



Pastoral Recommendations Project
By the baptized - For the baptized

Developing the Parish Community

The first image which the Second Vatican Council used to teach us about the church was that of the People of God. All of humanity was included in this image of the church with non-believers, believers, and all Christians gathered in concentric circles around the fullest expression of church, the Catholic community. All of us are church. "All men (women) are called to belong to the new People of God." (*On the Church #13*)

When the council came to teach us further about what it means to be church, it first taught us and the Council itself about the liturgy. "The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed." (*On Liturgy #10*) and "...all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which...is their right and duty by reason of their baptism." (*On Liturgy #14*) the liturgy is the model for the church. The church does four things: young gather the folks, you tell the story, you break the bread and you serve the needs.

Therefore, because we are all members of the People of God, the church, and all by baptism are to take our full, conscious and active part in the life of the church, we are called to the perennial renewal of the church, especially at a time when our local church is being stressed by bankruptcy, episcopal resignations, departures from the church, and the crimes of sexual abuse of children.

In addition, Pope Francis has called upon the laity to lead the church and for bishops and priests to serve them in that effort. He has said that if the church is a pyramid, maybe the base should be on top and the point of the pyramid on the bottom.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Determine what our definition of a viable parish is.
 - *Do this with strong parish and deanery input.*
 - *Do not close, cluster, or merge any viable parish.*
 - *Decisions about parish closings should be made on the parish and deanery levels.*
- Establish a research, planning and futurizing office for the diocese, possibly in conjunction with the University of St. Thomas.
 - *This would provide current data about parish life for the renewal of parishes, the assignment of ministers, financial trends, demographic trends, etc. These data should be published annually and easily available at other times.*
- Re-establish the ministry of Parish Life Coordinators (persons other than priests who serve as pastors) to keep viable parishes together during the shortage of priests.
 - *These coordinators (usually lay persons) are already provided for in Canon Law and for our archdiocese in a study commissioned by Archbishop Roach in 1993. The diocese of New Ulm has used these coordinators extensively in the past.*
- Assure that there is a fit between a new pastor and a parish, using our Comprehensive Assignment Board, (CAB) with lay and ordained members, which recommends assignments of priests and deacons.
 - *If there is not a fit, do not assign the new pastor.*
 - *In this process, all pastoral /clergy assignments will be the result of the full, active and conscious participation by the lay leadership, staff, and people of the parish, especially as they are oriented by CAB findings about the parishes.*
- Help new pastors respect the wideness of the Catholic spiritual tradition and the diversity of Catholic communities, not just a limited view of Catholic life.
- Offer leadership training institutes for the continuing education of parish leaders, possibly in conjunction with our universities, so that best practices are adopted in our parishes.
 - *The National Roundtable for Church Management can serve as a resource. They would have special consulting services for parishes with problems.*

- Establish deanery level clergy and lay personnel as back up service to ensure that coverage is provided for each parish's pastoral and sacramental needs when a parish's own personnel are absent.
- Include parish input to seminary formation and education to meet the real spiritual needs of the people.
 - *Seminary boards should have strong lay parish membership.*
- Develop a 'planting ministry' in the archdiocese to plan for future parishes as demographics change and evolve.
- Determine the size of civic community that deserves to be served by its own Catholic community.
- Develop support for small faith communities within and beyond parish structures, including families as domestic churches.
 - *Welcome the development of intentional ecclesial communities as living expressions of our common call as responsible Christians. Support small base communities.*
 - *Allow for experimental approaches to parish life, such as lay leadership for parishes, deanery wide sacramental ministers and ministries, women as pastors, and shared services.*
- Include all professional parish ministers in deanery meetings.
 - *Invite parish representatives to meet on the deanery level to develop deanery structures.*
- Have parishes and parishioners agree upon and consent to the rights and duties of parishioners, parish and pastoral staff, so that continuing needs are met for liturgy, pastoral care, justice, education etc. with parishioner participation and appropriate staff involvement.
 - *Parishioners should commit to their offerings of time, talent and treasure.*
- Provide in a special way for the community to meet the needs of single members, young and old.
- Develop endowment funds in every parish and parochial school, so that persons who wish to leave a gift can do so with the assurance that the principal of their gift will last forever, only the interest off of the principal will be used for parish and school needs.

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