



**Archdiocesan Pastoral Council
July 16, 2022
Meeting Minutes**

The Shrine of St. Anthony, 12290 Folly Quarter Road, Ellicott City

Present: Archbishop William E. Lori, Ms. Sara Miller, Ms. Consuelo Petro, Mr. Larry Simmons and Mr. Alexander Wright.

Excused: Mr. Richard Babbitt, Ms. Chelsea Baranoski, Ms. Stephanie Clancy, Ms. Anita Cain, Ms. Elaine McCubbin, Ms. Uju Okwesili, Ms. Gloria Olivares, Mr. Jesus Eusebio Perez and Ms. Camilla Rawe.

Guests: The Most Rev. Bruce A. Lewandowski, Mr. Sean Caine and Ms. Yvonne Wenger.

Archbishop Lori called the meeting to order at 10:11 a.m. He offered welcoming remarks and led the group in prayer for a Synodal Church.

Topics Addressed:

I. Synod

Bishop Bruce Lewandowski joined Sean Caine, principal of Caine Communications, to provide an update on the Archdiocese's Synod process, including a comprehensive overview of the 10-page draft that will be submitted to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. The draft will be submitted to the bishops by August. The Archdiocese's final report will be made publicly available. The report is the culmination of a process that began a year ago and included listening sessions across the Archdiocese that generated some 250 reports from parishes, religious orders, Catholic schools and others, such as an ecumenical group. All responses were indexed and logged.

Archbishop Lori noted that the Synod process has brought a valuable tool to parishes and the Church community at-large that can be replicated.

The Council's feedback will be incorporated into the final draft.

The draft is organized around three primary themes that emerged: communion, participation and mission.

Communion

People expressed love for their parishes, their parish priests and the opportunities the Church provides for them to live out their faith. Many long for participation and opportunities for involvement to return to pre-pandemic levels. In addition to the welcoming, warm and close-knit communities described, many cited the role of women in leadership as a place for the Church to grow and an opportunity for parishes to do more for all to feel welcome regardless of cultural differences, ability levels and sexual-attraction. (“‘All are welcome’ needs to be a reality and not just a slogan.”)

The Church has a moral obligation to transcend politics and race by bringing the message of the Gospel to the public. These matters – which include subjects such as abortion, immigration and access to health care, housing and education – are often drawn into bitter political discourse. The Church can do more to build greater union.

The Synod process renewed calls for the Church to address the sin of racism and dismantle the systems that perpetuate racism. More can be done to support Black Catholics on their faith journey, so everyone can feel truly welcomed, respected and accepted.

For consideration going forward, the Church must renew opportunities for fellowship, strengthen outlets for adult formation, provide forums to listen and build dialogue and do more to minister to people who feel excluded.

Members responded

- Members did not offer feedback on this section.

Participation

The listening sessions revealed the hope and anticipation many feel about the Synod. People see this as Pope Francis using a pastoral approach to flip the pyramid with the conversation originating with the laity and channeling to Church leadership. This optimism comes as some too often feel invisible.

Many remain unaware of the avenues available to make their voices heard, such as parish councils and finance committees, that are mostly comprised of lay members. When these outlets are not operating effectively with consistent collaboration, barriers exist that the Church must overcome for greater participation.

Laity are also looking to become more involved beyond administrative issues – from participation in developing the liturgy of the Mass to engaging with people when they receive the Sacraments. As priests juggle a vast array of responsibilities, shifting duties to the laity will free up more capacity for the clergy to focus on pastoral care. Responses include people who would like to see priests be allowed to marry and, likewise, admit married deacons into the priesthood.

To restore participation to pre-pandemic levels, parishioners expressed an interest in extending personal invitations to fellow members of their church communities to return.

Sexual abuse in the Church remains a barrier to participation. During listening sessions, participants expressed that family members have left the Church because of this. While some indicated gratitude for policies in place to root out future issues, others remain angry and said the problematic history is a factor in their involvement in the Church.

For consideration going forward, Church leadership must improve efforts to educate the laity about existing structures that allow participation. Leadership must also provide intentional communication and

promote meaningful opportunities for people to draw closer to their faith through transparency, accountability and healing.

Members responded

- Members were curious about whether the Synod report will result in action items for the parishes and how the information will be shared. Archbishop Lori said the next step is discernment. The Synod is the beginning of a larger conversation about the future of the Church and the answers do not yet exist. Extensive and ongoing conversations will continue from groups like the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, the Presbyteral Council and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.
- To ensure the findings are widely available, the Archdiocesan report will be published on the website and the individual parish reports will be made available through the church sites. Communication will also include the Catholic Review and social media.
- A goal is for parishes that are strong in certain areas to help guide others. The Archdiocese's Emmaus Teams will actively engage pastors, staff and parish councils.

Mission

Evangelization was at the heart of every conversation, and the understanding is that the Church's laity is critical to effectively spreading the work about the Church's mission. Great potential exists to evangelize through fostering a welcoming community for people living in poverty, individuals who are same-sex attracted, divorced and re-married Catholics and people whose first language is Spanish.

Bringing more young people and young adults into the Church is fundamentally important. Feedback from listening sessions held in Catholic high schools and on college campuses offered insights around the Church being perceived as too political and too judgmental. Young people cited high engagement in campus ministries as being tied to their ability to help design events and interactions aligned with their interests and pastoral needs. Young people repeatedly said they wanted a more loving and welcoming Church.

Through the listening sessions, a need for ongoing adult faith formation emerged. Some said a reason for leaving the Church as young adult came as a result of not understanding the faith.

For consideration going forward, young people ask the Church to heed their call for greater acceptance, compassion and inclusion.

Members responded:

- The Archbishop noted that the Church advocacy is rooted in Gospel values – not politics. In pursuit of justice (racism, economic, social), the Church seeks to transform society for the better.
- Judge Wright offered that Church teachings are constant and do not follow the hot topics of the day. The report should underscore that advocacy is based in Church social doctrine.
- Members emphasized the opportunity presented when couples turn to the Church for marriage. This includes supporting Catholics marrying non-Catholics to help ensure they can communicate with their partners the value of raising future children in the Church.

Next steps

Members' comments will be documented and woven into the draft report. Before the report is turned into the bishops, the draft will be presented to other key stakeholders for final edits. The report will be translated into Spanish and published in English and Spanish through many channels. Bishop

Lewandowski also mentioned that it is helpful to read the Synod report alongside the Archbishop's pastoral letters, "[A Light Brightly Visible](#)," "[A Light Brightly Visible 2.0](#)" and the "[Journey to Racial Justice: Repentance, Healing and Action](#)."

The Archbishop thanked all for their efforts on this critical endeavor and acknowledged that the work is only getting started.

II. The next step of the APC

Yvonne Wenger, director of community affairs, provided an update of the efforts to recruit new members to replace the four members rotating off. So far, the Archdiocese has received multiple applications for the young adult representative, but applicants are needed for the three other open positions, representing the Urban and Western vicariates. Members were asked to provide feedback on their terms and how to make the APC stronger going forward.

Members responded:

- Terms should be staggered to regularly bring on fresh perspectives and new energy to the APC. We should also consider setting term limits for members.
- Future meetings could offer a remote and in-person options to allow people with longer commutes to easily join.
- The APC's quarterly meeting schedule offers a good frequency, but additional meetings could be helpful on topical matters as they arise.

III. Closing remarks and prayer

Although a quorum was not present to adopt the minutes, members were asked to review the minutes from the April 30 meeting.

Archbishop Lori offered a closing prayer and the meeting concluded.