

# Pastoral Council tackles 'hard choices'

HARTFORD – The Archdiocese of Hartford's Pastoral Council met for the first time Oct. 4 to discuss ways to strengthen the archdiocese's ability to meet needs and challenges today and in the future.

The council is made up of 26 members who represent parishes from across the archdiocese with diverse backgrounds and concerns.

According to Father James A. Shanley, vicar for pastoral planning, these business and community leaders are active in their parishes and are in touch with the priorities of their fellow parishioners.

"One of the goals of the council is to effectively respond to Pope Francis' desire to embrace and realize a spiritually rich and vibrant future for the Catholic Church," said Shanley. The Pope has said: "I dream of a 'missionary option', that is a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, languages and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation."

Archbishop Leonard P. Blair chaired the council and talked about Pope Francis' first apostolic trip to the United States that recently gave the faithful a sense of renewal, hope and love.

The council broadly discussed some of the challenging decisions it will face relative to parishes, schools and/or ministries as it works collaboratively to position the Archdiocese of Hartford to meet today's needs.

"In these times, when our parishes and schools face challenges that are both spiritual and demographic, hard choices need to be made, and consultation with the council will help archdiocesan leaders devise well informed, col-

laborative action plans," said Archbishop Blair.

Debbie Sousa, a council member, said she left the meeting with a sense of purpose, and felt honored to be asked to be part of the consultation process. She belongs to St. Stanislaus Church in Bristol.

Another member, Nancy Strini, from St. Joseph in Canaan, said she is accepting the pope's invitation to evangelize by doing what is best for our local parishes.

"I don't feel that people would have agreed to serve on the Pastoral Council if pastoral planning was just code for shutting down parishes and closing schools. I am hopeful that we will look at a broader list of ways to improve the archdiocese, including lighting a fire under the laity by concerted efforts to bring fallen away Catholics back to church, and to be open to new ministries that might derive from the changes that are taking place in parishes, such as transporting parishioners to Mass, offering community meals, etc."

The Pastoral Council will meet quarterly.

Besides Archbishop Blair, the council's members are:

Myles Hubbard, St. Justin, Hartford; Carlos Aedo, St. Bridget, Manchester; Sheila Jewell, St. Martin dePorres, New Haven; Tracie Baker, St. Anthony, Litchfield; John Kalamarides, St. Mark the Evangelist, West Hartford; Clifford Bechtold, St. George, Guilford; Cindy Kociszewski, St. Thomas, Thomaston; James E. Bowman, St. Bridget, Cheshire; and John Lodovico, St. Anthony, Bristol.

Also, Dr. Lawrence DeNardis, St. Joan of Arc, Hamden; Sister Mariette Moan of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, vicar for religious, Hartford; Judge Andre Dorval, St. Ann, Bristol; Armando Morales, St. Rose of Lima, New Haven; Gerald Farrell Jr., Most Holy Trinity, Wallingford;

Deacon Martin O'Connor, St. Bernadette, New Haven; Father Robert O'Grady, St. Mary, Windsor Locks; Lorraine K. Young, St. Mary, Branford; Kerry A. Robinson, St. Thomas More Chapel, New Haven; Beth Rubino, St. Patrick, Farmington; Joseph A. Santos, Sacred Heart, Suffield; Patricia Smatt, St. Joseph, Bristol; Ms Sousa, Ms. Strini and James M. Thomas, St. Dunstan, Glastonbury.

The support staff is made up of Father Shanley and Father Ryan Lerner, secretary to the archbishop.