



Archdiocesan Pastoral Council
Tuesday, June 3, virtual meeting
Meeting notes

Present: Archbishop William E. Lori, Mr. Michael Chorabik Jr., Mr. James Conway, Mrs. Sherry Jendrek, Mrs. Elaine McCubbin, Mrs. Uju Okwesili, Mr. Emory Plitt, Ms. Annalynne Reddington and Mr. Alexander Wright.

Excused: Mr. Andrew Likoudis, Ms. Agnes Nepomuceno, Ms. Consuelo Petro, Mrs. Lee Anne Santiago and Mr. Larry Simmons.

Guests: Father Matthew Himes, Mrs. Rena Black, Ms. Jenny Kraska and Ms. Yvonne Wenger.

Archbishop Lori called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. He offered a greeting and read a Gospel reading from John 1:1-11. He then led the group in prayer.

He welcomed new member Sherry Jendrek, the representative for Anne Arundel County and a parishioner of Pastorate of the Visitation (Our Lady of the Chesapeake and St Jane Frances de Chantal) in Pasadena.

The Archbishop then asked for the group to approve the meeting notes from the March 3 meeting, and the notes were approved.

Topics Addressed

I. Legislative session recap

Archbishop Lori welcomed Ms. Jenny Kraska, executive director of the Maryland Catholic Conference, to provide a summary of the Maryland General Assembly's legislative session that ended in April.

Ms. Kraska reported that topics for the session covered education, social and economic justice, life, Catholic cemeteries and much more. She said the Conference contributed to important successes for the Church. Among the highlights from the legislative session was the state's \$9 million investment in educational scholarships through BOOST. Ms. Kraska said BOOST is an incredible program that helps many children and families throughout the state. Catholic schools also received funding for textbooks, aging schools, safety and security and nursing.

Although it was not expected to be introduced, the legislature once again considered physician-assisted suicide. The bill received a hearing in the House but was not heard in the Senate and therefore did not pass this year. Ms. Kraska noted that the state of Delaware has now legalized physician-assisted suicide.

After five sessions, a bill that the Maryland Catholic Conference drafted has passed to provide protections for new mothers and pregnant women on college campuses. The provisions include protections for scholarships, accommodations for breast feeding and the storage of breast milk and excused absences for doctor appointments.

Another legislative victory is the new training requirements for truck drivers to help them learn to identify and respond to warning signs of human trafficking. The legislature also approved updates to the U visa program to allow victims of crimes or witnesses of crime to extend their visas in cooperation with law enforcement.

Ms. Kraska also provided an update to the council on the changes to the Child Victims Act amid thousands of claims and billions of dollars in estimated liability facing the state of Maryland. The legislature amended the law to lower the cap on non-economic damages from \$890,000 per occurrence for public institutions and \$1.5 million per occurrence for private institutions to \$400,000 per claimant (not occurrence) for public institutions and \$700,000 per claimant for private institutions. The changes to the law also place caps on attorney's fees going forward. This has resulted in a surge of lawsuits being filed against public and private institutions by May 31, before the effective date of the lower damages caps.

Discussion with Members

Archbishop Lori thanked Ms. Kraska and her team for their efforts.

In response to questions from members, Ms. Kraska explained that while the caps on non-economic damages will be lower starting June 1, 2025, the legislature has allowed cases to be filed continuously going forward unlike other states that have limited litigation to a designated period of time.

Ms. Kraska thanked the members for their advocacy and efforts to engage their parish communities on legislative priorities through the Maryland Catholic Conference's action alerts.

II. Youth Ministry Protagonism Lab and USCCB's *Listen, Teach, Send* pastoral framework

Archbishop Lori welcomed Mrs. Rena Black, the Archdiocese's coordinator for missionary discipleship. Mrs. Black discussed the role of young people as spirit-driven agents of faith, and she explored how the Church can better make space for them. To do so, the young ministry teams in the Archdiocese are working in a "Protagonism Lab" that emphasizes creativity and vision in order to support the full potential of children and teenagers.

The questions about youth engagement are particularly timely given the Archdiocese's change in the age of Confirmation to 9 years old. This means that young people will be fully initiated in the Church before

middle and high school. The work starts with efforts to listen to young people just as Jesus listened to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. The “Listen, Teach, Send” pastoral framework for engagement that the Archdiocese is following is provided by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Mrs. Black said the charge for parish communities is to engage in “sacred listening” with young people by asking questions about what worries them, brings them joy or makes them hopeful.

Next, the framework invites youth ministers to teach by encouraging young people to more deeply understand their faith and model it for others. She said young people are active agents who should be empowered as disciples of Christ. Finally, Mrs. Black said the third part of the movement is to send young people out into the world filled with missionary vigor.

Discussion with Members

Ms. McCubbin said she has witnessed a significant increase in the enthusiasm of people at her parish, Our Lady Queen of Peace, and its group Youth for Christ. Mrs. Black said she would want to connect more with the group.

Mr. Plitt asked if the Archdiocese has conducted formal surveys with young people to understand more about their engagement in ministry groups and what their unmet spiritual needs are. Mrs. Black said the Archdiocese is working to engage young people in a number of ways both through structured and non-structured youth groups.

Archbishop Lori said there is often an assumption that youth in the Church are non-existent; however, he said that is not true. The Church is seeing significant engagement among young people with growing numbers in various communities. Mrs. Black acknowledged the positive trends and said efforts are being made in conjunction with the ministry to provide opportunities for young men and women to discern a vocation to religious life.

III. College Campus Ministry

Archbishop Lori introduced Father Matt Himes, associate director of vocations and chaplain at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He addressed the perception that college-age young adults are leaving the Church and offered insights from his efforts in college campus ministry where many students are returning to their faith or becoming Catholic.

Father Himes detailed why he believes the ministry at UMBC, once very small, is now one that is thriving and drawing many students to Christ each semester. He said college students hunger for community and to be seen, known and loved, and the ministry provides a pathway for them to find those things.

Many students, Father Himes said, are yearning for answers to technical or intellectual questions. He encourages them to develop their individual relationships with Christ and not to lose sight of the role of faith in what cannot be seen.

A key to the success for the ministry at UMBC has been efforts to build relationships with others at the university. Building relationships happens in many big and small ways. For example, Father Himes said

anytime the ministry must reserve space to meet or hold an event on campus, he encourages the young people involved to never miss an opportunity to reach out to others and invite them to join. Hospitality is one way the ministry has grown from 12 students three years ago to 75 today. Father Himes also encourages young people to attend daily Mass and Sunday Mass and participate in Eucharistic adoration.

The Archbishop remarked on the inspiring number of college-aged people who were brought into the Church at Easter. This included about five college students from Towson University and about 10 from UMBC.

Discussion with Members

Mrs. Jendrek noted that as a mother to young daughters, she is eager to see the Archdiocese help parish communities find ways to embrace and listen to children and teens as they grow in Christ and develop their faith. The growth in youth engagement will take trust, and given the trust that has been broken in the Church through the scourge of child sexual abuse, Mrs. Jendrek said parish communities and ministries need to be focused on rebuilding trust in authentic ways.

Archbishop Lori outlined the decades-long efforts the Church has undertaken to rebuild trust, provide transparency and accountability and institute policies and practices to create a safe environment for young people. He pointed to his pastoral letter, “Apology, Hearing & Action: The Church’s Work to Repair Sacred Trust,” as a place for the members to learn more.

Father Himes said from his experience, a lack of trust is tied to a lack of sense of belonging. Finding ways to make people feel welcome is one of the foundational ways to build the college campus ministries.

Mrs. Jendrek thanked the Archbishop for highlighting the resources that are available for educating the faithful, as well as anyone who has disaffiliated with the Church.

Mr. Chorabik encouraged college ministry leaders to steer those interested to groups like the Knights of Columbus. The Knights have provided a place for Mr. Chorabik and so many others to develop deeper faith and engage in meaningful service. He encouraged ministers to make the Sacraments the keystone of all engagement.

Father Himes echoed the importance of vibrant service opportunities, such as mission trips, that allow young people to meet Christ through the people they serve.

IV. Closing prayer

Archbishop Lori led the group in prayer and the meeting concluded at 7:38 p.m.