



**Archdiocesan Pastoral Council
Sept. 17, 2022
Meeting Minutes**

St. John Neumann Church, 620 N. Bestgate Road, Annapolis

Present: Archbishop William E. Lori, Ms. Anita Cain, Mr. James Conway, Ms. Stephanie Clancy, Mr. Andrew Likoudis, Ms. Elaine McCubbin, Ms. Sara Miller, Ms. Uju Okwesili, Ms. Consuelo Petro and Mr. Larry Simmons.

Excused: Ms. Agnes Nepomuceno, Ms. Gloria Olivares, Mrs. Annalynne Reddington, Mrs. Lee Anne Santiago and Mr. Alexander Wright.

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

Archbishop Lori called the meeting to order at 10:14 a.m. He offered welcoming remarks and led the group in prayer for a Synodal Church.

Topics Addressed:

I. New term of the APC

Archbishop Lori welcomed members. Among those gathered were new members James Conway, the Urban Vicariate/Harbor & Metro East representative, and Andrew Likoudis, the Young Adult Community representative. The Archbishop went on to provide an overview and reflections of the APC's role within the Church community. Such a body is included in Canon Law and the function is to be consultative. He asked the members to engage in prayerful listening and reminded them that the goal is to not find political solutions, but to follow the will of God. The APC can and should look to engage people who have drifted away from the Church and find ways to strengthen the bond with those who remain engaged. The membership is designed to represent the diversity within our parish communities.

Members responded

Mr. Simmons talked about the post-COVID challenges for church engagement and reflected on the possible role of APC representatives. Ms. McCubbin followed by asking to learn more about the Emmaus Teams and what role they can play to reach out to people moving into communities and engage them in their local parishes. Mr. Likoudis noted that in a post-COVID environment, the Church should look for innovative ways to engage people – and often that starts with inviting them to join events and parish communities.

Archbishop Lori introduced the ongoing “Eucharistic Revival” and the efforts to engage people and gently guide them out of isolation. He promised to share the “what” and “how” with the APC at an upcoming meeting.

II. Synod

Bishop Bruce Lewandowski joined Sean Caine, principal of Caine Communications, and Jenny Kraska, executive director of the Maryland Catholic Conference, to provide an update on the Archdiocese’s Synod process.

The Archdiocese sent our comprehensive 10-page overview to the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. The bishops’ synthesis is due to be released publicly within days of the meeting.

Bishop Bruce said, “Synodality is God’s style.” He said when looking at the strengths of the Synod processes at dioceses across the country, the Archdiocese of Baltimore proved to be “a very good one with spirit-filled conversation.” Finalizing the written report is not the end of the Archdiocese’s Synod process. The goals of the Synod process are to foster closeness with God, unity in the Church and faith in our communities. The Synod is not an event. Through unity, we must seek the good of the whole even when it means sacrifice for the individual.

Mr. Caine then offered a brief presentation on the Synod, which is organized around 12 primary categories: catechesis, the Black Catholic experience, the Hispanic Catholic experience, LGBTQ+ Catholics, politics, the role of laity, women, clergy, COVID, impact of the sexual abuse scandal, youth and young adults. The full report is [online](#) in English and Spanish.

Catechesis: People want to understand church teachings better and would welcome preaching that is more closely connected to faith and life.

Black Catholic experience: The Church has a continued need to address the sin of racism.

Hispanic Catholic experience: Parishes must be careful not to create parallel churches.

LGBTQ+ Catholics: The Church has a need to accompany them and change how Catholic teachings are communicated.

Politics: Fundamental human rights transcend party politics.

Role of laity: Laity want to find transparent evidence that their experiences, leadership and opinions factor into Church decisions. Although bodies involving the laity operate consistently and actively throughout the Church, many expressed interest in being more involved in management of their parishes finances, facilities and liturgies.

Women: The Church should look for all opportunities to honor the gifts women bring to the Church through ministry.

Clergy: A prevailing belief is that priests are asked to do too much and are frequently assigned to multiple parishes. Some expressed their wish for priests to marry and an overwhelming majority said they respect their pastors.

COVID: The pandemic created a separation of people from their parishes and the Eucharist.

Impact of the sexual abuse scandal: Many left the Church due to a lack of trust while many others say they are confident the Church has created a system of accountability.

Youth and young adults: Young people are rarely asked to participate in leadership roles, and many young adults say they find their campus ministry to be more inviting places to participate.

Following the presentation, the members broke into three small, Synod-style groups to discuss pastoral priorities. Mr. Caine said the suggestions and recommendations from the members would be collected along with input from regional gatherings and other consultative bodies.

III. Seek the City to Come

Bishop Bruce Lewandowski introduced a new sweeping initiative in Baltimore City and the surrounding suburbs called “Seek the City to Come (Heb 13:14)” that will reimagine the Catholic experience in the metropolitan community. The Archdiocese’s “Seek the City” team has been meeting with pastoral staff members and key parish leaders to talk about the city, the Church’s footprint and how we can best move forward facing the reality that the Catholic population has gotten significantly smaller in recent decades. This is due to many factors, including racism and white flight. Now, parishes communities of hundreds are supporting structures built for thousands. The driving questions going forward are, what should ministry in the city look like and what parishes does the city need? The mission is to reimagine and reenergize the Church in Baltimore by figuring out the best way to shine God’s light in Baltimore. Bishop Lewandowski said, “We have to acknowledge that our footprint will be different; some buildings we have to let go of and move on from. However, this isn’t a retreat from the city. We are not running away from the city – we are rushing toward the people and neighborhoods that need us the most.” Bishop Lewandowski emphasized that there is no pre-determined outcome.

Over the next six to nine months, the initiative will remain in the listening phase during which time data and opinions will be gathered. The “Seek the City” team will meet with all of the 62 parishes involved and tour every facility. Regional meetings will be held throughout the city in-person and online; all are welcome. Fourteen focus groups will be convened around different pastoral priorities and involving Black and Hispanic Catholics, civic leaders, nonprofits, young people and others.

The second phase will usher in a time for prayer, deep reflection and discernment. Over the following three to five months, the initiative will host regional meetings and prayerful discussions. This phase will be guided by the question: What is the Holy Spirit inviting us to do? What might God’s will be for us now?

The third phase in about two years will bring us to decision points and implementation.

Members responded

Mr. Simmons asked about whether there was a metric in place to gauge a church’s reach or impact. Bishop Lewandowski said there is no yardstick to measure churches. The benefit of the individual parish visits will provide a close up look at each parish and a profile of each will be created.

Ms. Clancy asked if evangelization can be incorporated into the delivery of social services. Bishop Lewandowski said it is precisely because of our Catholic faith that the social services are provided, and a greater connection between a worship community and services could be established.

Archbishop Lori said he would like to see more engagement between Catholic Charities and parish communities, for instance. This could include engaging more parishioners as volunteers for Catholic Charities programs.

The Archbishop pledged to bring a more complete update to the Council in the months to come.

IV. Closing remarks and prayer

Archbishop Lori offered a closing prayer and the meeting concluded at 12:17 p.m.