

**Priest Council Minutes**  
**Archdiocesan Pastoral Center**  
**October 3, 2019 at 10:00 a.m.**

**Present:** Most Rev. Wilton D. Gregory; Most Rev. Mario E. Dorsonville; Most Rev. Michael W. Fisher; Rev. Msgr. Charles V. Antonicelli; Rev. Ismael N. Ayala; Rev. David W. Beaubien; Rev. Daniel B. Carson; Rev. Joseph A. Calis; Rev. Msgr. Salvatore A. Criscuolo; Rev. John J. Dillon; Rev. Msgr. Donald S. Essex; Rev. LeRoy J. Fangmeyer; Rev. Scott R. Hahn; Rev. James M. Stack; Rev. Msgr. Peter J. Vaghi; Rev. Msgr. James D. Watkins

**Absent:** Most Rev. Roy E. Campbell; Rev. Msgr. William J. English; Rev. William E. Foley; Rev. Kenneth J. Gill; Rev. Mark F. Hughes; Rev. Mark D. Knestout; Rev. Thomas G. LaHood; Rev. Anthony E. Lickteig; Rev. Raymond H. Moore; Rev. Msgr. Charles E. Pope; Rev. Mark L. Smith; Rev. Lawrence A. Young

**Opening Prayer**

Archbishop Wilton Gregory opened the meeting in in prayer.

**Approve Minutes**

The minutes of the June 20, 2019 meeting were approved without corrections.

**Implementation of Canon 1742**

Monsignor Charles Antonicelli, Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia, introduced the implementation of Canon 1742, which stipulates that the Archbishop discuss the prospective removal of a pastor with at least two priests from a group chosen for this purpose by the Priest Council. All members of the Council who are pastors agreed to serve as members of this group.

The Council elected Msgr. Peter Vaghi, Fr. Mel Ayala, and Fr. Thomas LaHood to the Priest Council Executive Board, which helps the Archbishop to determine the Council's agenda. The Council elected Fr. Stephen Wyble as Parochial Vicar representative for the Priest Retirement Board.

**Cremation: Pastoral Response and Review of Liturgical Policy**

Ms. Jeannine Marino, Secretary for Pastoral Ministry and Social Concerns, gave a presentation concerning pastoral response and liturgical policy in light of the growing trend of cremation, which last year surpassed traditional burials nationwide for the first time. This trend raises the question of the proper disposition of cremated remains (sometimes referred to as "cremains"). Often, cremated remains are not being buried, or they are being scattered about in various ways and places. Sometimes the cremated remains are divided among relatives, or are even being made into jewelry, etc. Many funerals are currently celebrated that are not followed by interment in a timely manner. These circumstances require us to develop instructions for the faithful that are clear and concise regarding the teachings and expectations of the Church concerning cremated remains. The overarching principle is that cremated remains must be treated with the same reverence with which a body would be treated.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches:

- 2300 The bodies of the dead must be treated with respect and charity, in faith and hope of the Resurrection. The burial of the dead is a corporal work of mercy; it honors the children of God, who are temples of the Holy Spirit.
- 2301 The Church permits cremation, provided that it does not demonstrate a denial of faith in the resurrection of the body.

The Code of Canon Law states:

- C. 1176 §1: Deceased members of the Christian faithful must be given ecclesiastical funerals according to the norm of the law.
- §3: The Church earnestly recommends that the pious custom of burying the bodies of the deceased be observed; nevertheless, the Church does not prohibit cremation unless it was chosen for reasons contrary to Christian doctrine.

The Order of Christian Funerals teaches:

- #413: Although cremation is now permitted by the Church, it does not enjoy the same value as burial of the body. The Church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites, since the presence of the human body better expresses the values which the Church affirms in those rites.
- #417: The cremated remains of a body should be treated with the respect given to the human body from which they come. This includes the use of a worthy vessel to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are carried, the care and attention to appropriate placement and transport, and the final disposition. The cremated remains should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires.

The Congregation for The Doctrine of the Faith's *Ad resurgendum cum Christo* (Aug. 15, 2016) instructed:

- 4. In circumstances when cremation is chosen because of sanitary, economic or social considerations, this choice must never violate the explicitly-stated or the reasonably inferable wishes of the deceased faithful. The Church raises no doctrinal objections to this practice... The Church continues to prefer the practice of burying the bodies of the deceased, because this shows a greater esteem towards the deceased. Nevertheless, cremation is not prohibited, “unless it was chosen for reasons contrary to Christian doctrine.”
- 5. When, for legitimate motives, cremation of the body has been chosen, the ashes of the faithful must be laid to rest in a sacred place, that is, in a cemetery or, in certain cases, in a church or an area which has been set aside for this purpose, and so dedicated by the competent ecclesial authority.
- 6. For the reasons given above, the conservation of the ashes of the departed in a domestic residence is not permitted. Only in grave and exceptional cases dependent on cultural conditions of a localized nature, may the Ordinary, in agreement with the Episcopal Conference or the Synod of Bishops of the Oriental Churches, concede permission for the conservation of the ashes of the departed in a domestic residence. Nonetheless, the ashes may not be divided among various

family members and due respect must be maintained regarding the circumstances of such a conservation.

- 7. In order that every appearance of pantheism, naturalism or nihilism be avoided, it is not permitted to scatter the ashes of the faithful departed in the air, on land, at sea or in some other way, nor may they be preserved in mementos, pieces of jewelry or other objects. These courses of action cannot be legitimized by an appeal to the sanitary, social, or economic motives that may have occasioned the choice of cremation.
- 8. When the deceased notoriously has requested cremation and the scattering of their ashes for reasons contrary to the Christian faith, a Christian funeral must be denied to that person according to the norms of the law.

The Archdiocese of Washington's Liturgical Norms regarding cremation are found in sections 10.4.5 and 10.14.1-10.14.5:

- 10.4.5 Unless they gave some signs of repentance before death, those who are publicly known to have chosen the cremation of their bodies for reasons contrary to Christian faith must be deprived of ecclesiastical funerals.
- 10.14.1 The Church does not prohibit cremation unless it was chosen for reasons contrary to Christian doctrine. Cremation, however, does not enjoy the same value as burial of the body. "The Church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites, since the presence of the human body better expresses the values which the Church affirms in its rites." Therefore, it is earnestly recommended by the Conference of Bishops that cremation take place following the funeral liturgy.
- 10.14.2 Any catechesis on the subject of cremation should emphasize that "the cremated remains of a body should be treated with the same respect given to the corporeal remains of a human body. This includes the use of a worthy vessel to contain the ashes, the manner in which they are carried, the care and attention to appropriate placement and transport, and the final disposition."
- 10.14.3 A funeral Mass with the cremated remains present necessitates a dignified place on which the remains can rest during the Mass. To avoid ritual use of makeshift carriers or other inappropriate containers, parishes may wish to obtain a well-designed urn or ceremonial vessel and stand to hold the cremated remains during the vigil and funeral.
- 10.14.4 Cremated remains should be reverently buried or entombed in a cemetery, mausoleum, or columbarium; they may also be buried in a common grave in a cemetery.
- 10.14.5 Cremated remains may be properly buried at sea in the urn, coffin or other container in which they have been carried to the place of committal. While cremated remains may be buried at sea, "the practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires."

Regarding catechetical efforts, Ms. Marino recommended using catechetical materials already in existence and providing more information to pastors and the faithful about the Church's teachings on death, funerals, and burial practices. She also recommended working with Catholic Cemeteries to promote their already existing resources on funerals

and burial practices. Catholic Cemeteries has a webpage clearly stating the Church's teaching regarding cremation and burial of cremated remains. The Secretariat for Pastoral Ministry and Social Concerns can offer assistance to parishes wishing to establish bereavement ministries to accompany families who have lost a loved one. Bereavement ministers could assist the pastor with outreach to families regarding scheduling an interment date for cremated remains.

Regarding liturgical norms, Ms. Marino recommended that since our policies are aligned with other archdioceses in the country, our liturgical norms should remain the same. Additional formation opportunities can be offered to clergy, hospital chaplains, and parish bereavement ministers on the liturgical norms for funerals and burials, and pastoral support for the grieving.

During the discussion that followed the presentation, the question was raised concerning whether or not it is permitted to incense remains during Mass, and it was affirmed that this is a permitted option in the liturgical text. A columbarium is an appropriate way of storing cremated remains, and Archbishop Gregory referenced how in the Archdiocese of Atlanta, there was an occasion where people were invited to bring ashes for blessing and placement in a columbarium. It was noted that the All Souls Day liturgy would be an appropriate context for such a ceremony, and that the Rite of Christian Burial is not complete until the proper disposition of cremated remains. Catholic Cemeteries of the Archdiocese of Washington also accepts cremated remains, and the 2016 instructions from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith stipulates burial in an urn or coffin. If a parish with a cemetery or columbarium ever moves, there are legal and pastoral issues arising from the movement of human remains. The Council agreed that the Archdiocese should create a brochure addressing funerals, burial, and cremation for distribution to parishes and funeral directors.

### **Review of Revised Child Protection and Safe Environment Policy**

Mrs. Kim Viti Fiorentino, Chancellor and General Counsel, gave a presentation on the revised archdiocesan Child Protection and Safe Environment Policy, which was distributed to all Council members. This policy aims to reflect the truth that all people – *children* and *adults* – have the right to be safe and protected from harm in any and all environments – home, school, religious institutions, neighborhoods, and communities.

The Archdiocese of Washington embraces this right to safety and is dedicated to promoting and ensuring the protection of all *children* entrusted to our care and to all *adults* who receive *pastoral care* or serve our mission. Any *adult* who engages in sexual activity with a *child* is performing an immoral, gravely sinful, and criminal act. Similarly, any *adult* – clergy or layperson – who engages in *improper adult conduct* is in violation of the Archdiocese's mandate to provide a safe and dignified environment for all who work in or serve the Church. The Archdiocese is committed to do all in its power to create a safe environment for *children*, youth, and any person to prevent *physical abuse*, *sexual abuse*, and *neglect*, and to bring the healing ministry of the Archdiocese to bear wherever possible. It is the expectation of the Archdiocese of Washington that all persons and entities under its auspices comply with the provisions stated in this policy.

This Child Protection and Safe Environment Policy builds on a 1986 policy issued by the Archdiocese of Washington that was updated in 1993, 1999, 2003, 2007, and 2013. It is responsive to our concern for *children* and to the provisions contained in the revised *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and the *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons* initially approved by the full body of U.S. Catholic bishops at its November 2002 General Meeting, with revisions approved at its June 2005, June 2011, and June 2018 General Meetings. Additionally, the Archdiocese is supplementing this policy to ensure that matters of safe environment for all people are specifically included in the protections this policy is designed to provide.

Related to the revised archdiocesan Child Protection Policy, on May 9, 2019, the Holy See issued *Motu Proprio Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, which calls for the universal implementation of enhanced mandated protections and reporting requirements for *children* and vulnerable adults. The archdiocesan Child Protection and Safe Environment Policy hereby implements all requirements of *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*. The Archdiocese of Washington will adhere to any further guidance for implementation issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and may further supplement these policies as appropriate to ensure ongoing compliance.

With renewed faith, we recommit ourselves to the Policy's goals:

- To reiterate and strengthen educative and screening procedures toward the goal of preventing *child abuse* by archdiocesan personnel and *volunteers*;
- To affirm and memorialize our procedures to ensure that all individuals with contact with the Archdiocese partake in an environment that is safe from *improper adult conduct* by any member of the *clergy*, *lay employee*, or *volunteer*;
- To identify and observe reporting requirements to civil and archdiocesan authorities;
- To address the spiritual, physical, and emotional care of the abused *child* and his or her family, any *adult* who suffers from *improper adult conduct*, as well as the affected Catholic community;
- To address the spiritual, physical, and emotional care of the individual against whom the charge was made; and
- To carry out all policies with regard to Church procedures when *child abuse* or *improper adult conduct* is alleged.

The summary of the changes to the Policy are as follows:

- Expanding the definition of "contact with children" for the requirement of background checks and oversight.
- Expanding the definition and scope of criminal background checks.
- Expanding the purview of the policies to include oversight of "improper adult conduct."
- Giving the Advisory Board and Case Review Board responsibility to review cases of "improper adult conduct" and advise on appropriate action.
- Clarifying requirements for internal notification and oversight of policy matters.
- Members of the Advisory Board serve terms of three years, renewable at the discretion of the Archbishop.

- Mandating that covered persons allow the Archdiocese to have access to the findings of any child welfare agencies' administrative investigation of allegations of abuse.
- Specifically including prohibitions on text, email, and social media communications with minors without parental/guardian involvement.

The recent case involving the Shrine of the Sacred Heart provides an example of a case handled in accord with our Policy. In that case, the Moderator of the Curia, Vicar for Clergy, Office of Child Protection and Safe Environment, and Office of General Counsel coordinated to make recommendations for appropriate remediation or removal, and the Advisory Board was kept apprised and approved of all of the steps taken in that case. The Archdiocese commends the archdiocesan staff for the hard work and countless hours spent on the review, revision, and implementation of the Policy, with a special heartfelt thank you to Mrs. Fiorentino, Mrs. Courtney Chase in the Office of Child Protection and Safe Environment, and the Child Protection and Safe Environment Advisory Board.

Following Mrs. Fiorentino's presentation, Mrs. Chase addressed more issues in discussion with the Council. Fingerprinting records go into the FBI database, and the FBI provides ongoing checks of an individual's criminal history. The FBI sends alerts usually within 24-48 hours of something coming to their attention. In such a case, Mrs. Chase would reach out to the relevant pastor, and the person's VIRTUS account is would be deactivated. In response to an issue raised concerning the reluctance of some persons to be fingerprinted because of immigration issues, Mrs. Chase stated that authorities are not going to subpoena fingerprints. All pastors will get a copy of the Coordinators Manual, and there will be a Child Protection Coordinator training in October as well as a webinar. Mrs. Chase also meets with deans to communicate expectations related to the Child Protection Policy. She emphasized that it is never a good idea to be alone with or exchange text messages with a minor. Communicating her desire to be available when situations arise, she gave her cell number to the Council members.

### **Introduction of Ms. Paula Gwynn Grant**

Archbishop Gregory introduced Ms. Paula Gwynn Grant as the new archdiocesan Secretary for Communications, who comes here after having served in the Archdiocese of Atlanta. Ms. Grant stated that she has been visiting parishes and that she is happy to do so. She emphasized the importance of being proactive in our own storytelling through telling our stories steadily and not simply correcting inaccuracies reported by the media. The Secretariat for Communications therefore welcomes parishes sharing their good stories ([communications@adw.org](mailto:communications@adw.org)), but when the media does require us to react, we need to do so responsibly and realistically.

Ms. Grant emphasized that we are on the same team, and that being the case, she is ready and available to help. It is still the policy to call, text, or email Communications when contacted by the media. If a pastor *does not* want to engage with the media, he should contact Ms. Grant, and if he *does* want to engage with the media, he should still contact her to decide what the message will be. Regarding use of social media, protocols related to it are part of the Archdiocese Employment Policies. Clergy and other archdiocesan personnel need to recognize that when they are posting on social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter), even on personal accounts, they are still reflecting on the Archdiocese. If a

potential posting on such a platform causes you to hesitate with the question of “Should I?”, then the answer is “No.” If parishes have live events, the Communications staff is also available to help with that. So that priests may contact her when needed, Ms. Grant gave her cell phone number: 202-579-1537.

### **Policy Regarding Naming Buildings**

Archbishop Gregory announced that, going forward, if an archdiocesan facility is to be named in honor of a person, then that person must be in the Church’s canon of saints. In accord with this policy, the new residence for retired priests will be named the St. John XXIII Residence for Senior Priests. The future residents were informed of this name, and they were happy with it. The residence will be ready for occupancy sometime in November (since the meeting this has been moved to mid December)

### **Closing Prayer and Comments**

Prior to closing the meeting in prayer, Archbishop Gregory introduced Fr. Dan Carson as a new member of the Priest Council. As Vicar for Clergy, Fr. Carson will be assisting Bishop Fisher in the Secretariat for Ministerial Leadership.

### **Next Meeting**

November 21, 2019