

**Priest Council Minutes**  
**Saint John Paul II National Shrine**  
**June 9, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.**

**Present:**

Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory  
Rev. David W. Beaubien  
Rev. Emilio E. Biosca, O.F.M. Cap.  
Rev. Robert P. Boxie, III  
Most Rev. Roy E. Campbell, Jr.  
Rev. Rory T. Conley  
Most Rev. Mario E. Dorsonville  
Rev. Francisco E. Aguirre  
Rev. Msgr. William J. English

Rev. Matthew J. Fish  
Rev. William E. Foley  
Rev. Mark F. Hughes  
Rev. Thomas G. LaHood  
Very Rev. Anthony E. Lickteig  
Rev. Mark L. Smith  
Rev. Msgr. Eddie L. Tolentino  
Rev. David G. Wells  
Rev. Msgr. Michael Wilson

**Absent:**

Very Rev. Daniel B. Carson  
Rev. Cornelius K. Ejiogu, S.S.J.  
Rev. Michael J. King  
Rev. Benjamin J. Petty

Rev. Msgr. Charles E. Pope  
Rev. Lawrence A. Young  
Rev. Msgr. Peter J. Vaghi

**Opening Prayer and Comments**

Cardinal Gregory began by updating the group on Father Daniel Carson's medical situation by letting them know his surgery was successful and the recovery is going well but is slow. His Eminence asked that in our prayer today we ask God to watch over Father Carson and then opened the meeting with a prayer.

His Eminence also let the group know that Father Anthony Lickteig would be filling in for this meeting. He welcomed the members of the council in attendance and with a quorum being present asked Fr. Lickteig to begin the meeting.

**Approve Minutes**

Fr. Lickteig asked if there were any questions concerning the meeting minutes from the May 5, 2022 meeting. No questions were brought forth. The minutes of the May 5, 2022 meeting were approved.

**Clergy and Religious Compensation**

Ms. Carol Brillantes-dela Paz, Executive Director of Finance, began her presentation by letting the group know that she joined the finance team 19 months ago and is a member of St. Mary's Catholic Church – Bryantown, Maryland with Father Rory T. Conley, Pastor.

Ms. Brillantes-dela Paz reported that at the May 13, 2021 Priest Council meeting, the following recommendations were adopted:

- Three percent increase in compensation for active priests
- \$600 expense advance increase (\$50 per month)
- Two percent increase in compensation for religious

She indicated that for the current year they were seeing positive signs in terms of Mass attendance and offertory. The average weekly offertory in March 2022 was two percent higher than in March 2021. However, they are still seeing parishes and schools that continue to struggle financially. Inflation, which has been lower in the past several years, has increased significantly with 7.04 percent for calendar year 2021 and 8.3 percent for the year over year period of 2021. In addition, inflation does not appear to be showing any signs of decreasing.

Ms. Brillantis-dela Paz explained that clergy compensation included both base pay and a social security payment. Clergy generally received an annual increase, as well as an additional increase of at least three percent each five-year anniversary of their ordination. However, in two of the past four years, they have not received an increase. Inflation forecasts pre-pandemic were expected to be around two percent, however, inflation has increased at a rate not seen in 40 years.

Ms. Brillantis-dela Paz reviewed the historical context of clergy compensation with the group. Although the archdiocese is still projecting a budget deficit for fiscal year 2022, they are recommending that increases for both the laity and clergy to be considered due to the loss in purchasing power being experienced.

She reviewed what the differences would be for a three, four, or five percent increase by step and years of service for base compensation. The determination indicated that there was not that much of a difference in the total amounts. Before concluding, she also showed the total costs and benefits for each of the percentages.

Ms. Brillantes-dela Paz then opened the floor for questions from the group. As there were no questions posed, Ms. Brillantes-dela Paz turned the floor over to Fr. Lickteig to present for a decision.

Fr. Lickteig reminded the group that a five percent increase for retired priests was approved at the May 2022 Priest Retirement Board and reminded them that the payments for active parish priests will come out of their parish budgets. He posed the question to the group on which level of increase they would recommend for approval. The following comments were made:

- Bishop Campbell recommended five percent as that was their intention and he felt it was appropriate for priests.
- The question was posed to Cardinal Gregory and Fr. Lickteig as to what was their recommendation. His Eminence responded that he would like to rely on the wisdom of the group as he sees the overall picture but the priests live with the individual perspective. He knows there are some parishes that may not be able to afford it.
- To the newly ordained who do not have a salary, it is important to them.

- Pastors have ability to take less if they would like to.
- It would be set for this year only and would be reevaluate every year.
- If you look at five percent it equals a total of \$141 a month – should not break a parish's budget.

Cardinal Gregory put the recommendation of a five percent increase to a vote. All were in favor and a five percent increase was approved.

### **Religious Compensation Recommendation**

Ms. Brillantes-dela Paz then presented the recommendations for religious compensation.

As a background, she explained that for over more than a decade, the compensation offered to archdiocesan religious fell behind the amounts offered in similar (arch) dioceses. In response, relatively larger increases to compensation and benefits were introduced in recent years for fiscal years 2010-2016, but were brought back down to three percent for fiscal year 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020. They were also reduced to one percent in fiscal year 2020-2021 and two percent for fiscal year 2021-2022.

These increases have brought the total compensation for religious in The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington into near parity, providing only 96 percent of the average of similar (arch) dioceses.

Ms. Brillantes-dela Paz then presented the fiscal year 2022-2023 recommendations to the council for approval as follows:

- A 4.0 percent increase in stipend
- A 4.0 percent increase in all benefits

She also noted that the parishes with religious in senior roles (e.g. principal position) evaluate an incremental gift that fairly reflects the location's financial situation and the highly valued contribution of that specific religious. The following comments were made:

- I have no frame of reference – is this for when they are in a parish? Any kind of ministry, teaching, etc. Once they get the percentage, they can plan their budgets. His Eminence responded that the money goes to religious communities and not each person.
- Where does the funding come from? Fr. Lickteig responded that it depends on where the religious are working. The funding could come from the parish if they are working there.
- Is it full time/part time positions and pay? Fr. Lickteig responded that it really depends on the position and when they are working.

She reviewed what the differences would be for two, three, or four percent a stipend and Health Insurance. The determination indicated that there was not that much of a difference in the total amounts.

Cardinal Gregory put the recommendation of a four percent increase to a vote. All were in favor and a four percent increase was approved.

## **XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: Archdiocesan Consultation**

Dr. Jeannine Marino, Secretary for Pastoral Ministry and Social Concerns, began her presentation by thanking the group for the opportunity to present an update to the Synod. She also thanked Very Reverend David Beaubien, Pastor of Saint Aloysius, Ms. Deborah McDonald and Ms. Pam Harris, Assistant Secretaries for Pastoral Ministry and Social Concerns, for their assistance in helping to draft the 10-page report. It was not an easy task to try and synthesis all of the listening sessions and she was very grateful for their assistance. She also thanked those present who reached out to her about the report and offered their feedback.

Dr. Marino focused on two areas during the presentation: an overview of the conclusion of the archdiocesan synod and then feedback and emendations on the draft synthesis report.

The Holy See provided guidance about the content of the report in Appendix D of the September 2021 *Vademecum* and in a brief memo to bishops. Appendix D of the *Vademecum* provided six themes that they would like each diocese to provide feedback on in the report. The themes were the questions used in the regional synod listening sessions.

Dr. Marino explained that each diocese needed to submit their 10-page diocesan report to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) with a due date of June 30.

The Holy See provided guidance about the content of the 10-page report in Appendix D of the September 2021 *Vademecum* and in a brief memo to bishops. Appendix D of the *Vademecum* provided six themes that The Holy See would like each diocese to provide feedback on in the report. These themes were the questions used in the regional synod listening sessions.

The six themes that the Holy See wanted feedback on are how the draft report has been structured with the perimeters that were given. In addition to providing the content that must be in the 10-page report, the Synod of Bishops provided the below format and structure that each report is to follow:

- Introduction (1-2 pages) summarizing the diocesan experience and methodology.
- Body of the Synthesis (6-7 pages) summarizing the diocesan responses to the six themes in the *Vademecum*.

- Conclusion (1-2 pages) summarizing what the next steps of the diocese are to continue this synodal path.
- Appendices – optional appendices can be submitted related to the diocesan synod process.

We are to provide a short introduction and conclusion with a longer synthesis and can submit optional appendices.

Dr. Marino reported that the draft report had been completed, and they were seeking feedback from the priest council and the archdiocesan pastoral council. The report needed to be finalized by June 13 so it could be submitted to Ms. Paula Gwynn Grant, Secretary for Communications, and her team by June 15.

Ms. Gwynn Grant's team would take the last two weeks in June to design, format and layout the final report for submission on June 30. They would also translate the report into Spanish and design, format and layout the Spanish report.

Dr. Marino asked the group to focus on the draft report and provide any feedback and emendations. A thorough review of the draft report was conducted and priest council provided feedback on content and structure. Given the fluid nature of the conversation and feedback the comments were not easily synthesized into meeting minutes. However, unedited minutes can be shared with members of the priest council by contacting Ms. Tracy Rich.

The final report will be made publically available for all to read as Cardinal Gregory had requested since the beginning of the process.

### **Closing Comments**

Cardinal Gregory thanked the presenters for a very fruitful discussion. He also mentioned the following topics:

#### ***Grant for Maryland Parishes***

The Maryland Catholic Conference has notified the Pastoral Center of the availability of grants under the Protecting Against Hate Crimes (PAHC) program to fund, among other things, security needs at churches in the face of increasing threats of anti-religious property damage. Allowable grant uses include security-related facility upgrades such as security cameras, improved lighting and door-hardening, as well as training for existing staff and employing security personnel. The deadline to apply for a grant was June 24.

#### ***Parish Security Concerns***

Federal authorities have issued warnings that churches and other facilities face a heightened threat environment. Meanwhile, in recent weeks there have been many acts of vandalism and property damage nationwide against pro-life pregnancy centers and Catholic churches in particular, including even the theft of a tabernacle and the Eucharist. There have also been incidents of disruptions to religious services. Some of our own

archdiocesan facilities have been victimized. Now some pro-abortion rights groups have called for a “Night of Rage” when the Supreme Court issues its decision in the *Dobbs* case, which is expected sometime in the next two weeks. The USCCB has urged elected officials and law enforcement authorities to take action and the FBI is investigating.

This information is being shared with you so that you might increase your vigilance at your parishes and schools, including taking appropriate measures to ensure the security of the premises and especially the Blessed Sacrament. You may wish to revisit parish security protocols, ensure that your ushers are trained to handle any possible disturbances, check to make sure security cameras and systems and exterior lighting are properly functioning, and, as always, contact law enforcement to report any security incidents or safety concerns.

Should an individual or group cause a disruption in your church, they may also record it to post on social media to gain attention. If this happens, please do not confront the protesters. Instead, please handle with Christian charity and discretion and notify the police. If you should discover any vandalism, please report it to the police and notify the Moderator’s Office and Catholic Mutual at once.

His Eminence then closed the meeting in prayer.

#### **Next Meeting**

October 6, 2022