

March 15, 2012

Status of Implementation of Synod Initiative II (Structures for Participation and Accountability)

Origin of the Report

At its January 26, 2008 meeting, the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (APC) considered a proposal to offer Cardinal Mahony six reports, one on each on the status of the Initiatives of the 2003 Synod. The six reports would outline the work completed throughout the archdiocese in implementing the six Initiatives. The APC appointed an ad hoc committee¹ to study the council's ability and willingness to undertake the reports. At the May 10, 2008 meeting, the APC heard the recommendation of the ad hoc committee. It had developed an extensive template for creating the reports and urged the APC to undertake them. The APC endorsed the reporting proposal, and identified Synod Initiative II (Participation and Accountability) as the topic of the first report.

Scope of the Report

The APC established a committee² to ascertain the manner and extent that Synod Initiative II had been implemented and to develop a report of these findings. The committee decided to ask the Regional Pastoral Councils to help it learn about regional efforts to implement Initiative II. The committee developed a survey instrument which was sent, over Cardinal Mahony's signature, to each of the five Regional Pastoral Councils (RPC). The instrument used the language of Initiative II, asking each parish how it invites people to be "an integral part of its mission, structure, and governance." It said that parishes should "provide for increased participation, collaboration and accountability for mission and ministry." Synod Initiative II does not mention pastoral or finance councils but because these canonical councils exemplify the kinds of structures that Initiative II was calling for, the survey instrument asked about them explicitly. The instrument also asked about stewardship councils (not mentioned in Canon Law) and about projects and activities that foster parish participation in mission, structure, and governance.

At the 2012 Inter-Regional Pastoral Council Gathering, an ad hoc committee on Initiative II reviewed a draft of this report and noted that it would have been of value for the developers of this report to have acquired information about the training that PPC members had received, the use in councils of more than one language, and printed resources of which PPCs should avail themselves. It is recommended that these issues be considered in any subsequent report on this topic.

¹ Cathy Brudnicki, Loraine de Jesus, David Estrada, Mark Fischer, Anita Ford, Kathy Hamrock, Kathleen Schwartz, and Cambria Smith.

² Anita Ford, Caitlin Morais, Loraine de Jesus, Jack Dunn, Tom Connolly, Gary Patterson, John Woolway, David Estrada and Lauren Burns.

Development of the Report

The five Regional Pastoral Councils used the survey instrument to estimate the extent of the implementation in the five regions of the Synod's call for participation, collaboration, and accountability. Each of the five regions submitted a report on their region's implementation of Synod Initiative II. The committee reviewed these individual reports and synthesized and analyzed them. Because the information was gathered in 2008, a subsequent survey was taken in September 2011 by the staff of the Archdiocesan Office of Synod Implementation and Stewardship. The APC requests that the APC propose the conclusions and recommendations of the most recent survey to Archbishop Gomez for implementation.

There was a general affirmation of the recommendations made in this report by the ad hoc committee at the 2012 Inter-Regional Pastoral Council Gathering that reviewed the report. They provided additional recommendations. These have been incorporated into this report.

Number of Pastoral and Finance Councils

The majority of parishes contacted supplied the information requested, however, some did not. Consequently, the data is incomplete. Nevertheless, because the data is valid, trends and comparisons as to the extent to which the parishes of each region have established the canonical structures of parish pastoral and finance councils can be made.

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles has encouraged pastors and parish life directors (PLD) to consult their parishioners via parish pastoral councils, a type of the council first recommended in Vatican II's Decree on Bishops (par. 27). The survey reports indicate that most pastors have established pastoral councils.

Parish Pastoral Councils in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles

<u>Region</u>	<u># of Parishes</u>	<u># of Responding Parishes</u>	<u># of PPCs Reported</u>
OLA	77	68	56
SB	37	33	28
SP	67	56	45
SF	46	40	36
SG	66	61	47

From the data collected, there are 212 PPCs in the 292 parishes in the five regions. This suggests that PPCs exist in approximately 73% of archdiocesan parishes. If the data that was originally reported by the five regions in their individual reports of 2008, this indicates that there has been a 10% increase in the number of PPCs during this three year period. Since PPCs are an exemplary form of participation, collaboration, and accountability, their relatively high numbers suggest that archdiocesan parishes are making an effort to implement Synod Initiative II.

Canon 537 mandates the establishment of parish finance councils. The following chart indicates the degree to which finance councils exist in the archdiocese's parishes.

Parish Finance Councils in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles

<u>Region</u>	<u># of Parishes</u>	<u># of Responding Parishes</u>	<u># of PFCs Reported</u>
OLA	77	68	63
SB	37	33	31
SP	67	56	48
SF	54	40	38
SG	66	61	54

From the data collected, there are 234 parish finance councils in the 292 parishes in the five regions. This suggests that 80% of the archdiocesan parishes have parish finance councils. Because not all of the RPCs provided data about the numbers of parish finance councils in their 2008 reports, it is not possible to determine if there was growth in the number of parish finance councils over the three year time reporting period. An extrapolation was made from the data provided by the RPC's in 2008 which indicated that 80% of the archdiocesan parishes had parish finance councils. Consequently, it can be concluded that the number has remained consistent. Nevertheless, the figures provided continue to indicate a general willingness by archdiocesan parishes to implement Synod Initiative II.

Differences in The Understanding of PPCs and PFCs

One of the striking features of PPCs and PFCs is how much they differ from one another. The report from the San Gabriel Region, with its detailed snapshot of the various parishes, clearly demonstrates three important differences:

1. The Way the PPCs Understand Their Task. Some PPCs understand their task as planning, and this accords with the official description of the PPC task as

study, reflection, and the recommendation of conclusion.³ But other PPCs see themselves as coordinators of parish commissions or standing committees (a task not mentioned in official Church documents).⁴ Still other PPCs choose their membership from commissions, but undertake the task of planning.⁵ PPCs that plan differ considerably from PPCs that coordinate parish ministries. This is important to understand and should be a theme of archdiocesan education efforts.

2. The Way that PFCs Understand Their Task. Another striking feature of the San Gabriel report is that it shows differences in the way that PFCs undertake their work. Some PFCs understand their role as monitoring income and expenditures, making regular reports, and helping to prepare the annual parish budget.⁶ This view of the PFC accords well with the archdiocese's Parish Budgeting Manual. Other PFCs, however, do not understand their primary role as budget planning. Instead, they respond to problems or concerns and undertake fund raising projects.⁷ This difference in the way that PFCs understand their role is important, and it is recommended that the archdiocese encourage PFCs to focus their efforts on monitoring, reporting, and planning for the budget.

3. Differences in the Way that Decision-Making with Councils is Understood, Another remarkable difference among San Gabriel parishes lies with the way in which they describe decision-making. Canon Law states that pastoral councils have a consultative-only vote. They advise the pastor but he is not obligated to accept their advice. Several parishes reflect this canonical approach to decision-making⁸. In other parishes, however, pastors seek consensus, suggesting that they refrain from deciding until they are of one mind with the council.⁹ This is not incompatible the canonical approach. It suggests that there are a variety of ways in which pastors and councils reach and make decisions. Further, study and discussion of these methods of decision-making would be worthwhile.

These three differences were also noted throughout the archdiocese in the findings of the later survey conducted by the Office of Synod Implementation and Stewardship.

³ Resurrection Church is studying evangelization and All Souls Church has studied how to develop new ministries.

⁴ The pastoral council at Epiphany Church is comprised of organization heads and coordinates the annual fiesta.

⁵ Immaculate Conception Church has five commissions (suggesting that they coordinate ministries) but the council's work is to plan and give direction.

⁶ At St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, the finance council reviews quarterly and yearly reports and helps prepare the budget.

⁷ The finance council at St. Anthony Church drafts plans to ensure that the parish and school are solvent and can make capital repairs.

⁸ At Our Lady of Victory Church, decisions are "made by pastor with input from all."

⁹ Decisions at St. Thomas More Church "are made in consensus with all involved."

Notable Successes

The reports from the RPC's suggest that the archdiocese has developed a number of successful approaches to the Synod Initiative II. Three deserve special attention:

1. Identification of PPC and PFC Chairpersons. The San Fernando report notably identifies the chairpersons of the various PPCs and PFCs. Maintaining lists of such chairpersons can enable improved communication, especially via electronic mail.

2. Visitation of PPCs. The San Pedro report was remarkable in that it described efforts by RPC members to visit PPCs. The report stated "We've learned through our visits that many of the councils are in different stages of maturity" and many councils "were not educated on the Synod or its Initiatives." The RPC visitors were able to assist councillors and share information about the Synod. This establishment of regional-parochial liaisons has great potential.

3. Study Methodology. The Our Lady of the Angeles report indicated that the Viability Study enabled parishes "to assist leadership...in planning for the future administrative structure and staffing of each parish within the region." This is a good example of PPCs undertaking their official task as described in Vatican documents, the task of "investigation" and "reflection" and "reaching conclusions." The archdiocese, by asking parishes to undertake a study, was in effect asking them to learn the methodology recommended for PPCs everywhere.

In short, the regional reports have indicated three directions in which the archdiocese ought to go:

1. Identifying and Communicating Regularly with PPC Chairpersons
2. Developing Liaisons Between RPCs and PPCs, and
3. Advocating the Methodology of Study, Reflection, and Recommendation.

Conclusion

The numerous PPCs and PFCs in the archdiocese are evidence that many parishes are taking seriously the recommendation of the Synod Initiative II. Through these councils, parishioners are becoming "an integral part of its (i.e., the parish's) mission, structure, and governance." Such councils "provide for increased participation, collaboration, and accountability for mission and ministry."

The evidence shows, however, that there is little unanimity of thought about the role and task of PPCs and PFCs. It is not always apparent that PPCs are following the recommendations of the archdiocesan document Communion and Collaboration. Many PFCs have not embraced the archdiocese's recommendation that they focus on monitoring income and expenses, regular reporting and developing a parish budget. Moreover, pastors understand their task of collaboration in a variety of ways. For example, not all PPCs are involved in the process of pastoral planning. Further education is needed to clarify the role of PPCs and PFCs, and to refine the methods by which pastors consult councils and reach decisions with them.

Despite these inconsistencies, there are notable successes to celebrate - successes that indicate directions for future growth. The archdiocese can strengthen the implementation of Initiative II by communicating regularly with council chairs, by developing liaisons between regional and parochial councillors, and by promoting the consultative methods of study, reflection, and the development of recommendations. These will help the archdiocese to increase participation, collaboration, and accountability.

Recommendations

1. Training. Training sessions provided to members of PPCs have been highly effective. The APC recommends that training that is sponsored by the RPC's be offered in each of the regions on at least an annual basis. This training should include a review of the purpose and role of the PPCs and a review of the Synod Initiatives. Specialized training should also be provided to PPC Chairs, Vice Chairs and Secretaries/Recorders. Suggested topics include developing agendas, conducting meetings, taking meetings, and writing bulletins to keep the parishioners informed of PPC activities and progress as well as to gather input. Pastors, administrators, parish life directors and parish pastoral council members should be offered in-depth training on collaborative pastoral planning which is at the heart of the work of parish pastoral councils. Additionally, the APC recommends training for all newly assigned pastors on the role and purpose of parish pastoral councils and finance councils. New pastors and new PLDs need to learn how to form them and consult them. It is also recommended that PPC members together with pastors be offered training in parish pastoral planning.

The importance of uniform training content was stressed by the ad hoc committee that reviewed the report at the Inter-Regional Pastoral Gathering. They stressed the need for this training to promote a uniform vision. This can be accomplished by video-recording the training programs and cataloguing them.

Each region should recommend six potential mentors who could be called upon to train councillors and pastors. These mentors should be available to pastors who wish to develop PPCs as well as pastors who wish to reenergize existing PPCs by bringing them into compliance with the archdiocesan guidelines. Consultation and Accountability should be taught by the Office of Continuing Education for the Clergy.

The archdiocesan *Parish Budgeting Manual* should be updated and published on the archdiocesan website together with the archdiocesan guidelines for PPCs, *Communion and Consultation*.

2. Mandate. The APC recommends regular reminders to pastors who do not have PPCs that as a result of Synod Initiative II, the Cardinal has mandated their establishment in each and every parish. It is also recommended that the Regional Bishops continuously stress, through the deanery meetings, the necessity for each parish to have a PPC, a PFC and a Stewardship Council. Further the APC recommends that the Regional Bishops request copies of parish pastoral plans on a tri-annual basis and that these be available on an electronic basis to assist other parishes who are pursuing similar initiatives. The parish pastoral plans should be accompanied by a report on the status of the prior pastoral plans that are to be shared at deanery meetings so that other parishes can learn from successes achieved and challenges overcome.

3. Communication. The APC recommends that all parishes post the names of the chairs of their PPC, their PFC and their Stewardship Council on their parish web site. Additionally, it is recommended that these names be posted on the Archdiocesan website under the listing of parishes. It is recommended that a vehicle for PPCs to regularly communicate with one another and their respective RPC be promoted e.g., through video conferencing or a list serve (akin to the one that parish business managers have). It is also recommended that PPCs and PFCs periodically meet and collaborate. The APC also recommends that it continue to host an annual Inter-Regional Pastoral Council Meeting that encourages the exchange of related ideas, projects, plans and proposals. Further, it is recommended that the archdiocese have a centralized website for council information. The APC recommends that the RPC standing synod initiative committee members establish a network of communication across the regions and that these be supplemented by meetings on at least a yearly basis. These can be facilitated through the use of the archdiocesan video conferencing equipment that is now available in each of the regions. Finally, it is recommended that all annual parish reports include the names of PPC and PFC members.

4. Parish Liaisons. The APC recommends that the RPC Members establish liaisons with pastors in their region and the chairs of PPCs to support both communication and training related to the work of PPCs as well as the implementation of all of the Synod Initiatives.

5. Accountability. The ad hoc committee present at the Inter-Regional Pastoral Council Gathering noted the need for accountability for parishes to have active PPCs, PFCs and eventually Stewardship Councils and suggested that a vehicle be established to require the annual reporting of the status of these councils.