politics intrude on their church life.
- Racism and lack of accord between people of different races and ethnicities, including parishes with large Hispanic populations that feel as if they are in a parallel environment to their fellow parishioners who are English-speaking.

Archbishop Lori says that this Synod process will not be “one and done.” This process is a teaching tool that the Holy Father has used to show church communities how to embark on such introspection.

#### **Members Responded:**

- How has our process differed from other dioceses and archdioceses? In many cases, the Archdiocese of Baltimore is much further along than other dioceses that are only beginning the process. One diocese had no in-person listening sessions due to COVID; it was all conducted electronically. The Archdiocese is unique in its efforts to include clergy in the listening sessions.

- The comments and feedback should be preserved and accessible locally, even if the report must be condensed into 10 pages for Rome that can only offer thematic overviews. Every comment, including quotes, will be documented for the Archdiocese's records. An attempt will be made to include direct language in the final report so that parishioners can hear their comments being reflected back. Parishes are encouraged to publish their own reports.
- Archbishop Lori notes that this process will give the APC areas on which to focus energy and discussion, including on engaging young people.
- How were clergy comments divergent from parishioners? There were small differences but a lot of commonality.
- Efforts should be made to ensure youth voices are included in the Synod report to Rome. Schools are being encouraged over the final month of May to solicit and collect feedback from young people.
- Some are very skeptical that the reports will not make it in an authentic form to Rome and will be dismissed at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishop's level. Hopefully, the existence of parish-level reports will lend credibility to the process and evidence of the actions taken.
- Through the help of the newly-formed Emmaus teams and the Institute for Evangelization, the Archbishop says parishes can adopt local responses to challenges revealed through the Synod process.
- Many of the challenges revealed in the listening sessions are actually misunderstandings and lack of information about the actions and practices of the current Church. One of the main jobs resulting from this process is the need to get the truth out.
- To address the need to evangelize and engage young people, church communities should look to legacy families and find ways to be inclusive to younger generations.
- Archbishop Lori would like the APC to incorporate the challenges revealed through the Synod into discussion items on forthcoming APC agendas.

## **II. The next term of the APC**

Yvonne Wenger, the Archdiocese's director of community affairs, offered an updated after polling the APC members: seven members want to stay on for a second term and two said they could stay on or rotate off, as needed; four said they were ready to rotate off. This represents a healthy turnover. Yvonne will begin the process of recruiting new members to the APC in the coming weeks. She read the bulletin announcement used to recruit the current council members to ask if it was still an appropriate description.

### **Members Responded:**

- All present indicated an agreement in the approach to recruiting new members and the advantage of having a third of the APC rotate off and two-thirds stay on.

## **III. Closing remarks and prayer**

Yvonne Wenger advised that the next meeting would be held on July 16, and likely it will be at the Shrine of St. Anthony in Ellicott City. Archbishop Lori offered a closing prayer and the meeting concluded at 11:58 p.m.