

**IN THIS ISSUE**

## Renewal of the Church: the Road Ahead

Those with long memories may recall Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, a staunch defender of the status quo in the days before the Second Vatican Council, whose episcopal coat of arms proclaimed *Semper Idem*, “always the same.” But an earlier and more famous cardinal, John Henry Newman, had written: “To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.” And Vatican II itself, after some debate, wrote in its Decree on Ecumenism, “In its pilgrimage on earth, Christ summons the Church to that continual reformation of which it is always in need.”

This fourth issue of *C21 Resources* focuses on the Church of the future in the U.S. and what kind of change, renewal, or reform is needed in order to get from here to there. The articles reprinted here propose different ways the Church might undertake Newman’s challenge without violating Ottaviani’s sense of its changeless truth.

When BC undertook two years ago the initiative that came to be called *The Church in the 21st Century*, it sought to respond as a university to the shocking disclosures about sexual misconduct by priests and the inadequate responses of bishops. What resources did we have in scripture, tradition, theology, and other intellectual disciplines to help us understand

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## A Plea for Dialogue

*A Dying Priest’s Appeal to the Bishops*

Two days before his death in August 2003, Rev. Msgr. Philip F. Murnion, founder of the National Pastoral Life Center, sent the following letter to each bishop in the United States.

To My Brother in Christ:

In his final public address on October 24, 1996, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin spoke these moving words. “A dying person does not have time for the peripheral or the accidental. He or she is drawn to the essential, the important—yes, the eternal. And what is important, my friends, is that we find that unity with the Lord and within the community of faith for which Jesus prayed so fervently on the night before he died.”

Now, in God’s Providence, I too write this reflection as a dying person, with no time for the peripheral or

accidental. In many ways the crisis in the Church and the ensuing polarization...have only grown more acute. Your own credibility and ability to guide God’s people have been severely compromised, sometimes because of negligence and lack of wise leadership, sometimes because of factors beyond your direct responsibility.

It is time for bold initiatives. I do not presume to know all the dimensions of such undertakings. But I am convinced they must emerge from the deepest discernment of God’s will and the widest consultation of God’s people.

In his apostolic letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, the Holy Father strongly urges practice of “the ancient pastoral wisdom which, without prejudice of their authority, encouraged pastors to listen more widely to the entire People of God.” Thus, in the mind of the

Pope, there is no contradiction between legitimate authority and careful consultation. Consultation, listening, and dialogue only enhance true authority, because they issue from a lived trust and they serve to increase trust.

If I were to sum up my final plea to you, it would be: “dialogue, dialogue, dialogue!” I do not mean this as a facile or pious slogan, for I am only too aware of its cost and conditions. It is for this reason, I think, that the Pope places dialogue within the context of an entire theological and spiritual vision and practice. In his Letter, the Holy Father advocates a “theology and spirituality of communion,” for they “encourage a fruitful dialogue between pastors and faithful” (ibid). Indeed, does not the living out of such a spirituality of communion require dialogue as its very life-breath: the dialogue of prayer with Jesus Christ, the dialogue of mutual building up on the part of the members of Christ?

A spirituality of communion and dialogue is as demanding in its asceticism as the spirituality of desert or cloister. Like them, it requires its own structures. The Catholic tradition knows well that spirituality and structure are not opposed. Here, as elsewhere, it affirms the “both/and” of charism and institution, invisible grace and visible embodiment. Both are essential, though only one is eternal. We can ill afford to be less Catholic than the Pope himself who insists: “The spirituality of communion, by prompting a trust and openness wholly in accord with the dignity and responsibility of every member of the People of God, supplies institutional reality with a soul.”

For more than 20 years I have been blessed by working with many of you. I know that many have sought diligently to consult and communicate with your priests and people alike.



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## C21 RESOURCES

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*C21 Resources is published by Boston College's Church in the 21st Century initiative, in partnership with the publications in which these articles first appeared. C21 Resources is a compilation of the best analyses and essays on the Church's crisis and search for renewal. They are published with the intent of stimulating discussion and thought among bishops, priests, and religious and lay members of the Catholic community.*

## Murnion

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But in this time of crisis we face the urgent need imaginatively to expand present structures and to create new ones that will enable us to draw more effectively upon the rich wisdom of those baptized in water and the Holy Spirit.

Permit me with the last breaths the Spirit gives me to implore you: Do not be afraid to embrace this spirituality of communion, this "little way" of dialogue with one another, with your priests, with all God's faithful. Doing so, you will touch not only the hearts of your brothers and sisters; you will draw closer to the heart of Jesus, the Lord and brother of us all.

## IN THIS ISSUE

### *Change, Renewal and Reform: The Road Ahead for the U.S. Church*

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the issues? What kinds of changes would prevent a crisis like this again?

Quickly the focus widened to look at questions beyond the headlines. What should the roles of laity, priests, and bishops be in a healthy Church? How should we understand the Church's teaching on sexuality and, especially, the gap between teaching and practice among Catholics? How can we live our faith as a community and hand it on to the young? More than 25,000 people have come to campus or alumni gatherings around the country for 130 lectures, panel discussions, scholarly conferences, and artistic performances dealing with these questions.

The idea of *C21 Resources* was born when we realized that many alumni and friends in Boston and around the country can't come to campus for an event but want help in thinking about the issues. Catholic weekly and monthly journals are publishing thoughtful articles about the crisis, we thought. Let's collect the best of them and reprint them in newspaper format.

This issue of *C21 Resources* is being sent to about 160,000 alumni and friends of BC. Many have told us they value the articles we're sending them. A few have made it clear they don't. One even accused us of manufacturing the crisis. Most, though, seem to be the audience we had in mind: thoughtful men and women, disturbed by what is happening in the Church they love, eager to read material that helps them think about the issues.

Publishing *C21 Resources* has been something of a paradox. As editors we have sometimes wondered: If our readers appreciate the articles that we are reprinting, why don't they read the journals where they first appeared? There are more than a million living alumni of Jesuit colleges and universities in the United States, yet *America*, the weekly journal of opinion edited by Jesuits, has 45,000 subscribers and most Catholic

journals have far fewer. Why don't Catholics nourish their thinking about the Church and religious topics by reading *Commonweal* or *First Things* or *U.S. Catholic*? We would be pleased if *C21 Resources* leads some readers to subscribe to the journals that have been providing us with our material for the past two years.

Nearly two years ago, when the Church in the 21st Century initiative was created at Boston College, we believed that the issues challenging the Church would be well on their way to resolution by this time. That has turned out not to be the case. In fact, many Catholics are just now understanding the extent of loss we have suffered and its consequences for a Church we love and its people.

Thus, we see a continued need for a program that includes the kinds of lectures, conferences, articles, and books that you and others have come to expect from Boston College. However, we plan to incorporate fresh salients. These will include distance learning opportunities for Catholics everywhere who want a chance to develop a serious understanding of, and relationship with, their faith, and the establishment of a permanent center on campus to study and assist the Church in this 21st century as it moves toward a necessary renewal of spirit and resources. That, in any event, is our intent and our prayer.

The past two years have been a defining moment not only for the Church in the U.S. but for Boston College. If universities in the West were born, as John Paul II has said, from the heart of the Church, Catholic universities clearly now have the responsibility of helping the Church do its thinking.

In the subtle economy of grace, even this darkest episode in the history of the American Catholic Church can yield points of light. The essays in this issue of *C21 Resources* offer a variety of ways of thinking hopefully about change and renewal in the Church.

*The Editors*

## Facts, Myths, and Questions

BY THOMAS J. REESE

For those who have been following the sexual abuse crisis in the American Catholic Church since the mid-1980's, the reports by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the National Review Board for the Protection of Children and Young People provided confirmation of hunches and the destruction of myths. At the same time, they left many questions unanswered.

The myths have been promoted by people on both sides of the debate: those who want to beat up on the Church and those who want to downplay the crisis. But what are the facts reported in this study of sexual abuse in the Church between 1950 and 2002?

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*The beginning,  
not the end, of  
research on sexual  
abuse in the  
Church.*

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*Myth:* Less than 1 percent of the clergy are involved in sexual abuse. *Fact:* 4,392 priests, or 4 percent of the total number of members of the Catholic clergy between 1950 and 2002, have had allegations made against them.

*Myth:* Much of the abuse was not really serious. *Fact:* All incidents reported to John Jay involved more than verbal abuse or pornography. Only 3 percent of the acts involved only touching over the victim's clothes. On the other hand, 57 percent of the acts involved touching under the victim's clothes, 27 percent involved the cleric performing oral

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# Getting in Touch with the Real Facts on Abuse

sex, and 25 percent involved penile penetration or attempted penetration.

*Myth:* Most of the abusers were serial offenders. *Fact:* 56 percent of priests had only one allegation against them. The 149 priests who had more than 10 allegations against them were responsible for abusing 2,960 victims, thus accounting for 27 percent of the allegations.

*Myth:* These offending priests were “dirty old men.” *Fact:* Half the priests were 35 years of age or younger at the time of the first instance of alleged abuse.

*Myth:* Many of the abusive priests had been victims of sexual abuse as children. *Fact:* Fewer than 7 percent of the priests were reported to have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional abuse as children.

*Myth:* Celibacy caused the sex abuse crisis. *Fact:* 96 percent of priests (all of them obliged by celibacy) were not involved in sexual abuse.

*Myth:* Homosexuality caused the abuse crisis. *Fact:* No one knows the exact percentage of priests who are homosexual. Estimates have ranged from 10 percent to 60 percent. In any case, most homosexual priests were not involved in the sexual abuse of minors.

*Myth:* Most abuse was done under the influence of alcohol or drugs when the priest did not know what he was doing. *Fact:* Although 19 percent of the accused priests had alcohol or substance abuse problems, only 9 percent used drugs or alcohol during the alleged instances of abuse.

## Myths about the Victims

*Myth:* There were 60,000 to 100,000 victims of sexual abuse. *Fact:* While we know only the number of victims who reported their abuse to bishops, it is difficult to see how there could be 6 to 10 times as many victims as the number (10,667) who came forward.

*Myth:* The victims did not approach the Church but sent their lawyers. *Fact:* Only 20 percent of the allegations were reported to the Church by lawyers representing victims. Almost 50 percent of the allegations were reported by victims, plus another 14 percent by parents or guardians.

*Myth:* Most of the abuse occurred with older teenagers. *Fact:* Only 15 percent of the victims were 16 to 17 years of age; 51 percent were between the ages of 11 and 14.

*Myth:* Abusers targeted children of single mothers. *Fact:* Only 11 percent of victims were living with their mothers only. Almost 79 percent of the victims had both parents living at home.

*Myth:* Most abusers threatened their victims. *Fact:* Only 8 percent of victims were threatened by their abuser. Most abusers indulged in “grooming,” a premeditated behavior intended to manipulate the potential victim into complying with the sexual abuse; 39 percent of the clerics offered alcohol or drugs to their victims.

the 80’s, and by the 90’s had returned to the levels of the 1950’s.

*Myth:* Billions of dollars have been spent by the Church dealing with this crisis. *Fact:* Though the cost may eventually reach a billion dollars, the total already spent as compiled by John Jay was \$472 million.

*Myth:* The Church knew about these allegations from the very beginning. *Fact:* According to the John Jay report, one-third of the accusations were made in the years 2002-3. Two-thirds have been reported since 1993. “Thus, prior to 1993, only one-third of cases were known to Church officials,” says the report.

*Myth:* The abusive priests always/never received treatment. *Fact:* Nearly 40 percent of priests

Six dioceses and several religious orders did not even respond to the survey. Even for the other 189 dioceses, the bishops could report only on those who had come forward. One-third of the allegations were reported in 2002-3. How many more are out there?

- A few serial abusers (147) were responsible for a quarter of all allegations. Why were these men not spotted and dealt with by other priests and Church officials?
- More than half the priests had only one allegation against them. Is this because their names were never made public, or were they truly one-time offenders? Would it be safe to return any of these men to ministry?

The number of alleged abuses increased in the 1960’s, peaked in the 70’s, declined in the 80’s, and by the 90’s were at the levels of the 1950’s. Were there more cases prior to 1960 that simply were not reported or recorded? Will there be more cases reported for the 90’s as time goes on? Or did most bishops get their act together in the late 80’s, so that most abusers were dealt with and potential abusers were not ordained?

Eighty-one percent of the victims were male. Why? What role does homosexuality play in this crisis? There is no hard data on what percentage of the clergy is homosexual, because the bishops refuse to allow such a study.

## What Next?

The John Jay report can be only the beginning, not the end, of research on the problem of sexual abuse in the Church. The more the problem is studied, the more likely it is that the Church will change from being part of the problem to being part of the solution to the epidemic of sexual abuse in our country, where 20 percent of women and 15 percent of men report that they were victims of child sexual abuse as children.

*Thomas J. Reese, S.J., is editor-in-chief of America.*

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## *A small number of serial abusers accounted for one-fourth of all allegations. Why were these men not spotted and dealt with by other priests and Church officials?*

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*Myth:* The abuse is a result of the seminary training after the Second Vatican Council (1963-65). *Fact:* Almost 70 percent of the abusive priests were ordained before 1970, after attending pre-Vatican II seminaries or seminaries that had had little time to adapt to the reforms of Vatican II.

*Myth:* This problem is unique to the Catholic Church. *Fact:* The John Jay report notes that in the period 1992-2000, the number of substantiated sexual abuse cases in American society as a whole was between 89,355 and 149,800 annually. At a minimum, this number for one year is eight times the total number of alleged abuses in the Church over a period of 52 years.

*Myth:* The abuse is still going on at the same rate. *Fact:* The number of alleged abuses increased in the 1960’s, peaked in the 70’s, declined in

alleged to have committed sexual abuse participated in treatment programs. The more allegations a priest had, the more likely he was to participate in treatment, according to the report.

## More Research Needed

The John Jay report, which covers the period of 1950-2002, is an excellent first step in the research on this problem, but it raises as many questions as it answers:

- 4,392 priests (4 percent of the clergy) were accused of sexual abuse. Is this better or worse than other professions—teachers, social workers, scout leaders, doctors, lawyers, psychologists—or the total male population? No one knows, because comparable studies have not been done.
- 10,667 individuals reported abuse. Are there more victims? Definitely.

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# Crisis Management in the Church

BY FREDERICK W. GLUCK

**T**he Catholic Church in the United States is going through the greatest crisis in its history. Dealing with crises is not a problem unique to Church leaders; it is a task faced by leaders of any complex organization. When faced with a crisis, U.S. corporate leaders often bring in a firm like McKinsey & Company to help them think through their situation and construct a meaningful program for change. The consultants—working closely with management—analyze the causes of the crisis, both internal (like inadequate personnel, mismanagement, misallocation of resources, not keeping up with technological improvements, or a dysfunctional corporate culture) and external (aggressive competition, for example, changes in consumer preferences, or a decline in the company's reputation). They then jointly develop strategies and programs to respond to the crisis so that the company can prosper.

While at McKinsey, I often advised corporate leaders on dealing with crises. What advice would I give the Catholic bishops for dealing with the current crisis?

Unpleasant and challenging as the recent sexual abuse scandal has been, that is not the crisis to which I am referring. I have in mind rather the long-term decline in the relevance, or at least perceived relevance, of the Catholic Church to the lives and spiritual well-being of its members, the concomitant decline in the Church's capability to serve them, and the resulting loss of the Church's influence and standing in the greater population and in our society. This decline has been in progress for at least 30 years and has now reached the stage where there are very serious questions about the very future of the Church in the United States. The reasons for this situation are many and complex, but I do not believe that there can be any question about the seriousness of the situation. On

the positive side, there seems to be a very large number among the laity who, while embarrassed, upset, and enormously frustrated by the current state of affairs, remain deeply committed to their faith and the Church, are willing and able to help, and are thirsting for direction and leadership from the clergy.

## The Current State

I will examine the current state of the Church from the perspective of a management consultant. I will look at: human resources, finance, general management, and market position.

1. There are two broad problems with human resources in the Church: insufficient talent and inadequate processes for managing it. More specifically, on the talent side:

- The work force is rapidly aging.
- The Church's ability to recruit has declined dramatically over the last 40 years.
- The Church is no longer the first choice of the best and the brightest.
- Church people are demoralized by internal conflict and public scandal.

And on the process side:

- Many believe that Church personnel policies are overly restrictive and are counter-productive.
- There is no effective performance measurement system at any level, which makes constructive change very difficult, if not impossible, to either plan or execute in any timely manner.
- There is no effective planning mechanism in place to deal with the dramatic changes in mix between clergy and laity in important positions in the Church and its related network of social services that has already taken place and will inevitably continue. This further complicates the change process.
- While the contributions of the laity to the administration and management of Church affairs

is already quite important and will undoubtedly become ever more critical, there doesn't seem to be a comprehensive plan for achieving a smooth integration. In summary, the Church seems to lack even the rudiments of an effective human resource management process or system at a time when the need is enormous and increasing rapidly.

2. On the finance side:

- The Church's traditional sources of revenues are drying up.
- Church costs are escalating rapidly as it no longer is attracting high-quality, cheap labor.
- The plant is rapidly becoming obsolete.
- Potential liabilities as a result of the recent scandals are large and growing.
- The processes for financial management seem to be highly fragmented, uncoordinated, and much too underdeveloped to deal with the problems enumerated above.

3. With respect to management:

- The U.S. Church is a subsidiary of a large enterprise located in a foreign country where management has been historically committed to resisting change and maintaining the status quo.
  - The U.S. Church organization has no effective central point of leadership that can energize the necessary change program.
  - Church leadership is aging and is also largely committed to the status quo or even the status quo ante.
  - Church tradition of hierarchy dominates most of the leaders' thinking about management.
4. The character of the Church's membership and its potential

membership (market position) has changed substantially. As a result of these changes and the managerial shortcomings cited above, the U.S. Church's market position has deteriorated in a dramatic way:

- The potential market is much better informed and aware of the options available to them than in the past.
- Many of the faithful (customers) no longer feel committed to the product line and openly reject portions of it as irrelevant to their lives.
- The Church's reputation has declined precipitously as a result of recent scandals and many of the faithful no longer trust Church leaders or believe in their infallibility.
- On the positive side, most of the faithful remain highly committed to the basic message and thirst for sure-handed leadership and dramatic change in the delivery system.

## Strategy for a Turnaround

The situation is not without hope; but the Church, I believe, is in what can only be called a "turnaround" situation. In the business world, successful turnarounds are generally characterized by:

- Changes in leadership
- A single-minded focus on measuring performance and acting quickly when it is unsatisfactory
- Quick identification of the causes underlying the major problems and development of specific action plans to remove them
- Dramatic cuts in cost and staff
- Sale or closing of unprofitable operations
- A comprehensive challenge to all the assumptions underlying strategy, organization, and operations.

Coming to grips with this formidable set of challenges, in an organization as historically successful as the Church, will be a daunting challenge and can be accomplished only by a comprehensive program of change with strong leadership from the top. Moreover, little constructive change will be possible until some of the most glaring shortcomings in Church management and governance approaches are remedied. These shortcomings are most evident in the

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*Little change will be possible until the most glaring shortcomings in Church management and governance are remedied.*

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management of finance and human resources. These shortcomings—there are undoubtedly others—are the legacy of years of operation with a management and governance system tuned for a very different environment. Nevertheless, I believe that Church leaders can make much progress in the short term by addressing finance and human resources, and they would send a very constructive message to both the clergy and the laity that real change was afoot.

Since there is no “C.E.O.” of the U.S. Church—and very little likelihood that one will be appointed—the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops seems to be the only place where the necessary leadership energy can be generated. This would require significant change in their mode of operation, however.

The Conference should make a strong public commitment to managerial change that will address shortcomings in the administration of the U.S. Church and to an examination, with the full participation of the laity, of the controversial and divisive policy issues that plague the U.S. Church.

That managerial agenda should include:

- Ensuring financial accountability and transparency in each and every parish and diocese and measuring financial performance and correcting shortcomings therein. Some accounting and reporting guidelines were adopted by the Conference in 1971 and 1983 under the leadership of Cardinal Terence Cooke; but these were only guidelines, which could be ignored. No review or enforcement mechanism was provided.
- Developing and standardizing an approach to managing the human resources of each parish and diocese and the U.S. Church as a whole. This effort should encompass such needs as:
- Integrating the laity into the overall governance and management of Church affairs and planning for the inevitable continuing shift of responsibilities at all levels of the Church to the laity.
- Defining and implementing a comprehensive program of performance measurement and management development

- Defining a comprehensive set of personnel policies to guide the management of the U.S. Church and to shape recruiting and human resource development policies.
- Developing a systematic approach to dealing with controversial issues in the U.S. Church that integrates the laity completely into the process—including, most importantly, the definition of which issues should be addressed. The agenda of issues should include, for example, the role of women, the role of the laity, clerical homosexuality, celibacy, birth control, and divorce.

In order to accomplish these goals, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops should recruit an advisory board of prominent Catholic laypeople capable of devoting substantial time and effort to the organization and management of these efforts. Representatives of this advisory board should be included in the senior council of the Conference.

The bishops’ conference should concomitantly examine its own organization and capabilities and make the necessary changes required to discharge these new responsibilities.

Finally, the Conference should communicate to the pope and the Roman Curia the absolute necessity of adopting modern management methods in the U.S. Church and the inevitability and desirability of including the laity as equal partners in deliberations about important policy issues.

I recognize that the changes recommended may appear to more traditional members of the Church to be radical and impossible to implement. Turnaround situations, however, always require radical action, and unless some dramatic action to energize a change program for the U.S. Church that fully incorporates the laity is undertaken, I believe the decline that is already well under way will only accelerate.

*Frederick W. Gluck is a former managing director of McKinsey & Company, the consulting firm, and a former vice chairman and director at the Bechtel Group.*

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## True and False Reform

BY AVERY CARDINAL DULLES

**T**he long experience of the Catholic Church has included many seasons of decline and renewal. Throughout the centuries the Church has striven, by preaching and exhortation, to help individual Christians reform their lives. At various times, reformers have arisen to make the consecrated life a more authentic school of perfection. One thinks in this connection of the Cistercians and Trappists as reformed branches of the Benedictine order, and of the Discalced Carmelites, who conducted a thoroughgoing reform of their order in 16th-century Spain. The universal Church likewise has undertaken major institutional reforms; for example, the Gregorian Reform of the eleventh century, which imposed stricter discipline on the clergy and secured the independence of the Church from secular control.

At many times in her history, the Church has been threatened by false reforms that, if accepted, would have denatured her. Such reforms were attempted by the Encratites in the second century, the Donatists in the fourth century, the Waldensians in the twelfth, the Spiritual Franciscans in the thirteenth, Wycliffe in the fourteenth, and Jan Hus in the fifteenth.

The Conciliar movement in the fifteenth century brought forth some good fruits but came to a bad end at the Council of Basel. Attempting to convert the Church into a kind of constitutional monarchy, it ran afoul of the Catholic doctrine of papal primacy.

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the necessity of a thoroughgoing reform was generally recognized. After the failure of the Fifth Lateran Council to achieve this objective, the whole Church teemed with reform movements, notably among Christian humanists such as Desiderius Erasmus, John Colet, and Thomas More. Catholic cardinals such as Gaspar Contarini, James Sadoleto, Reginald Pole, and John Peter Caraffa, proposed timely reforms some years before the Council of

Trent. Luther and his colleagues also took up the theme of reform, but in the name of correcting abuses they attacked essentials of the Catholic faith and became separated from the Church. The reform decrees of Trent targeted some of the real abuses and continued to bear excellent fruits long after the Council. But in the next few centuries, the term “reform” became suspect among Catholics because it seemed to have a Protestant ring.

The First Vatican Council ran counter to certain reform movements of the nineteenth century. It successfully eliminated the remnants of the Conciliar Movement and crushed ecclesiastical nationalism in the form of Gallicanism and its counterparts in several nations. As a result, the papacy maintained uncontested control of the Catholic Church through the middle of the twentieth century.

During the decade after World War II, the Church in Europe, especially in France, experienced a revitalization thanks to a number of movements that may be grouped under the heading of *ressourcement*. The Second Vatican Council was able to build effectively on the revival of biblical and patristic studies, the liturgical movement, kerygmatic theology, the catechetical renewal, the lay apostolate, the ecumenical movement, and the social apostolate. Aware of the negative connotations of terms like “reformation,” Vatican II used such language very sparingly, but did not shrink from implementing some of the desiderata of Luther and the early Protestants.

Fearing that the term “reform” had too negative a connotation, the Council spoke by preference of purification and renewal (*renovatio*). The Constitution on the Church, for example, declared: “The Church, embracing sinners in her bosom, is at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, and incessantly pursues the path of penance and renewal” (*Lumen Gentium* 8).

In one passage, Vatican II spoke explicitly though very guardedly of ecclesial reform. In stating that the Church is subject to reform to the extent that it is a human institution, it implies the presence of a divine

element that is not subject to reform. It rules out any attempt to reform the deposit of faith.

Since Vatican II, reform movements have proliferated, but some of them have been ambiguous or misconceived. On the left, we find initiatives that seek to make the Church more tolerant, more liberal, and more democratic. Some progressivist reformers aim to dissolve the Church's hierarchical structure and transform her into an egalitarian democracy. Bishops have



*Desiderius Erasmus*

now and again criticized or condemned liberalizing groups such as the “We Are Church” movement, which originated in Austria, and the “Call to Action” here in the United States.

Moderately to the right are orthodox but intransigent theologians who aspire to “reform the reforms” introduced in the wake of Vatican II. At the extreme right, the Church is confronted by movements that seek to undo the work of the Council itself, restoring what they venerate as Tridentine Catholicism. The Holy See has condemned the reactionary traditionalism of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre. His breakaway Church and a variety of so-called Sedevacantist movements are certainly schismatic if not openly heretical.

In order to make a sound evaluation of reform movements, it will be helpful to unpack the concept of reform itself. To reform is to give new and better form to a preexistent reality, while preserving the essentials. Unlike innovation, reform implies organic continuity; it does not add something foreign or extrinsic. Unlike revolution or transformation, reform respects and retains the

substance that was previously there. Unlike development, it implies that something has gone wrong and needs to be corrected. The point of departure for reform is always an idea or institution that is affirmed but considered to have been imperfectly or defectively realized. The goal is to make persons or institutions more faithful to an ideal already accepted.

Reform may be either restorative or progressive. Restorative reform seeks to reactivate a better past or a past that is idealized. Progressive reform aims to move ahead toward an ideal or utopian future. Either style can run to excess. Restorative reform tends toward traditionalism; progressive reform, toward modernism. But neither direction can be ruled out. Sometimes the past needs to be reactivated; at other times, it may need to be transcended.

In any discussion of reform, two opposite errors are to be avoided. The first is to assume that because



*Thomas More*

the Church is divinely instituted, it never needs to be reformed. This position is erroneous because it fails to attend to the human element. Since all the members of the Church, including the pope and the bishops, are limited in virtue and ability, they may fail to live up to the principles of the faith itself. When guilty of negligence, timidity, or misjudgment, they may need to be corrected, as Paul, for example, corrected Peter (Galatians 2:11).

The second error would be to assail or undermine the essentials of Catholic Christianity. This would not be reform but dissolution. Paul rebuked the Galatians for turning to

a different gospel (1:6). The Catholic Church is unconditionally bound to her scriptures, her creeds, her dogmas, and her divinely instituted hierarchical office and sacramental worship. To propose that the Church should deny the divinity of Christ, or retract the dogma of papal infallibility, or convert herself into a religious democracy, as some have done in the name of reform, is to misunderstand both the nature of Catholicism and the nature of reform.

Anyone seeking to reform the Church must share the Church's faith and accept the essentials of her

God. We must energetically oppose reformers who contend that the Church must abandon her claims to absolute truth, must allow dissent from her own doctrines, and must be governed according to the principles of liberal democracy.

False reforms, I conclude, are those that fail to respect the imperatives of the gospel and the divinely given traditions and structures of the Church, or which impair ecclesial communion and tend rather toward schism. Would-be reformers often proclaim themselves to be prophets, but show their true colors by their

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*The immoral behavior of Catholics  
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alcoholism, drug use, embezzlement,  
and corporate dishonesty.*

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mission. The Church cannot take seriously the reforms advocated by those who deny that Christ was Son of God and Redeemer, who assert that the scriptures teach error, or who hold that the Church should not require orthodoxy on the part of her members. Proposals coming from a perspective alien to Christian faith should be treated with the utmost suspicion if not dismissed as unworthy of consideration.

The Church must be herself, and must not strive to become what nonbelievers might like her to be. Her first responsibility is to preserve intact the revelation and the means of grace that have been entrusted to her. Her second responsibility is to transmit the faith in its purity and make it operative in the lives of her members. Her third responsibility is to help persons who are not yet her members, and human society as a whole, to benefit from the redemptive work of Christ.

In our day, the prevailing climate of agnosticism, relativism, and subjectivism is frequently taken as having the kind of normative value that belongs by right to the word of

lack of humility, their impatience, and their disregard for the sacred scripture and tradition.

It is often asserted that reformers ought to speak prophetically. This may well be true, provided that the nature of prophecy be correctly understood. Thomas Aquinas made an essential distinction between prophecy as it functioned in the Old Testament and as it functions within the Church. The ancient prophets, he says, were sent for two purposes: “To establish the faith and to rectify behavior.” In our day, he adds, “the faith is already founded, because the things promised of old have been fulfilled in Christ. But prophecy which has as its goal to rectify behavior neither ceases nor will ever cease.” Prophetism since the time of Christ, as Congar reminds us, must always be inscribed within the framework of apostolicity. “Any prophetism that would, in one way or another, look for a revelation still open to substantial accretions or admit the possibility of changes in the apostolic revelation is not true prophetism of the Church.” To give in to revolutionary impulses would impoverish the Church's

divinely given legacy and impair her mission to the world.

Since the Second Vatican Council, ill-considered projects for institutional reform have become a consuming passion among certain intellectuals. Under the circumstances, it is understandable that some excellent theologians react negatively to the very idea. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger makes an important point:

*The reform that is needed at all times does not consist in constantly remodeling "our" Church according to our taste... or in inventing her ourselves, but in ceaselessly clearing away our subsidiary constructions to let in the pure light that comes from above and that is also the dawning of pure freedom.*

#### Doubts About Reform

He goes on to observe that "the more administrative machinery we construct, be it the most modern, the less place there is for the Spirit, the less place there is for the Lord, and the less freedom there is."

Henri de Lubac speaks in similar terms:

*I do not believe that structural reforms, about which there has been much debate for some years, are ever the main part of a program that must aim at the only true renewal, spiritual renewal. I even fear that the present-day inflation of such projects and discussions furnishes an all-too-convenient alibi to avoid it. The conciliar formula "Ecclesia semper purificanda" seems to me as to others [e.g., Jean-Jacques von Allmen] "much superior to the 'Ecclesia semper reformanda' which is used so extensively nearly everywhere." But I do believe, on the other hand, that any disturbance, any change, or any relaxation of the essential structure of the Church would suffice to endanger all spiritual renewal.*

Cardinal de Lubac is not here denying the desirability of any and all institutional reforms, but only insisting that we should not exaggerate their importance and that we always take care to leave intact the essential and abiding structures of the Church. He is surely correct in thinking that no social reorganization will be able to overcome the human tendency to sin and error. The most perfect structures, in the hands of incompetent or selfish administrators, will only make things worse. But where people are motivated by faith and generosity, even deficient structures will be tolerable.

Notwithstanding all doubts about the proper balance between personal and institutional reform, it should be clear that the Church of our day has no cause for complacency. At least here in the United States, it stands in urgent need of far-reaching intellectual, spiritual, and moral regeneration. Some of the issues to be addressed, I submit, are the following.

Religious illiteracy has sunk to a new low. We urgently need an effective program of catechesis and religious education on all levels. The Catechism of the Catholic Church is only the first step in this revival, since the renewal it stands for cannot be implemented without the formation of a corps of trained catechists and the preparation of suitable materials for the religious education of different age groups and constituencies.

Dissent is rampant, not only on secondary and reformable teachings but even on central doctrines of the faith. Catholics should be trained to have greater confidence in the Magisterium, which enjoys a special assistance from the Holy Spirit. They should willingly conform their private judgment to its teaching, even when

community but as the sacrifice of the universal Church performed in union with the whole body of bishops and the Bishop of Rome as its head. As Pope John Paul II reminds us in his recent encyclical, Holy Communion cannot be worthily received except by persons who are in union with the Church and free from serious sin (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 36-37; 44-45).

Religious practice is falling off. Many fail to attend Mass on Sundays. The sacrament of Penance is neglected by the vast majority of Catholics. There is a serious dearth of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life.

The immoral behavior of Catholics, both lay and clergy, is a cause of scandal and defections. Under this heading I would include not only sexual abuse of minors, which has been so extensively publicized in recent years, but sex outside of marriage, abortion, divorce, alcoholism, the use and marketing of drugs, domestic violence, defamation, and financial scandals such as falsification of records and embezzlement. The morality of Catholics all too often sinks below the standards commonly observed by Protestants and unbelievers.

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*Reform is a good thing, but history teaches that it can be misconceived and indiscreet. The only reform the Church should consider is one based on authentically Christian and Catholic principles.*

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no dogmatic definition has been made.

The call for a new evangelization strongly issued by Paul VI and John Paul II has fallen, it would seem, on deaf ears. The majority of Catholics have little appreciation of their mission to spread the faith as a precious gift intended for all. In some cases, they behave as if faith were an unwelcome burden. Members of fundamentalist churches, Mormons, and Pentecostals commonly exhibit a stronger missionary thrust than Catholics.

Liturgical laws are often flouted. The sacraments need to be celebrated with dignity and reverence. The Mass should be seen not simply as a communal meal celebrated by a local

Self-evidently, these and similar reforms ought to be undertaken under the leadership of the bishops. Unfortunately, however, the prestige of the bishops is today at a new low. In some cases, there is alienation between bishops and priests. Laity are in some places organizing against bishops and seeking to apply fiscal pressures and negative publicity as means to bring about what they see as reforms. This situation makes for new problems, likewise calling for reform. The Church cannot be made to function like a political community, with adversarial parties contending for supremacy.

Some of the alienation between

different groups may result from mechanisms introduced in the wake of Vatican II. The Council exalted the episcopacy to an unprecedented peak of power and responsibility. No normal individual is capable of being at once the chief teacher, the leading mystagogue, and the principal administrator for millions of Catholics, responsible for a huge array of parishes, schools, universities, hospitals, and charitable organizations. Bishops are also expected to be in constant consultation with pastoral councils and senates of priests. Within the diocese, the bishop holds the fullness of legislative, judicial, and executive power.

In addition to their tasks within their respective dioceses, bishops are regularly engaged in the deliberations and decisions of the national episcopal conference to which they belong and in some cases have assignments from one or more of its multiple committees. A number of them are also involved in the government of the universal Church. They occasionally serve on congregations of the Holy See, and take part in synods of bishops. No wonder that there are failures in the handling of certain assignments of priests and other personnel.

#### "A Man of High Culture"

According to the job description in the official documents, the bishop ought to be a man of high culture, firm in faith, solid in orthodoxy, a paragon of holiness, graciously winning in personality, able to assess the talents and weaknesses of others, skilled at managing large corporations and conducting fiscal policy, eloquent in the pulpit, fearless under criticism, indefatigable, and always self-possessed. Do we have in the United States a sufficient supply of priests with all these qualities? Many of the candidates being elevated to the episcopate, it would seem, are men of ordinary abilities, kind and hardworking, but incapable of measuring up to the almost superhuman responsibilities of the office. They run the risk of being morally, psychologically, and spiritually crushed under the burdens. As a prime structural problem, therefore, I would single out for special attention the episcopal office. What can be done to restore the priestly and pastoral ministry of bishops to its position of primacy?

In this context, the relationship

between clergy and laity may need some reconsideration. The distinction of roles, clearly spelled out by the Second Vatican Council, can be overstepped from both sides. Bishops, in their zeal to give explicit pastoral direction on every question and to control everything that goes on in their diocese, sometimes infringe on the proper competence of the laity, whose responsibility it is to apply the gospel to the circumstances of the marketplace, the professions, and political life. But the laity should understand that doctrinal teaching, pastoral governance, and liturgical leadership are tasks ordinarily reserved to persons in holy orders, especially the pope and bishops.

Within the Church itself, the laity have certain rights and responsibilities, as sharers by baptism in the threefold office of Christ: prophet, priest, and king. Their talents should be used for

the benefit of the Church. Although the order of the Catholic Church cannot be congregational, members of the congregation can make a positive contribution, especially where their professional skills and experience are needed. There is every reason why the voice of the faithful should be heard, provided it does not come from an adversarial stance as part of a scheme to seize power.

I submit, therefore, that a great deal of thought and probably some experimentation are needed to arrive at the correct via media between clericalism and laicism. Plenty of organs for collaboration now exist: plenary councils, diocesan synods, diocesan and parish councils, and committees. New structures would not seem to be necessary. Often more is accomplished by informal consultations than by official meetings.

For the sake of successful coopera-

tion, the respective responsibilities of clergy and laity must be clearly demarcated. Whenever the functions are confused, misunderstandings, tensions, and conflict follow. Successful cooperation might help to reduce the excessive load of responsibility that now weighs upon bishops.

The idea of reform is as old as Christianity itself. Reform is by definition a good thing, and frequently is needed both on the personal and the institutional level. But history teaches that reform can be misconceived and indiscreet. The only kind of reform that the Church should consider is one based on authentically Christian and Catholic principles. Holy Scripture and Catholic tradition give the necessary parameters. All who propose ecclesial reform should make it clear at the outset that they sincerely embrace these principles, otherwise they should not be invited

to participate in the process.

Where existing institutions prove clearly inadequate, institutional reform has a claim on our consideration. But it is less important and fruitful in the long run than personal reform, which requires purification of the heart from pride, sensuality, and lust for power. Where there is a humble and loving spirit, combined with firm faith and stringent self-discipline, institutional reform will be at once less urgent and easier to achieve.

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## Task for the Next Church Council

BY RAYMOND G. HELMICK

**H**ave we a new Council of the Church in our near future? When Pope John XXIII answered that question affirmatively back in 1959, the rather sclerotic Catholic Church of the time faced a broadening crisis of relevancy, but nothing like the catastrophe we have experienced since January 2002. As we discovered how widespread was the crisis of child sexual abuse by priests, how long a time it had been going on, and how Church leaders had concealed it, we entered a devastating period of collapsing trust and fierce recrimination.

We have urgent questions about whether the bishops, whose actions horrify us even more than those of the pederasts, will be held accountable in any credible way. That is terribly disillusioning for all who wish to have confidence in the Church as an institutional structure through which to live their faith. Accountability, which seems an ultimate redline question for the Roman authorities, constitutes a quite distinct issue from

the pervasive sexual disorders. Since the cardinal archbishop of Boston has had to resign his see, calls for other resignations abound; all refer to the pope as the only one who can judge, order, or accept them. Roman officials shrink from the thought, fearing that bishops may go down like a row of dominoes.

If we are to attack this problem root and branch, we must be clear that the roots are in Rome, where officialdom expected that bishops would set as their first priority the protection of the institution's reputation from scandal.

That is not to say that the pope did it; this is the sort of thing that comes from a bureaucracy. Nor should we be surprised. This is the way of large institutions, as examples ranging from Enron to the United States government constantly teach us. Bishops have simply followed institutional procedures. We have to suspect that any bishop who would not go along would have found himself at the end of his career course.

We have serious questions, then, to ask about basic habits in the Church. Angry though people may be,

we make fools of ourselves if we believe that a few hangings, a reign of terror in the Church, will resolve these issues. Our ills are so endemic to the system that it is mere evasion to heap all the blame on individuals. Venting our outrage on them may give us some self-indulgent satisfaction, but it does not address the underlying problems at all. Two obvious questions stand out: one about our attitudes toward sexuality, the other about the governance of the Church. On both matters, our whole process needs to be opened up. While there may be other ways of doing this, the traditional one is in a Council of the Church.

This may well be the matter for a new papacy, which will come in its time, although Pope John Paul II keeps surprising those who write him off and addressing new problems with new energy. We may expect that when the cardinals next meet to elect a pope, these matters, weighing on the whole Catholic Church, will be at the front of their minds. The leaders in the Church have a responsibility to ask why these things have happened. We will all be telling them they

must deal with this when electing a pope, and the one chosen will have to address this disaster in some appropriate way.

### The Sex-Abuse Question

Anyone can see the social immaturity, especially the retarded psychosexual development, of predator priests. There have to be reasons for these disorders, and things in the experience and formation of these priests that have led to their perversions. We hear a good deal about sexual sin, but basic attitudes toward sexuality are among the things that we shy away from discussing in our Church.

It does not stand to our credit if we regard one of God's most precious gifts to us with the disdain and evasion that human sexuality has received in much of our tradition, the furtiveness with which it is treated. This applies not only to Catholics but to most other Christians as well. The antisexual tradition goes back to Saint Augustine, many of his contemporaries, and even older authorities, but actually has its roots in the pagan world of their time, its dualism (reflected in the Manichaeism that had so attracted Augustine), and its disgust with the body and the material circumstances of life.

In the recruitment of our Catholic clergy and religious members, this



attitude creates opportunities for young people simply to evade or postpone dealing with the issue of sexuality at all, treating it as something that has nothing to do with them. Many of us know celibates who, even much later in life, have never genuinely faced themselves. This is especially tempting to those with some ambivalence, uncertainty, or fear about their own sexuality. We may try to screen out such individuals as candidates, but we can expect little success if the screeners themselves share those attitudes.

#### A Poisonous Legacy

The bishops at the Second Vatican Council made a concerted effort never to accept this disparagement of the sexual character of human beings and the sexual expression of human love, particularly in their teaching on celibacy. But the poisoning tradition still holds on—one that sees people's sexuality as the bad thing about them, of which they should be ashamed, and suggests that they try to live as if they didn't have it. Discussion of this whole area has long been treated with so much reluctance and suspicion as to contribute to a widespread immaturity in our community—such that we ought not be surprised when it leads to bizarre consequences like priest-pedophilia. The wild chaos of sexual permissiveness that characterizes so much of our contemporary scene can actually be seen as simply the reverse side of this same coin.

Many commentators, some with preconceived agendas, want to approach this pathology with instant solutions, like the abolition of mandatory celibacy or the ordination of women, without undertaking the more fundamental reflection that the matter requires. These issues will doubtless come into the picture and will eventually have the attention of such a Council as we may hope to see. We owe it to the integrity of the faith to examine this void in our understanding of the human being more carefully before settling for easy solutions.

Many question whether celibacy or virginity can be other than damaging to the persons committed to them. No one will be able to defend their value convincingly unless a mature and welcoming understanding of sexuality and sexual identity becomes the common property of Christians.

Still more pressing, however, is the

question of authority structures in the Church.

We have seen protection of the institution and its managers set above even the most basic moral responsibilities. Our foundational Christian Scripture calls for the most open dealings among us. The “rulers of the gentiles,” we are told, “lord it over them, and their great men know how to make their authority felt,” but “among you this is not to happen” (Matt. 20, 25). Ours is to be a Church where “there is nothing hidden, but it must be disclosed, nothing kept

secret except to be brought to light” (Mark 4, 22). To appeal to such fundamentals of Christ's teaching seems simply ironic today, and we need to ask why.

We have become a very law-bound Church. That in itself accords ill with

freer. The Christian community is to build up its members in a living of the faith, in the confident service of God in others around us, especially those most in need. Of course, the Christian community eventually became large and complex, acquiring respectability and a great deal of secular responsibility for civil society—first under Constantine and his successor emperors, and again in the harsher eleventh century. By then it found itself in need of orderly structures for its own governance.

What happened was that it turned, for lack of any specifically Christian structure of law, to purely secular sources. Just by reason of time and place, the Christians who established our internal canons of law adopted the categories of Roman law, which still dominate not only the canon law of the Catholic Church but also, as

system of Roman law, such a figure as Cardinal Law in Boston, like any other bishop—caught though he was in the headlights of a condition that is the fundamental commonplace throughout the Church so governed—was constituted judge of his accusers. How could he escape this? Early in the debacle, the lay members of several existing parish councils, some of the most devoted of all his Catholic people, attempted to construct an association among them—a much milder venture than the better-known Voice of the Faithful. The inevitable response, in terms of the law as constituted, was to reject the association as something built other than on the executive's will and hence potentially divisive.

Is this form of legal structure of the nature of Christianity? By no means. “The Christian ideal,” as G. K. Chesterton once told us, “has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried.”

#### Rome's Tentacles

We are often told that the Church is no democracy, and the reasoning has been, essentially, that this Roman imperial system is the form of its law. But that has nothing whatever to do with Christian principle. The Roman system was adopted only because it was the most obvious law available at the time when the Church first found itself so extensive an institution as to need some such structure of order. It has had so long a tenure in the Church's experience that it will be a painfully intricate thing to extract ourselves from its tentacles, should we so choose, but that is the enterprise that our current predicament demands. Such a task will require a commitment longer than the duration of a Council of the Church, but its initiation is properly the work of a Council.

Undoubtedly, many of the authority figures who reign in the Church would find it much more comfortable to resist any accountability. They have lived without it as long as they have had their jobs. But the situation has become untenable now. The executive seat in the Church-as-corporation currently stands empty. This must pose a dilemma for our present pope—a centralizing figure who yet asks so earnestly for the thoughts of all Christians on how his office may better contribute to unity in the

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the priorities set in the letters of Saint Paul, which stress that our salvation is by faith, not by the works of the law. We search our scripture for a “law of Christ,” and what we find, in such texts as the Sermon on the Mount, is instead an insistence that we must never satisfy ourselves with observing merely the requirements set by a law. Instead, we must always strive to do more, to put ourselves at the service of others—never by constraint, but by a willing offering of self. You can't codify that.

That makes the Christian community an unwelcoming place in which to develop a culture of law. We have a different kind of mandate from Christ—more difficult, perhaps, but

Code Napoleon, the legal systems of most European countries.

The law is Roman but has no essentially Christian character to it. It is the law of empire, and its governing premise is that the will of the sovereign is law. That this should have become the basis of canon law is entirely anomalous. It is the very system of domination that Christ so explicitly rejects for his followers. It has provided a kind of order—essentially, an imposition of order—to much of Europe ever since Roman imperial times, but its fundamental flaw is that there is no room in it for making those who govern accountable.

By no choice of his, but by the simple fact of his rank within this

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Church. It has got to emerge as the main topic of discussion when the cardinals meet to elect his successor. The man who emerges from that conclave will know that this is the top item on his plate.

There are, of course, multiple systems of law we could draw on, many of which are free of either the arbitrary, unaccountable character of the Roman law or the exclusively retributive character of common law. Many of these systems of justice exist among peoples whom we in the West tend to regard patronizingly, as having civilizations less complex than ours. Yet South Africans, seeking a more wholesome system of justice than the one they received from the European colonists, found much of value in the native African concept of ubuntu—the strong, restorative concept that inspired their Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Lawyers and judges in our country, and in some parts of Europe and Australia, have experimented with systems of restorative justice, in which the objective is the restora-

tion of relations in society rather than mere retribution, but these remain a novelty, still in their teething stage. Those so inclined have found some useful lessons in the practices of Native Americans, the circle-sentencing concept among their most attractive features. None of these, though helpful, have specifically the inspiration of Christian gospel behind them - but neither has the current Roman-law-inspired law of the Church.

Are we capable, then, of constructing a system of internal order for our Church that would genuinely spring from sources within the Christian gospel tradition? The process would have to begin by recognizing the profoundly a-Christian, even anti-Christian, character of the law we presently have—disruptive of Christian living and corrosive, as we are seeing with the sex scandal, of the most fundamental values of Christian faith. We would have to reflect long and carefully to build an ordered Church community that truly related to values of that faith, and we could

not expect to construct it at one stroke. We have a time before us to learn some of the humility that is so conspicuously lacking in the system by which we now operate.

The Second Vatican Council, in fact, went some distance toward constructing such a system in the first two chapters of *Lumen Gentium*, the dogmatic constitution on the Church. Those chapters, however, have since been negated—first by a distrustful period of anxiety, and then by a concentrated period of clawing back from any tendencies toward the accountability of those who govern.

Is this indeed the work of a Council? We may well believe that it is—and one much needed in the face of the deservedly low esteem into which the governance of the Church has fallen. The Council would need to face squarely both of these outstanding questions: the sexuality question and that of law and structure. On the sexuality question, the Church needs to hear from many persons of authority, intellectual and spiritual, other than bishops. Just as much, on the

matter of law and a structure of service, humility, and accountability, many other than the bishops of the Church need to be heard and respectfully consulted.

We face challenges to the basic credibility of our Church, and hence of our teaching, of no less magnitude than those of the sixteenth century. The Catholic Church responded poorly then, and paid with centuries of division and dissension among Christian believers when its defensiveness turned the attempted Reformation into a lasting breach. If we should treat the present crisis as less serious than it is, we can expect to see disruption of a comparable sort.

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## Information Deficit

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### *Why the Church's hierarchy isn't working*

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BY ANDREW GREELEY

**D**espite the fax machines and computers ubiquitous today in offices of the Roman curia, the institutional organization of the Vatican has not changed appreciably since the late eighteenth century. Perhaps the organization of the Vatican worked well enough one hundred fifty years ago. Yet the Church stretches to the ends of the earth and is now responsible for the religious life of at least 1.2 billion people in a world of jet transportation and almost instant communication. Moreover, the modest reforms of Vatican II quite unintentionally destabilized the structures (what sociologists call behavior patterns and the supporting motivations) of the Church and thus diminished the credibility of its lead-

ership. Any attempt to govern with the same style that was effective in 1850 would be like the United States trying to return to the presidential style of Theodore Roosevelt, who used to sit in a rocking chair in the “rose garden” at the end of the day and talk to federal workers as they walked home across the White House lawn.

To a relative Vatican outsider like myself, the Church's need for organizational Change seems self-evident. Yet few bishops are ready to consider a drastic reform of the Church's internal operations. They do not comprehend that decision-making is shaped by the information available to the decision-makers, and that, in the absence of good information, serious mistakes are made.

In this article, I will develop a social-science critique of the internal organization of the Catholic Church

and offer tentative recommendations for reform. In doing so, I will eschew theological arguments. My thesis is that many of the problems facing the Church today flow not from theological error, bad will, or malice, but from inadequate information. A reorganization of the Church will not by itself heal the polarization between those who enthusiastically support the Second Vatican Council and those who want to reverse it, but without an open flow of information, healing is not possible.

Many in Rome and elsewhere in the Catholic world contend that the Church does not need social science because it has the Holy Spirit. Hence the tools of management science are not relevant. Nor, because of its divine origin, does the Church need to apply to itself its own principle of subsidiarity (nothing should be done at a higher and larger level that can

be done at a lower and smaller level). Such reasoning, based on simplistic faith and even more simplistic theology (or a calculating one), in effect regards the Church as purely divine and thus unaffected by the problems that beset other human institutions. Don't worry about the poverty of leadership, pious folk (including cardinals) tell me, God will not desert his Church. (Does that also mean God was responsible for all the errors and mistakes the Church has made?) Yet all that was promised to the Church by Jesus was survival—the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

Whether this erroneous perspective is based on naive piety or (deliberately) bad theology does not matter. It must be dismissed out of hand, for the Church is subject to the same organizational dynamics as other human institutions. If the Church is to function effectively, it needs to follow

the same principles of subsidiarity any other human institution must. Subsidiarity opens the way for the maximum input from the Spirit. There may be some sense in which subsidiarity does not apply to the Church, but there must be some sense in which it does—at least when it comes to organizational management. (John XXIII said that it does apply to the Church; John Paul II says it does

with the United States. We routinely hear of Rome's solemn concern for the problems affecting the American Church. Yet the truth is that the Vatican is largely clueless, not simply because of its anti-American bias or because of stupidity (though one must not exclude those factors), but because there is no way for the curia to acquire adequate information about the United States or any other

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*Perhaps the most serious issue facing the next papal conclave is whether the present strongly centralized organization of the Church can continue.*

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not. I am prepared to agree with both; they were speaking of different dimensions of the Church.)

Perhaps the most serious issue facing the next papal conclave is whether the present strongly centralized organization of the Church can continue. The truth is that it doesn't work very well because the current structure is "flat." There is in practice no ordered hierarchy leading down from the pope to the local bishops, and no reliable flow of information coming up from the local Church.

For example, the pope must supervise several thousand bishops. Yet corporate theory suggests that an executive should supervise no more than seven subordinates. True, the pope exercises control with the help of the heads of the various curial congregations and the dozen or so members of his cabinet, but these men specialize in subject matter (liturgy, the making of bishops, etc.), not in regions of the world or specific countries. The pope's task is therefore impossible, both because he is personally responsible for far too many supervisory tasks, and because the available sources of information—either through the papal nuncios in the various countries or through the various curial departments—are bound to be thin and often contradictory. How can the Vatican know the truth about a specific problem in a specific country?

Think of the Vatican's relations

country. Thus the pope was, through no fault of his own, apparently not aware of the seriousness of the sexual-abuse problem. How was he to know, if no one told him?

It took a long, long time for the curia to realize how serious the crisis was in the United States. It is not clear even now that it understands the sexual-abuse problem, or realizes that the problem is not confined to the Church in the United States. One Roman official attributed clerical sexual abuse to the "hypersexuality of American culture." In the absence of better information, more careful research, and deeper understanding of the various countries in the Catholic world, curial officials fall back on vague generalizations that are often little more than uninformed clichés. They do so not because they are malicious, but because they are ignorant. Inadequate information leads to bad decisions. That inevitably happens in a "flat" organization. Whoever the next pope is, he must open up communication within the Church and transform the flatness of the organization.

Another mark of good management is the ability to govern collaboratively. In every organization, someone is ultimately responsible for making decisions. Successful managers listen very carefully to subordinates, however, and take into account their advice and recommendations. Such collaborative work at the highest

levels of the Church has been rare. But we desperately need it now. The flat shape of the Church and lack of collaboration are not, one can safely say, part of the essence of the Church. These organizational failings are now preventing the upward flow of information and the utilization of all available talent and insight, and placing the Church in a straitjacket. The pope may speak on marriage with serene confidence. Yet if he wants to be heard by those to whom he is speaking, it would be helpful if his listeners felt they had some input into his reflections.

As the most elementary dictum of management science puts it, all those whose cooperation will be necessary to implement a decision should have input. To put it more clearly, top Church leadership should not only want to listen, not only try to learn

how to listen (neither of which it is currently ready to do), but must see to it that effective channels for both communication and collaboration exist at every level.

Some will complain that this is nothing more than an argument for making doctrinal decisions by majority vote. That is not my goal. My proposal seeks only to involve as many people as possible in collaborative efforts so that the final decision will be based on the best possible information and the wisest possible insights. If that happens, the final decision will have more influence rather than less. One may even say Rome will have greater authority.

How does one go about creating subsidiarity in the Church? I would recommend consideration of the following suggestions:

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**Return the selection of bishops to the local Church.** The “Great” popes of the early Church (Leo and Gregory) said that a new bishop should be selected by the priests, accepted by the people, and consecrated by the bishops of the province. He should not be imposed on them from the outside.

In the American Church, until the 1919 revision of canon law, the “irremovable” pastors of the Archdiocese of Chicago had the right to submit a terna (a list of three candidates for bishop) to Rome. So did the bishops of Illinois and the archbishops of the country. Hence, not so long ago, some form of popular nomination of bishops existed. I would propose that in the future, the priests of Chicago (perhaps the priest council) should be able to submit a terna to the pastoral council (laity). The latter would either accept it or work out a compromise terna, which would then go on to Rome. The pope would then choose the new archbishop or request another terna (and if he deemed it necessary, another and yet another indefinitely). It would be difficult to keep these discussions secret, and perhaps it would be better not to try. Secrecy is a dubious strategy in a Church whose founder warned that what is whispered in the closets will be proclaimed from the housetops. It is also an impossible strategy in the contemporary world where whispers find their way instantly into the international media.

Such a change need not be as abrupt as at first it may seem, especially since it would be in part a return to a system that persisted until the early twentieth century. It would be necessary, though, to revise canon law. While the pope would still have the final say, even he would not be able to impose a bishop whom the priests and people did not want.

Would there be politics in such a system? Certainly. To be sure, the present system of covert cronyism has plenty of politics also. Could the Holy Spirit work through a more democratic process? Probably more effectively than in the present system.

**Strengthen national bishops’ conferences.** Subsidiarity requires that national hierarchies be given more authority and power—and thus be rehabilitated from Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger’s attacks on them. National bishops’ conferences should be able to enforce decisions (made by some

kind of supermajority) on all dioceses. They should have authority to make decisions in many matters without prior clearance from Rome, though the pope would have the right to review any decision he thought harmful to the faithful.

**Promote local, regional, and supernational synods.** There is also a need for supernational synods (European, North American, English-speaking world) with clearly delimited powers, as well as more local synods within a country. This process would force bishops to attend even more meetings, but perhaps not many more than they do now. Such synods ought not to be merely pilgrimages from preconceived ideas to foregone conclusions, as some American bishops are now recommending for a plenary council.

Note carefully that at no point in this vast structure is papal authority under challenge. The pope might have to listen to many more people, some of them doubtless with wild ideas. On the other hand, if he did not want to listen to them, he would not be forced to do so. Nor would there be any limitation on his right to micromanage any subsidiary institution in the Church, right down to the local diocese or parish. My plan is not to put restraints on a pope but rather to make more information available to him and his advisers.

**Papal elections.** As for the election of a pope, it will not do to return to the actual (instead of titular) parish priests of Rome. Clearly, the historical process for the election of the bishop of Rome has evolved and is now quite broad, yet the priests of Rome ought

world. The curia should rely on and consist of specialists whose training and function is to understand the Church in all its distant manifestations.

**Church leadership should make every effort to prevent the curia’s common practice of drawing up elaborate a priori plans for the entire Church with little or no consultation from those who might be affected.** A classic case is the recent General Instruction of the Roman Missal. The experts at the Congregation for Divine Worship share with their fellow liturgists a propensity for spinning out of the air fussy rubrical reforms that they think address crucial problems—in this case lack of reverence at the Eucharist and a failure to distinguish between the priest and the laity. In fact, any serious empirical analysis (which is hard for liturgists because they know everything already) or high-quality information of any kind from the Catholic laity would have shown that the serious liturgical problem is not the occasional lack of reverence or the almost nonexistent collapse of the distinction between clergy and laity. The sad truth is that the liturgy is boring, especially when it is marked by poor music and bad preaching. If the Congregation for Divine Worship was truly interested in the quality of the liturgy, it would launch a worldwide campaign to improve sermons.

Is there any chance that the next pope would begin to move in these directions? One would be ill-advised to bet on it. Still, the most serious failures of the Church since 1960 are due not to a resistance to change, but to the failure to adjust to the administrative and managerial demands of a world Church in a world culture. All too often today, the world episcopate appears as an isolated oligarchy, a removed priestly caste claiming access to special knowledge of God’s will. Only systematic reform of how the institution gathers information can change that appearance.

*Rev. Andrew Greeley is a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago. His new books are The Catholic Revolution: New Wine in Old Wineskins (University of California Press), Priests: A Calling in Crisis (University of Chicago Press), and a novel, The Priestly Sins (Tor).*

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*There is in practice no ordered hierarchy leading down from the pope to the local bishops, and no reliable flow of information coming up from the local Church.*

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Furthermore, the Church should rehabilitate the international synod of bishops in Rome, give it canonical and theological status, free it from domination by the curia, and permit it to establish its own offices in Rome and prepare its own agenda (subject to papal approval). Between meetings, a group of its members should be appointed interim representatives, and be available for consultation with the pope whenever he desires it—or, perhaps, whenever they request it. The idea would work only if a pope was completely committed to consultation. The synod, like a general council, however, would have no authority over the pope and no right to reverse his decisions. The synod would be nothing more than a group under the inspiration of the Spirit who would be ready to discuss problems facing the Church with the pope, and to whom the pope (presumably) would listen.

to have and nominate their own vicar. Still, some way must be found for the clergy and laity of the world to be involved in the choice.

**Reforming the Roman curia.** The problem with the curia, as I see it, is not that it’s too big but rather that its two thousand members are much too small a staff for advising the leader of a Church of 1.2 billion people. The curia must be larger, better trained, more professional, and more restrained in its propensity to interfere in problems that could be solved better at a local level. Terms of service should be limited to two five-year periods (or maybe only one), so that membership on a curial staff would not become a prerequisite for ecclesiastical advancement. Perhaps a rule could be made that would preclude immediate election to a bishopric from a curial position. Finally, there should be a division of labor based on representation from the regions of the



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# Open Questions on the Roman Collar

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*Celibacy and the ordination of women should be central to the debate over the future of the Catholic priesthood*

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BY THOMAS H. GROOME

In a communiqué from Rome following their meeting last month, the U.S. cardinals and episcopal leaders said that because “a link between pedophilia and celibacy cannot be scientifically maintained” they would remove priestly celibacy from the discussion. Those who hope for a systemic overhaul of priestly ministry know that when celibacy is taken off the table, the same surely follows for women’s ordination.

It’s likely true that there is no cause-and-effect correlation between celibacy and pedophilia, strictly defined as attraction to prepubescent children. But how about the sexual abuse of adolescents by celibate priests? Many of the older priests now accused of such ephebophilia entered through the minor seminary system and began to attempt celibacy in their early teens, with adolescent hormones in top gear and sexual identity often still in flux. Who knows what effect that had?

Released to the world again after 12 years of strict regimen—the old seminary system resembled boot camp—it would not be surprising if many were sexually underdeveloped and so picked up where they had left off. More surprising by far is that the vast majority turned out to be fine priests, with only a handful of aberrants among them.

There are about 13,000 married deacons in the U.S. Catholic Church, but they have caused no such scandal. Likewise, there are 35,000 lay people in designated functions of Catholic ministry in this country; apart from a handful of cases, the same good record holds.

In another area of discussion, might there be some connection between celibacy and the “gaying” of the priesthood? Even the president

of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, Bishop Wilton Gregory, discusses the matter, and expresses concern that homosexuals not reach a majority among priests. That implies there is already a high percentage. But why would the priesthood be attracting a disproportionate number? Surely many good Catholic gay men, told by their Church that their orientation is “intrinsically disordered” and that they are “called to chastity” for life, say to themselves, If I must be celibate, why not be a priest? A homosexual is as likely as a heterosexual to integrate his spirituality

up and saves face at all costs for members of the club.

And why were so many known abusers shuttled from parish to parish? One reason is the dire shortage of priests. That shortage, a crisis long before this scandal hit, is attributable to having celibacy as a precondition for priesthood.

But even if celibacy is not one of the root causes of the present scandal, and even if women among our priests and bishops would not have prevented it—an unlikely hypothesis—it is high time that we reconstruct the Catholic priesthood. And not just because of

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*Even if celibacy is not a root cause of the scandal, it is time that we reconstruct the priesthood and in so doing reconsider celibacy and maleness as preconditions. And not just because of the scandal, but because it is the right thing to do theologically and for the life of the Church.*

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and sexuality into a life of integrity; many of our finest priests and bishops are gay. Yet no one desires that priesthood become a gay profession. Still, celibacy may be encouraging as much.

All the exaggerated rhetoric about celibacy being a “higher calling” than marriage can encourage a pedestalized clericalism that covers

the scandal, nor even the dire shortage, but reconsidering celibacy and maleness as preconditions is the right thing to do theologically and for the life of the Church.

A brief look at each issue:

There will always be a vowed religious life within the Catholic communion, cherished and supported as an extraordinary witness to God’s

reign in the world. And the religious orders will most likely remain exclusively male or female. In other words, to be a Jesuit or a Sister of Mercy, one will still be required to take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and to live in same-sex communities. But should a semblance of this venerable tradition, historically grounded in monastic spirituality, be imposed on all priests, specifically through the precondition of celibacy?

For almost 1,200 years, Christianity had a married priesthood. The gospels record Jesus healing Peter’s mother-in-law, and some 40 popes after him were married—formally. So, to make celibacy optional is not a new liberal idea but a return to the practice of the early Church.

When the Western Church mandated celibacy for priests (often dated from the Second Lateran Council of 1139), it was for some noble reasons to better serve people but for some dubious ones as well: among them, concern for inheritance of Church property and a negative theology of human sexuality. Eastern Catholicism rejected the precondition of celibacy except for bishops, and the Protestant reformers favored marriage for the clergy. Both of these Christian communities have been well served by their ministers. In this era, Catholic priesthood would be improved, and thus its believers better served, by having the quantity, quality, and perspective that married priests would bring. And the credibility of those who voluntarily choose celibacy—always remaining an option—be enhanced all the more.

Likewise, the presence of women as priests and bishops would be an extraordinary gift to the life of the Catholic Church. What a loss it is when ordained ministry is limited to men, excluding the consciousness and gifts of women; at best we benefit from only half our priestly resources. To ordain women would surely hasten the demise of clericalism—the antithesis to priesthood as servant leadership—and catalyze a renewed ministry of “holy order.”

In the mid-70’s, Pope Paul VI set up a blue-ribbon commission of eminent Catholic scholars to investigate the question of women’s ordination from a biblical perspective. Their resounding conclusion was that it would not be “contrary to scripture,”

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a most significant finding that opened wide the theological debate. The commission also noted that women in the early Church performed functions of ministry that later were reserved for priests.

It's true, of course, that women were excluded from priesthood throughout Christian tradition, though there are historical rumors of notable exceptions. But remember that the Church's cultural context also barred women from the trades and professions, from owning property, and from all public work. Who

would wonder that they were excluded from priesthood and why repeat such "tradition"?

Clericalism needs to break down; priesthood needs to break open. Indeed, the U.S. Catholic Church must and will put in place a national policy to prevent both the crimes and the coverup of clergy sex abuse. And it must address many other issues if it is to move beyond symptoms to causes, including lay participation in the oversight of the Church, the clandestine way bishops are selected, the inflated role of the

Roman Curia, and many more.

But it must keep the issues of celibacy and the ordination of women on the table as well.

The systemic changes needed will require the U.S. Catholic bishops to find their own voice, to speak the truth that they know themselves and hear from the great majority of their people, to take back Church leadership from the right-wing phalanx, representing only a small percentage of American Catholics but holding so many of the strings of power.

It will take courage for the bishops

to keep these issues on the table for the universal Church. But every people of God needs good priests and great prophets. Let us pray for both.

*Thomas H. Groome is professor of theology and religious education at Boston College, and author of What Makes Us Catholic: Eight Gifts for Life.*

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## Reviving a Parish Culture

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*A new pastor brings a congregation back to a vibrant, collaborative life*

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BY PAUL WILKES

**A** year and a half ago, when a new pastor was assigned to our parish, we, the Catholic remnants, held our collective breath. We had a stunningly beautiful parish Church and equally stunning was how dysfunctional we had become as a parish body.

After years of a distant, autocratic pastor who, beneath all his surface coolness, had the parish's best interests at heart and one-on-one could be an effective spiritual counselor, we were sent a distant, autocratic man who quickly proved he had neither talent. By the time he was unceremoniously removed from the parish, not only had numbers plummeted at weekend liturgies and parish committees virtually imploded because of his imperious, erratic ways, but we had discovered that we were on the verge of insolvency because of his profligate spending on staff he had added, furniture he had purchased, and personal expenses incurred. The offenses were of such magnitude to make the front page of our local paper. The diocese had to send—so we heard—a huge sum to bail us out.

We were a dispirited flock, dulled

by a "parish culture" that was only more terrible in degree, but sadly enough—if what I hear from too many Catholics is at all accurate—not infrequent in today's Church. In my particular parish, one had learned to approach the parish secretary or business manager as supplicant, expecting (and rarely being surprised to the contrary) that the initial answer would be no, regardless of the request. We had become accustomed to a parish culture that assumed we were bothersome, that our ideas were not worth pursuing. And, anyhow, all the hoops that would have to be jumped through to get something going in the parish required more energy and perseverance than most of us could muster.

All this collaboration that we've been hearing about? Collaboration in my parish meant doing the pastor's will and keeping our thoughts to ourselves.

But perhaps unlike many Catholics who might think their dysfunctional parish is the norm and who have simply drifted away from the Church, I had recently been leading a somewhat disorienting, even schizophrenic life as a practicing Catholic. For I had, while a member of my own parish and with the support of a Lilly Endowment grant, been able

to find and then visit—but only visit—some of the best parishes in America. I eventually published my findings in *Excellent Catholic Parishes: The Guide to Best Places and Practices*. I had seen firsthand dynamic, open, spirit-filled parishes with an entirely different kind of parish culture.

Also in my travels, I had sat with diocesan personnel directors whose jobs grow more difficult by the month as priests retire and both the number and quality of their replacements leave a disquieting gap. I knew well what was "out there" in terms of priestly talent. I wondered if we would be getting still another pastor who would curtly clip the wings of the Spirit.

When our new pastor arrived a year and half ago, all we knew about him was that he had most recently served a parish so distant from ours that there was no, as we used to say in the Navy, scuttlebutt about his performance there. We were so broken and embarrassed by our previous pastor, that, while we wanted so much of our new pastor, we had rather modest expectations. On the surface, we simply wanted him to stay out of the papers, keep the parish out of debt, perform the standard liturgies with some thought and dignity, and keep our limping parish grade

school open. But on a deeper level, we were looking for, if not the Messiah, at least someone who would give us a new vision of what a parish and individuals we could be. We wanted our parish to thrive, we wanted it to matter in our lives and the life of our community.

In his first weeks, we listened eagerly, but we heard no rousing calls to unity or greatness. Instead, our new pastor started with the simplest of things, such as quietly dropping the notice that had appeared as the first and prominent item in our rather skimpy and tired weekly bulletin. That notice, which week after week advised that only "Catholics in the state of grace and in good standing with the Church" should dare to approach the altar for Eucharist, in some ways defined the spirit of the parish. It was not that the statement was outside Church norms, but it was an immediate indication that this was a parish that wasn't as concerned about what you could or should be, but more what you couldn't or shouldn't do. An unnecessary slammed door, a curt slap in the face. Hardly welcoming.

As the weeks went on, although he never mentioned this somewhat amorphous thing I call "parish

culture,” our new pastor set about to change the tenor and texture of our parish. Some were symbolic acts; others were targeted at rebuilding our shattered community. To name just some of them:

- He moved out of the rectory, floridly and expensively redecorated by his predecessor, and moved into the smaller, vacant convent. (Later, three wonderful nuns were encouraged to come to our parish and they now occupy the rectory.)
- He started a “branch” religious bookstore in a vacant office, using the buying power and management experience of a large bookstore.
- He inaugurated a monthly “dinner with the pastor,” where a dozen or so people would bring a meal to the rectory visit informally, and get to know him and each other.
- He began a Thursday morning discussion of the upcoming Sunday’s readings so that the Word could be a part of our week, not just proclaimed on the weekend.
- He returned phone calls
- He thoughtfully prepared his sermons, using contemporary examples while making a salient point or two, not mouthing pieties or mind-numbing

exegeses that might have impressed seminary professors but escape most of us in the pews.

- He was blessedly open to our ideas. When a group of us approached him with an idea for a homemade parish renewal program, he was immediately on board with the idea and offered his suggestions, but allowed this group of lay people to steer the project.
- He revamped and expanded the parish bulletin to include his spiritual reflections, news of the school, and other items of interest.
- He invited outside speakers to address us.

Looking over this list of initiatives, I am stunned by their ordinariness. Yet, they are so refreshing for this parched group of Catholics.

Over the months, he made the tough decisions as well. After trying for the better part of a year to instill a new vision for some of the more reluctant parish staff who were quite comfortable with the old parish culture, he replaced them and expanded the duties of new staffers, giving them more freedom to innovate.

Of course, no good deed or good intention goes unpunished. While the majority of the parishioners have applauded him for his innovations and openness, critical letters have

been written to diocesan officials. Speakers who are obviously not Catholic enough for some tastes, portions of his sermons with which the doctrinal police take issue, his handling of personnel matters, an alleged “takeover” by newly enflamed lay people have all been duly reported.

I try to stop by his convent home every week or so to see how he’s doing. For the most part, I find him positive, upbeat. Sometimes, though, I find not the smiling, good-natured pastor we have come to know, but a man almost as dispirited as the parish he had found 18 months before. Another letter might have been sent to diocesan officials or people are grumbling about this change or that alleged slight. The parish grapevine spreads news quickly. On those down days, he wonders if it is worth it, if he’s up to the job, if we are on the right path.

All I can do is be honest with him.

Although we might have hoped for the One, he was not the Messiah. He was not a brilliant scripture scholar, he was not an incisive CEO, and he was certainly not a miracle worker.

But it is worth it. We now have a parish that has come to life, where there is a palpable good feeling. Where people linger after Mass, where our once-endangered grade

school is now thriving, where the budget has been balanced, where committees are again functioning, where individuals have come forward with fresh ideas and taken on new ministries.

I tell him of our gratitude for what he has done for our parish in such a short time. And that he is a good and reasonable man who has let us see his humanity and treated us as equals. He is a solid priest who never needs to play the clerical imperative card to have his way. He is a model to other pastors, a leader who doesn’t need always to be in control. He has given life to a parish and hope to the parishioners during a very difficult period in a Church that at turns welcomes and fights that wonderful Vatican II vision of a truly collaborative community of believers and pilgrims.

And that he was about that most difficult of jobs—changing a parish culture. It will be continually difficult. But absolutely necessary.

*Among Paul Wilkes’s many books are Excellent Catholic Parishes: The Guide to Best Places and Practices.*

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## Contributing Publications

*America*, the national Catholic weekly magazine, has been published since 1909 by Jesuits in the United States for thinking Catholics and those who want to know what Catholics are thinking. It has published dozens of articles, analyses, and commentaries on the sexual-abuse crisis in the Church and its aftermath since 2002. *America* is online at [www.americamagazine.org](http://www.americamagazine.org). Subscribe via the Web site or call 1-800-627-9533.

Established in 1924, *Commonweal* is an independent journal of opinion edited by lay Catholics. It has a special interest in religion (Catholic and otherwise), politics, war and peace issues, and culture. Along with articles on current events, *Commonweal* regularly reviews books, plays, films, and television. It is published 22 times per year. Its goal is “to bring a

distinctively Catholic perspective to bear on the issues of the day.” Please give us a try. A trial subscription is \$25. Call 888-495-6755, or visit [www.commonwealmagazine.org](http://www.commonwealmagazine.org)

*First Things* is a monthly journal of opinion founded and edited by Rev. Richard John Neuhaus, a Lutheran priest, prolific author, and authority on religion and public life. *First Things* is published in New York by the Institute on Religion and Public Life, whose mission is to “advance a religiously informed public philosophy for the ordering of society.” Editorial board members include Mary Ann Glendon, George Weigel and Michael Novak. Subscriptions may be ordered on its Web site, [www.firstthings.com](http://www.firstthings.com)

*Human Development Magazine* is published for people involved in the work of fostering the growth of others. This includes persons in-

involved in religious leadership and formation, spiritual direction, pastoral care, and education, including parents, teachers, coaches, students, or others interested in the development of the whole person. The magazine, founded in 1980, is published quarterly by Regis University in Denver, Colorado. Its editor-in-chief is the Jesuit priest, author, and spiritual director Rev. William A. Barry, S.J. A one-year subscription costs \$36 and may be ordered by calling Regis University at 800-388-2366 or visiting [www.regis.edu](http://www.regis.edu)

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# The Real Agenda

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*Voice of the Faithful can be part of the solution*

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BY ROBERT M. ROWDEN

St. John Chrysostom once warned: “Whoever is not angry when there is cause for anger sins.” The 25 Catholics who gathered in the basement of St. John the Evangelist Church in Wellesley, Mass. on a Monday night in January 2002 were angry indeed—angry and embarrassed because of the sexual abuse of so many children by priest-predators in their own archdiocese, but angry especially because incidents of abuse had been kept secret by archdiocesan leaders for whom concealment appeared to be the number one priority, while known predators were transferred from parish to unsuspecting parish. Any financial settlements with victims were made in secret and were often contingent upon maintaining secrecy. The scandal and its extent were documented in *The Boston Globe*, and soon all were reminded that clergy sexual abuse had infected the Church in many dioceses in the United States and in many nations.

By spring, crowds had swelled to 700. In July 2002, a convention of this newly formed group, called Voice of the Faithful, and known as VOTF, drew over 4,000 participants. Today the membership of Voice of the Faithful numbers over 33,000 Catholics in 40 states and 21 countries, largely through 200 parish affiliates. VOTF has defined its mission: “To provide a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit, through which the faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church.” Its goals remain: to support those who have been abused, to support the vast numbers of fine priests of integrity who were devastated by the crisis, and to shape structural change within the Church. This third goal, structural change, has raised eyebrows, caused understandable concern among some leaders, and allowed the dismissal and banning of VOTF by those for whom “change,” in reference

to Church structure, appears intrinsically subversive.

There are those who say that the laity should have no role in Church governance, since it is the function of the bishop to teach, govern, and sanctify. Such a view is not supported by Canon Law. Canon 212, for example, states: “In accord with the knowledge, competence, and preeminence which they possess, [lay people] have the right and even at times a duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church, and they

confidently assign offices to them in service of the Church, leaving them freedom and scope for activity” (No. 37). From the “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity”: “While preserving intact the necessary link with ecclesiastical authority, the laity have the right to establish and direct [apostolic] associations and to join existing ones” (No. 19). VOTF seeks a link with authority in every diocese for respectful dialogue, but it will not negotiate its right to exist as an association of faithful Catholic lay men and women. Suspicion of motives,

and truly dedicated to Christ and his Church, some bishops, by what they have done and what they have failed to do, have enabled and facilitated multiple child rape. Saying this is not a sign of anti-episcopal bias. It is a fact that has been demonstrated many times and in many places. Although priest-predators have been properly and appropriately removed from ministry, and many have been charged, tried, and convicted of crimes, those bishops who failed in their basic responsibility to protect our children have not been charged, condemned, censured, or even criticized by higher authority. There are no structures of accountability for them.

Fellow bishops, many of whom have publicly apologized to victims and are complying with the provisions of the Dallas charter, have nevertheless remained silent. Cardinal Francis George, on the eve of the bishops’ meeting in Washington, D.C., said, “There have to be sanctions for a bishop who has been negligent the same as there are sanctions for a priest.” The bishops, however, were asked only to commit themselves to “fraternal support, fraternal challenge, and fraternal correction.” In the words of the Rev. Richard John Neuhaus: “pretty limp.” In fact, the only time in memory when a bishop has been publicly criticized by other bishops was when Cardinal Joseph Bernardin made his doctrinally sound case for the Common Ground Initiative in the document *Called to Be Catholic*, in 1996. He was publicly criticized by Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston, and later, somewhat less vehemently, by Cardinals James Hickey of Washington, D.C., Anthony Bevilacqua of Philadelphia, and Adam Maida of Detroit.

VOTF believes that now, more than ever, dialogue is needed among bishops, theologians, priests, and lay people. Reconciliation is a mark of Christ’s presence among us. The American laity, better educated and informed than ever before, actively

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*The crisis has magnified  
the realization that the laity  
are absolutely powerless in the  
government of their Church.  
There is a total lack of  
institutional checks and balances  
that would allow them some  
say about how  
authority is exercised.*

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have a right to make their opinion known to the other Christian faithful.” Again in Canon 129: “Lay members of the Christian faithful can cooperate in the exercise of this power [of governance] in accord with the norm of law.” The documents of the Second Vatican Council call for active lay participation in Church affairs. From the “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church”: “The sacred pastors should recognize the dignity and responsibility of the laity in the Church. They should willingly use their prudent advice and con-

misinterpretation and misinformation about VOTF are rampant. It is accused of doctrinal heresy, seeking to establish parallel Church structures, anti-episcopal bias, and alignment and identification with anti-Church victims-rights groups.

The recent crisis arising from sexual abuse by members of the clergy has impaired the teaching authority of the hierarchy and has demonstrated that the present system of Church governance is seriously flawed. While the vast majority of bishops and priests are able, sincere, holy,



involved and in love with the Church, want and need to be involved in its healing and continuing reform. The bishops need the meaningful involvement of lay organizations if their credibility is to be restored.

Clearly there is no dogma, doctrine, or canon law that prohibits collaboration by a bishop or pastor with the laity in the exercise of his administrative authority. If members of the hierarchy are in fact “the servants of the servants of God,” there are no grounds for secrecy and no justification for excluding those being served from having a say in how they are served, and from some voice in their governance. There is no logic in excluding from consultation the very people the bishops are commissioned to serve. Such exclusion is analogous to a physician’s not asking a patient to talk about symptoms.

A major part of the structural change envisioned by VOTF is the establishment and empowerment of elected, representative pastoral councils on the parish and diocesan levels, which would have not merely an advisory but also a significant legislative function, analogous to the way our national government is structured. VOTF wants organized participation by clergy and laity in the selection of pastors and bishops, and in exercising oversight and independent auditing of parish and diocesan finances to ensure openness and transparency. There is nothing in principle that would prohibit lay participation in councils and congregations even at the highest levels of governance in the Church.

The current crisis has magnified the realization that the laity are absolutely powerless in the government of their Church. There is a total lack of institutional checks and balances that would allow them some say about how authority is exercised. Against the protest that “the Church is not a democracy” runs the growing consensus and underlying conviction that a dose of democracy is precisely what the Church needs in the present crisis.

VOTF supports survivors of abuse by listening to their stories, by lobbying for their medical needs and appropriate treatment of their post-traumatic stress disorders, and by advocating just compensation for their life-changing trauma. We seek criminal prosecution of abusers.

Although VOTF endorses some of the goals and practices of victims-rights organizations, and has met with and collaborated with them in some instances, we are identified and/or affiliated with none of these groups. Many of their members have understandably left the Church and are not interested in its future or its viability. We reach out to these and seek their healing and return to the ranks of the faithful.

VOTF especially supports the overwhelming majority of our priests, who live with integrity the promises and vows that come with ordination, who seek integrity in their personal lives of prayer, in their daily ministry, in the simplicity of their lifestyle, in their preaching of the Word, and in their celebration of the liturgy. We support them with expressions of encouragement and gratitude, and most of all by our active participation in the life of the parish through gifts of time, talent, and treasure. We seek justice and due process for anyone accused, and we pray for all priests and pledge to support them in their ministry.

Despite repeated assertions to the contrary, VOTF has no other agenda than the one above, and posted for all to see on its Web site, <http://www.votf.org> [www.votf.org](http://www.votf.org). We refuse to address theological controversies or to take a position on divisive issues. We do not contest any Church teaching. We accept the teaching authority of the magisterium. Our membership is scattered across the spectrum of Catholic thought, but we are united in our stated goals. We seek to build up the kingdom of God, not to tear it down. We recognize that structural change takes time and does not happen in a moment. VOTF members pray daily for the Church, its bishops and priests, and for the laity that we might come together in love, for respectful dialogue, always keeping Christ at the center of our efforts.

*Robert M. Rowden is a retired physician and a member of the steering committee for Voice of the Faithful in northern California.*

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## The Hour of the Laity

*Let us not neglect the apostolates for lay Catholics we already have*

BY MARY ANN GLENDON

Throughout the twentieth century, leaders of the Catholic Church implored lay men and women with increasing urgency to be more active as Catholics in society, and—since Vatican II—to become more involved in the internal affairs of the Church. The earlier call found a warm response among Catholic Americans in the 1930’s, 40’s and 50’s. But as Catholics gained in affluence and influence, the lay apostolate has suffered, while new opportunities for service in the institutional Church have gone begging. No wonder that John Paul II, with his history of close collaboration with lay men and women, often refers to the laity as a “sleeping giant.” For decades, the giant has seemed lost in the deep slumber of an adolescent. Now that the sleeper is beginning to stir—roused by media coverage of clerical sexual misconduct—it is beginning to look as though the Leviathan has the faith I.Q. of a pre-adolescent. Can this be the long-awaited “hour of the laity”?

The current resurgence of interest in lay organization suggests that the time is ripe to explore what has happened to American Catholics’ understanding of the lay vocation over the years during which they made unprecedented economic and social advances. Are the sixty-three million or so Catholics who comprise over a fifth of the U.S. population evangelizing the culture, as every Christian is called to do, or is the culture evangelizing them?

For all the efforts of the Second Vatican Council to make lay men and women the front line of the Church’s mission in society, events in the United States and other affluent countries in the 1960’s and 70’s would make it harder than ever for such messages to get through. The

breakdown in sexual mores, the rise in family disruption, and the massive entry of mothers of young children into the labor force amounted to a massive social experiment, an unprecedented demographic revolution for which neither the Church nor the affected societies were prepared.

In those turbulent years, pressures intensified for Catholics to

*In matters of reform, Catholics must not conform to the spirit of the age but do what is good, pleasing and perfect in the sight of God.*

treat their religion as an entirely private matter, and to adopt a pick-and-choose approach to doctrine. Many theologians, religious educators, and clergy succumbed to the same temptations. In that context, it was not only difficult for the strong demands of Vatican II to be heard; the messages that did get through were often scrambled. In an important sense, all the most divisive controversies of the post-conciliar years were about how far Catholics can go in adapting to the prevailing culture while remaining Catholic.

Though American society was rapidly becoming more secular, certain cultural elements of Protestantism remained as strong or stronger than ever: radical individualism, intolerance for dissent (redirected toward dissent from the secular dogmas that replaced Christianity in the belief systems of

many), and an abiding hostility to Catholicism. For the upwardly mobile Catholic, assimilation into that culture thus meant acquiescing in anti-Catholicism to a degree that would have astonished our immigrant ancestors. But that's what all too many of us did. In the 1970's, Andrew Greeley observed that "of all the minority groups in this country, Catholics are the least concerned about their own rights and the least conscious of the persistent and systematic discrimination against them in the upper reaches of the corporate and intellectual worlds."

In this observation, as in his early warnings about child abuse and the growth of a homosexual subculture among the clergy, Father Greeley was on the mark. I regret to say that I was a case in point until my consciousness was raised by my Jewish husband. In the 1970's, when I was teaching at Boston College Law School, someone took down all the crucifixes from the walls one summer. Though the majority of the faculty at the time was Catholic and the dean was a Jesuit priest, not one of us entered a protest. When I told my husband, he was shocked. He said, "What's the matter with you Catholics? There would be an uproar if anyone did something like that with Jewish symbols. Why do Catholics put up with that kind of thing?" That was a turning point for me. I began to wonder, Why do we Catholics put up with that sort of thing? Why did we get so careless about the faith for which our ancestors made so many sacrifices?

In many cases, the answer lies simply in the desire to get ahead and be accepted. But for most Catholics of the American diaspora, I believe the problem is deeper: they no longer know how to talk about what they believe or why they believe it. The people-called-together have lost their sense of who they are and what they were called to do.

And they seem to have lost a lot of mail as well. How many lay people, one wonders, have read any of the letters that popes have addressed to them over the years? For that matter, how many Catholics can give a sensible account of basic Church teachings on matters as close to them as the Eucharist and human sexuality, let alone the lay apostolate? If few can do so, it is not for lack of com-

munications from Rome. Building on *Renum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*, the fathers of Vatican II reminded the lay faithful that it is their particular responsibility "to evangelize the various sectors of family, social, professional, cultural, and political life."

#### A "Sleeping Giant" Stirs

Now that the "sleeping giant" is beginning to show signs of regaining Catholic consciousness, the Church is going to have to reckon with the fact that the most highly educated laity in its history has forgotten a great

Appleby, for example, told the American bishops in Dallas that "I do not exaggerate by saying that the future of the Church in this country depends on your sharing authority with the laity."

There has also been much talk about the need for a more independent American Catholic Church. "Let Rome be Rome," said Dr. Appleby. Then there is Governor Frank Keating, chosen by the bishops to head their National Review Board, who proclaimed, astonishingly, at his first press conference that, with respect to the role of the laity, "Martin Luther was right." The Voice of the

hardly a reactionary in Church matters, took pains to caution an earlier reform-minded group, the Common Ground Initiative, against "the danger of concentrating too much on the life within the Church. I suspect," he said, "that it is a trick of the Devil to divert good people from the task of evangelization by embroiling them in endless controversial issues to the neglect of the Church's essential role, which is mission."

By leaving evangelization and the social apostolate out of the picture, many lay spokespersons are promoting some pretty basic misunderstandings: that the best way for the laity to be active is in terms of ecclesial governance; that the Church and her structures are to be equated with public agencies or private corporations; that she and her ministers are to be regarded with mistrust; and that she stands in need of supervision by secular reformers. If those attitudes take hold, they will make it very difficult for the Church to move forward through the present crisis without compromising either her teachings or her constitutionally protected freedom to carry out her mission.

Much of that careless talk simply reflects the fact that, with the decline of Catholic institutions, the actual experience of the lay apostolate has disappeared from the lives of most Catholics—along with the practical understanding of complementarity among the roles of the different members of the mystical body of Christ. It is only common sense that most of us lay people are best equipped to fulfill our vocations primarily in the places where we live and work. It is because we are present in all the secular occupations that the Vatican II fathers emphasized our "special task" to take a more active part, according to our talents and knowledge, in the explanation and defense of Christian principles and in the application of them to the problems of our times. John Paul II elaborated on that theme in *Christifideles Laici*, pointing out that this will be possible in secularized societies only "if the lay faithful will know how to overcome in themselves the separation of the gospel from life, to again take up in their daily activities in family, work, and society an integrated approach to life that is fully brought about by the inspiration and strength of the

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*Many lay spokespersons are promoting basic misunderstandings: that the best way for the laity to be active is in terms of ecclesial governance; that the Church and her structures are to be equated with public agencies or private corporations; that she and her ministers are to be regarded with mistrust; and that she stands in need of supervision by secular reformers.*

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deal about where it came from. Meanwhile, as with any emerging mass movement, activists with definite ideas about where they would like it to go are eager to capture the giant's strength for their own purposes. In recent months, American Catholics have heard vague but strident calls for "structural reform," for lay "empowerment," and for more lay participation in the Church's internal "decision-making." Dr. Scott

Faithful, an organization formed in 2002 by Boston suburbanites, states as its mission: "To provide a prayerful voice, attentive to the spirit, through which the faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church."

There is nary a sign, thus far, that these spokesmen have a sense of the main job the gospels tell Christians they were placed on earth to do. Even the late Basil Cardinal Hume,

gospel.” Those are the main messages of all those letters that most of us have not read or answered. And those are the messages that are notably absent from the statements of spokespersons for the lay groups that have formed over the past few months.

#### Beyond Slogans

Needless to say, the Church will need to undertake far-reaching reforms in order to move beyond the present crisis, and many of the recent calls for reform are coming from well-intentioned men and women. Most Catholics are deeply and rightly concerned about the recent revelations of clerical sexual abuse; they want to do something about the havoc wrought by unfaithful priests; and they are grasping at the slogans that are in the air. But slogans about “structural reform” and “power-sharing” did not come from nowhere. Aging members of the generation of failed theories—political, economic, and sexual—have seized on the current crisis as their last opportunity to transform American Catholicism into something more compatible with the spirit of the age of their youth. It is, as Michael Novak puts it, their last chance to rush the wall.

Meanwhile, like Paul of old, John Paul II keeps sending those pesky letters reminding what he generously calls the Faithful that Christians must not conform to the spirit of the age, but must seek to do what is good, pleasing, and perfect in the sight of God. For the umpteenth time, he explains that “it is not a matter of inventing a ‘new program.’ The program already exists: it is the plan found in the gospel and in the living Tradition; it is the same as ever.” One might think those messages would at least be picked up and amplified by those Catholics whose profession it is to figure out how to mediate the truths that are “ever ancient and ever new” under changing social conditions. But the fact is that far too many American Catholic theologians, trained in non-denominational divinity schools, have received little grounding in their own tradition. And far too many bishops and priests have ceased to preach the Word of God in its unexpurgated fullness, including the teachings that are most difficult to follow in a hedonistic and materialistic society.

Fr. Richard John Neuhaus has said that the crisis of the Catholic Church in 2002 is threefold: fidelity, fidelity, and fidelity. He is right to stress that lack of fidelity has brought the Church in America to a sorry pass. But it also needs to be said that

among America’s semi-skilled knowledge class. Traditionally, it has been one of the glories of their faith that Catholics can give reasons for the moral positions they hold—reasons that are accessible to all men and women of good will, of other

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*It is true that lack of fidelity has brought the Church in America to a sorry pass. But it also needs to be said that we are paying the price for another disaster: our inadequate formation of theologians, religious educators, and parents.*

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we are paying the price for another three-dimensional disaster: formation, formation, and formation (formation of our theologians, of our religious educators, and thus of parents).

The wordsmiths of the culture of death have been quick to exploit that weakness in the Church that has consistently been their most feared and powerful enemy. Thirty or so years ago, they came up with one of the most insidious slogans ever invented: “Personally, I’m opposed to (fill-in-the-blank), but I can’t impose my opinions on others.” That slogan was the moral anesthesia they offered to people who are troubled about moral decline, but who do not know quite how to express their views, especially in public settings. Only in recent years have some Catholics, Protestants, and Jews stepped forward to point out that when citizens in a democratic republic advance religiously grounded moral viewpoints in the public square, they are not imposing anything on anyone. They are proposing. That is what is supposed to happen in our form of government—citizens propose, they give reasons, they deliberate, they vote.

It is ironic, given their rich intellectual heritage, that so many Catholics feel unable to respond even to the simplistic forms of secular fundamentalism that are prevalent

faiths, or of no faith. Long ago, St. Thomas Aquinas wrote: “Instruct those who are listening so that they will be brought to an understanding of the truth envisaged. Here one must rely on arguments which probe the root of truth and make people know how what is said is true; otherwise, if the master decides a question simply by using sheer authorities, the hearer will...acquire no knowledge or understanding and will go away empty.”

The time is overdue for Catholics (not only in America) to recognize that we have neglected our stewardship duties toward the intellectual heritage that we hold in trust for future generations. The question of why we have failed to keep that tradition abreast of the best human and natural science of our times—as St. Thomas did in his day—would be a subject for another occasion. Suffice it to note here that, in the twentieth century, that was the project of Bernard Lonergan and others, but the job has had few takers. Andrew Greeley’s diagnosis is harsh: “American Catholicism,” he says, “did not try intellectualism and find it wanting; it rather found intellectualism hard and decided not to try it.”

Perhaps Greeley is too severe, but it is hard to disagree with theologian Frederick Lawrence when he says

that “the Church’s current activity in the educational sphere is not making sufficiently manifest how the basic thrust of Catholic Christianity is in harmony with full-fledged intellectualism, let alone that intellectual life is integral to the Church’s mission.” Lawrence goes on to say, “The Church today needs to proclaim loud and clear that understanding the natural order of the cosmos in the human and subhuman sciences, and in philosophy and theology, is part of appreciating God’s cosmic Word expressed in Creation. It is part and parcel of the fullness of the Catholic mind and heart.”

#### To Serve the Church

American Catholics need to rededicate themselves to the intellectual apostolate, not only for the sake of the Church’s mission, but for the sake of a country that has become dangerously careless about the moral foundations on which our freedoms depend. Tocqueville was right that Catholicism can be good for American democracy, but that can only happen if Catholicism is true to itself.

Until recently, like most American Catholics, I was relatively unaware of the extent and variety of these movements. It was only through serving on the Pontifical Council for the Laity that I came to know groups like Communion and Liberation, the Community of St. Egidio, Focolare, the Neo-Catechumenate Way, Opus Dei, and Regnum Christi, and became acquainted with many of their leaders and members. What a contrast between these groups that work in harmony with the Church and organizations that define their aims in terms of power! It is no surprise that the more faithful and vibrant the great lay organizations are, the more they are vilified by dissenters and anti-Catholics. But attacks do not seem to trouble them, for they know who they are and where they are going.

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# Priscilla and Aquila Set Out Again

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## *A profile of the lay Catholic in the 21st century*

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BY ROBERT P. MALONEY

**W**e who live today in a notably hierarchical Church do not always find it easy to appreciate the important role of lay people in the early Church, especially of women, even though we have heard about it repeatedly in the readings at Mass on Sundays. How often do we recall Tabitha, whose life “was marked by constant good deeds and acts of charity” (Acts 9:36)? I suspect that hardly anybody ever thinks of Phoebe, whom Paul describes as a deaconess and whom he praises for having been of such great help to so many, including himself (Rom 16:1-3). Though just about everyone recognizes Mary Magdalen’s name, how often do we note that in John’s Gospel the first evangelizer is not Peter, nor John, nor any of the Apostles, but Mary Magdalen herself, who proclaims to the Apostles: “I have seen the Lord” (Jn 20:18). The New Testament mentions many other lay men and women, most of whom have been largely overlooked in the course of history.

When I notice people wavering about the importance of the laity in the Church, I encourage them to read about Priscilla and Aquila. In the Letter to the Romans, Paul states that all the gentile communities are indebted to this married couple (Rom 16:4). It is hard to find higher praise than that.

These two great Christians appear on four occasions in the New Testament: in the Letter to the Romans (16:3), the First Letter to the Corinthians (16:19), in the 18th chapter of Acts (vss. 2, 18, and 26), and at the end of the Second Letter to Timothy (4:19). What do we know about them? The texts tell us that they were:

- a married couple
- converts from Judaism

- lay missionaries
- expelled from Rome during the persecution of Claudius
- living in exile in Corinth
- working as tentmakers, Paul’s occupation
- hospitable to Paul, taking him into their home
- his missionary companions in Ephesus, and really the founders of the Church there
- risking their lives for his sake
- hosts of the local Church in their own home, a house-Church
- catechizers of the great preacher Apollos.

Paul and Luke rate this couple as extraordinary missionaries. Priscilla, whom Paul calls Prisca, is twice mentioned ahead of her husband in the New Testament; this seems to be

They will be profoundly lay. For those who are married, it is especially important to recall the beautiful name used by the Second Vatican Council and repeated by Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975) in describing the family. It is called “the domestic Church.” The family, like the Church, is a place where the gospel is transmitted, especially to children, and from which it also radiates to others by the witness to unity and love that resides in a deeply Christian family. I hope that in the 21st century Catholic married couples will live as true “domestic churches,” communicating God’s life to their children and to all those whom they contact.

The 21st century will see, I suspect, the flowering of the lay

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*The 21st century will see the flowering of this vocation in the Church. The laity will be well educated, well formed, and knowledgeable about the social teaching of the Church. And they will see that they have a special role to play in evangelizing the world of culture, politics, economics, the sciences, the arts, society, international life, and the media.*

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an indication that she had a more important role to play in the missionary activity of the primitive Church than did Aquila.

Will the role of lay Catholics be revitalized in the 21st century? Below I offer a brief profile.

vocation in the Church. The laity, by the very fact that they are lay, have a special role to play in evangelizing the world of culture, politics, economics, the sciences, the arts, society, international life, and the media. Today, inspired by docu-

ments like Evangelii Nuntiandi and Christifideles Laici (1988), lay men and women exercise a very wide variety of ministries, serving as heads of local Church communities, both small and large, as catechists, teachers, directors of prayer, leaders of services of the Word of God, ministers to the sick in their homes and in hospitals, and as servants of the poor. In the future, even more than at present, they will bring creative ministerial competence to setting up sites on the Internet, animating local communities through song and art, parish planning and administration, and evangelizing in countless other ways, both directly and indirectly.

*They will be well educated, well formed, and knowledgeable about the social teaching of the Church.* My father and mother never reached high school. Both had to work from the time they were very young, so their formal education ended early. But a generation later, all five of us, their children, had the chance to go to college; some of us went to graduate school too. Lay Catholics of the 21st century will be very well educated. I hope their education is integral, that it will have a healthy mix of the humanities, sciences, philosophy, and theology.

One of my deepest hopes is that the lay Catholic of the 21st century will be not just well educated, but well formed, too. Our future lay Catholics will receive formation especially in their homes, but also in Catholic schools, parish religious education programs, and youth groups. Others will perhaps have experienced a foreign mission through programs sponsored by dioceses or religious communities. Others will have journeyed for years in groups, like the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Our schools, youth groups and parish associations will all, I hope, have strengthened significantly the formation that they give to young people.



Well-formed lay persons will gradually find the delicate balance between daily labor and daily prayer. They will recognize that prayer and action go hand in hand in a healthy spirituality. They will experience that divorced from action, prayer can turn escapist and create illusions of holiness. But conversely, they will know that service divorced from prayer can be shallow, have a “driven” quality to it, and become an addiction.

While the Church proclaimed its social teaching eloquently throughout the 20th century, it remained largely unknown to most believers. This social teaching focuses especially on the neediest in society and is the foundation for the Church’s “preferential option for the poor.” I hope that all Catholic formation programs in the 21st century will impart a healthy dose of this teaching, packaging it well, so that those in formation can learn it and then transmit it to others.

They will be electronically connected. Unlike most of us today, lay Catholics of the 21st century will be electronically connected almost from birth. They will have learned to read, write and do math with the aid of a computer. E-mail will be a means of communication that they take completely for granted, using it to contact people in other countries and on other continents. They will look for ways to use technological resources to draw others to work in the service of the most needy and in investigating the causes of poverty. They will design Web sites that are really attractive to others, especially to the young.

Recognizing the importance of being “connected” with the larger world, these lay people will be creative communicators. A recent Church document states the challenge eloquently, human communication has in it something of God’s creative activity: “With loving regard, the divine Artist passes on to the human artist”—and, we might say, to the communicator as well—“a spark of his own surpassing wisdom, calling him or her to share in his creative power....”

They will be team players on a multiracial squad. Catholics are called to live and serve not merely as individuals, but as members of a family of believers. In a society characterized by individualism, it is very important that we “sacramentalize” a family spirit, handing on to others a capacity for teamwork rather than merely pro-

jecting ourselves as individuals.

The Catholic lay person of the 21st century should be capable of cooperating with other members of the Church, standing at their side, promoting their gifts, generating group energy, encouraging young people to join forces in the service of the most abandoned.

In the 20th century, as the great theologian Karl Rahner often pointed out, the Church became, for the first time in its history, a truly “world-Church.” In the 21st century, our local parishes will involve a growing number of Asians, Pacific Islanders, Africans, and Latin Americans who will stand alongside North Americans and those of European roots as the constituents of a truly global family. Church members will be of all races and colors. Those whose skin is black, brown, yellow, red, and white will stand next to one another in projects serving the poor, will sit beside one another doing research into the causes of poverty, will work with one another in lay missions, and will sing and pray with one another in eucharistic celebrations.

I hope that the multiracial character of 21st-century Catholic parishes will be a clear witness to the unity of the human race and that the gifts of various cultures will help us to have a continually expanding vision.

They will be truly missionary and in live contact with the world of the poor. As transportation and communication become ever more rapid, I trust that 21st-century Catholic lay men and women will have a truly global point of view. They will be conscious, as they view the ocean, that its waves break on other shores where the poorest of the poor live and labor.

Most likely, the poorest of the poor in the 21st century will be the very same persons listed 2,500 years ago in the Book of Deuteronomy (16:11): women, children, and refugees. The 21st-century Catholic lay person will be creative in assisting them: helping them find adequate food and lodging, health care, education; listening to the word of God with them and sharing with them in prayerful celebration and rich religious instruction.

Let me express a final hope in conclusion. I hope that we see many lay saints in the 21st century. Today, the Church reminds us again and

again of the universal call to holiness, of the universal call to mission, and of the universal call to build a civilization of love. So I hope that Catholic lay persons in the 21st century, like many genuinely holy lay men and women in the past, will teach much more by witness than by words, much more by their lives than by their lessons, much more by their persons than by their projects. I hope that they connect the soul of the Church with the soul of the world,

that they blend together deep rootedness in God with deep rootedness in the sufferings of the poor, and that they express a creative, contemporary sense of tradition in complex, changing circumstances.

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## The Vanishing Eucharist

BY WILLARD F. JABUSCH

**B**y now it is clear to anyone interested in the Catholic Church that there are no longer enough priests to celebrate Mass in many parishes. In rural areas and in the poorer neighborhoods of the great cities, parishes are being closed not only for economic reasons, but also because priests cannot be found to serve as pastors. The great religious orders, Franciscans, Jesuits, Redemptorists, and Benedictines, are handing over to local bishops parishes they have staffed for decades. Some say that their “charism” no longer includes parish work. Others bluntly admit that they just do not have the men.

On both sides of the Atlantic, lay people, frequently women, now preside at prayer services on Sundays. In place of the Mass, which had been offered weekly and even daily for many years, there are now some Bible readings, a few hymns, and possibly a homily and distribution of previously consecrated Communion hosts.

Many loyal Catholics are astonished that this has happened so quickly and that communion services would be considered an appropriate solution. After all, did not the teaching of centuries up to and including the Second Vatican Council insist that the

celebration of the holy Eucharist was at the center of our religious life, defining us as Catholic Christians? Are we not a eucharistic people, for whom this sacrament is much more than a mere symbol or reminder of the Lord? It is his very presence given to us for our spiritual nourishment and refreshment. Are we not invited to a joyful banquet of sacred food and drink, a living memorial, the representation of the very death and resurrection of the Lord for our time and place?

If all this is more than pious fantasy and theological speculation, if it is indeed defined dogma, it is no wonder that so many find it strange and even scandalous that this sacrament should be allowed to disappear from the religious life of large numbers of Catholics.

Numerous Catholics find it supremely difficult, even impossible, to receive sacramental absolution for sin, the anointing of the sick, and, most importantly, the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the Mass.

Certainly millions of Catholics in Latin America have long experienced this situation. Consider, for example, the little village of San Miguelito in Mexico, which is like many other places in Mexico and Central and South America. In the late 16th century, two zealous friars somehow found their way to this remote spot in the mountains. They

stayed to evangelize the people and give basic religious instruction. Before long San Miguelito had its own impressive baroque Church and a lively devotional life. The friars baptized, offered daily Mass and celebrated the liturgies for marriages and burials.

When political changes took place, the friars were called back to the city. Yet each year on the feast of St. Michael, one of them would make the journey, baptize many babies,

gent and personable. His neighbors recognized his obvious leadership qualities. Pablo, with his wife and children, became the first persons in town to accept the new religion, reading the Bible every day, giving up the potent local “firewater” and leading the prayers and hymns at the Sunday service and Wednesday night Bible study. The Americans then arranged for Pablo to attend an Assembly of God Bible college in

mons may be rather thin theologically, fundamentalist and naive, but he is accepted and content with his little flock.

In Peru and Bolivia, in Guatemala, Brazil, and Mexico, wherever there are few priests or where the priests are arrogant or indolent, the story of San Miguelito has been repeated. The bishops of Latin America meet and discuss this, but they seem powerless to halt the march of converts into evangelical Protestantism or Mormonism. One Mormon “elder” (all of 20 years old) told me that in the United States their most successful area for conversions is the Southwest. They are finding so many converts among Hispanics that they hardly have resources or time to process them all.

In Latin America, even very small villages will have an Assembly of God or other evangelical Church. A town of any size will also boast a large white Mormon “Church” with a gleaming spire pointed like a needle into the sky, a religious education building, and a tidy sports field for soccer and American basketball. For several decades now, it may well be that the most effective preachers in Spanish or Portuguese are not Catholic. In many places, the Catholic clergy are not only outnumbered, but they seem to lack the fervor and evangelical passion of the Protestants. All this has been the price, a very high price, for the Catholic unwillingness or inability to supply sufficient and effective pastors for the people.

The problem in Latin America, of course, goes back several centuries. Even in colonial times under the Catholic monarchs, with flourishing religious orders and governmental support, there were never enough clergy to preach and celebrate the sacraments.

In Europe and North America, the crisis is much more recent. The use of married priests and perhaps women priests has been offered as a solution and rejected. Rather, the challenge is met by downplaying, in practice, the necessity of Sunday Mass and the recruiting of non-ordained men and women to conduct a prayer service in lieu of Mass.

Martin Luther and John Calvin dreamed of a Church without holy orders, a sacrificial liturgy, confession, and anointing of the sick. Now, in many places, regular access to the

sacraments is not possible. Will the next generation continue to see them as important? Will even the Eucharist, like confession, become a “disappearing sacrament”?

*Rev. Willard F. Jabusch is chaplain emeritus of the University of Chicago.*

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*Because of the priest shortage, numerous Catholics find it difficult, even impossible, to receive sacramental absolution for sin, the anointing of the sick, and, most importantly, the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the Mass.*

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hear confessions, solemnize marriages, celebrate Mass, and finally lead a procession with the statue of the patron of the town through the streets and plaza. Exhausted, he would then ride his horse back to the city. As the years went by, this holy day developed into a colorful and rowdy fiesta, the religious and social high point of the year. But it was, after all, only one day out of 365. And with fewer vocations to the Franciscans and even fewer to the diocesan priesthood, the possibility of a resident pastor became even more remote.

One day, a Protestant missionary team from Texas arrived in the village. They rented a house and went from door to door making friends and handing out literature, especially nicely illustrated copies of the New Testament. Since most of the people had trouble reading, they also offered Christian songs, which they taught to the children and broadcast in the evening over their loudspeakers.

But these industrious and vigorous young Americans had no intention of remaining in the village forever. They quickly made the acquaintance of Pablo, a young married man, the father of two sons, who clearly was intelli-

the capital for some intensive courses in scripture and in preaching. A simple but attractive little chapel was built at the edge of town. When Pablo returned with his certificate in Bible studies, he was named the pastor.

Thus, a new Assembly of God congregation, one of hundreds, came to be established. With a resident pastor who was rooted in the community, educated (but not overeducated), zealous, and involved in the life of the village, preaching sermons in the local dialect, it is not a surprise that this new Protestant congregation quickly grew. When the Catholic priest next came to San Miguelito for his yearly visit, there was a clear lack of interest in what he had to say.

Even if a celibate priest could be found to go and live in a remote village like San Miguelito, he comes as an outsider, an “intellectual” with a university and seminary training. He has read Aquinas and Bonaventure, perhaps Rahner or Ratzinger. With whom can he talk? Where is the intellectual stimulus? With neither a wife nor children, how long before boredom and loneliness lead him to alcohol, eccentricities, or sex? Pablo, on the other hand, “fits in.” His ser-

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# Scratching the Stained-Glass Ceiling

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*A look at gifts brought and challenges faced by the Church's women leaders*

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BY RENEE M. LAREAU

**I**t is lunchtime on a Thursday, and Sharon Daly, vice president for social policy at Catholic Charities USA, talks hurriedly on her cell phone, the buzzing chaos of Washington's Union Station in the background. Daly, the first woman to occupy this position, squeezes a phone interview in between legislative meetings on Capitol Hill, with the future funding of programs like Section 8 housing and Head Start at the forefront of her mind.

A 25-year veteran in the field of legislative advocacy, Daly recalls feeling a little out of place at the 1984 bishops' meeting, the first she attended during her tenure in the public policy arm of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). "There were hardly any women there. I just remember looking out into this sea of 300 white heads and gold chains," she says with a laugh. Despite her minority experience, Daly has never looked back. After holding a variety of legislative advocacy positions, she has devoted the past nine years to Catholic Charities' advocacy work on welfare reform, tax issues, and the federal budget.

Daly is but one in an expanding group of courageous, intelligent women leaders in the U.S. Catholic Church, women who have been named to top-level executive Church jobs in the traditionally male-clergy-dominated areas of personnel, property, and policy.

These highly educated women, most of whom have served the Church loyally for decades, are the first women to hold positions such as chancellors, personnel directors, and pastoral administrators. Though they embrace a collaborative leadership style that resists self-promotion, these women are not the type to shy away from "firsts."

Mary Edlund, 55, the first female chancellor of the Archdiocese of

Dallas, began her post with the daunting task of regaining the laity's trust after a major clergy sex-abuse crisis in 1997. Carol Fowler, 61, the first female director of personnel in the Archdiocese of Chicago, proudly recalls when Cardinal Joseph Bernardin asked her to take the position in 1991.

Valerie Chapman, 53, pastoral administrator at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Portland, Oregon, stood in the designated pastor's space in Portland's cathedral as the archbishop confirmed her parish's high school students. Dolores Leckey, a senior fellow at the Woodstock Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., now welcomes young women theology students into her office for informal mentoring sessions, drawing upon her rich 20 years of work experience as founding director of the Secretariat for Family, Laity, Women, and Youth at the USCCB.

Though most U.S. Catholics would not be surprised to learn that women comprise 83 percent of those engaged in parish work, many are not acquainted with the increasing number of women who hold high-level administrative Church positions in dioceses, social service agencies, and faith-based organizations. These pioneering women carry with them an enormous amount of decision-making power by virtue of the positions they hold.

Daly, Edlund, Fowler, Chapman, Leckey, and many women like them are changing the face of the Church's leadership. Their stories tell not only of the rich gifts and unique leadership styles that women bring to the Church, but also of the challenges that come with being a "first" in anything.

## **A Spirit of Collaboration**

Many women bring a collaborative leadership style into organizational structures that have traditionally operated hierarchically. "I used to teach math," says Fowler. "I treat issues like a word problem and try to

be a problem-solver by working with others. Sometimes this means that I'll decide more slowly. If I have a disagreement to deal with, for example, between [religious educators] and principals, I'll pull together a committee to look at the problem."

Sister of Mercy Sharon Euart, 58, a canon lawyer in Silver Springs, Maryland, agrees that for many women leaders the decision-making process is as significant as the decision itself. "Women tend to be more attentive to things like process and dialogue. This can extend the decision-making process but can generate ownership, understanding, and support."

But Daly doesn't see this style as unique to women. "Before I saw a lot of leaders I assumed that collaboration was unique to women. Now that I have worked with lots of leaders I'm not convinced that's the case. Collaboration does not come any more naturally to me than to my male counterparts," she says. But collaboration is essential for influencing legislation. "It's a complex dance," she says. "You have to have relationships with both allies and opponents. The best leaders in this line of work are people who are collaborative. It doesn't matter if they are male or female."

Leckey found a collaborative leadership style helped in her work with the USCCB because "I wasn't competitive with the bishops like some men were. Many of them had gone to seminary together and suddenly one of their classmates was named a bishop, and one of them would be thinking, 'Well, I was smarter in liturgy than he was.' That wasn't an issue for me."

Relationship-building can be a challenge for women Church leaders, especially when working with clergy who have access to informal social networks that often exclude women.

During her tenure as the first female associate general secretary at the USCCB, Euart says, "There were times I'd feel left out of the conversation because there had been previous

conversations that had taken place at the priests' residence before work," she says. "I had to let [the priests] know that while it may have happened unconsciously it was not helpful to the decision-making process. I learned to adapt to this and looked for more information when it was appropriate."

## **Answering the Call**

The majority of women who now serve in these high-level administrative positions speak out of many years of experience working in the Church. Most believe that, in their case, familiarity has its privileges.

This was certainly the case for Edlund, who, in the wake of a major clergy sex-abuse trial, was given the responsibility of reviewing sexual-abuse allegations involving minors, reconstituting advisory review boards, and heading up the priest personnel board, which had historically been composed of all clergy. Edlund, who'd worked for the Dallas archdiocese since 1979, says she definitely "had an advantage in that I already had a good working relationship with the clergy. They were getting a known entity."

Euart agrees. Being the first female associate general secretary of the USCCB was a challenge, but "I felt that I moved into it smoothly because I was not completely unknown. I felt tremendous staff support and support from the bishops. This was important because one of my responsibilities was to supervise 10 departments, most of which were headed by priests."

Unfortunately for Euart, being a known entity wasn't quite enough. In the fall of 2000, after 13 years as the USCCB's associate general secretary, Euart was asked to leave her post. This was especially painful for her in light of the fact that she was, in the minds of many clergy and lay people, the leading candidate for the general secretary post itself. When the U.S. bishops asked the Vatican if religious

or other lay people could be nominated for the job, according to a September 2000 article in the *National Catholic Reporter*; the answer from Rome was a resounding “no.”

The general secretary serves as the day-to-day chief operating officer of the bishops’ conference. Though only priests have held the post since the position’s inception in 1918, canon law does not specify that this high-level administrative position must be held by a priest.

Not only did Euart not get the top job, she lost her job as associate general secretary. “The new general secretary wanted to hire his own staff,” she says. “It was the most painful professional experience I have ever had, and there wasn’t anything I could do about it.”

Jane Bensman, 54, a pastoral associate at Queen of Martyrs Parish in Dayton, Ohio and the only full-time pastoral staff member at the 500-family parish, experienced her own job security scare when her pastor was removed in April 2002 in the face of a substantiated allegation of sexual abuse. An interim pastor was appointed who was “very difficult,” according to Bensman.

“It was pretty much a mess, and he handled things very inadequately,” she says. “He didn’t want [the staff] to be in charge, even though we all had been the ones who had been in charge all along. We definitely didn’t fit into his mold of how he thought things should be.”

Thankfully, the interim pastor only stayed for three months, and Queen of Martyrs now shares a new pastor with a neighboring parish. Bensman says the new pastor is “someone who works with me like I am an equal, a colleague.”

#### Called to Serve

Despite the loss and difficulties that accompanied Bensman and Euart’s experiences, both stand firm in their convictions they are called to serve the Church. “My heart’s desire is finding a way to serve the bishops in this country again,” says Euart, who now serves various dioceses and religious communities as a consultant.

“It was ultimately because of the people that I stayed at the parish,” says Bensman. “I felt that I could provide stability in the transition. I spent a lot of time praying about my decision, and it turned out to

be wonderful.”

Euart and Bensman’s deep sense of ministry is echoed emphatically by many women administrators. Such anecdotal evidence is bolstered by a March 2002 study by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), the first academic study of women’s experiences in Catholic Church administrative roles. The LCWR study, titled “Women and Jurisdiction: An Unfolding Reality,” found that 85 percent of the 426 women interviewed reported a high sense of vocation or calling.

Does this mean that these women feel a call to the priesthood? Are these administrative positions simply the next best thing?

“Ordination has never been an interest of mine personally, but that is not to say that I am not aware of other women who are interested in

have the final say in major administrative decisions.

The average age of women Church administrators—59.5 years according to the LCWR study—raises the question of who will carry the torch for the next generation. For those gathered at a March 2001 first-ever national gathering of women diocesan leaders, recruitment of younger women occupied a prominent place on the agenda.

Sheila Garcia, assistant director of the USCCB’s Secretariat for Family, Laity, Women, and Youth says that she is “terribly concerned that there are not enough younger women in the pipeline. We need to point out to them the number of leadership positions that are available...Many younger women think that because they can’t be ordained there is no way they can have a meaningful role.”

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## Many women bring a collaborative leadership style into organizational structures that have traditionally operated hierarchically.

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it,” says Euart. “My gifts are in administration.”

Fowler echoes a similar sentiment. “I don’t believe that God calls you to something that isn’t going to happen,” she says. “But the sense of vocation is very strong in me. My call is the absolute number one, overarching reason why I do this. It comes out of Baptism.”

Though these leading female Church administrators enjoy unprecedented access to decision-making power, the introduction to the LCWR study sounds a note of caution and reality with respect to decision-making and ordination: “As long as jurisdiction (the power to govern) is tied to ordination, a very limited number of roles with authority will be open to women.”

Though the number of high-level women administrators is increasing, they are still the exception rather than the norm. In the end, it is by-and-large the ordained clergy who

Fowler experiences this dearth of women firsthand, especially when she serves as the only woman on an 18-member advisory council to Chicago Cardinal Francis George. While other women attend the meetings, Fowler is the only voting female member of the council. “We need more women at the higher level positions for their perspective on life, Church, and who God is in our lives.”

#### A Female Perspective

Other women administrators speak emphatically of the continued need for a women’s viewpoint in the Church, and the challenges they face in making that perspective heard. “[It] will not happen unless women get in there and work at it,” says Chapman. “It’s not like going through the seminary, where when [seminarians] finish they will be guaranteed a job.”

Chapman emphasizes the need for older women to mentor younger

women “and not to feel threatened by them. With so few leadership opportunities for women available there is a tendency to be protective of the few opportunities that do exist.”

Competitive salaries, mentoring, and opportunities for graduate education and leadership will help ensure that educated, trained younger women will be ready and willing to lead the Church in the future.

Mentoring is a high priority for Catholic Charities’ Sharon Daly, who tries “to challenge the people who work for me to grow. I’m just as likely to send someone else from our staff to a meeting on Capitol Hill as I am to go myself.”

Euart says that, despite the professional challenges she has endured, she highly recommends the field of Church leadership to women. “If younger women have the gifts, the desire, and the training, and have a love for the Church, it is worth a try. Women have to try to find a niche in the structure that currently exists—we can’t lose sight of the fact that this is a hierarchical Church, and that isn’t going to change.”

Jane Bensman looks to the future of the Church with hope. “The future potential for women will only increase,” she says, “and the field of Church ministry will continue to be strengthened because of it.”

While women administrators may not have access to the social or ecclesial networks that ordained clergy have, many cultivate a variety of formal and informal support networks. Mary Edlund relies on other women in the chancery and classmates from her canon law program. Jane Bensman participates in a bi-monthly meeting of area pastoral associates who gather for prayer, networking, and education. Valerie Chapman meets every six weeks with pastors and the vicar of clergy and also attends regular meetings with an ecumenical community organizing group, close priest friends, and pastoral associates who have responsibilities similar to hers.

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# What Women Want

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*'Buffy,' the pope and the new feminists*

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BY CATHLEEN KAVENY

In his 1995 Letter to Women, Pope John Paul II calls for a dialogue about the situation and challenges facing women. He addresses himself to all women, not just those who are Catholic, and still less to that subset of Catholic women who agree with his formulation of a “new feminism.” The pope’s feminism celebrates the advances women have made in the economic and political spheres even as it promotes traditional ideas about the nature and vocation of women, which are rooted in his conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary as the perfect exemplar of the “feminine genius” so desperately needed to humanize the world today.

The pope’s tone is not crabby and defensive, but open-minded and appreciative. In fact, the letter begins with a litany of gratitude to and for women who occupy a wide variety of roles in their families, their communities, and the world. Who would be a good dialogue partner, within the context of American culture, for those Catholics who wish to explore the pope’s new feminism? I would like to propose Buffy Summers, the protagonist of the popular television series “Buffy the Vampire Slayer.”

I’m not kidding. Buffy is not mere mind candy. Philosophers, theologians, literary critics, and scientists write about Buffy. Secular feminists and conservative Catholics argue passionately about what Buffy’s extraordinary popularity may mean. The brainchild of the talented Joss Whedon (a writer of *Toy Story*), the “Buffyverse” (the metaphysical and moral world of the show) operates as an extended metaphor for the problems faced by middle-class teenagers, particularly girls. Whedon knows that high school and college are not the carefree prelude to real life as popular culture generally portrays them. Rather, they are real life’s most intense and dangerous phase: negotiating them successfully requires

a strong moral character, the loyalty, honesty, and compassion of friends and family, and sometimes a bit of supernatural grace. As it turns out, we all live in the Buffyverse, no matter what our age.

Why is Buffy an important interlocutor for the “new feminism” inspired by John Paul II? Because the two have enough in common for the discussion to be fruitful. The pope rejects sexism, as well as both “sameness” and “separatist” feminism, for the same basic reason: they undermine the dignity of women because they are untrue to the complex reality of the nature and situation of women. So does Buffy, but with snappier dialogue and better clothes.

Spending some quality time in the Buffyverse would also help the pope and the new feminists avoid three pitfalls marring their work. First, in their efforts to escape the distortions of the old feminism, such as its dismissive attitude toward traditional female roles as caregivers or mothers, some new feminists have come close to embracing the old sexism.

Second, in attempting to highlight the positive aspects of the Church’s teaching on sexual matters in a culture that alternately glorifies and trivializes sexuality as a form of self-gratification, new feminists sidestep the dark and raw doubts about passion, love, and commitment that are increasingly part of the experience of many young people.

Third, in their promotion of the dignity of the vocation of women, in particular the vocation of many women to motherhood, those championing the pope’s views perpetuate several false dichotomies about the character traits associated with women, the roles available to them, and even the meaning of vocation itself.

The basic challenge for a new feminism—for any Catholic feminism—is to transcend these dichotomies. It needs to show how one and the same woman can be both strong and sensitive to the needs of others, and in particular

how being a good mother does not exclude (and in fact may require) a tough-minded independence and worldly competence. It also needs to proclaim unambiguously that a vocation is a personal call, given by God to each person, freely to embrace—and freely to create—her own destiny, which will involve both self-sacrifice and self-fulfillment in service to others. A true vocation is not an impersonal demand to conform to the cookie-cutter requirements of outdated conceptions of particular roles, whether nun, mother, teacher, or engineer.

Buffy Summers has such a vocation. She is also a delicate-looking blonde who attends high school (and later college) in Southern California. She has every qualification necessary to be prom queen. Her problem, you might say, is that she is overqualified; she also happens to be the Slayer,

a hellmouth, an entrance to the underworld ruled by all variety of demon life. Not only does Buffy have to spend a lot of time patrolling dark and dank cemeteries, resulting in disheveled hair and missed dates, but she needs to run through the whirling blades of a double-edged set of preconceptions. On the one hand, her fragile appearance, and even her name, do not correspond well with her vocation as a vampire slayer. On the other, her powers haven’t proved to be a guy magnet. Even basically decent boys in the Buffyverse tend to resent strong girls, or at least to shy away from them.

Despite her unique vocation, Buffy’s problem is not unique. It is the problem of many young women attempting to come to terms with the various and complicated facets of their personalities. In an effort to avoid sex-based stereotypes, an earlier

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*Buffy is not mere mind candy. Philosophers, theologians, literary critics, and scientists write about Buffy. Secular feminists and conservative Catholics argue passionately about what Buffy’s extraordinary popularity may mean. Her world is a metaphor for the problems faced by middle-class teenage girls.*

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the one girl of her generation endowed with the supernatural strength and speed necessary to fight vampires, demons, and other evil forces (how else to describe the social pressures of high school?) preying on human beings.

Being the Slayer can drastically interfere with social life, particularly if your hometown is set directly over

generation of feminists proposed the norm of “mutuality” (reciprocal respect and care) as a way to evaluate relationships among all people, including between men and women. The norm played down the significance of sexual differences in order to highlight character traits that men and women were acknowledged to hold in common, some of which (such as intelli-



gence and determination) previously bring associated only with men.

Yet for many young women today, the norm of a gender-free “mutuality” fails to account for the deep sense of attraction—and difference—they experience with respect to men. The norm also seems constraining, especially coming from a movement dedicated to the liberation of women, because it suggests that strength and success require the renunciation of all traditional feminine behavior and interests.

In the “feminine” world of lacy outfits and pretty pink bows, the character of a woman is primarily defined by what she may not be (anything stereotypically associated with men), rather than by what she herself is.

Later, “Princess” Buffy quivers before the vampire Spike, who remarks: “Look at you. Shaking. Terrified. Alone. A lost little lamb. I love it.” Then, as he prepares to bite Buffy, the spell is broken: she gracefully arises and deftly fends him off, signaling her rejection of a dependent and vulnerable role. Yet, in a recognizably contemporary twist, she retains her femininity in the fight: the beautiful dress survives intact. Picking up her stake again with relish, she remarks, “It’s good to be me.”

Only the willfully blind could fail to acknowledge the real agonies that the sexual revolution of the 1960’s brought in its wake. As with any revolution, the brunt fell on the most vulnerable: divorced, middle-aged women suddenly found themselves without resources in a culture where the rules of matrimony had changed midstream; many children were raised in the acrimony and instability of a crumbling or broken marriage; and adolescents were expected to navigate their way to sexual maturity and a stable, intimate relationship in a world that extolled the freedom of sexual expression but ignored its emotional and psychological dangers.

Who wouldn’t want to find a way to make these demons go away? Some Catholics, like seminary professor Christopher West and theologian Mary Shivanandan (*Crossing the Threshold of Love: A New Vision of Marriage in the Light of John Paul II’s Anthropology*, Catholic University of America Press), believe they have found the answer in the “theology

of the body,” which they have developed out of the phenomenological anthropology proposed by John Paul II. One might call it the sexual ethics of the new feminism.

The theology of the body integrates key features of Catholic sexual teaching (especially the prohibition against contraception) into a full-blown anthropology centered on the complete complementarity of men and women on the physical, psychological, and social levels. Equal but distinct, man and woman are created by God with the capacity to give themselves totally to one another, body and mind, heart and soul. This capacity for mutual self-gift is per-

better. Sounds good, but what if things are not better? Or what if the ineliminable consequences of your own sins, the sins of other people, bad luck, or bad timing mean that you can never live this lovely picture of metaphysical and sexual harmony?

The theologians of the body have an answer. Tightly grasping that picture of sexual harmony and existential bliss in one hand, they gesture awkwardly to the need for suffering and the way of the Cross with the other. In their idealized world, sin, suffering, grace, redemption, and the possibility for self-sacrifice may somehow coexist, but they are never intermingled. And therein lies the

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*In an effort to avoid sex-based stereotypes, an earlier generation of feminists proposed “mutuality” as a way to evaluate relationships among all people, including between men and women. Yet for many young women today, the norm of a gender-free “mutuality” fails to account for the deep sense of attraction—and difference—they experience with respect to men.*

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fectly fulfilled in an act of sexual intercourse between husband and wife that is open to the creation of new life. By living your married life according to Catholic teaching, you can harmoniously integrate pleasure and procreation, friendship and desire, commitment and contentment. There are no sharp edges, no loose ends.

Of course, those retailing the theology of the body acknowledge that not everyone’s life or marriage corresponds to this idealized picture. They chalk a good portion of this fact up to personal sin. The solution? Get married young, never use contraception, accept your God-given sex role, and your life will be better—your lovemaking will be better; your relationship with your spouse will be better; and your metaphysical identity as a man or woman will be

problem. In real life—especially in real marriages—they intermingle all the time. Our sense of brokenness can give rise to an unholy as well as holy longing; our restless stirrings can both animate our contentment and threaten to destroy it. Traditional Catholic realism has always known this. We do not know our heart’s desire, and we do not have the strength, or sometimes even the will, to grasp it when we think it fleetingly appears. Yet, in the strangest moments, in the oddest situations, we can experience some wisp of peace, some taste of the possibility of redemption. Divine grace follows God’s plans, not ours.

A compatible realism is at work in Buffy. Buffy is not Gidget. The teenagers and twentysomethings on the show do have sexual relationships, but unlike most television

shows these days, Buffy does not pretend that those relationships are without consequence, especially for the moral character of those involved. On her seventeenth birthday, Buffy loses her virginity in a night of passion with Angel, who, after losing his soul, reverts at sunrise to his old demonic self, in accordance with a gypsy curse that prohibits him from experiencing true mortal happiness.

Other characters are similarly denied both the “happily ever after” they desire in a sexual relationship and the capacity to extinguish that desire once and for all. Prompted by the ghosts of his own parents’ unhappy marriage, Buffy’s mortal friend Xander leaves his fiancée Anya at the altar, propelling her to resume her former identity as a vengeance demon. The powerful witch Willow, possessed by grief and anger when her lover Tara is senselessly murdered, sets out on a mad plan to destroy the world. In the end, what saves her, and the world itself, is not eros, but agape: the unconditional and selfless love shown her by Xander, a regular mortal guy, a carpenter, and her friend since kindergarten. As the episode ends, with a bleeding Xander comforting a broken Willow, we hear Sarah McLachlan in the background, softly singing the Prayer of St. Francis.

The struggle over women’s roles—middle-class America’s very own Thirty Years War—is not over yet. According to a recent survey by the Center for the Advancement of Women, a large percentage of women say that stay-at-home mothers and working mothers “often” or “sometimes” look down on each other. There is no shortage of wounds, or salt to rub in them, on either side.

In fact, some new feminists strongly imply that a woman who voluntarily assumes substantial work outside the home is selfishly sacrificing her children for her career. To put the issue this way is to distort what is at stake, especially for Catholics. It’s not about career. It’s about vocation, which both the modern world and the Church agree involves both self-sacrifice and self-fulfillment in the service of others. Is it possible that many a woman has a vocation with two distinct poles of concern, one directed toward her own family, the other more broadly toward the community? Is it possible that at

least some of the inevitable difficulties of being both a mother and a job holder, the robbing Peter to pay Paul, the exhaustion—are rightly endured, because they are the side effects of fidelity to a complicated calling?

How can anyone have a vocation that incorporates some elements traditionally associated with virginity and others traditionally associated with motherhood? Here is where Buffy can be helpful, can show us a way to mix and match. Like many American women her age, she qualifies—at least literally—neither as virgin nor as mother. Yet no one could be further from the stereotypical “selfish” secular feminist implicitly criticized by the pope and others. The series is about vocation; it explores what it means for Buffy to be a vampire slayer, not merely to slay vampires for fun or profit. It shows her struggling to live up to the demands of the role, sacrificing the usual teenage pleasures to meet her unusual responsibilities. It also shows her growth in competence, wisdom, and confidence, and her eventual realization that the sacrifices are worth it. In exploring the meaning of vocation, the show suggests ways of overcoming several dichotomies that hamper a creative and humane response to the contemporary situation of women.

#### On Being Chosen

The most fundamental dichotomy the series overcomes is between being chosen and choosing. Just as a brilliant scientist or a phenomenal athlete chooses to acknowledge and to accept responsibility for developing her innate gifts, Buffy chooses to accept her calling and the responsibilities involved. In this way, the show deftly calls into question our society’s entrenched opposition between unchosen responsibilities and self-determination. It demonstrates how impoverished, how unimaginative it is to think that women who want to develop their talents and who prize their autonomy are merely self-regarding. We are each called to an individual vocation, not to the identical vocation.

In living out her unusual vocation, Buffy also transcends the dichotomy between virginity and motherhood. Her independence and strength of character do not undermine her ability to nurture; in fact, they support

it in difficult situations. When the pope, and many of the new feminists, speak of motherhood, they seem to be romantically focusing on babies and small children. What about caring for adolescents? Successfully raising a teenage girl to fulfill her own vocation requires a remarkable combination of strength and restraint, challenge and affirmation—an independence and self-possession typically associated with the life of virginity. Buffy knows this from both sides; she battles with her mother, who struggled to accept the fact that her daughter was also the Slayer, and later on, she battles with her younger sister Dawn, whom she was left to raise alone after her mother’s death.

The show does not shy away from conflicts between Buffy’s role as the Slayer and her role as Dawn’s sister/mother. Nowhere are these more acute than at the end of season 5, where Buffy seems to face an impossible choice: sacrifice her sister, or allow the entire world, including Dawn, to be overrun by demon dimensions of reality. Buffy simply refuses to choose. She willingly forfeits her own life in order to save Dawn.

In Buffy’s free gift of herself, we see the dichotomy between self-sacrifice and self-fulfillment overcome; we glimpse the true meaning of vocation. There is no bitterness, only active acceptance. Buffy wants Dawn not to be haunted by her sacrifice, but to go on in freedom to accept her own vocation. Her parting words to her sister embody the ethos of the series. “I love you. I will always love you. But this is the work that I have to do. You have to take care of them now. You have to take care of each other. The hardest thing in this world...is to live in it. Be brave. Live...for me.”

The pope himself might have said these words. The task of the new feminism that he has inspired is to show how they might be truly spoken by any woman who responds faithfully to God’s call, no matter what the shape of her individual vocation.

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## The Future Church: A Demographic Revolution

BY JOSEPH CLAUDE HARRIS

Peter Drucker, writing in the Nov. 3, 2001 issue of *The Economist*, described a revolution that will cause a restructuring of European and American economies and cultures for much of this century. “In the developed countries, the dominant factor in the next society will be something to which most people are only just beginning to pay attention: the rapid growth in the older population and the rapid shrinking of the younger generation.”

In every developed country and in China and Brazil, the number of births has fallen well below the replacement number required for any population to remain stable: 2.2 births per woman of reproductive age. As a result, immigration will become potentially divisive in all rich countries as businesses seek workers to augment a shrinking number of native employees.

A current and pending movement of millions of Muslims into Europe and a burgeoning Hispanic population in the United States will challenge Church leaders to restate the eternal message of Jesus to non-European and non-Anglo cultures.

#### Population Forecasts for Europe

Population changes forecast for Germany illustrate the dramatic pressures western European countries will soon face. By 2030, people over 65 in Germany, the world’s third largest economy, will account for almost half the adult population, compared with one-fifth now. The result will be that the total German population will shrink from 82 million to 70 million, with virtually all of the decline—40 million to 30 million—occurring in the working population group. The D.I.W. research institute in Berlin estimates that by 2020 Germany will have to import one million immigrants of working age each year simply to

maintain its workforce.

These declining fertility rates have alarmed religious and secular leaders on the European continent. In the face of a total fertility rate of 1.2 lifetime births per female in Italy, Pope John Paul II exhorted Italians, in an address given in February 2000, to “make more babies.” The Bavarian premier, Edmund Stoiber, confronting a total fertility rate of 1.3 in Germany, one-upped the pontiff and offered a tangible program of cash subsidies per birth. Under Mr. Stoiber’s scheme, German parents would get the equivalent of about \$484 a month, more than triple the current rate, for the first three years of life.

Both survey data and actual demographic information indicate that large families are a thing of the past. When young women and men are asked how many children they plan to have, almost all, in all relatively wealthy countries, reply two or maybe three. Fewer than 2 percent say they do not want children.

There seems to be little connection, however, between survey responses and actual birth data. In Germany, 30 percent of women born in 1965 are childless. In the past, over 90 percent of women their age would have had children by now. Data also show a strong pattern of women having only one child. In the case of Italy, for example, Rosella Palombra, who has studied attitudes toward parenthood at the National Institute for Population Research in Italy, says that Italian couples feel strong pressure to become parents—but one child is enough to fulfill this social duty. Everywhere in southern Europe, large families have been replaced by single-child families: 26 percent of Spanish and 31 percent of Portuguese women now in their late 30’s have just one child.

The low fertility rates of recent years may reflect a pattern in which women are postponing childbearing until careers have been established.

In most western European countries, the birth rate rose between 1998 and 1999. Some demographers argue that the apparent fall in fertility rates has reached a plateau and that Europe's true fertility rate may be 1.8 children per woman. Even this "optimistic" fertility rate, however, still implies people having fewer children than the replacement of the population requires.

In general, present patterns point to a decrease in the population of western European countries from 388 million in 2000 to 368 million by 2025. Much of the decline will occur in Germany and Italy. Catholic Church membership in Germany will shrink by 2 million. In the case of Italy, the Church enrollment loss will about equal the population decline, since 97 percent of Italians are baptized Catholic.

The impending birth dearth will lessen the historical Catholic dominance of the religious map of Europe. The present infrastructure of the worldwide Catholic Church reflects its European origins. In 1997, a little less than two-thirds of the world's parishes were located in Europe. About a quarter of the world's Catholic population lives in Europe. Non-European parishes register about three-quarters of the Catholic population. A total of 53 percent of the world's priests staffed European parishes and programs. With 53 percent of the cardinals living in Europe, much of the management focus of the Church reflects European cultural values and concerns. Many years of likely immigration patterns will result in Islam becoming a large European faith. Interfaith activities will cease to be esoteric endeavors.

Demographic changes have already led to an outbreak of xenophobia. In September 2000, Cardinal Giacomo Biffi, the archbishop of Bologna, held a news conference at which he painted a picture, which he found bleak, of Italian civilization threatened by an onslaught of migrating Muslims. The cardinal spoke in favor of restrictive immigration policies. "I have never had anything against the word 'crusade' personally," he said, as quoted in *The Times of London*. "We have to be concerned about saving the nation." These remarks subsequently struck a responsive chord with Cardinal Angelo Sodano, the Vatican secretary of state, who said that Cardinal Biffi's words

"were wise, very wise indeed."

One may hope that this initial bout of fear will subside as immigration to Europe becomes more commonplace. Church leaders will then have to contend with concerns about how to run an average parish when the median age of the adult portion of the congregation is 65. In the past, baptisms and weddings have in most places dominated parish life. Pastors typically focused much of the energy and resources of a parish on schools and religious education programs for youth. In the future, funerals may outnumber weddings. Parish programs will also need to reflect the fact that a substantial portion of the population of an average parish will be retired.

#### Hispanic Catholic Growth

A much different situation exists in the United States, where Catholic membership rolls seem to be surviving turbulent times rather well. The Official Catholic Directory counted the Catholic population as 47 million in 1980; it increased to 55.6 million by 1995. Catholics have maintained a 23-percent level among the growing American population. At the risk of raining on such a happy parade, two trends in Catholic membership data suggest at least a challenging future for diocesan and parish leaders. Yes, the Catholic population is growing, but much of the increase—6.5 million—has occurred among Hispanic communities. The picture for non-Hispanic membership is not quite so robust, with the non-Hispanic Catholic population increasing only about 1.5 million.

Rapid growth of the Hispanic community has influenced parish programs in all parts of the country. Five years ago, there were only two Spanish-language Masses offered in Indianapolis each Sunday, both in the same parish. Today, 80 different parishes in the city offer Hispanic Masses; the number would be larger if there were sufficient Spanish-speaking priests. While these changes affect every community, the truly large growth in the numbers of Hispanics has happened in southern California, Texas, southern Florida, and metropolitan areas like New York and Chicago. For example, one Hispanic Catholic in six in the entire country presently resides in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Ernesto

Zedillo, then president of Mexico, referred to Los Angeles as the world's second most populous Mexican city during a 1999 visit to southern California.

U.S. Census Bureau forecasts point to a more diverse ethnic distribution in the American population over the next 50 years. Government demographers expect the Hispanic population in this country to quadruple from 27.3 million in 1995 to 96.5 million by the middle of the next century. CARA researchers report that 56 percent of Hispanics say they are Catholic. Should this proportion remain constant, the projected growth pattern cannot help but affect the operation of Catholic parishes in this country. At present, American Catholic Church membership may be about one-quarter Hispanic; if present patterns continue, Catholic Church mailing lists in 50 years could well top 100 million, with perhaps half the names showing Hispanic origins. Both the effects of migration and the considerable natural increase—the excess of births over deaths—of the Hispanic population will contribute to a rapid growth pattern for Hispanics.

Nowhere is the increase of the Latino population more evident than in southern California. The total population for the three-county area that makes up the Archdiocese of Los Angeles increased by 561,851 between 1990 and 1996. At the same time, the Catholic population increased by 688,257. The number of non-Catholics thus declined by 126,406. Since the increase in the number of Catholics accounted for more than the entire population growth, the number of Catholics as a share of all residents increased from 28.5 percent to 33.5 percent. The pattern of a growing total of Catholics closely paralleled growth in the Hispanic population in the three counties. Should present patterns persist for two decades, Los Angeles residents would be 52 percent Hispanic and 43 percent Catholic by the year 2020. The archbishop of Los Angeles would then serve as pastor of one of the largest Hispanic communities in the world. The transition to a Latino community will come about because of two factors that cause population shifts: the impact of natural increase and the effect of migration.

Natural increase means the number of births exceeds the total of

deaths. Migration describes population arrivals and departures over a specified period of time. The total population in the three counties of the Los Angeles Catholic Church grew by 561,851 between 1990 and 1996. Since there were 834,491 more births than deaths during the period, the fact that the population only increased by 561,851 means that a total of 272,640 residents moved from the area over a six-year period. There was a net growth in population for the counties that comprise the Archdiocese of Los Angeles because births outnumbered deaths.

#### Immigrant Parishes

When Catholics came to America in the 19th century, they settled in cities and founded parishes to preserve their culture and language. A system of national parishes emerged, from Little Germany on Manhattan's Lower East Side to the Italian neighborhood of North Beach in San Francisco. These churches offered sacraments and a community association in a language intelligible to the immigrants. Granddaughters and grandsons of the immigrants subsequently moved from the cities to the suburbs in the 1950's and founded distinctively American parishes. National congregations gradually grew to be anachronisms.

American Church leaders today face a unique organizational challenge, particularly in the four states that border Mexico. It is not a matter of some national parishes ministering to the needs of Hispanics. In Los Angeles, Hispanics presently make up two-thirds of the Catholic population, and the proportion is rapidly rising. Given the fact that the non-Hispanic population is shrinking, there may well be a market for national parishes in Los Angeles that offer liturgies in English. Dioceses in the border states have become Hispanic enclaves that function like national parishes in the 19th century.

It is difficult to predict trends, but what is sure is a markedly changed Church in the next generation.

*Joseph Claude Harris works as financial officer for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Seattle, Washington*

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# Architects of Success

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## *The promise of young Hispanic Catholic leadership*

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BY KENNETH G. DAVIS

Although parents may well attend whatever Church makes their children feel most welcome, young people are not as likely to attend a Church simply because it appeals to their parents. Win over the youth and perhaps win the whole family. If this anecdote is reasonable, the future of the Catholic Church in the United States is being constructed by young Hispanics.

The latest census reports that 35.7 percent of all Hispanics in the United States are less than 18 years old, compared to 23.5 percent of non-Hispanic whites. And while the population of Hispanic youth is expected to boom in the next 20 years, the non-Hispanic white youth population is expected to decline. This increase among Hispanics will account for most of the youth population growth over the next two decades.

In its Exploratory Study on the Status of Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry in the U.S., the Instituto Fe y Vida (Institute for Faith and Life) reports that while the Catholic Church overall is about 33 percent Hispanic, the young Church is already around 45 percent Hispanic. In California, Hispanic youth now make up close to 75 percent of all Catholics under the age of 18. In Texas, they outnumber non-Hispanics by almost two to one, and the number of dioceses nationwide in which they make up 50 percent or more is growing each year.

### **What Do We Know?**

Unfortunately, we know very little. Only *Young Adult Catholics: Religion in the Culture of Choice*, by Dean Hoge and others, includes a chapter on Hispanic youth. Most recent studies on young Catholics do not even consider them.

The 2000 census indicates that about half the Hispanics in the United States are native born; the remainder come from every Latin American

country. Spanish is spoken in 85 percent of their homes, and 40 percent speak English “less than well.” Though increasing numbers are entering the middle class and engaging in university studies, only 57 percent of Hispanics completed high school, and just 9 percent are university graduates. Over 18 percent of Hispanic families live in poverty.

Because young Catholic Hispanics also exhibit this continuum of acculturation processes, specialists in Hispanic youth and young adult ministry, such as Instituto Fe y Vida and the National Catholic Network de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana (La Red), emphasize ministry in both English

to develop the ministry:

Of the 35 dioceses (19 percent) that have personnel trained to develop programs and coordinate this ministry at the parish level, 10 employ such ministers only part time.

Just 6 percent of the diocesan personnel ministering to youth in our country are themselves Hispanic. Of those, 40 percent do so half time, one day a week or as volunteers.

In California—traditionally the state with the strongest Hispanic ministry—a quarter of the dioceses have no personnel specifically supporting ministry to young Hispanics. Another 25 percent have Hispanic youth and young adult ministers with

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*The Church in the United States, especially at parish and diocesan levels, would be well served by investing considerably greater resources in Hispanic youth and young adult ministry leadership development.*

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and Spanish. An analysis done by La Red reveals that Spanish-speaking young people (single Hispanics between 18 and 30) are the better served. The status of ministry to bilingual Hispanic youth is unknown, and only sporadic attention is given specifically to English-speaking young Hispanic adults. For example, although the National Catholic Youth Conference 2001 had more Hispanic participation than ever, that participation was still tiny (5.2 percent). Why did so few Hispanic youth participate despite the best efforts of the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, which included \$100,000 in scholarships?

The following four observations from the Fe y Vida study suggest that a paucity of Hispanic ministers, their frequent turnover, and limited academic preparation make it difficult

a B.A. or equivalent; a further 25 percent have ministers with some courses at the college level; and 25 percent have ministers with only a high school diploma.

In the last 10 years, only four of California’s 13 dioceses have been able to retain their diocesan coordinator for that specific ministry for more than three years.

### **Scarcity of Skilled Ministers**

Current efforts to develop leaders who will minister to Hispanic young Catholics are obviously insufficient. Poor recruitment and retention, as well as limited support for continuing education or full-time employment, are some of the reasons we have so few Hispanic leaders in youth and young adult ministry. Our bishops seem to be aware of this need.

According to a document of the U.S. Bishops’ Committee on Hispanic Affairs, Hispanic Ministry at the Turn of the New Millennium (November 1999), only 7.1 percent of bishops identified their youth programs as adequate. That was the lowest positive response rate of any ministry evaluated. Research conducted for the bishops by the Louisville Institute summarized the situation: “Given the fact that the Latino population in this country is overwhelmingly young (approximately 50 percent are under the age of twenty-six and over 33 percent under the age of eighteen), the Church ignores Hispanic youth at its own peril.”

The results of another recent survey, therefore, are not surprising. The Hispanic Churches in American Public Life Project explains the exodus of Hispanics from the Catholic Church precisely by generational difference. While 74 percent of immigrants are Catholic, only 66 percent of the second generation and 59 percent of third and later generations remain Catholic.

If the urgings of Andrew Greeley, Allan Figueroa Deck, Juan Diaz Vilar, and others in the pages of *America* about the need to re-examine ministry to Hispanics are true, the need is especially great in the case of younger Hispanics. Local churches need to invest in Hispanic young leadership that is carefully selected, well educated, and properly supported. This will require that Church structures created to serve white non-Hispanic Catholics be re-evaluated in response to this new pastoral reality.

### **Structural Challenges and Hopes**

The relatively more numerous clergy and considerably greater money in the United States has created a local Church with a powerful infrastructure of parish employees, diocesan offices, hospitals, schools, professional organizations, publishing houses and the like. This phenomenon has led to a highly professionalized ministry that requires large investments in education, technology, and support services. Such an expensive

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Church infrastructure, with its corresponding models of ministry, may well serve non-Hispanic whites, especially from middle and upper classes. But it tends to eclipse apostolic models that do not share the same cultural presumptions, and this hinders the development of different ministerial models. Popular religion and apostolic

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*Hispanic young people are not a problem, but a solution. Given the tools, they can lead us into the future.*

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movements that are not similarly organized, for example, or that do not share the same spirituality may be misunderstood or dismissed.

But because Latin American parish and diocesan infrastructures are considerably weaker, ministry relies strongly on the leadership of the young people themselves, who are very often products of apostolic movements. And popular religion is constitutive of the way most Latin Americans are Catholic. Hence the models of youth and young adult ministry in North and South America are quite different, because of different histories, socioeconomic realities, and cultures. Since the uniqueness of Hispanic youth and young adults in the United States is precisely that they negotiate both of those cultures and histories, any ministry to them must address this peculiar experience.

Well-trained Hispanic young adults can best minister to their own, because they best understand those cultural crossroads. They can exemplify this “crossroads Christianity” to other youth and young adults in the bicultural or multicultural environment in which they live. Such leaders are also able to bridge the gap between the current leadership of the U.S. Church’s infrastructure (largely non-Hispanic whites) and young Hispanics. As examples and

bridge builders, they are potential architects of success.

Recruiting, educating, and retaining such ministers is therefore vital. This requires a strong, sustained, and coordinated investment through stewardship, education, and communication, at which our country’s ecclesial infrastructure excels. Hence the thesis of this article: U.S. Church structures, especially at parish and diocesan levels, would be well served by investing considerably greater resources in Hispanic youth and young adult ministry leadership development.

All this is not to say that there is presently no good ministry for Catholic young Hispanics in the country. Some parishes, dioceses, and apostolic movements do excellent work. More vocation directors and seminaries are responding. And the same *Fe y Vida* study extols the tremendous time and energy that thousands of Hispanic young people invest in ministering to their peers. But much more sustained and coordinated support of Hispanic leadership is necessary for effective ministry to a population the size of young Hispanics. Despite the best intentions, the Church will continue to be ineffective if parishes and occasional dioceses only intermittently have ministers who are architects of success—that is, young Hispanics who serve as bridge builders between our differing cultural presumptions and ministerial models.

#### Recommendations

Reflecting upon all this, *La Red*, Instituto *Fe y Vida*, and the South East Pastoral Institute presented a proposal to the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Hispanic Affairs to promote ministry to young Hispanics. Approved by the committee at their November 2001 meeting, the goals of the initiative are: 1) to improve and expand ministry to Hispanic youth and young adults; 2) to coordinate national, diocesan, and parish efforts to integrate ministry to young Hispanics effectively into the mission of the Church; 3) to offer sound formation for youth ministers and pastoral advisers from this community based on the bishops’ National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry and Encuentro 2000.

Among others, the following actions were also recommended to the bishops’ Committee on Hispanic Affairs in order to achieve those

goals: 1) engage in a dialogue with the bishops’ Committee on Youth and Young Adult Ministry and, with the collaboration of that committee, launch a decade of intensive support and advocacy for the development of Hispanic youth and young adult ministry in both English and Spanish; 2) write a pastoral letter focusing on ministry to the younger generations of Hispanic Catholics with the aim of presenting this invisible segment of our Church to the conscience of other Church leaders; 3) request the support of Catholic foundations and organizations for programs to form pastoral ministers capable of serving Hispanic youth and young adults in the language in which they live their faith life.

No one suggests simply throwing money at a problem. Hispanic young people are not a problem, but a solution. The National Catholic Council for Hispanic Ministry

(<http://www.ncchm.org>) collaborated on a recent study that demonstrates that, if given the tools, young Hispanics will be architects of a successful ministry: “Hispanic Catholic leadership development (especially among women, youth, and young adults) requires an immediate and significant investment, but once formed, such leaders are very likely to in turn contribute time, talent, and treasure to the Church.”

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## Will Church Finances Be the Next Scandal?

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*Changing how funds are accounted for*

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BY DAVID GIBSON

**T**he release this year of the survey quantifying a half-century of clergy sexual abuse of minors reinforces the fact that the scandal has two interconnected natures—one sexual, the other financial.

The overall price tag on the debacle is disputed, but responsible estimates suggest that it is at least approximately \$750 million, if one includes the settlement reached recently by the Archdiocese of Boston.

Whatever the actual tally, American Catholics for the past two years have often focused their fury on the enormous amount of money, much of it supplied by lay people, paid out to cover up cases of abuse. This is not to say that Catholics care more

about money than about clerical sexual abuse. Rather, the fact is that aside from donating money, Catholics feel virtually powerless to affect the course of events within their Church, and the scandal revealed that those donations had been used in ways that wound up subverting, rather than building up, the Church.

Catholics are now focusing on fiscal accountability as a priority in restoring trust in the Church. Polls consistently show that eight in ten Catholics rate Church financial reform as a top concern. Just as important, both conservatives and liberals agree on this issue, making it one of the rare areas of convergence in a polarized Church.

“Clearly one of the byproducts of the sexual-abuse scandal is the recognition that the Church needs



to be financially accountable, and that's not going to go away," said Charles Zech, an economics professor at Villanova University and the leading authority on Church finances. "Too often there is a lack of detail and frankly a lack of respect for Catholic lay people, who are very well educated and deserve to know what is going on."

The problem is that while the scandal has prompted the bishops to take unprecedented—some would say draconian—steps to halt sexual abuse in the future, few practical steps have been taken to make the Church more financially transparent. The 2002 Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People adopted in Dallas bound bishops not to sign confidentiality agreements with victims (except for "grave and substantial reasons brought forward by the victim/survivor"), yet everything else about diocesan and parish finances remains as obscure to most Catholics as the rubrics of the Tridentine Mass.

Reforms must go beyond matters of legal settlements to include a wholesale change in the way funds are accounted for in the Church. A failure to reform the Church's financial policies would present an enormous risk to lay morale at a time when the credibility of the institutional Church is at an all-time low. This is not just about the laity looking over the pastor's shoulder. Sadly, there are plenty of examples of lay people absconding with Church funds. Rather, this is about averting the next Church scandal, and prevention must happen at the parish as well as the diocesan level. The stakes are huge, in terms of faith and the amount of money involved.

It is often noted that, as in few other places, money is fungible in religious organizations—and Catholics today are dealing in serious money. The latest survey, by researcher Joseph Claude Harris, indicated that American Catholics put \$5.8 billion into the collection basket in 2002. Combine that with the various government grants the Church receives for other projects, and one quickly realizes that dioceses today are sprawling, multitiered corporations that often have annual budgets in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Despite this size and complexity, there is no mechanism in place for publicly accounting for these monies, or for doing so in a

way that is remotely intelligible to the average parishioner.

In June 2003, for example, the Philadelphia archdiocese issued a financial statement detailing expenditures of \$334,449,037, and reporting a \$7 million deficit that it chalked up to investments that were "negatively impacted by the financially challenging times." But since it was the first time in nine years the archdiocese

except the heat of scandal and the good will of the particular bishop. In fact, there isn't even a means to gauge how many dioceses reveal their finances on a regular basis. A 1986 study reported that some 70 percent of dioceses released financial reports, but even that level of openness has slipped since. One Church official I spoke with estimated that in recent years as few as twenty of

Boston—the bishops tried to come up with a policy that would prove more effective than the earlier statements on financial accountability they had approved dating back to 1971. Yet the resolution before the conference was not especially rigorous. It merely asked the conference to "consider some advertentia, that is, helping bishops pay attention to the law of the Church and confirming that each is doing so." And it sought to do so in a "collegial manner while at the same time respecting the principle of subsidiarity and the desire not to burden any person or office with unrealistic responsibility that might encroach on the legitimate rights of a diocesan bishop to manage his diocese."

The voluntary system of "fraternal support" that the bishops finally adopted did nothing to infringe upon the time-honored authority of each bishop, nor did it ensure much openness. Additionally, since the conference does not compile that information, it is not known whether any of the bishops have been following the guidelines.

Just as important as releasing financial data is doing so in a manner that is consistent with "full disclosure." Statistics can conceal as much as they reveal, and audits can blind readers with a blizzard of figures or provide little more than an easily digestible "summary" that tells little.

Ken Korotky, chief financial officer for the USCCB, told me that he sees a trend toward transparency and comprehensible annual statements. (The bishops' conference itself releases detailed financial statements, and the bishops carefully scrutinize, in public session, the conference's budget.) Still, Korotky questions whether there could ever be a one-size-fits-all financial statement. "I don't know that we're seeing a growing uniformity," he said. "Each diocese is so different in terms of the way it is set up legally and financially. It would be like saying GM should look exactly like your neighborhood Wal-Mart."

Others argue that comprehensible disclosure is not all that difficult, and that whatever the hurdles, they must be overcome if the hierarchy is to regain its credibility. "It is not just having yearly statements, but it has to be a real attempt to have information in place to make it understandable," said Zech, the Villanova

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*While the scandal has prompted the bishops to take unprecedented steps to halt sexual abuse in the future, few practical steps have been taken to make the Church more financially transparent. And the financial situation is even murkier in the nation's 19,000 parishes.*

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had released a financial statement, there was no point of comparison to make any independent judgments on the overall fiscal health of the Philadelphia Church.

Under the pressure of scandal, other dioceses are also beginning to release financial statements. The Boston archdiocese went so far as to post its financial statement on its Web site, and in December, Manchester, New Hampshire bishop John McCormack, the embattled former aide to Boston's Cardinal Bernard Law, released an audited financial statement for the first time in the 120-year history of the Manchester diocese.

Although these are all useful first steps, they remain ad hoc efforts with nothing to compel compliance

the nearly two hundred U.S. dioceses were releasing annual statements.

As currently written, canon law stipulates only that a bishop must appoint a finance council "of at least three members of the Christian faithful truly skilled in financial affairs as well as in civil law." He must also name a diocesan finance director, and none can be closely related to the bishop by blood. The bishop's financial advisers must also prepare a yearly accounting of receipts and expenditures for the bishop, but if the bishop chooses, that is as far as the disclosure has to go.

Concern over the lack of transparency was already troubling some in the bishops' conference before the scandal broke: in November 2001—before the first abuse stories from

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economics professor. “Right now it is hit-and-miss.”

The financial situation is even murkier in the nation’s nineteen thousand parishes. Although we are only now about to learn the overall costs of clergy sexual abuse in the United States, some two decades after the first wave of such revelations appeared, there is no equivalent snapshot of the state of parish finance councils. This is a glaring oversight that undermines the ability of lay people to become involved in their Church, and of bishops to reassure the faithful that they are being good stewards.

Zech estimates that two-thirds of parishes nationwide have finance councils, but many of these may exist in name only. Pastors can appoint whomever they like to a council, and in some places the councils just act as rubber stamps for the pastor’s decisions. Contrary to widespread assumptions, the lack of data about parish finances concerns not only the folks in the pew. The bishop himself is often clueless about the budgets of his parishes. A 1999 volume by the Canon Law Society of America, the *Church Finance Handbook*, details dozens of case studies highlighting

the range of problems that can afflict diocesan finances.

#### **What Should Be Done?**

To be sure, there are many parishes and dioceses across the country that practice disclosure and accountability, along with the collaboration that is both the seed and fruit of such practices. Still, without a systematic effort to promote and ensure transparency, credibility will remain elusive, and malfeasance will remain a regular temptation.

There are, however, a number of relatively simple steps that could quickly and effectively improve the situation. The first is to define the problem. Catholics today are eager to know what concrete actions they can take to affect how the Church is run. Yet without basic information on the parameters of the problem, it is difficult to provide detailed answers. Consequently, there must be a national survey on exactly how many parishes have finance councils, and then a qualitative study on how they operate—which work well, and which do not.

Similarly, there must be a survey of the dioceses to determine the number and quality of diocesan

finance councils, whether they release regular financial statements, and how those statements are prepared. In all likelihood, there will be no universal template for diocesan statements, but they could all comply with a certain set of standards for intelligibility.

A second step would be to provide a central clearinghouse for information for parish finance-council members and pastors. With the laity (and priests as well) often ill-prepared for the workings of parish governance, and with individual finance councils operating in virtual isolation, it is vital to provide how-to guides for lay people who want to have a voice in the running of their parish. “Every finance council struggles out there on its own,” says Mark Fischer, a professor of pastoral theology at St. John’s Seminary in Los Angeles and a leading expert on pastoral councils. “There is no comparative data. So no one knows what the parish across town, or anywhere else, is doing.”

Finally, while the information gathering could be accomplished by a private foundation or university-based researchers, eventually some mechanism for national oversight

and reporting is essential. Ideally, that would be undertaken by, or in collaboration with, the bishops’ conference, perhaps along the lines of the National Lay Review Board.

The changes necessary to reverse the Church’s closed-door mentality on financial matters need not entail a radical revision of Church structures or a return to the divisive nineteenth-century battles over “trusteeism.” Contrary to what many prelates fear, accountability is not a threat to the bishop’s trifold mission “to teach, to sanctify, and to govern.” Opening the Church’s books involves no change in doctrine or theology, and the bishop or pastor would still have the final say on how diocesan or parish funds are spent. The priority right now is for simple transparency, so that everyone can know what is coming in and what is going out, and where it is going. Next is to cultivate the collaboration that canon law requires, but which is not being fulfilled.

*David Gibson is author of The Coming Catholic Church (HarperSanFrancisco).*

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