



**DIOCESE OF SCRANTON
PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, MAY 23, 2023
MINUTES**

The council was called to order at 3:05 pm.

- Roll Call was taken. *Present:* Bishop Bambera; Monsignors Quinn and Van Loon; Fathers Shantillo, Polednak, Albert, Bechtel, Beck, Bryant, DeCelles, Doris, Edwards, Fox, Glenn, Jeffrey, Kuhar, Kutch, McCreary, Miller, Pisaneschi, Quinnan, Ricciardi, Wasnock. *Excused:* Fathers Czachor, Evanko, McDougall, Polmounter, Tudgay.
- Prayer Intentions: Msgr. Ward, who is undergoing therapy; Fr. Lyman, who is struggling; Fr. Chet Snyder, of Harrisburg, whose funeral was recently..
- Fr. Doris led daytime prayer at 3:08 pm.

Minutes from the April 25, 2023 meeting were approved.

AGENDA

I. Priest Retirement Package: Rev. Gerald Shantillo

Fr. Shantillo offered an update on priest retirement benefits. The diocese has restructured the pension plan and is investing aggressively with the goal of a healthy balance sheet by 2025 or 2026. This allows the Diocese to make some important changes, which become effective July 1. A priest may now opt out of the pension, if, for example, he already has retirement benefits from a past career. A priest will be vested after 25 years, but if he is in second career and retires sooner, his benefits will be prorated. The periodic increase of benefits has been doubled, from \$50 to \$100. There will also be a lump sum benefit for men who leave the priesthood through proper channels. Questions raised by council dealt with (among other issues): early retirement for non-medical reasons (pension will be prorated); lowering the retirement age; medical benefits for retired priests (Freedom Blue, along with Medicare, almost equals pre-retirement medical coverage); and changes to medical coverage for currently active priests.

II. Outdoor Wedding Policy

Bishop Bambera led a discussion on weddings outside of a parish church. The prompt was an article on the Archdiocese of Baltimore's policy on non-church weddings. Such a policy could create new opportunities for evangelization, provided that guidelines are clearly communicated to wedding planners, venues, and the like. The dignity of the liturgy was a major point of debate. Outdoor liturgies are vulnerable to factors such as rain and the misconception that alcohol may be consumed. Yet appropriate venues and careful planning can do much to promote a dignified nuptial Mass. Msgrs. Van Loon and Quinn and Frs. Bryant, Bechtel and McCreary volunteered to serve on a task force to investigate the policies of Baltimore and Harrisburg and to propose a policy for our diocese, to be considered by the presbyterate.

III. Diocesan Concelebration Vestments

Msgr. Van Loon presented the task force's recommendations regarding a new diocesan vestment. The task force engaged with several suppliers, including Renzetti-Magnarelli, Holy Rood, and Sorgente, with a view to purchasing vestments that would last 20 to 35 years. They recommend Holy Rood's Staplehill style for its quality, durability, and dignified look. Holy Rood has expressed its willingness to work with us on pricing for dalmatics as well. The vestments are fairly expensive, and it will likely take Holy Rood a year and a half to produce them all. A majority of the council voted to adopt Holy Rood's Staplehill as our new diocesan vestment. Council preferred the V-neck style (14 votes) over the rounded 'yoke' neck (8 votes). Parishes are expected to purchase the vestments, but a priest could also order a vestment to keep for himself.

IV. Religious Education Programs

Fr. Miller requested that his presentation be postponed to the next meeting in the interests of time. Council agreed.

V. Bishop Update

Bishop Bambera thanked the council for its energy and attention to the topics that we have discussed. He expressed particular appreciation for the conversation about evangelization and outreach in the context of diocesan wedding policies. He also responded to a question on window legislation, noting the diocese's ongoing preparations for this possibility and meetings he has had with abuse victims since Bishop Timlin's funeral.

VI. The next meeting is scheduled for September 12, 2023.

The meeting concluded with Evening Prayer, led by Fr. Bechtel at 4:48 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Fr. Mark DeCelles