**Archdiocesan Parish Council of the Archdiocese of Boston**

**Pastoral Center, Braintree**

**Monday 19 December 2022**

1) Call to Order at 6:30 pm by Sister Marian Batho, CSJ

* Welcome to all for the December 2022 RCAB APC in-person meeting. Our last in-person meeting was a year ago on 30/Nov/2021.
* We will address the Synod on Synodality this evening.

1. Opening Remarks – Cardinal Seán

* Welcome to All! It is great to meet again.
* The pandemic has taught us a lot about staying connected via technology, and it gave us the opportunity to stay connected. But some parishes are struggling to return. A group is looking into the parishes that are making a better recovery, to share lessons learned.
* The notion of Synodality is important, and it is a key activity from the Holy Father. It’s about allowing the Holy Spirit to guide us as a church, and to make our communities a truly evangelizing community.
* With regard to the Synod on Synodality, in the history of the church, we have never had this level of overall participation from the entire church. The response has been historic. We are very grateful for all that has been received and processed.

3) Archdiocesan Synthesis for the Synod on Synodality.

Background

* Presentation on this topic was provided by Father Paul Soper
* The goal tonight is to first review the status of this activity, and then the RCAB synthesis document itself, followed by discussion time at each table group on three specific questions.
* The three questions for each table group are:

1) What in this synthesis document is the most important?

2) What did not happen, and what was not heard?

3) What next? What should we now do as action? The Synod was both local and global, and what should be our response that should be considered going forward both locally and globally?

Status Update (on the processing of this information)

* RCAB submitted 11 pages for the US Bishops conference in June 2022. For the RCAB report, see: <https://www.bostoncatholic.org/synod-synodality>
* The US Council of Catholic Bishops has since generated the combined report. This can be googled at “USCCB Synod Synthesis”. See: <https://www.usccb.org/resources/us-national-synthesis-2021-2023-synod>
* There has since been a call for a meeting of the North American Bishops for a continental synthesis for North America. These are now occurring as we speak.
* Later in 2023 and into 2024, this will all be considered as global input by Rome.

Archdiocesan Synod Synthesis.

* More than half of this document is given over to the survivors. This is believed to be critical.
* The first two sections are very similar to other regions of North America. But the third section onward is unique and distinctive for the Boston Archdiocese. This is important.
* Section One of the report reflects on the joy of the sacraments, well celebrated Liturgy, good homilies, etc.
* A significant concern is the lack of young people. We are aware of the implications, but not sure what to do about it. There are other additional concerns, such as the seemingly endless scandals.
* It has become increasingly hard to identify the boundaries, and what defines a Catholic. Concern for a lot of people who have a minor voice because they are marginalized.
* Section Two of the report is what can we do better.
* Real listening is something that is really needed, and the strong connection between listening and prayer.
* We are generally focused on asking for church support but not listening what they have to say.
* Section 3 of the report is important, and unique.
* They are saying after all the conversation, you go home, but we (the survivors) do not. It is a lifelong sentence. Real closure is hard, or simply does not happen.
* There is always a question if the church is taking seriously about what has happened, and what will happen, and should happen. People notice when this issue is being ignored.

Breakout Groups and Table Discussions

* Work on this until 7:30 pm.
* Each group will address the following three questions:

1) What in this synthesis document is the most important?

2) What did not happen, and what was not heard?

3) What should we now do? This is a challenging question.

Table Breakout Groups

Breakout Group Reports

* Listening. This is an essential element of this activity, and was seemingly challenging for many.
* Personal experience with inclusivity. We do not want people excluded.
* Discussion about other survivors, such as with closed parishes. This is a constant concern.
* The importance of the family mass cannot be understated.
* Consistency on the lack of trust, which is deep-rooted.
* Solutions are a challenge, and important but still needed. It’s almost that some will shop for what they want among the parishes.
* We have lost the definition of what it means to be Catholic. This needs to be better established in today’s society.
* The document is very balanced, overall.
* An issue that is missing is any mention of the catechesis.
* When we talk about the church we need to emphasize quality over quantity.
* Consider additional listening sessions.
* A lot of people are very territorial with their parishes, and not thinking of the bigger church. This exercise pressed this issue. This was the concept of thinking both locally and globally at the same time.
* The ceremony and a good liturgy is critical. The Eucharist must be done correctly. It is important.
* Interesting that the Latin Mass has been divisional for some, but not for others. This is confusing for some.
* The very effort of the Synod was critical, even more important than the deliverables itself. It was great to be in lockstep with the entire church. This is consistent with Cardinal Sean’s statements about how unique this is in the history of the church.
* Listening was a critical part of this exercise. Overall, this was a key takeaway.
* A key characteristic of the church is its stability, which is a huge plus, but also a challenge with the natural evolution. For changes with the church, and our moral teachings, we do not need or want a revolution, but instead to manage the evolution.
* We need to keep focus on the marginalized, and continue to listen. But we also need to consider action.

Summary Comments on the Synod

* Cardinal Seán: These reports were all very helpful, relevant and important.
* In a prior Synod, we stopped every 15 minutes to simply listen. Listening is very important, for everyone.
* Inconsistencies and definition of what it means to be a Catholic has been mentioned and rightfully so. We need an apologetic that can explain and defend the faith. Older Catholics recall the Baltimore Doctrine, which was to defend against the Protestant faith. The challenges today are not from other faiths, but from science and other societal perspectives as a replacement for faith. We need a new apologetic today. It is very important that our teachings and doctrines make sense to others.
* As an example, when Pope Benedict visited the UK some years ago, the Catholics in the community directly addressed the hot button issues on behalf of the Catholic faith. Theie efforts were very helpful. He ultimately gave a critically acclaimed presentation to Parliament, but nevertheless it was still a struggle.
* It is important to live a life of discipleship. Getting people to at least talk with us about their grievances, this is a critical first step. But we cannot just change our doctrine. Today, we are lacking dialogue, respectful dialogue.
* In the first Acts of the Apostles, they had huge challenges despite having Christ in their midst. They had deep conflicts, but came together and overcame these challenges (e.g., accepting of the gentiles). Unity was critical. They showed love, and it brought everyone together. They forged a sense of community.
* Today we are in a very individualistic society and culture. Religion holds us together. As we lose our religion, we become more individualistic.
* Bishop Peter Uglietto: Mention of the other survivors is important, such as from closed parishes. Current APC members are an example of us moving forward. The level of conversation at these meetings is very inspiring.
* Sister Marian: Any further comments or questions.
* How will this be disseminated to Parishes?
* Father Soper: It was already emailed back in late July to all Parishes, and it is also it is on the RCAB website. See: <https://www.bostoncatholic.org/synod-synodality>

4) Summary Remarks by Cardinal Seán.

* The Pandemic has weakened us as a church. We are continuing our struggle to return.
* We are a Eucharistic people. We are blessed in Boston, with 16 new seminarians. Seminary enrollments are up. Those working to identify new candidates are working hard, and being successful. Vocations are everybody’s business.
* Next month we will go to Washington DC for a North American youth day, but next summer the World Youth Day will be in Portugal. These are great activities.
* The immigration situation is very challenging. The government continues to struggle with this, and Catholic Charities continues to address this. This now includes Ukrainians, including a member on this APC. The disruption of food supplies in that part of the world has impacted many people beyond Ukraine.
* Physician assisted suicide continues to be an important issue. The State Supreme Court recently has upheld a block on this. The Boston Globe, on the other hand, continues to promote it. The government continues to move the goalposts on this issue. It is becoming more and more promoted in some places. This is a huge challenge.
* The value of human life, and the dignity of human life, is critical. It’s not just about abortion, and also includes addressing social justice for women and others.
* In closing, we have a gift for Sister Marion. Thanks for all your great work.
* Also, another important announcement is the moving on of Bishop Uglietto (as mentioned recently in the Boston Pilot. The RCAB will have a new Vicar General as of 1/Jan/2022. This will be Mark O’Connell from the North Region, as the new Vicar General. Sincere thanks is extended to Bishop Uglietto for all his service.

5) Closing Prayer - Cardinal Seán

* Closing Prayer by Cardinal Seán.
* Thanks to all and a Merry Christmas to all.
* Meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.