



Archdiocesan Pastoral Council meeting
Saturday, Nov. 18 at St. John the Evangelist, Columbia
Meeting notes

Present: Archbishop William E. Lori, Ms. Stephanie Clancy, Mr. Andrew Likoudis, Ms. Elaine McCubbin, Ms. Agnes Nepomuceno, Ms. Gloria Olivares, Ms. Consuelo Petro, Ms. Annalynne Reddington, Ms. Lee Anne Santiago, and Mr. Alexander Wright.

Excused: Ms. Anita Cain, Mr. James Conway, Ms. Sara Miller, Ms. Uju Okwesili and Mr. Larry Simmons.

Guests: Ms. Jenny Kraska and Ms. Yvonne Wenger.

Archbishop Lori called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. He offered welcoming remarks and member Consuelo Petro led the group in prayer. The council agreed to approve the meeting notes from June 17 and Sept. 13. The Archbishop thanked outgoing members Stephanie Clancy and Anita Cain for their service. He also talked about some highlights from the fall plenary assembly of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore, including approval of the “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship” teaching document on the political responsibility of Catholics.

Topics Addressed

I. Chapter 11 reorganization

Archbishop Lori encouraged members to read his op-ed, “Bankruptcy was the only way to compensate abuse victims and continue our ministries,” which was published in America Magazine. A copy was enclosed in the members’ meeting packets. This short piece provides a summary of the reasons behind the decision to file for Chapter 11 reorganization. The Archbishop outlined other communications materials to help the faithful understand the process, including those posted on the Archdiocese’s website.

After enactment of a new Maryland law, the Archdiocese of Baltimore would have faced a large number of lawsuits of historic cases of child sexual abuse that were previously barred. The Archdiocese filed for Chapter 11 reorganization, because it is the best path forward to accomplish two overarching goals: to equitably compensate victim-survivors of child sexual abuse and ensure the local Church can continue its mission and ministries. The Archbishop reached this decision after consultation with various Archdiocesan bodies, including the APC.

The courts overseeing other diocesan reorganizations have set a period of time for victim-survivors to submit claims. Victim-survivors, the Archdiocese, and insurance companies have negotiated toward an agreed-upon plan that provides a process for all victim-survivors to be compensated while the operations and ministries of the Archdiocese continue. After victim-survivors agree to the plan and the court

approves it, future claims relating to past incidents of abuse cannot be brought against the Archdiocese and would be channeled to the established trust. The Archdiocese will use its unrestricted assets to provide funds to the trust and pay various costs. It is expected that the trust will also be funded with insurance proceeds and contributions from parishes, schools and related entities. In dioceses that have been through this process, the vast majority of funding in the trust has come from diocesan unrestricted assets and insurance proceeds.

More than 30 other Roman Catholic dioceses in the United States have filed for reorganization under Chapter 11. The reorganization process typically takes about 3 years, although there are some outliers.

Discussion with Members

In response to questions from APC members, it was noted that:

Some say the new law is not constitutional, and lawsuits are expected to be filed against many entities throughout the state with the Maryland Supreme Court to ultimately decide the question of whether the law is constitutional;

The Archdiocese of Baltimore has a long and strong history of responding to victim-survivors with the principal aim of assisting them to find healing through efforts to accompany survivors that began decades ago;

Additionally, the Archdiocese trains priests, seminarians, parish and school staff and all volunteers to prevent and report abuse, and all clergy, religious and employees undergo background screenings; and

APC members are asked to continue to support the mission and ministry of the Church.

II. Legislative preview

Jenny Kraska, executive director of the Maryland Catholic Conference, provided a brief overview of some of the issues the conference will be monitoring when the General Assembly convenes on Jan. 10. The conference is the Catholic Church's lobbying and public policy arm in the state. She encouraged the APC members to bring information back to their parishes about signing up for the Catholic Advocacy Network to receive policy updates and action alerts and she asked members to consider hosting a sign-up drive. Information enclosed in their packets provides details on next steps.

The matter of juvenile justice is expected to receive a fair amount of focus among the 3,000 bills that are typically filed during a session. As in past years, the conference will work to be involved in discussions to advocate for policies aligned with Catholic social teaching.

Ms. Kraska said she expects physician-assisted suicide legislation to be a priority for legislators. She encouraged the APC members to email and call their elected officials to oppose legislation related to physician-assisted suicide, as these messages make a difference in how legislators vote. She pointed to inclusion of BOOST scholarship funding in the Maryland budget as an example of successful advocacy by engaged Catholics.

Another matter of concern is legislation to approve human composting. Often confused with green burials that are already legal and respect both the person and the environment, human composting turns deceased people into a disposable commodity. This is a soil mix that is developed through a complex and multi-

month process that involves mixing a deceased person with items such as mulch, bacteria and fungi, and manually breaking apart the person's bones, in warehouse-type facilities.

Other issues of importance to the conference includes legislation affecting the environment, schools, education and cemeteries.

Ms. Kraska also provided a packet of information for the members on health care directives for Catholics in Maryland. Like many of the conference's materials, it is available in English and Spanish.

Discussion with Members

In response to questions from APC members, it was noted that:

A referendum to amend Maryland's constitution to add abortion as a right will be on the November 2024 ballot for voters to approve or deny; and

"Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" is a regularly updated resource provided by the USCCB to help guide Catholics in their pursuit of political engagement and civil dialogue; the Maryland Catholic Conference will also provide candidate surveys next spring.

III. APC meeting schedule and leadership update

Yvonne Wenger, director of public relations, provided members with the 2024 meeting scheduled. She also let the membership know that Geri Byrd, director of community and external affairs, will take over the role of facilitating the APC next year.

IV. Closing prayer

Archbishop Lori led the APC in a closing prayer for the healing of victims of abuse. The meeting concluded at 11:44 a.m.