



Archdiocesan Pastoral Council meeting
Saturday, June 17 at St. Joseph Catholic Community, Sykesville
Meeting notes

Present: Archbishop William E. Lori, Ms. Anita Cain, Mr. James Conway, Ms. Elaine McCubbin, Ms. Agnes Nepomuceno, Ms. Uju Okwesili, Ms. Consuelo Petro, Ms. Annalynne Reddington, Ms. Lee Anne Santiago, Mr. Larry Simmons and Mr. Alexander Wright.

Excused: Ms. Stephanie Clancy, Mr. Andrew Likoudis, Ms. Sara Miller and Ms. Gloria Olivares.

Guests: Ms. Stacy Golden, Mr. Edward Herrera, Dr. Tricia Pyne and Ms. Yvonne Wenger

Archbishop Lori called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m. He offered welcoming remarks and led the group in prayer to heal racial division. The council agreed to approve the meeting notes from April 12. The Archbishop asked members to save the date for the next meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 18 at 10 a.m., location to be determined.

Topics Addressed

I. Commission on Slavery

Archbishop Lori offered an overview of the Commission on Slavery, a 17-member panel he convened in March made up of historians, researchers, clergy, educators and experts in diversity, equity and inclusion. The history is significant, especially considering that the Archdiocese of Baltimore is the oldest in the country, dating back to 1789. The goals of the commission include documenting the Archdiocese's involvement in the institution of slavery, acknowledging that painful history and recognizing the contribution of our enslaved brothers and sisters in Christ. This exercise could enrich curricula in schools and seminaries and lead to a number of outcomes that must still be determined.

This work comes as the book, "The 272" is published. This book, by journalist Rachel L. Swarns, explores the ties between the Catholic Church and slavery, including the sale of enslaved human beings to benefit Georgetown University.

The Archdiocese's journey to racial justice began many years ago. It includes Cardinal Keeler's acknowledgement of the involvement in slavery in the 1990s and the publication of Archbishop Lori's two pastoral letters and the creation of the Racial Justice Coordinating Council.

Archbishop Lori introduced Dr. Tricia Pyne, director of the associated archives for the Archdiocese and St. Mary's Seminary. She is the lead historian for the Commission on Slavery.

Dr. Pyne said many Catholics are unaware of the Church's ties to slavery. Over the last two decades, a growing number of Catholic organizations have begun to acknowledge their participation in slavery and work to bring about reconciliation and healing. Here in Maryland, Catholics were among the first settlers and the first enslavers. This included Jesuit missionaries. The profits generated from the enslaved were critical during the colonial period and bringing wealth to the Church. Church leaders and representatives brought the enslaved to places in the mid-West as they relocated. Ties deepened as the enslaved men and woman and children served on farms and as blacksmiths and laborers. They worshipped alongside their enslavers, sometimes in churches they built.

The commission's work is still in the planning stages. The examination of records will be limited to the current boundaries of the Archdiocese. Investigation into Maryland counties outside the boundaries will be determined by the dioceses of Wilmington and Washington.

The historical investigation will include both church and civil records. Commission members will examine the archbishops' correspondence and financial records. So far, historians know the first five archbishops owned or made use of enslaved men, women and children. We must do more research to determine what roles they played in the Church history and what happened after the deaths of the archbishops who enslaved them. Where they granted freedom? Where they sold to other enslavers?

The parishes in the Archdiocese that were founded before the Civil War will be contacted, as their surviving sacramental records are of particular interest to this work. One goal is to make lineage information available to their descendants. The commission will also be in contact with religious communities and other Church institutions operating at the time.

Historians and researchers will identify civil records, such as tax documents. The Legacy of Slavery in Maryland, a program and searchable database of the Maryland State Archives, will be an asset.

While the commission must still determine the ways in which the findings will be communicated, the group will generate a report to summarize its findings, create a webpage and share information with affiliated religious communities.

Archbishop Lori thanked Dr. Pyne for her presentation and invited Judge Wright – a member of both the commission and the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council – to offer remarks.

Judge Wright noted that the commission's membership includes many with distinguished backgrounds. The meetings so far have produced lively discussions. He said the study of the Church's ties to slavery cannot stop with its abolishment. The commission must look into the impacts of Jim Crow and segregation that continues today. This effort must also inform the Archdiocese's Seek the City to Come initiative that is exploring the Catholic Church's footprint and impact in Baltimore City.

Members responded

Ms. McCubbin commended the Archdiocese on the effort to bring to light the dark history. She asked more about the qualifications of the commission members.

Dr. Pyne said members include historians and other experts in the Maryland and Catholic communities will be invited to serve on an advisory board to the commission.

Ms. Okwesili thanked the Archbishop for the work, and asked for more information about the goals tied to the work. Dr. Pyne said in addition to the historical investigation, the local Church will enter a period

of reflection and discernment to investigate and understand the legacy of slavery on the development of the Church in Maryland and ask how to best move forward as a community.

Mr. Simmons asked if the information will be available for ancestry research. Dr. Pyne said the Archdiocese has worked in the past with organizations to digitize sacramental registers that are currently available for free online.

The Archbishop said acknowledging history is key to a brighter future. This includes documenting the actions the Church took that were profoundly contrary to the Gospel. The commission's work will help grow understanding and awareness of the roots and tentacles of slavery.

Judge Wright added the importance of the opportunity to capture living history.

II. Family faith formation, youth ministry and the Sacrament of Confirmation

Archbishop Lori outlined the work of the Institute for Evangelization, including the Emmaus teams that go out two-by-two to help strengthen parishes. Stacy Golden is director of the Office of Family, Youth and Young Adult Ministry. In her work, Mrs. Golden has been studying disaffiliation when young people and adults decide to walk away from their religious faith. Data show young people leaving the faith at earlier ages than before. To dig into solutions, Archbishop Lori convened a working group that will issue a proposal about ways to better engage with youth.

The median age of disaffiliation is 13, although some studies suggest it is as young as age 11. The pandemic has made the situation more acute. Men and women of parenting age are disaffiliating around age 30, and because they're having children older, the Church has very limited opportunities to engage with these families. Parental influence is one of the most powerful indicators of a young person's faith formation.

Mrs. Golden asked the members where they are noticing patterns of disaffiliation.

Members responded

Mr. Simmons said some say the Church has too many rules and too many regulations.

Mr. Conway said the Church is so cerebral that it pushes people out and some feel as though their religious expression is stifled. This is especially painful when people feel as though their religious expression is tied to their cultural identity.

Mrs. Cain said the ability to successfully offer faith formation is based on the relationship between the young people and the catechist.

Mrs. Okwesili said any plan to engage young people must account for natural developmental stages that include testing boundaries and an urge to be defiant.

Mrs. Golden outlined the path forward for the Archdiocese's efforts, noting that the Church must find a way to meet people where they are and provide what they yearn for. There is a place only the Lord can fill, she said.

Ongoing formation will incorporate the new directory for Catechesis, which is based on the Archbishop's pastoral letter, "A Light Brightly Visible 2.0." The Archdiocese has also partnered with Ablaze Family Ministries to put emphasis on formation that engages the entire family unit and helps parish leaders

accompany families. The approach will move formation from classrooms to small groups and shift teachers to witnesses in Catechesis.

This year and next, Ablaze Family Ministries will offer “Disciple Markers Part One” for parish staffs and those leading ministry. They will be invited to a retreat to rest and reimagine their ministry. After that, “Disciple Markers Part Two” will be offered to catechists and small group leaders. Retreats will be offered across the Archdiocese.

Mr. Herrera also outlined plans to offer “Sacraments in a Day.” Under this initiative, parents will be invited to have their children be Baptized and adults will receive Confirmation, providing an opportunity for them to encounter the Lord and return to the Church. It will be first offered at the Cathedral and then adapted for individual parishes based on a model that will work for individual communities. The Sacraments would be offered as a one-day retreat experience and the Archdiocese would work to ensure the families who receive Sacraments would return to parish communities ready to support them.

Mrs. Golden said a frequent challenge is that parents do not have sponsors for Baptism, so this new approach would also seek to identify and engage mentor families that will invite and guide new families into the life of the parish.

Regarding the age of Confirmation, Mrs. Golden said the Archdiocese must consider the entire formation model. The local Church will be piloting Confirmation in select parishes at age 9, when children are in fourth grade. The pilots will involve substantial parental and family involvement.

The Archbishop pointed to guidance from Pope Francis around creating a culture of encounter where families engage one another in the life of the Church and people can find true accompaniment. The goal, he said, is nothing less than participation in the life of the Trinity, individually and communally.

Ms. Petro said the addition in her parish of faith formation classes through sixth grade, as opposed to ending after second grade, has led to meaningful evangelization. One challenge that remains is the tendency for young people to leave the Church after they receive Confirmation.

Mrs. Golden said whether young people leave at age 9 or 15, the Church must do more to build community and engage with families relationally. “We need to bring the whole families in, and minister together with them.”

With Father’s Day on Sunday, the Archbishop talked about the importance of an engaged father in their child’s faith life. One question to consider is how the Church can help parents, especially Dads, have the courage to practice their faiths.

III. Other

Ms. McCubbin asked about the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Eucharistic Revival that is currently underway. The Archbishop said parishes are being asked to double down on evangelizing catechesis, so the faithful can be equipped to bear witness to the Eucharistic encounter with Christ and serve as missionary disciples. Next year, the Church will organize a national pilgrimage across the U.S. aimed at evangelizing catechesis.

IV. Closing Prayer

Archbishop Lori highlighted the Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and offered a closing prayer. The meeting concluded at 12:01 p.m.