



Pastoral Recommendations Project
By the baptized - For the baptized

Building Structures for Two-Way Communication

The people's concern:

A church community does not exist without channels of ongoing, two-way communication among all its members, lay and ordained, and particularly between the bishop and the people. The Holy Spirit works through the communion of the baptized, confirmed people of God, who are called to manifest a sign of the reign of God within their local church. This co-creative mission of the Church requires that servant leaders recognize the necessity for channels of ongoing, two-way communication.

In the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis in 2016, the *Catholic Spirit*, the official bi-weekly newspaper of the Archdiocese, and the Archdiocesan website are the means of one-way communication for the Archbishop to the people. There are no official structures through which the laity can communicate their concerns for the mission of the local church to each other, to their pastors, or to their Archbishop, and the sense of the faithful has not been sought by the Archbishop as a matter of course.

The effect of the lack of two-way communication structures is a weak community life, impeded personal and cultural growth, and failure of the faithful to discern together the mission of the church and how to work toward it. The local church is not a unified, vibrant, joyous sign of the reign of God to the world as it is called to be.

Recommendations:

1. We ask that the Archbishop, as the chief pastor and teacher of the local church, have an open attitude about sharing his governing power and that he will instruct archdiocesan staff to welcome individuals and groups who offer ideas and collaborative participation in the life of the church. The Archbishop's openness to the diverse points of view in the community and his willingness to engage in two-way communication will help to unify the polarized local church in its mission.

We anticipate that the attitude of openness, transparency and accountability at the archdiocesan level will influence pastors and parish staff to encourage people's participation in parish life.

2. We recommend that the archdiocese join the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management and inculcate its standards of excellence in openness and communication.

Although the National Roundtable leaves the theological rationale for the local church to the bishop of the diocese, it advocates for contemporary best practices in management, which mirror the collaborative values of a Vatican II Church and the values of the culture of the church's members. The advocated policy includes encouraging lay people and clergy to participate with the authorized leadership in the governing of the local church. We understand that the Archdiocese is at present working with the Roundtable on issues of seminary management. We appreciate this initial effort. (*See the Council of the Baptized - "A Call for Transparency and Accountability" position paper*)

http://cccr-cob.org/images/CCCR_MEDIA/Position_Statement_Program/Position_Paper_Transperancy.pdf

(*See the National Leadership Roundtable website.*)

<http://www.theleadershiproundtable.org/>

3. We recommend the establishment of an Archdiocesan Pastoral Council with Deanery Councils of lay men and women elected from parishes through deaneries.

The APC should include:

- Strategic planning and decision-making authority on specified issues
- Representative elected membership through lay and ordained deanery organizations
- Representatives from archdiocesan decision-making offices
- Open submission of agenda items
- Open meetings with some opportunity for observer participation
- Access to ongoing research on Catholic demographics and culture in the Archdiocese
- A general assembly of the Archdiocesan community or synods at least biannually

(*See the Council of the Baptized - "Archdiocesan Pastoral Council" position paper*)

http://www.cccr-cob.org/images/CCCR_MEDIA/Position_Statement_Program/Pastoral_Council.pdf

4. We recommend that the Archdiocese establish an Office for Discernment, a communication structure through which the Archbishop, in the exercise of his authority, commits himself to hear and adjudicate claims for justice and concerns of conscience brought to his attention from the people, and to be generally bound by a communal discernment. The Office for Discernment includes two main categories of dispute requiring resolution: one category covers matters of legal right currently handled in the Office of Reconciliation and the second covers matters of policy and decisions that may be imposed by leaders without consultation. Currently there is no forum in which full discussion of policy decisions takes place among all the church members who desire to participate. The Office for Discernment, with orderly procedures for debate and coming to consensus, would be a means for both decision-makers and people to be held accountable in hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit and reasoning together toward gospel-centered governance.

We anticipate that an Office for Discernment that yields good results at the Archdiocesan level may be replicated at the parish level.

The procedures of the Office for Discernment should be designed by a committee of lay men and women professionals in the area of conflict resolution in consultation with Catholic theologians versed in Vatican II ecclesiology.

During the development of the Office for Discernment, we recommend that the current Office of Reconciliation do the following:

- Publish a list of the legal rights of church members recognized by canon-law or Archdiocesan law that are referred to in "Allowable Disputes"
- Establish reasonable limitation periods
- Hold open hearings when appropriate and agreed to by disputants
- Allow attorneys to participate in specified procedures
- Increase the types of conciliation processes allowed including mediation, restorative justice and other processes created by the participants

5. We recommend increasing the range of the *Catholic Spirit* as a vehicle for two-way communication, including:

- Observe professional reportorial standards in covering the variety of Catholic life in the Archdiocese, including news that addresses the problems Catholics face in parish life

- Include a section for community points of view, e.g., “My Turn”
- Encourage letters to the editor in each issue
- Allow comments, monitored for quality, on the Archbishop’s column
- Balance the lay and ordained coverage
- Contract for columns with a range of theological viewpoint

In addition, we recommend expanding the two-way channels of communication by establishing an email network of parish members across the Archdiocese and exploring the use of social media to communicate with diverse audiences.

6. We recommend that the Archdiocese establish communication and dialogue with the Intentional Eucharistic Communities (IEC’s) who identify as Catholic within the boundaries of the Archdiocese. In recent years, several communities of Catholics who had developed forms of meaningful worship and preaching practice in union with their appointed pastors over years were forced to choose between their community solidarity and communion with the Archbishop. This internal division is a source of suffering for many people and calls out for initiation of dialogue. The IEC’s provide for the larger Church a conscientious witness to the working of the Holy Spirit and the efficacy of alternate forms of ritual and community life.

7. If and/or when the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis requests the appointment of an additional auxiliary bishop, we recommend that all members of the local church be consulted in the selection of the appointee. We recommend that procedures be established for on-going development of episcopal leadership. Models for such procedures are available in many Christian churches. Arguments from scripture, early church practice, Vatican II ecclesiology, and contemporary organizational theory all demonstrate the wisdom of developing servant leadership. Open communication among church members about the qualities of servant leadership and the expectation of having a voice in selecting competent leaders would develop a responsible Catholic community in the spirit of Vatican II.

(See the Council of the Baptized - "Selection of Bishops" position paper)
http://www.cccr-cob.org/images/CCCR_MEDIA/Position_Statement_Program/Selection_of_Bishops.pdf

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