

**Priest Council Minutes
Saint John Paul II National Shrine
November 4, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.**

Present:

Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory
Most Rev. Roy E. Campbell, Jr.
Most Rev. Mario E. Dorsonville
Rev. Francisco E. Aguirre
Rev. David W. Beaubien
Rev. Robert P. Boxie, III
Very Rev. Daniel B. Carson
Rev. Rory T. Conley
Rev. Cornelius K. Ejiogu, S.S.J.
Rev. Msgr. William J. English
Rev. William E. Foley

Rev. Mark F. Hughes
Rev. Michael J. King
Very Rev. Mark D. Knestout
Rev. Thomas G. LaHood
Very Rev. Anthony E. Lickteig
Rev. Benjamin J. Petty
Rev. Msgr. Charles E. Pope
Rev. Mark L. Smith
Rev. Msgr. Eddie L. Tolentino
Rev. Msgr. Peter J. Vaghi
Rev. David G. Wells

Absent:

Rev. Emilio E. Biosca, O.F.M. Cap.
Rev. Matthew J. Fish

Rev. Msgr. Michael Wilson
Rev. Lawrence A. Young

Opening Prayer and Comments

After opening the meeting in prayer, Cardinal Gregory welcomed the members of the Council in attendance and with a quorum being present and welcomed Fr. Carson to begin the meeting.

Approve Minutes

Fr. Carson asked if there were any questions concerning the meeting minutes from the October 7 meeting. No questions were brought forth. The minutes of the October 7, 2021 meeting were approved.

Catholic Schools Consultation Update

Ms. Kelly Branaman, Secretary of Catholic Schools and Superintendent of Schools gave an update on Catholic School Consultation. She began with a year-over-year total enrollment snapshot reporting an aggregate enrollment increase of 4.9 percent for the first time since 2008. The archdiocesan elementary and early learning centers drove the increase with elementary schools having an 8 percent increase in enrollment and early learning centers with a 16 percent increase. She also reported that archdiocesan high schools have an aggregate increase in enrollment of 3 percent. Archbishop Carroll High School had an increase in 12.5 percent and Don Bosco Cristo Rey High School experienced a decrease of -5 percent.

Ms. Branaman presented COVID case tracking and reported that schools are managing the second year of the pandemic quite well. Schools are managing safety protocols to mitigate exposure. Masks are worn; temperature and wellness checks have been implemented. Being in the second year of the pandemic, the management of positive

cases are now routine. Schools work with the Catholic Schools Office and Local Health Departments on positive cases. Ms. Branaman was thankful that they are not in the spotlight of the media this year regarding positive cases. Principals are confident in working with the health departments. As of the date of the presentation, there were 143 cases, 36 of the 143 cases were open and 107 cases were closed.

Ms. Branaman presented the rate of vaccinations of school employees by county. She was proud of our rates based on a non-mandated status. They are managing the DC vaccine mandate for school employees at this time. Legal, Human Resources and Schools provided directions to pastors, bookkeepers and principals with a process for collecting vaccination information from staff and allowing for medical and religious exemptions.

There is concern of a teacher shortage following the pandemic. They surveyed school leaders and found that 30 percent of our principals were teaching in some capacity. Sixty-five percent of our principals reported assuming other non-instructional duties outside the classroom. This could be a result of open staff positions as well as other duties as it relates to health and safety measures in the pandemic.

Government funding is a key resource for our schools especially through school choice initiatives in Maryland and the District of Columbia. Last year, ADW Maryland families benefited from receiving \$1,569,756 in tuition from the MD Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today (BOOST) Scholarship program and DC families received \$12,280,478 from the Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP).

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), March 27, 2020 authorized the Education Stabilization Fund (ESF) to help states to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the devastating effects of COVID-19. Two programs in the ESF required Local Education Associations (LEA) to provide equitable services to students and teachers in non-public schools. They are:

- GEER – The Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund (CARES Act Section 18002)
- ESSER – The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (CARES Act Section 18003)

The Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA Act), December 27, 2020 authorized the Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools (EANS) program to provide services or assistance to eligible non-public schools to address educational disruptions caused by COVID-19, referred to as EANS I. The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act, March 11, 2021, authorized a second EANS program, referred to as EANS II.

In total so far, ADW schools have received over \$2,896,863 in COVID relief funding to support new technology infrastructures, portable devices for students and teachers, PPE equipment, screens and other health equipment.

The current EANS I total for archdiocesan schools is over \$3.5 million. However, that number will be significantly higher because Maryland divided EANS I into two rounds. Round one numbers include 42 ADW MD schools who applied, whereas, we currently

only have data for six ADW MD schools from Round 2. Approximately \$20 million left unspent in MD EANS I will revert back to GEER fund, and the Governor's office has said they will make this funding available in some way to non-public schools.

For EANS II, both Maryland and DC have applied to the U.S. Department of Education (DOE), but DOE is delayed in accepting state applications. Once DOE accepts Maryland and DC's applications and awards the funds, both states will have 30 days to make an application available to non-public schools.

There are two big changes for this program:

- Eligible schools are those that enroll a significant percentage of students from low-income families and are most impacted by COVID-19. We believe there will be a cutoff of 40% Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) in DC and 20% FARMS in Maryland.
- States cannot implement the program as a reimbursement and must enter into direct contract with vendors to provide services/make purchases.

DC will have \$4.5 million and MD will have \$39.2 million available for EANS II. This is slightly less than what they received under EANS I, but given far fewer schools will be eligible, those schools that participate will receive significantly higher allocations.

Ms. Branaman presented student performance in reading and mathematics for Spring 2021 to include the full year of the pandemic. Students across the ADW were in virtual learning, a hybrid model, or in person full time. The Scantron Performance series demonstrated that our students did very well and experienced little academic slide as reported by assessment scores in both reading and math across all grade levels. Our students greatly exceeded the national average in both reading and math.

Ms. Branaman reported on the Consultation Process under policy 4620 & 4621, which covers schools facing financial or enrollment stress, which may impact the schools viability the following year (priority schools). Triggers for consultation include:

- A loan is required to sustain school operations
- 35% or more of parish revenue supporting school deficit
- Tuition fails to cover a minimum of 65% of school expenses
- Enrollment falls below 65% of school capacity
- Fundraising proceeds fall below 5% of total school expenses

With our strong enrollment increases in most schools, we are in a unique position this year to not have any schools in immediate crisis. We have some schools that we are targeting for conversations with the pastor and principal to possibly adjust budgets and staffing, but our schools are in a good place based on enrollments.

The Consultative Process, Policy 4620 & 4621 Required Actions include:

- Meeting with faculty, staff, advisory bodies, parents and parishioners
- Handouts provided during meeting containing financial and/or enrollment data to be discussed

- Collaboration between pastor, CSO and principal
- Action plan
- Canonical administrator makes final decision regarding next steps

The Consultive Process Levels of Support include:

- Direct Supervision – Priority
-School facing unique operational barriers, which impact the school's viability. The ADW and pastor agree to shared supervision through a memorandum of understanding (MOU).
- Consultation – Priority
-School facing financial or enrollment stress, which may impact the school's viability the following year.
- Intervention
-School facing financial or enrollment stress, which may impact a school's viability within the next two to five years.
- Watch
-School facing financial or enrollment stress, which may impact a school's viability within the next five to ten years

Below are the schools that were in consultation during the 2020-2021 school year. Saint Margaret of Scotland, a childcare center, closed in January 2021. The other three schools had very successful years working to adjust budgets and increase enrollment. Saint Francis international made the intentional strategic move from a double track school to a viable, strong single-track school. Saint Philip worked closely with the Catholic Schools Office to cut expenses and adjust staffing in the school. All three schools have a planned surplus this fiscal year.

Priority Schools from 2020-2021:

- Saint Margaret of Scotland (Closed operations January 2021)
- Saint Philip the Apostle School (Enrollment 161 (Up 8%) (Projected Budget \$54,668)
- Saint Bartholomew School (Enrollment 190 (Up 30%) (Projected Budget (\$3,900)
- Saint Francis International School (Enrollment 305 (Down 6%) (Projected Budget \$277,000)

There are three priority schools for this year. As mentioned earlier, none are at risk of closure, but we would like to formally discuss enrollment and financial support for the schools. These schools include:

- Saint Mary Piscataway
-We are supporting the school currently with a budget review. The school experienced a 17 percent increase enrollment. We want to support the school in budget and staffing adjustments that keep the school on trend with decreasing the deficit.
- Saint Augustine
-Saint Augustine saw an enrollment decrease of -9 percent this year. Father Carson and Kelly Branaman will meet with Father Pat and the school principal to

discuss the total cost to educate and the percent of seats available for students from the Opportunity Scholarship Program.

- Archbishop Neale School
-Kelly Branaman will speak to leadership at Archbishop Neale School regarding the current enrollment as a double track school in the middle grades. The school would benefit from a review of enrollment by grade level and determine if a strategic decline or merger of grade levels is appropriate.

The following schools are schools we continue to support by means of reviewing the budget and looking at enrollment. We would like to work to decrease deficits whenever possible:

- Saint Columbia (Enrollment 154 (Up 16%) (Projected Budget Up \$119,000)
- Saint Ambrose (Enrollment 175 (Up 6%) (Projected Budget Up \$2,284)
- Saint Mary, Rockville (Enrollment 177 (Up 0%) (Projected Budget Down \$201,000)
- Saint Michael (Enrollment 132 (Up 6%) (Projected Budget Down \$13,000)

Lastly, the three following schools are simply mentioned as we plan to discuss with leadership their future long range plans for budgeting and enrollment. These schools may want to consider a strategic plan in the next few years to assure long-term viability.

- Saint Matthias
- Saint Joseph
- Saint Mary, Bryantown

Ms. Branaman discussed the short term and long term next steps, which include:

Next Steps – Long Term

- Archdiocesan-wide *State of the Schools* meetings
- Implement the Tuition Policy, planned for SY 21-22
- Focus on retention for the SY21-22
- Meetings with pastors and principals
- Adjust consultation lists following meetings
- Report on any changes to the completed consultation list
- Set November State of the Schools meetings
- Establish timelines and goals for each school community

Next Steps – Long Term

- Discuss the potential of a specific education campaign
- Evaluate the structure and role of the Catholic Education Foundation may play in an education campaign
- Analyze the distribution of tuition funds
- Develop more effective governance and tuition models

Ms. Branaman closed with two verses:

Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. James 1:12

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13

Archdiocese Religious Curriculum Revision

Ms. Sara Blauvelt, Director for Catechesis, gave a presentation on the Archdiocesan Religious Curriculum Revision. She began by thanking Cardinal Gregory for the opportunity to present today.

When she last presented to the Priest Council she spoke of the need to renew catechesis in our parishes and noted the need for renewal was the result of both the pandemic and societal changes impacting our Church today.

The Office of Catechesis has taken their own words to heart and used the summer as an opportunity to review resources and priorities so that they could better support parishes in their revitalization efforts.

Ms. Blauvelt presented an overview of their first initiative – a revision of the K-8 archdiocese religion curriculum for students in our parishes and schools. She spoke about three considerations that guided the presentation. First, why is a revision necessary? The current curriculum is overwhelming and parent engagement is difficult. Second, they will look at the structure of the revision, highlighting what has been retained and what has changed. Finally, they will consider the impact of the curriculum revision on the formal assessment we currently use.

Ms. Blauvelt referenced a quote from the 2020 Directory for Catechesis, 59 (EG, 165) as a response to the overwhelming scope of the curriculum.

The centrality of the kerygma for the proclamation leads to several guidelines for catechesis a well: “it has to express God’s saving love which precedes any moral and religious obligation on our part; it should not impose the truth but appeal to freedom; it should be marked by joy, encouragement, liveliness and a harmonious balance which will not reduce preaching to a few doctrines which are at times more philosophical than evangelical.”

Directory for Catechesis, 59 (EG, 165)

Echoing the Second Vatican Council, the directory urges us to read the signs of the times and respond in a manner adapted to the needs of those we serve. For us, this means a return to the kerygma. The directory highlights a need for a return to kerygmatic catechesis. Alongside the kerygma, the directory speaks of a missionary that goes forth. With the kerygma as our anchor, we have confidence in moving forward with clarity of what we believe and profess in uncertain times and when winds and currents of society threaten to move us off course. With this kerygmatic anchor and missionary focus, we have reshaped the original curriculum.

Ms. Blauvelt presented the trajectory of the scope of the curriculum. She referenced the 2010 curriculum, which was introduced as a standards-based tool to effectively and

consistently teach the faith across the archdiocese. However, it was heavy handed as it tried to “overcome an epidemic of ignorance and doubt”, all in one resource.

Between 2015-2018, they undertook a revision, decreasing the number of indicators and adding scripture citations. The curriculum still skewed too strongly toward memorizing facts and required a rapid fire approach in the classroom.

While retaining the framework of the tasks of catechesis and curriculum standards we focused on kerygma in the latest revision. We have limited the number of indicators to clearly, succinctly, and articulately outline the essentials of our faith. This will allow catechists and teachers to return to key themes so that students can develop a deeper understanding of the truth and be able to apply it to their lives.

Ms. Blauvelt spoke about the priority of the parish. The parish-parent partnership and the need for parent engagement as another aspect of the need for a revision. The recent revision is designed to create a resource that fosters co-responsibility of parents and Church in the task of catechesis. This is more important than ever as parishes move away from the traditional classroom model and explore various family models. At the same time, this format will allow Catholic Schools to support parents, particularly those who may not be Catholic, in the faith formation of their children.

The revised format allows catechists and parents to literally teach from the same page. The update includes and retains the references from the catechism, the US Catechism for Adults, and scripture. These references are designed to equip catechists and parents in teaching the faith. We tried to be concise in reference by limiting the number of pages to read.

Ms. Blauvelt then referenced an additional handout, Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization 2021 Grade 1. She noted that they have decreased the number of indicators, but have not sacrificed essential truths. With fewer indicators, catechists and parents are better able to balance content and methodology to give life to faith. The simplified format acknowledges the cultural diversity within the archdiocese and strives to lessen the barriers to education across language and socio-economic groups. While we hope that parents will want to engage at all levels, at a minimum, we hope they will engage with prayers, scripture stories and saints, which were added above the indicators, as learning our history and discipleship are first and best learned at home. We selected scripture and saints that correspond with and enhance indicators as a cross reference to include all Trinity Dome Saints. All of this is designed to give catechists and teachers confidence. The Catechism and Scripture draw out the deposit of faith and articulate the truth to be taught.

Ms. Blauvelt then turned our attention to the Faith Knowledge Assessment (FKA). This large-scale revision necessitated that they consider the value and implementation of the annual assessment for students in grades 3 – 8, particularly in the parish setting. Both school and parish students take the assessment with the fact that there is value in this model for schools. Written from the indicators, it does provide strong data on what students know, or at least what they can show us they know on a test, however, it is a one-time snapshot. It is not the best model in our shift toward kerygmatic catechesis.

It was designed as a tool for accountability; unfortunately, it engenders a spirit of anxiety and resentment among many in both parishes and schools. It is expensive. On the parish side it costs the archdiocese about \$43K annually. The schools already use the Scantron platform for other subject area testing.

Last year we cancelled the assessment on the parish side – the goodwill this engendered cannot be understated. This, in part, served as a catalyst to consider other models of assessment.

Ms. Blauvelt discussed the desired outcome of assessment to show models that were considered. While they were not convinced the current model is best, she does believe in accountability and data helps us to review our efforts and seek ways to improve.

In considering how to assess, the distinction of outcome is most helpful, of learning, for learning and as learning. They are currently assessing for learning – what students know, easy access to data, but cumbersome in parish setting.

She suggested that in a kerygmatic and missionary model of catechesis, assessment for learning is most fruitful. They get data, not as robust, but this is ongoing and interactive. Students are engaged so learning can happen in the assessment process.

Finally, assessment as learning. Harder to quantify, but this critical thinking model allows students to integrate faith and life, the essential quality of a disciple.

Ms. Blauvelt presented a possible alternative for assessments in parishes called Kahoot!. She began by saying she thinks there is still value in Catholic Schools using the FKA markers for Catholic Identity. Plus they already use the other models of assessment regularly in the classroom.

While not an exhaustive review of options, Kahoot! stands out as both functional and cost effective. Kahoot! EDU would provide each parish with a license for use. An assessment similar in scope to FKA can be developed and sent to parishes for implementation. However, the engaging platform, on electronic devices is perhaps its most compelling feature. Assessments are presented in a gaming model. With this platform, catechists can use this as an interactive teaching tool. It can be used in the classroom but also in family formation models, as well as in other parish programs that a pastor might desire.

No decision has been made, but it does seem clear that our current model for assessment needs consideration. The timing is important as we either commit to Scantron now or move forward with another alternative.

Ms. Blauvelt ended with the understanding that the revision of the curriculum has been both exciting and daunting, but change always is. However, now is a providential time as we refocus on the missionary identity of the Church and journey together in faith.

Synod Update

Dr. Jeannine Marino, Secretary for Pastoral Ministry and Social Concerns, gave an update on the Synod.

His Eminence, Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, gave a virtual presentation the week before priest council to the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Canadian Canon Law Society about the Synod. Dr. Marino attended that presentation and learned that the Synod of Bishops is aware that many Western countries such as Canada and the U.S. have for many decades utilized the consultative synodal structures of the Church such as the diocesan pastoral, financial and priest councils, and the majority of parishes have also established parish pastoral and financial councils. Cardinal Grech indicated that for many dioceses in other parts of the world, they have not established these consultative synodal structures, which is why the Synod's preparatory material places a great emphasis on these structures. Furthermore, Cardinal Grech indicated that for those countries such as Canada and the U.S. that have these structures in place, the emphasis of the Synod will be slightly different and could include strengthening these councils through formation; evangelization to welcome people back to regular parish life; and increased dialogue between clergy and laity.

The Holy See announced an extension for the diocesan phase of the Universal Synod. Dioceses will now have a 10-month time period instead of the original 6-months. The diocesan phase will be between October 2021 and mid-August 2022. The Synod of Bishops in Rome indicated that they extended the diocesan phase in order for dioceses to have more time to hold fruitful dialogues with the faithful.

In light of the Holy See's new timeline, we are working on updating our timeline. A new proposed timeline has been drafted and submitted to a group of pastors and CPA staff for their feedback. Dr. Marino shared that the Dec 20, 2021 deadline for parish listening session summary reports will be extended to Feb 15, 2022, which would allow parish listening sessions to occur in January and early February. The Archdiocesan listening sessions will now occur from mid-March through very early May. The final report will be drafted in mid-May/early June. This will allow for a draft of the report to be shared in June with Priest Council and the Administrative Board for feedback and any revisions being done in early July for final submission on August 15.

The second update is that the Synod team is working on compiling a list of facilitators for parishes to use during their listening sessions. Dr. Marino hopes to have this list completed by early next week.

The Third update is that the Spanish translations of the Toolkit, Note Taker sheets, Participants Guide and Facilitator Guide are all done and laid out. The Communications team is doing a final proof of the Participant's Guide and Facilitator's Guide Spanish texts today and they should have all of the Spanish versions posted online within a couple of days.

Finally, you will find in your folders printed copies of the Participants Guide and Facilitators Guide. Some of you asked last month for copies of these guides so you could get a better sense of how to host listening sessions.

The CPA will be ordering copies of the Participants Guide and Facilitators Guide in English and Spanish and can ship them directly to parishes or ministries. This will be included in an upcoming priest email from the MOC's office as reminder to place your order. However, they need to have orders from parishes quickly so the order can be

placed as their usual printer, Linemark, is experiencing paper shortages. Pastors can also print their own from the documents on the ADW Synod website.

At the end of the presentation, Cardinal Gregory mentioned that the Holy See said to the Universal Church that if you want to know how to do Synod – look to The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington!

ADW Rebranding

Following the presentations, the rebranding of the archdiocesan name was discussed. Ms. Paula Gwynn Grant, Secretary for Communications explained that after years of archdiocesan internal consultation and to affirm our Catholic witness in public, as of Friday, July 31, 2021 the Archdiocese of Washington's public name officially became "The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington."

Our new name clarifies and eliminates brand confusion in social media and on the internet. We are weekly confused with our brothers and sisters of other faiths, who also use a diocesan structure and are based in Washington, D.C. such as The Episcopal Diocese of Washington and The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

In social media, we are often mistakenly tagged with the hashtag for the National Cathedral (the Episcopal Church's Cathedral in NW Washington, D.C.).

The Secretariat for Communications is actively managing this language change in all public places such as our internal stationery/presentation templates, marketing collateral materials, digital platforms including adw.org website (in English and Spanish at adw.org/es) and social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Vimeo, YouTube, and Instagram).

Closing Comments

Cardinal Gregory thanked the presenters for their wonderful job!

Cardinal Gregory closed the meeting in prayer.

Next Meeting

December 16, 2021