

**DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL
MARTYRS HALL
Catholic Renewal Center
July 29, 2023 – 10:30 am**

MINUTES

Most Rev. Robert Coerver, Mrs. Esther Clarady, Ms. Valerie Rodriguez, Flor Hurtado, Deacon Juan Cavazos, Deacon Adrian Jimenez, Chancellor, Mr. Lucas Flores, Sr. Peggy Szeljack, Sr. Olivia Rico, Mrs. Christine Wanjura, Mr. Marty Martin, Very Rev. George Poonely, (Plainview Deanery), Very Rev. Ernesto Lopez, (Lubbock Deanery), Very Rev. Jonathan Phillips, (Brownfield Deanery), Rev. Jeganathan Arulsamy, HGN, (*Standing in for Very Rev. Arockia dhass Jeganathan, HGN, Snyder Deanery*), and Judy Leos Rodriguez, Recording Secretary.

Absent: Msgr. David Cruz, Rev. Jose Kochuparambil, Mr. Larry Rossi, Mr. Stephen Henry, Mrs. Frances Alvarez, Ms. Gloria Calderon, and Mrs. Lisa Gonzales.

OPENING PRAYER

The regular meeting of the Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) was held on Saturday, July 29, 2023, and was opened with a prayer led by Marty Martin.

MINUTES

The DPC Minutes of April 22, 2023, were distributed via e-mail to the Council prior to this meeting. Father George Poonely moved to approve the minutes as written. Valerie Rodriguez seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved and stand approved as written. The April 22nd Minutes will be posted on the Diocesan website.

AGENDA TOPICS:

Welcome Flor Hurtado, from St. Williams, Denver City.

Safe Environment Audit: (Bishop Coerver)

The Safe Environment Audit was published nationally and was picked up by Our Sunday Visitor now OSV Catholic News. In the *Key Finding* page; Article 2 Review Board of the Charter. The Dioceses of Birmingham, Alabama, Lubbock, Texas, and St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands were each found noncompliant regarding Article 2 of the Dallas Charter, which in part specifies a required Review Board, comprised of mostly lay people not employed by the diocese, that meets regularly and serves as a consultative body to the Bishop. Each Diocese subsequently corrected the deficiency. Article 2 requires the Diocese have a lay-run Review Board that functions as a confidential consultative body to the Bishop.

It states: *In the Lubbock Diocese, COVID was at its height during the reporting period and had "stopped many areas of our work," Lucas Flores, Communications Director, told OSV News in an email, adding that the Diocese had resumed Review Board meetings.*

The Bishop said he was aware of the Audit Findings a year before this came out and wrote a letter objecting to these findings of noncompliance in October 2022.

In the letter the Bishop wrote that no mention is made of the COVID shut-down situation which the entire world found itself enduring in 2020. It was deemed unsafe to gather for meetings during much of the Audit period.

This letter was sent to the Executive Director of the Protection of Children & Young People Committee, Deacon Bernie Najadera in Washington, DC, he copied the Chair of the Committee, Bishop Konderla, Region X Member, Bishop Gomez, President, USCCB, Archbishop Garcia-Siller, Metropolitan, and Bishop Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio, Objecting that the Audit was not postponed. He stated that even the accreditation agency (TCCBED) of Catholic Schools in the State of Texas suspended their accreditation visits until fall of 2021. Despite the Bishop's Objections, he assured the above mentioned that he would take action to see to it that the Review Board of the Diocese of Lubbock gathers on a regular basis (as deemed safe), for the remainder of his tenure as Bishop of Lubbock.

The Bishop asked the Council to please respect the privacy of the DPC and asked them not to publish this information to the parishes.

Review of June Diocesan Events:

- 6/3 Ordination to the Priesthood
- 6/9 Mini Eucharistic Congresses
- 6/17 40th Anniversary
- 6/19 Sheehan Memorial Mass

The members reported that all the events were enjoyable, setup was great, the Congresses were short, brief, quick and to the point. Turnout was excellent. The speakers were very knowledgeable. Denver City procession were organized excellent with police and sheriff doing a wonderful job. Overall, each deanery did a great job in organizing the June Events which helped with the Spiritual Enrichment of the Diocese. The Bishop said he was very thankful for the way the parishes coordinated the events and was grateful to everyone who was involved in coordinating all these events.

Plainview had a great setup. Adoration was setup outside and speakers were very good. The Bishop said that he was not at the events on Friday, because he was representing the Diocese at Archbishop Sheehan's funeral in New Mexico.

Finance Office Items:

Marty reported that the last audit was not good, and was embarrassed by it. He said before he took over as CFO, there were Personnel issues in the Finance Office that made the audit a little difficult, but since he became CFO, he put things in place that would help the process of the Audit go smother. The Diocese received an *unmodified opinion* which meant it was the same opinion as the previous year.

There has been an \$800,000 increase in income expenses, but expenses were cut drastically by over 1 Million Dollars, which made a big difference.

The Bishop reported that the Diocese is in a very stable financial position. Our income will not be as high this fiscal year because of our endowment income will not be as good because we were passively impacted by the

cotton crops in the Fall of 2021 and we were not able to see the benefits until January 2023 at the timing of the distribution. We subsidized our parishes that can not meet all of their expenses. The Diocese will have to look at the viability of our parishes.

Finance Office reporting continued:

Marty received an email back in January, 2023, informing him that our property insurance rates would be going up and predictors were projecting a 40 % - 60% increase in premiums due to repeated years of catastrophic property damages and sexual abuse claims. He then reached out to Catholic Mutual and asked if there would be an increase. After speaking with them for several weeks in an attempt to negotiate a decrease, Marty traveled to Omaha to see if he could negotiate the premiums. He left the meeting still not pleased with the outcome. He was able to get premiums at 44% which is a lot better than some places came out. He informed the priests back in June, 2023 of the increase and what the premiums would look like.

The Bishop added a little bit of background on what Marty reported. The elimination of the statute of limitations, whether it be permanent or for a limited time, is happening in a lot of states, but not hit all states including Texas. Pennsylvania, California, New York and maybe Ohio are real hotspots. This is driving a lot of dioceses into bankruptcy. This last Legislative Session in Texas has the TCCB Lobbying very actively against eliminating the statute of limitations. This really doesn't impact us too much. We are very fortunate. Secondly, the 44 % increase, is going to cause many of our parishes to take a good look at their buildings, sheds, etc..., and figure out which ones need to stay open and which ones need to be closed. Billing will go out in August.

The next issue is our Medical Insurance (CEBG). This is made up of four dioceses, Amarillo, Lubbock, Corpus Christi and Tyler. The younger the people you insure, the lower the premiums are. The older the people are the higher the premiums get. This is why we joined CEBG Group in order to get some of the benefits at a group rate. Back in the Fall of 2022, we received notice that our premiums would be going up about 40 % to 50%. At this point, the diocese put out a request for proposal on premiums. We received 25 proposals, which we narrowed down to 8. The Board which consists of

members from each diocese, got together and interviewed the 8 companies and they determined that we would change from our previous carrier to a company called Gallagher Insurance. They decided to go with Blue Cross, Blue Shield. They were able to get the premium down and we received only a 5% increase in premiums.

The Presbyteral Council determined last fall that they would like to have an Ad hoc Finance Committee to discuss the support of the Diocesan Budget and to determine if the current method is working or if another means of support is needed. There have been six meetings so far. Members of the Ad hoc Finance Committee are Rev. Jacob Powell, Chair; Rev. Martin Pina; Rev. Bill Anton; Rev. Jeganathan Arulsamy, HGN; Rev. Ernesto Lopez; Juan Carlos Martinez, Director of Ministry Offering from the Finance Office; and Marty Martin, CFO. The Presbyteral Council wanted a recommendation on how the ministry offices and Cathedraticum were working. The first couple of meetings were spent coming up with resolutions on methods to support the Diocese. The Committee continues working on this and which direction it should go. A discussion continued.

The Bishop said that this Ad Hoc Committee could eventually become a Standing Committee of the Presbyteral Counsel. The Bishop believes that the work of the Ad Hoc Committee and the Presbyteral Council has helped the priests to take ownership of the expenses and stewardship in our Parish.

Ministry to Young People:

Peggy Klein could not make this meeting but will be presenting at the November 2023 meeting.

The Bishop remarked that the church would benefit a lot more if we paid attention to youth and young adults between the ages 18 to 35. This generation becomes very effective in ministering to youth.

Tending to the Poor of the Diocese of Lubbock:

Catholic Charities USA has just recently appointed a new President and CEO---Kerry Alys Robinson. The Bishop is very concerned with the poor in the Diocese of Lubbock and wants to ensure that we reach out to those communities most in need. A discussion continued.

No further discussion is needed at this time, but the Presbyteral Council will continue to discuss this further.

Vision and Priorities laid out at the 40th Anniversary Celebration:

-Focus on the young adults and youth of the Diocese.

-Help our Catholics form relationships through involvement in small groups of prayer, study, fellowship, support.

-Develop our families as such small groups and offer them the support they need and the opportunities for service as Missionary Disciples as part of the nurturance of their call to discipleship.

-Encourage effective, healthy, and legitimate retreat experiences and programs as fuel or even ignition for the fire of love for the Lord expressed in love for others.

-Make use of and support the efforts of the Catholic Education Growth Fund (a new initiative of the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops to widen the space of the tent of Catholic Education through new and creative models of education) to support families and parishes and local communities in providing quality and effective faith formation opportunities and strategies.

Diocesan Pastoral Planning:

The Bishop said that the priests need to look at twinning parishes together. For example: Do Denver City and Plains need to start doing more things together?

The parishes cannot afford to insure their facilities any longer, perhaps looking at doing more things together if the numbers allow them to, is something the parishes need to look at.

This will continue to be a discussion in the months and years to come.

How to Dialogue as Church:

The Bishop used the example that we just had with the poor and Denver City as a great example on what he means to Dialogue as a Church.

The Pope said it best recently:
“To Walk Together with Openness.”

BISHOP ANNOUNCED THE NEW DEANS

- Lubbock: Very Rev. Ernesto Lopez
- Brownfield: Very Rev. Jonathan Phillips
- Plainview: Very Rev. George Poonely
- Snyder: Very Rev. Arokia dhass Jeganathan, HGN

TOPIC FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

- Ministry to Young People (Peggy Klein)

CLOSING

Sister Olivia Rico closed the meeting with a prayer. The meeting was adjourned at 12 p.m.

The next DPC meeting will take place on Saturday, November 18, 2023 from 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., at the Pastoral Center (A), in Conference Room 125.

**Minutes respectfully submitted by
Judy Leos Rodriguez, Recording Secretary**