



**Archdiocese Pastoral Council meeting
Wednesday, April 12 by Zoom
Meeting notes**

Present: Archbishop William E. Lori, Mr. James Conway, Ms. Stephanie Clancy, Mr. Andrew Likoudis, Ms. Elaine McCubbin, Ms. Sara Miller, Ms. Gloria Olivares, Mrs. Annalynne Reddington, Mrs. Lee Anne Santiago, Mr. Larry Simmons and Mr. Alexander Wright.

Excused: Ms. Anita Cain, Ms. Agnes Nepomuceno, Ms. Uju Okwesili and Ms. Consuelo Petro.

Guests: Geri Royale Byrd, Christian Kendzierski, Bishop Bruce Lewandowski, Monsignor Jay O'Connor and Ms. Yvonne Wenger.

Archbishop Lori called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. He offered welcoming remarks and led the group in prayer for the healing of victim-survivors of child sexual abuse. The council agreed to approve the meeting minutes from Feb. 18. The Archbishop asked members to save the date for the next meeting on Saturday, June 17 at 10 a.m. at St. Joseph in Sykesville.

Topics Addressed:

I. Maryland Office of Attorney General's report, "Child Sexual Abuse in the Archdiocese of Baltimore."

Archbishop Lori said the report is a devastating and new reminder of harm committed by representatives of the Church, and he notes this has been most certainly a painful time for victim-survivors. He expressed a heartfelt apology to victim-survivors, and he encouraged members of the council to read his pastoral letter, "Apology, Healing and Action: The Church's Work to Repair the Sacred Trust." In the wake of the report, the Archbishop said the Archdiocese is redoubling the commitment toward the protection of children. The report is an historic accounting of child sexual abuse, almost exclusively from 1940s to 1990s (cases peaked during the 1960s and 1970s). The Archbishop told the council that no one who has been credibly accused of abuse is in ministry or employed by the Archdiocese. The abuse described in the report would not be possible in today's Church. As it has been since the early 1990s, any allegation that is received today is immediately shared with law enforcement, including the Attorney General's Office. This happens whether or not the Archdiocese considers the allegation to be credible. Over the last 30-plus years, the Archdiocese has ushered in a culture change, strong enforcement and accountability measures and a standard of transparency. Victim-survivors are offered professional counseling with a therapist they select and trust; some choose instead to receive monetary compensation. Clergy, employees and volunteers undergo extensive background checks and receive ongoing training. The Office of Child and Youth Protection is led by lay professionals and the Independent Review Board provides oversight. The Archbishop noted that the report did not include any recommendations for screening and training, investigating allegations or responding pastorally to victims. The report did recommend the Archdiocese expand its list of credibly accused brothers and priests to include other abusers. The Archbishop said the

Archdiocese is committed to transparency, noting that the names of abusers who are not members of the clergy are publicized through a number of communications, including parish meetings, bulletin announcements, news releases, press interviews and posts on social media. He said he will bring the recommendation to Independent Review Board for consideration. The report also recommended the state legislation lift the statute of limitations on cases of abuse, which the General Assembly approved this session and the governor signed into law.

The Archbishop asked the council to provide feedback on the report and the Archdiocese's response, and he asked whether the members have advice for him.

Members responded

Judge Wright asked about the statute of limitations legislation that passed in Annapolis. Archbishop Lori noted that the legislation lacks parity between public and private institutions, and he said, regardless of when abuse occurred, the Archdiocese has offered voluntary monetary settlements since 2007.

Ms. McCubbin said the report generated a lot of conversation in her parish, and many of her fellow parishioners felt it was unfortunate the report was released during Holy Week. She said the Archdiocese has responded with kindness and empathy.

Mr. Conway said there is concern in his parish community about the impact financially. The Church must continue to lead with compassion and transparency, he said.

Mr. Simmons asked whether other dioceses outside of Maryland have been subject to these sorts of reports. The Archbishop noted that the Maryland Attorney General launched its review following the Pennsylvania report in 2018, and about 25 other states have taken similar actions.

Ms. Clancy said the Archdiocese has responded to the report with compassion and sorrow. She said now is the time for the Church to demonstrate "who we are really are by serving and going out in the streets and evangelizing the goodness of our Catholic faith." She echoed Mr. Conway's comments and said some are concerned about the financial impact to their parish communities. The Archbishop said the Archdiocese will work to ensure the ministries of the Church will not be diminished.

Ms. Olivares said the child sexual abuse creates devastating lifelong effects. She thanked the Archbishop for the pastoral response and the Church's commitment to the protection of children.

The Archbishop thanked the members for their feedback and noted that the matter will be revisited in future meetings.

II. Seek the City to Come initiative

Geri Byrd, director of Seek the City to Come, said the initiative is centered on the power of voice. The Archdiocese is currently in the listening phase, which will continue through October when the envisioning phase will begin, leading to the final decision phase next spring. The goal is to collect as much input as possible to inform the direction of the Church in Baltimore. The Seek the City working group is conducting parish visits following a series of open prayerful discussions that were held regionally across the city.

So far, much of the feedback has indicated that the strength of the Church in Baltimore today is its welcoming posture, diversity and inclusion and social justice focus. People also point toward meaningful homilies, beautiful music and a focus on the Sacraments. Going forward, they say, the parishes must be

integrated into the neighborhoods, liturgies must be relevant to real life and churches must be flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of community members. People who have participated in the process say they want practical homilies and parishes that offer safe spaces and Catholic values.

By May, Seek the City will have visited 62 parishes in the city and immediate suburbs. The team has been averaging two-three parish visits a week since October. The visits start with Mass and include meetings with parish staff and volunteers and one with pastors and clergy. The visits end with a working group discussion that includes parishioners.

Additionally, Ms. Byrd said the Archdiocese is collecting input from specific focus groups to capture specialized and diverse feedback. This includes focus groups made up of Latino and Black Catholics, young families, single people, non-practicing Catholics, fellow nonprofit leaders, elected officials and donors.

She encouraged the council to share the Seek the City survey, and take it themselves.

Bishop Bruce said the initiative will convene a citywide Catholic gathering in June with the goal of bringing together as many Catholic families in Baltimore as possible. Details are forthcoming.

Members responded

Ms. Olivares commented on the sweeping nature of the initiative, and asked whether other parts of the diocese will go through a similar process. Bishop Bruce said for now, the city is the focus. Ms. Byrd noted that the initiative does include parishes in Baltimore County on the boundary with the city.

Bishop Bruce noted that despite a recent news report, Seek the City is not a result of the attorney general's report. The effort pre-dates the release of the report, and the undertaking is necessary without respect to the report. The goal is to bring new life and new mission and ministry to the Church in the city.

Bishop Bruce and Ms. Byrd led the council through a series of focused questions to provide feedback to the initiative,

III. Closing prayer

Archbishop Lori offered a closing prayer and the meeting concluded shortly before 8 p.m.