

DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES

Friday, January 12, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by Paul James, Chair, and Bishop Taylor offered a prayer.

In attendance: Bishop Anthony B. Taylor, Dcn. Matt Glover, Mr. Dennis Lee, Mr. Greg Wolfe, Dcn. Steve Mallett, Ms. Anabel Garcia (Zoom), Ms. Alma Stewart, Sr. Cecilia Nguyen, OSB, Dr. Karen Hollenbeck (Zoom), Mr. Adrián Domínguez (Zoom), Mr. Jeff Hines, Mr. Paul James, Mr. Roberto Martínez, Mrs. Kristy Dunn, Fr. Daniel Velasco (Zoom), and Catherine Phillips.

Not in attendance: Mr. Alan Halman, Fr. John Connell, VG, and Sr. Mickey Espinoza, MCP.

Review and approval of previous meeting's minutes: The minutes of the December 1, 2023, meeting were approved by acclamation.

Old Business

School of Spiritual Direction (Update) - Fr. Daniel Velasco

Fr. Daniel Velasco, Director of the School of Spiritual Direction and Pastor of Our Lady of the Holy Souls Catholic Church, provided an update that included the following:

- Currently 12 students in the 23-24 year.
- 12 more students expected to be added for the 24-25 year (a new group).
- This is a three (3) year program, and another new group is expected to begin in the 25-26 year.
- The content includes a prayer part that must be done in sequence from year 1 through year 3. There is also an academic part.
- In response to a question, a list has been created for the pastors with the names of certified Spiritual Directors in the diocese.

Synod on Synodality Synthesis – Additional Themes - Bishop Anthony B. Taylor

The Diocesan Pastoral Council members continued their discussion of the eleven (11) major themes that emerged from the Synod discussions in the Diocese of Little Rock. The themes for this meeting were LGBTQ issues and the Role of Women in the Church.

New Business

“Why They Follow” Book – Bishop Anthony B. Taylor

Bishop Taylor said this is a book the Presbyteral Council is reading and discussing at their meetings. He summarized that the book is about following Christ and being better communicators.

Fiducia Supplicans – Bishop Anthony B. Taylor

Bishop Taylor said this document issued by the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith was discussed with the Presbyteral Council. The Declaration is On the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings. There was some discussion by the Diocesan Pastoral Council members about how this document was being understood. It was seen as a new opportunity to reflect on blessings, and also as a step towards evangelizing and bringing Christ to others. Bishop Taylor's statement on *Fiducia Supplicans* dated

December 18, 2023 was complimented for its clarity in explaining the meaning of blessings from ministers of the Church.

Synod Listening Sessions – Bishop Anthony B. Taylor

Bishop Taylor shared a copy of a letter to all U.S. Catholic Bishops from the USCCB Committee on Doctrine on behalf of the US Synod Team. They are requesting additional listening sessions in diocese based on two questions:

1. Where have I seen or experienced successes - and distresses – within the Church’s Structure (s)/organization/leadership/life that encourage or hinder the mission?
2. How can the structures and organizations of the Church help all the baptized to respond to the call to proclaim the Gospel and to live as a community of love and mercy to Christ?

Bishop Taylor has assigned priests to assist with listening from people who are incarcerated in prison, members of the LGBTQ community, and the youth. He wants to hear from these groups even if they veer away from these two questions.

Arkansas Abortion Amendment – Catherine Phillips

Catherine Phillips, Director of the Diocesan Respect Life Office, briefed the Diocesan Pastoral Council members on the Arkansas Abortion Amendment ballot initiative. She provided a copy of the petition that is being circulated for signatures to qualify for the November 5 election. The Arkansas Abortion Amendment would permit abortion within 18 weeks of fertilization, and in cases of rape, incest, in the event of a fetal anomaly, or when deemed necessary to protect the mother’s life or physical health.

Bishop Taylor and the Diocese have launched a “Decline to Sign” campaign that joins other pro-life groups seeking to prevent enough signatures from being collected for this terrible pro-abortion amendment to be placed on the ballot. A “Vote No” campaign will follow if necessary. In the meantime, Catholics in Arkansas are being encouraged to pray that this measure will fail and to educate others about it.

Meeting Wrap-up

Bishop Taylor’s remarks

These were made as agenda items were presented and discussed.

Future Agenda Items

These can be submitted to Paul James, Chair, Bishop Taylor or María Velázquez in the Bishop’s Office. Topics that are on the agenda for the Presbyteral Council will also be used for the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

Next Meeting

The next meeting scheduled for Friday, April 19 was canceled due to the Mass of Christian Burial for Fr. Thomas Keller that day. As a result, the next meeting will be Friday, August 2.

Closing Prayer and Blessing

The meeting closed with the Lord’s Prayer at 12:25 p.m.

Respectfully recorded by:

Dennis Lee

Chancellor for Administrative Affairs