

Bishop DiLorenzo's Open Forum
Church of the Visitation
April 17, 2010

Summary

<u>Issue/Question</u>	<u>Response</u>
Please reconsider Diocesan policy of taxing our funds raised for youth scholarships.	Will take another look.
Can we get help from the Diocese for our playground reconstruction expenses?	If you need help, check with the Extension Society (Msgr Shreve) which has an endowment ... also try Home Mission Collection funds...can ask wealthier parish for help as well.
Strongly believe we need to hear from Church more often against abortion.	It's a matter of emphasis...Arlington Diocese stresses anti abortion, Richmond Diocese other social concerns. Respect Life is important... striving for balance. You can express views directly to legislators and Catholic Conference.
Despite initial reservations, was very impressed by VIRTUS program run by Diocese and glad it was mandatory for people working with kids.	Good...women leaders of schools and religious education efforts deserve all the credit.
Re: Reconciliation ... why not General Absolution after Penitential Rite at every Mass?	Sacrament of Reconciliation traditionally is both personal and communal. Hopefully we don't rush through Penitential Rite at Mass. People should feel aware of sinfulness but reconciled through Eucharist. For mortal sins, personal sacrament of reconciliation with priest expected. Also, for grave illness, Anointing is a forgiving Sacrament. General Absolution is for emergencies.
Why not have First Reconciliation/Communion at age 11, more developmentally suited than earlier?	I'm open to a serious discussion. Need some kind of rule, but not hard and fast. Expert opinion necessary. Parents need to decide ultimately. Individual situations vary. Another reason parents need adult ed to help them make best judgment about their child's readiness.
What is Rome doing/thinking about the US priest shortage? Consideration of married or female priests?	All need to understand that Vatican is not central HQ of a large corporation, and Dioceses are not branch offices of Rome. Our tradition is that while Pope (i.e., Peter) has special gift among the Apostles, all Bishops (i.e., the other eleven) have a direct mission from Christ. The buck stops with the Bishop regarding Diocesan matters ... including vocations. I've addressed priest shortage by assigning a full time Vocations Director. We now have 14 seminarians (vs.

	<p>previous six). Have a program to augment with international priests. Also have strong Deacon program.</p> <p>Richmond Diocese challenge is to maintain parish structure we have, not close churches as in Northeast and elsewhere (this per input of the parishes through long range planning activity). Believe we're doing this.</p> <p>Married/female priests not in my ability to make happen.</p>
Concern about rise of secularism in western culture and dwindling appreciation of Christian contribution to civilization. Anything being done?	Our region is still strongly Christian; note so many denominations (not like e.g., Oregon where we'd feel like strangers). Larger question hard for me to address directly.
Are we preaching vocations enough?	Again, think we're doing what we can with full-time Vocations Director and Diaconate.
Any Diocesan planning for Adult Religious Ed?	<p>Yes...the GIFT program is under development. See Emily Fillipi, Director for Christian Formation.</p> <p>(Per Emily: We are working hard on appropriate adult faith formation. Materials to be available by Fall. Particularly for rural parishes ... includes web conferencing (i.e., Skype/OOVO) technology so you can interact with other communities without driving. Contact my office.)</p>
What were the results of the survey of parishes re: responsiveness of Diocesan staff to local needs?	We asked your views on whether you were being heard and were your needs being met. Generally, most thought our offices were doing a good job. Results were on our web page. We identified strengths/needs and made changes accordingly.
Can we get demographic projections about Catholic populations to help our planning?	Yes. Contact my Office of Pastoral Planning, Beth Neu. See website.
Why permit married Episcopal priests to become Catholic clergy? And not home grown married priests?	Is the exception. I know celibate priesthood differs in Eastern and Western tradition. But it's not on my plate. You can keep pushing for change. Maybe it will happen over time.
Isn't it unjust for priests to have to leave to get married?	Priest made celibacy promise and then asked to be absolved. Doesn't seem like a justice issue to me. But don't look to me to change the rule. It might change but the faithful can make their voices heard.
What are your five year goals for the Diocese?	We started a five year program when I was appointed and have made progress. Now are working on understanding new challenges ... the "signs of the times" ... with Office of Pastoral

	<p>Planning. Awaiting final work on that, but apparently priorities are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Help with young people – children, youth, college-age, and young adults 2) Social concerns, esp. in view of bad economy 3) Vocations 4) Evangelization ... inactive/alienated Catholics and unchurched people
Can the Diocese promote the practice of the Devotion of Divine Mercy?	Prefer to leave such decisions to each Parish leadership. Don't want to mandate.
Feel as a Parish family here, we're still undergoing changes since the survey was done in September. Not the same Church. Still grieving and in transition. Your recommendations?	Your perception may or may not be widely held. You should try to get empirical input from a resurvey, a different new survey, town halls, etc. Meet as a family to understand what you need and then go to work.
Have heard of instances where foreign priests behaved badly in US. Are they vetted before assignment?	Yes, I have a personal relationship with the other Bishop from where we're considering an international assignment. Individual is vetted for criminal/legal problems through databases. The cases where international priests got in trouble usually involved them walking away from their assigned Diocese and going out on their own. Now the sponsoring Bishop and I have a claim on each other's resources to keep this from happening.
Do foreign priests get culture and language training?	Yes, there are classes/workshops/mentoring, and help with accent reduction. Granted it is a continuing challenge.
Our youth feel underappreciated because our priest doesn't usually attend monthly Youth Family Nights. So hard to keep them interested in Church when priest is not present for them.	Your community needs to address among yourselves the priest's time management practices and personal preferences. Good quality laypeople are also essential to making the youth feel appreciated.
The trend seems to be that young adults by and large leave the Church ... they say it's always the same thing week after week, doesn't meet their needs.	The liturgy is the same but the range of programs doesn't have to be. We all need to be creative about developmentally appropriate faith formation. It is true the current generation is walking away from denominational religion while considering themselves to be spiritual persons. Has been happening for awhile now.
An observation: Women are called on to do things that men had been previously considered solely qualified for when a crisis point is reached and men are unavailable in sufficient numbers. Then we find out women do the job just fine. This may happen in the future re: female priests.	
Key question on many minds: Is Father Robert	He's your Pastor. Not temporary as far as I'm

<p>temporary here? Have sense that he's on a one-year trial because not designated Pastor.</p>	<p>concerned. I gave you a chance to interview each other last summer because of death of Fr. Boddie. I never considered it probationary beyond that.</p>
<p>Returning to involvement with the Youth; strong programs can help with vocations. We try to get youth involved in liturgies, e.g., lectors today.</p>	<p>Good. Again, your parish needs to work out the time-presence equation for Fr. Cummins. Showing up is substantively important. But neither he nor I can be everywhere.</p>
<p>(Comment from Emily Fillipi)</p>	<p>Want to mention opportunities for small parishes re: Youth. We have a Catholic Youth Ministry office. Examples of activities include Youth Rallies & Annual Youth Conference where young people can make contact with others like themselves. Curricula are available in many areas such as "Respect Life" themes. Again, electronic conferencing helps with distances. We believe we have many rich resources. Please call and we can help.</p>