

Boston College
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY CONTINUING EDUCATION
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Transcript of
“Collaboration Across Communities of Practice
and Discerning Members’ Gifts,”
Video Segment 5
Transforming Parishes through Communities of Practice

presented by
Jane E. Regan, Ph.D.

Intentional about facilitating effective collaboration between communities of practice within that constellation of the parish and even beyond. Again, I think one of the important points is, first of all, to reaffirm the shared enterprise in which all the communities of practice within the parish are engaged, so that we be and become, as a parish, more effective agents evangelization.

When planning events that involve more than one community of practice, engage more than just the leadership people. We often say, well, we want the youth ministry kids to be involved with the second graders for first Eucharist, making the connection between confirmation and Eucharist; lovely. But generally, that’s just a decision that the two people in charge of those two groups make. What if some of the catechists or youth ministers were involved in that conversation? How would that be different? How would that be different, both in what you did and in their experience of belonging and their experience of being a participant? Recognizing and capitalizing on the role of broker. By broker I mean somebody who’s part of two different communities.

Back to that lector story. Robert, a friend of mine, was one of the people who went to the reflection on the Scriptures each week, but he was also a fifth-grade catechist. So he was able to bring some of the ways in which they engage Scripture to his fifth-grade students and the other fifth-grade catechists. So how do we find, how do we nurture those people?

And then finally, plan events that involve multiple communities of practice and overlapping enterprises so we get to know and appreciate what other people are doing.

Then finally, we want to be intentional about incorporating a process of discernment in order to engage people’s gifts more effectively. I do think that’s something that for the most part many of our parishes are not very good at, and that is helping people to name where their gifts are and aren’t. In terms of discerning gifts, how do we recognize that everybody has gifts that are given for the good of the community, and what does that mean? To help people to gain insight into the process of discernment and the way in which they engage in discernment in their lives in order to be clearer on what their gifts are. Provide means and opportunities for all the parish members to become familiar with and to explore a variety of ministry opportunities. Do people even know what some of the communities of practice are that they could be involved in?

Now that was a lot, and I want to finish up. I had a friend who was a pastor of a parish, and I remember being frustrated about something that was going on. It wasn’t going the way I wanted it to go and that’s always frustrating. I said, “I don’t know what to do next.” His comment to me was, “If you can’t move in the right direction, lean that way.” So I’m not thinking that you’re going to go

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home tonight and transform all the communities in your parish into active, vibrant communities of practice that nurture the faith of all the parish members. You could. Oh, you're going to do that? That's great. OK.

But what can we do? So let me just name a couple of things to think about, in terms of how do you lean in that direction? Name the vibrant communities of practice that do already exist and support them. What are some of the vibrant groups in your parish, in your faith community, and how do you support them? Think of the groups with which you work. Think of them in terms of making clear to yourself and to them their shared enterprise, what mutual engagement is about, what some of the repertoire is. One of the challenges with common repertoire is that sometimes something we've established as a repertoire can be at odds with the enterprise. So if the enterprise changes, for example, when my book club turned to a dessert club, we all stopped buying books because that was a common repertoire that was part of the book club. Instead we spent time poring over cookbooks and how to make great desserts. Different repertoire of behaviors.

Work at making clear the shared enterprise and common repertoire that united the community within your ministry. Here I was talking about campus ministry. What unites all of the different communities? Fundamentally we want to be intentional about connecting people with vibrant communities of practice because that's how they'll stay connected with the parish community is through that connection.