



INSPIRE: IMPLICATIONS FOR MINISTRY IN THE U.S. CHURCH

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Those responsible for the INSPIRE Project deserve enormous credit and thanks for all they have accomplished in the past nine years. The documents, research papers, and records of interviews provide a storehouse, a treasury, of information that will serve as models and examples for parishes for years to come. My assignment was to review four of the research papers—by Dan Gast on parish consulting, Bill Clark, SJ, on parish mergers, Brett Hoover on multicultural shared parishes, and Bryan and Mary Froehle on three parishes that exhibited “best practices.” As you know, each of the papers provide a wealth of information that together paints a picture of the tremendous advantage parishes have when they reflect on their mission and mode of operation with trained consultants assisting them.

My approach in this paper is to offer, from the perspective of my experience and research, insights on preparing for ministry and on ministry itself, especially as it pertains to parishes and leadership. Bill Clark suggested that I consider themes and topics, problems and possibilities, hopes and fears, and so on. The categories I use from this list may not be entirely discrete, but certainly all of them emerge in the paper. Concern about parish life has long been on the top of the agenda of church leaders. A 1981 statement of the bishops declared, “The parish is for most Catholics the single most important part of the church.” The INSPIRE project is directly responsive to the high priority assigned to parishes and addresses the pastoral issues of these essential units of church life.

Last summer I had the privilege of speaking at a Catholic Common Ground event in New York on the tenth anniversary of Fr. Phil Murnion’s death and the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination. In preparation for the talk, I reviewed some fifteen years of Fr. Murnion’s editorials in *Church Magazine*. In the last editorial, published after his death, he wrote, “Besides defining and expressing the identity of the individual as sacred, relational, and responsible, parishes define the world in ways that will affect one’s involvement with the world.” (Winter 2003) It is striking that many of the same themes and topics that were the focus of his comments through the years also surfaced in the INSPIRE parishes. However, many new twists and turns in parish life these days draw attention to how indispensable the findings of this project are for now and the future.

Much like a focus of INSPIRE, Fr. Murnion’s recurring theme insisted on the necessity of analyzing parish organization and operations. He stressed that certain **organizational**

requirements had to be met in order for a parish to function well; with that admonition as background, he addressed topics such as the qualities of the pastor and the staff and their communications and relationships with each other. In almost every one of the many educational programs he developed for pastoral leaders, Fr. Murnion provided components that dealt with effective administrative practices. One piece of advice he imparted concerned the importance of a mission statement. In this particular story he recounted, “Once I was accused of ‘having an agenda.’ My reaction was to say: ‘Noooooooooooo!’ Of course I have an agenda. Don’t you worry about those who either profess they don’t or **actually** don’t have an agenda. **Doesn’t having an agenda mean having a mission that is more than wishful thinking?**” (Fall 2001) This brief anecdote leads me to suggest that the linchpin of effective parish leadership is providing a clear sense of direction. This theme, which is at times conflated with “pastoral vision,” will be given a prominent place in the presentation that follows.

Other topics deserve significant treatment as well. Among them I will reflect on the role, character, education, and experience of the pastor and the type of staff he leads, and, importantly, the nature of his relationship with the team and their relationships with each other. Another topic that deserves consideration is the nature of the parish. Especially in recent years they have become more distinctive, affected by enormous changes in the Catholic population with its growing ideological differences and more diverse ethnic and racial make-up, as well as changes in parish structures caused by the declining availability of priests. These themes are reflected in Brett Hoover’s paper. The number of merged, clustered, and closed parishes has skyrocketed in the past ten years, as reflected in Bill Clark’s paper. Intertwined with these themes is the impact of the location of the parish. Clearly the well-off suburban parish has different problems and possibilities than the parish located in declining neighborhoods of the inner city. Rural parishes should not be forgotten; although because of location they do not show up in the INSPIRE project, they are disproportionately affected by fewer available priests. The hopes and fears of each parish and each person are determined by many variables, and yet the value of the methods that were used in this project can readily be adapted to suit almost any situation. Let me begin with reflection on the methods employed in the INSPIRE process and with the closely related topic of resources accessible to participants.

PART I. Methodology and Resources of INSPIRE

Two papers under consideration, Dan Gast’s and the Froehles’ deal extensively with the methodology utilized by INSPIRE and the special resources available for the implementation of the project. In his paper, “INSPIRE Learning about Parish Consulting,” Dan Gast gives an account of a wide range of literature that serve as a foundation for the project. He also documents extensively the framework employed in developing the protocols for preparation of consultants in their interaction with parishes. In their paper on “Renewing and Sustaining Effective Parish Ministry: Crucial Interventions, Exceptional Opportunities,” Bryan and Mary Froehle analyze three parishes, which serve as case studies, and they also review other INSPIRE documents. Pertinent here is the aspect of their paper that considers methods and resources.

The Literature

Beginning with a thorough overview of literature related to organizational development, leadership development, and organizational psychology, Dan Gast explained how these

disciplines could be brought to bear in the Catholic parish setting. Adapting Peter Drucker's statement about organizations, it is helpful to follow the movement from the typical parish leadership style of the mid-20th century and earlier to the present. Dan Gast notes that, like the secular leaders in Drucker's study, in the 1950s and before the pastor often held complete and unchallenged "command and control." The gradual shift to some form of management that invited the practical "knowledges" and the wisdom of "workers" into determining the direction and operation of parishes gradually evolved. As pastoral staffs grew in number and in expertise, processes were introduced that attempted to promote their full participation in developing and implementing the mission of the parishes.

As is well-known, not every parish evolved in the same way or as fully as Drucker's model suggests and so the genius of the INSPIRE project was to assist pastors and parish staffs in moving toward the ideal. As Dan Gast continues, his review of the literature turns to finding effective ways to move leadership in parishes to strengthen their organization and accomplish chosen goals. Loyola University Chicago had the good fortune of being home to the Center for Organizational Studies where the staff had specialized for many years in understanding "basic principles of effective consulting;" a book of the same name was co-authored by Loyola Professors Dr. Homer Johnson and Dr. Linda Stroh. Among the many valuable contributions of this Center was their role in educating and training a number of consultants for INSPIRE. Their approach of distinguishing among types of consultants is especially noteworthy. They identify some "experts" as bringing a specific knowledge or skill to an organization and others as "facilitators" who are more concerned with developing relational and communication skills. As Mr. Gast points out, both kinds of services – expertise and facilitation – were used by INSPIRE's parish consultants, with a leaning toward facilitation.

A wide array of other literature enhanced the background knowledge of all those involved in the project. Here I will refer only to the main topics Dan Gast covered. From the scientific world, the concept of systems was applied to the organized human enterprise. The authors who addressed this topic admonished readers "to step back and make the effort to understand a wider view." That view required paying attention to relationships, which are so central to effective team functioning in parishes. Other authors spoke of measuring, promoting, and sustaining quality in the workplace by laying out pathways to achieve objectives and animate missions. The goal of developing healthy, viable working communities was forwarded by applying systems concepts to institutional leadership, managerial supervision, and planning. This listing does not do justice to the depth of knowledge and awareness brought to the project by introducing these concepts. Recognizing this aspect of the project as an important part of the methodology is to say that INSPIRE'S success is based on the depth of understanding of how organizations function. The entire team possessed this expertise.

A key point to be underscored is that the theory and knowledge addressed in the literature had to be adapted to the parish setting, as indeed it was. Mr. Gast identified other pioneers in that effort, such as early proponents of collaboration in Catholic ministry settings, Br. Loughlan Soffield, ST and Sr. Carroll Juliano, SHCJ, along with Fr. George Wilson and Fr. Tom Sweetser, both Jesuits. Loyola has a long history of leading in areas relating to leadership and organization in ministry and other settings, with Jim and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead and Gerard Egan deserving special mention. Essential to the INSPIRE project was adapting to parishes the pertinent

findings related to other organizations. Project leaders were keenly aware of possible resistance by parish leaders to models that borrowed too heavily from scientific or business approaches without making necessary adjustments. Rightfully, “people in ministry see themselves and their religious mission as different.”

The designers of INSPIRE built into the proposal to the Lilly Endowment the goal of growing “Pastoral Leadership Teams” that would possess “a sustained, mindful peculiar integration of knowledge, spirituality, skill and experience.” As the program was implemented the leaders overcame some of the concerns of parish personnel by adjusting titles and procedures when necessary and pointing out commonalities when applicable. The literature points to a natural resistance to change that can be overcome when the status quo is perceived as no longer viable and when potential change is seen as beneficial. Thus, as consultants and teams began working together, they engaged spiritual learning activities on both a personal and a communal level, exemplifying the unique advantage pastoral teams had over their peers in non-religious settings. The adaptation bore fruit in at least two ways: it demonstrated how the INSPIRE Project responded to the development of “pastoral imagination,” a central theme of the grantee, and at the same time it was an encouragement to pastoral teams to cooperate more fully.

Three Observations about the Literature

1. The extensive literature search served as an invaluable foundation in that it provided a deeper understanding of the secular disciplines related to organizational and leadership development and organizational psychology. This background prevented mistakes that might have been unnoticed without understanding professional parallels.
2. The literature pertaining to secular groups, encompassing many disciplines was useful to the project because of the careful adaptation and application of the principles and insights to parish situations. By consultants acknowledging the centrality of the spiritual dimension, parish leaders undoubtedly were more open to and cooperative with the process.
3. The expertise already established at Loyola’s Center for Organizational Studies served as a tremendous advantage for the Director of the INSPIRE project and for the consultants who were educated under their auspices. Ongoing training for the specific purpose of this project added value to the endeavors of the consultants. If other projects of this nature are undertaken, it will be important for those who initiate the efforts to pay attention to the training of consultants.

The Resources

Two papers deal with the exceptional resources available to the INSPIRE project, those of the Froehles and of Dan Gast. After establishing some of the factors leading to INSPIRE’S success, the Froehles’ paper describes three main resources that parishes could not have provided themselves. **Consultants** are singled out as the greatest source of influence on the parish staff. Also highlighted are opportunities for **networking across parishes**, providing occasions that flow from the very act of participating in the project. These horizontal relationships are not ordinarily built into the parish structure. A third important factor is the **availability of funds**

provided to participating parishes for collective projects and personal development. Let us examine more closely how these resources employed.

Expert consultants were immensely important to the success of INSPIRE. Quotes from participating staff recounted by the Froehles offer immense praise for the outside experts who assisted parishes in reaching their goals. It was not simply the competence and experience of individuals who served in this capacity, but the fact that they modeled appreciative inquiry styles and, simply put, “they were nice to people.” Further, they served for a long time in each setting and were in a position to say things insiders could not say. They let staff know how their ways of interacting affected others, moving “people beyond conflict and fragmentation toward mutual respect and collaboration.” The consultants knew how to deal with discord, grief, and behaviors that needed to be challenged.

By introducing new methods and new tools they helped the process move forward and clarified the content of projects. The questions of consultants introduced creative paths for thinking about what the team wanted to accomplish. Teams had to answer questions such as: “How do you work as a team already?” “Where are your strengths?” “Where are your weaknesses?” “What are the goals that support that (goal of the project)?” “What are we going to do?” “Could you do without the consultant?” Chiefly, consultants saw their role as initiating processes and modeling relationships. Perhaps controversially, some interviewees assigned a rather different role to consultants – that of “spiritual director.” The processes used and the content of what consultants provided to each parish varied somewhat according to the particular situation of the parish.

Contributing to the success the consultants experienced, Dan Gast reported that they were chosen because of having “career histories that included church and parish-based ministries.” They also were highly credentialed, many of them through the former Loyola organizational development Master’s program, and so they were proficient in organizational disciplines required by the project. Their training had incorporated understanding of many different approaches to consulting as identified in the literature – some focused on improving communication and behavioral patterns, assessing the parish culture, and developing management techniques, while others emphasized evaluating and clarifying staff roles, and appraising the quality of relationships among the staff and especially with the pastor. Consultants also modeled attractive, accessible approaches to spiritual practice, how to make room for spiritual exercises, and ways to appreciate the spiritual traditions of other cultures by sharing spiritual practices that bridge gaps between team members of varied backgrounds and proclivities. Depending on the situation, some consultants were called on to give expert advice, but most served in a facilitative role. Over time consultants gained trust and influence by respecting each individual and by exercising confidentiality according to the agreement they made with the team.

The idea of **networking** across parishes seems like an obvious way for parish staffs to learn from one another through these horizontal relationships, but the pattern of interaction of parishes had been primarily vertical and related to diocesan structures. INSPIRE provided the capacity and encouragement for parishes to relate with each other. The Froehle’s paper described the learning from these exchanges in several ways: teams learned what was successful at other parishes and considered how they might apply the principles in their own situation; they came to understand the struggles that accompany organizational change and how to overcome problems or avoid

mistakes; and some networks shared books on pastoral ministry and discussed the ideas with other staffs. They also connected individuals to centers and resources that provide spiritual direction and retreats. By discovering the expertise of parish leaders from other parishes they were able to exchange services without extra cost. As a staff prepared to explain its goals to a staff of another parish, reporting on how well plans were being implemented, they assessed their progress more thoroughly than they otherwise might have done. Participants valued greatly what they learned through networking.

The **funds** provided by INSPIRE went a long way to ensure the success of the project. The fact that funds were to be used both “for a collective project and personal development for each staff member” was gratifying for the parish as a whole and especially for individuals. These funds had several commendable effects. They helped staff members feel valued and special. The investment in staff increased their investment in their ministry and in many cases rendered them more accountable. Some staff chose personal growth experiences and others used the time for professional growth, both of which increased their effectiveness and satisfaction. The learning of one staff member when shared with the all staff supported them as well. Especially in those parishes with limited resources the funds were exceptionally appreciated. The funds for projects sometimes actually made possible the implementation of plans where they could not have otherwise afforded them; in others funding was not as crucial, indicating that funds alone are not enough to improve parish success. Nonetheless, generally speaking, limited funds and too few opportunities are available to pastoral staff for their own growth, and often for needed projects as well.

In summary, interaction with consultants, networking, and funding were key resources provided by INSPIRE. The circumstances of the parish and the particular project meant that the three were valued differently. Virtually every parish found consultant input an essential and substantial asset. In most cases their expertise and external viewpoint helped staff to understand themselves in their strengths and weaknesses as never before, and so they gained proficiency in working together as a team. Networking was a seldom-utilized opportunity for learning from each other and since it usually involves minimum cost, it remains an option for future growth even without funding. As for funds provided by INSPIRE, one of the unique and powerful aspects was the emphasis on personal growth. While parishes often fund projects, they usually do not provide money for ongoing personal development. In the less-affluent parishes, funds for project development also made a significant difference.

Three Observations about Resources

1. Highly skilled, well-educated consultants played an enormous role in the success of the INSPIRE project. They adapted their general knowledge of organizations to the particular needs of parishes, especially by incorporating the spiritual dimension into their interaction with parish staffs. Their roles varied, depending on the needs of the parish, which may tend toward providing special expertise or, more frequently, toward facilitation of the work of the whole team, pastor and staff. Some participants described the relationship with the consultants as one of spiritual director. Though specific instances are not reported, a question might be raised as to the appropriateness of a spiritual direction relationship in these circumstances.

2. The value of networking was raised to a new level of awareness through the project. Since each parish has its own strengths on staff or in terms of their operations, these can readily be shared with others, perhaps in exchange for a help from the second parish. Expertise can be provided by staff on parish time without exchanging money. For no monetary expense parishes can learn from each other. Additionally, by simply meeting together and explaining projects and goals, others can be enriched.
3. If other dioceses are to replicate some aspects of the project, funds will have to be made available to parishes to achieve some of the outstanding goals of the INSPIRE effort. It seems especially important to make available opportunities for staff members to enrich themselves for the sake of their ministry and their own lives. Personal development enhanced achievement and cooperation, as well as skill among team members. Parishes who have adequate funding can easily allocate part of the budget for professional development, but personal development may be just as effective. For parishes in financial distress, their diocese would have to assist them.

PART II. Service Provided to Representative INSPIRE Parishes

Three papers provide an in-depth view of how the INSPIRE project functioned in parishes of various types. Two of the papers involve parishes with distinctive characteristics. The first, by William A. Clark, S.J., “Toward a Culture of Dynamic Community: Parish Consolidation and the Values of Project INSPIRE,” analyze two different situations in which a new parish was being formed from merging three parishes. The importance of highlighting these settings is understandable given how frequently parish structures are being adjusted to accommodate changes in church personnel and demography. The second paper, by Brett C. Hoover, “Effectively Pastoring Multicultural Parishes from Chicago to Los Angeles,” addresses an equally significant segment of parishes, those composed of various cultural groups. Finally, in the third paper already mentioned, the Froehles analyze the implementation of the INSPIRE project in three parishes operating in widely differing contexts and circumstances. Taken together, these seven parishes represent a wide-ranging cross-section of circumstances in which pastoral leadership is critical. I will mention some of the particular features of each type of parish.

Parish Mergers

William Clark’s contribution examines in depth a topic of immense significance to the Church in recent years, the “restructuring” and “consolidation” of parishes. If one considers all the forms encompassed by these words, a considerable majority of the approximately 20,000 parishes in the United States have undergone such changes. Not only have over half the parishes clustered in ways that require one pastor to serve two or more parishes, but a large number have also merged, that is, one or more parishes have closed and become part of another parish. In other cases several parishes have closed and formed another entity, a new parish that is sometimes housed in a new building with a name different from any of the previous constituent parishes. Given the frequency of such changes in parish structures, Fr. Clark’s study is of utmost importance since it describes clearly what can go right and what can go wrong in the process of coming together.

His research examines two situations with both “striking similarities” and “very clear contrasts.” One newly formed parish, which Fr. Clark names Corpus Christi, might be said to have had multiple advantages as they joined together and as the staff began participation in the INSPIRE Project. The other new parish given the name Resurrection had several strikes against it before it even thought of joining with the surrounding parishes and becoming part of the INSPIRE Project. Each of the two parishes resulted from the combination of three former parishes and both had at least one parish involved with INSPIRE during the merger. The newly formed entities remained active in INSPIRE as they finalized their arrangements. The author points out that in evaluating parishes one finds in each “unique combinations of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.” What is considered a strong point in one parish may not be so in another; therefore, success does not necessarily transfer from one place to another. The value of INSPIRE is obvious since consultants were able to provide separate analysis and recommendations for change in widely differing situations.

The author begins his analysis with a description of two styles of parish merger. The first is an “administrative style,” concerned with efficiency, cost effectiveness, and the availability of priests and other ministers. Its use is driven by external factors such as lack of priests, financial problems, and decreasing membership. Decisions about mergers are made rather quickly, often at the diocesan level without necessarily including local community input to any extent. The second is called “community style;” it considers the history, local circumstances, and the strengths and weaknesses of each parish. The composition of the communities is taken into account in the merger process and time is allowed for the process to unfold. Even if external pressures are driving the decision, the cultures of the communities involved are taken into consideration and honored. It might be that the external pressures and preferences that urge the choice of an administrative style are present in the latter case, but the difference between the two models is the value placed on the local members of the parish community. At Resurrection the style was administrative, but Corpus Christi was the beneficiary of the community style of decision-making.

In my research resulting in the book, *Priestly Ministry in Multiple Parishes*, these two styles of consolidating, clustering, or merging parishes were clearly represented on or near two ends of the spectrum. In between, variations in style of structural changes in parishes were prevalent, often determined by diocesan policies and the effectiveness of their planning efforts, as well as the planning of individual parishes. Without a doubt, the dioceses that had fewest problems had foreseen the inevitability of fewer parishes and began preparing for the adjustments long before they were required. Those diocesan leaders enjoined the support of priests and other pastoral leaders to engage the whole diocese in discussion of how best to use available human and financial resources. At worst, announcements were made without any previous notice and the ensuing difficulties are well-publicized.

In his paper, Bill Clark uses four characteristics to distinguish between the different perceptions of the mergers in Resurrection and Corpus Christi: process, pastoral leadership, community identity, and social ministry. Regarding process, two factors were important: timelines and engagement of the laity. For Corpus Christi, the merger unfolded over a period of twenty years, during which time they were not necessarily heading toward merger, but rather they were

learning about each other. The community style of administration allowed for sharing social gatherings and social ministry projects. Parishioners gained a common sense of mission. The administrative style at Resurrection did not leave time for cultivating relationships, nor did the parishes have a previous history of cooperation. Those outside the structure had the most effect and authority in bringing about the merger, so pastoral integration was left to be done later. Building a community was thus a daunting process.

A second factor, pastoral leadership, differed considerably between the two parishes. The pastoral experience of leaders at Corpus Christi was geared toward communal involvement, but at Resurrection the pastor had no experience with parish ministry and so the parishioners were not brought into the decision making process. The differences were both in the person of the leaders and in the previous relationships of the parishioners. Naturally the two factors led to significant administrative problems. The evolution of community identity in the two parishes was affected not only by the process and leadership, but by the ways in which the previous parishes had dealt with demographic changes. In Corpus Christi outreach among neighboring parishes was the mode of operation, with significant ties being formed. The Resurrection parishes were struggling to maintain their own identity and focused on internal issues. In the midst of such shifts, it was difficult for them to contemplate forming a new identity. Flowing from the Corpus Christi sense of identity was a real effort to integrate and collaborate with members of the other parishes that were eventually part of Corpus Christi. By living out the social mission urged by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), they had coincidentally prepared themselves for merger. The same could not be said of Resurrection since they had not collaborated before the merger. The leaders were overcome by other more urgent demands related to the physical plant, finances, and administration.

The role of INSPIRE consultants in each of these parishes differed considerably in many areas given their varied backgrounds, but were similar in other respects. The merger of staffs created tensions because of the different cultures each had developed, but also because of the style of leadership of new pastors. In the case of Corpus Christi the initial resistance to the consultant was overcome as the level of trust built and previous collaboration moved the process forward. For Resurrection the process was more difficult because of the need even to come to basic agreement about the merger itself and then to address practical arrangements. Eventually both parishes gained from the interaction with their consultants, but at very different levels of progress.

Three Observations about the Role of INSPIRE in Parish Mergers

1. One of the most important findings about INSPIRE'S work with parish mergers is the readiness of the staff and parishioners for consultation. In one case the merged parishes had worked together for many years and had assisted each other through shared programs and projects. Their coming together was a much more natural move than for the second set of parishes, each of which had struggled for its own identity and saw themselves in competition more than collaboration with the others. They had only a short period of time to accomplish the merger and so were not ready to receive the full benefit of the consultation.

2. The goals of consultation were significantly different because of the background of the parishes involved in the mergers. For the more successful parish (Corpus Christi), they were ready to work toward their goal of collaboration because of the community style of involvement. Because of the administrative style used in bringing about the merger, the other parish (Resurrection) had so many issues about the process of the merger itself and about finances and other practical arrangements that they were not ready for the more important work of fostering a collaborative spirit in the new parish.

3. The ability and willingness to enter into the process of merger depended significantly on the way pastors and staffs responded. In the first situation, the pastor was skeptical at the beginning about the project; he felt that the consultant might be stirring up trouble rather than assisting in the process. With the help of the staff, some of whom had worked with INSPIRE in their previous parish, they were able to move the pastor beyond mistrust and bring about the collaboration they desired. In the second case, the nature of the merger interfered with bridging the gaps among staff members. The change in pastors added to the complexity of the situation since the new pastor had to address one crisis after another. Unlike in the first merged parish, the staff that had previous positive experience with INSPIRE were seen more as overbearing than helpful.

Multicultural Parishes

Brett Hoover's paper, "No Favoritism: Effectively Pastoring Multicultural Parishes from Chicago to Los Angeles," includes study of pastoral leadership in two multicultural parishes. This topic is of intense interest because so many parishes in the United States (around 40%) have multiple distinct cultural groups. The author sought to answer this question, "What kind of pastoral leadership serves multicultural communities and why?" His analysis of these two INSPIRE parishes shows that although the two were quite different, "the pastors in both parishes engaged in similar practices that proved effective." The process promoted responsible and intentional collaborative leadership, but how and why its approach works is not immediately obvious. In his paper Brett Hoover reveals some of the answers that explain the success.

As we learn from Dan Gast's paper, organizational development theory underpins the practice of parish consulting. One of the premises is that intentionality in deciding on actions increases the level of success. Thus Pastoral Leadership Teams were taught and then encouraged to "reflect communally on the purpose and spirituality of their work in ministry." This approach made it possible for teams to imagine the unimaginable. One result was that ministry was seen not exclusively as a series of tasks; rather spiritual connections were made with the work being done. Almost miraculously, it seems, this attitude reduced the feeling teams often have of being too busy, burnt out, and overworked.

A second important factor contributing to success was the targeted investment of money designed to give incentive to Pastoral Leadership Teams to reflect on the deeper spiritual and pastoral reasons why they, with the pastor, engaged in ministry. Strong leadership from pastors with good interpersonal skills made it possible for them to convey the vision for the parish, the purpose of the ministry they engaged in together. By sharing the "power rather than hoarding it" they were able to draw the best from their respective staffs.

Looking more deeply into the subject of multicultural parishes, the author culled data from dozens of parishes, and studied two of them in depth. One was a small, urban multicultural parish in Chicago and the other a multicultural mega-parish in an inner suburb of Los Angeles. From these two parishes Brett Hoover articulates the approach used to implement the vision for the parishes.

A key fact about the Chicago parish was that a white working class neighborhood and parish became majority Hispanic about 25 years ago and an Anglo minority remained committed and present. The pastor, who spoke Spanish, came at a key time when the parish feared being closed. He started by developing and promoting a pastoral vision centered on partnership between the two major cultural groups, Hispanic and Anglo. He urged the parishioners to see cultural diversity as an opportunity rather than a problem. He worked against the concept of homophily – a sociological term meaning the love of the same, or the tendency of a person or group to segregate. To implement his pastoral vision of “partnership between cultural communities,” he adopted what Bill Clark refers to as the “community style” of leadership. First, the pastor discussed the concept with his Pastoral Leadership Team and gathered their input. Then together they made available town hall meetings where they listened to participants, giving all participants a chance to speak. Because the pastor had made conscious efforts to reflect the actual demographic makeup of the parish on the Pastoral Leadership Team, it made it easier for those who wished to speak since they felt represented. One of the pastor’s shortcomings was his failure to follow through on what was promised, even though he said the right things.

The other parish located in Los Angeles was very large, with 7,000 people attending the eleven weekend Masses. The parishioners include Spanish-speaking immigrants from Mexico and Central America and English-speaking U.S.-born Latinos, Filipino immigrants, and a few elderly whites who have been in the parish since the 1950s. The United States born Latino pastor was energetic, fluent in Spanish, and eager for *all* to be involved. Distinguishing his pastoral vision was his ability to integrate himself into every group. Unlike the other pastor who favored some and neglected others, he showed no favoritism and insisted that all people be respected. As a result, he gained credibility with the parishioners and was trusted by them. By focusing on the vision of the parish and not on himself, he overcame the problem of dependence on him. Other behaviors added to his success: he authorized and blessed the efforts of others and emphasized different ministries and groups. He attended the events of all groups so that many different kinds of things could happen for many different kinds of people. To reach those who were not served by the existing staff, he recruited a neo-Catechumenate priest, though he himself was progressive, and he obtained a Filipino priest for the parish to minister to Filipinos. The pastor was intent on working with parish leaders who would contribute to the welfare of all segments of the parish.

Three Observations about the Role of INSPIRE in Multicultural Parishes

1. The approach and leadership of the pastor, along with the cooperation of a diverse staff, is crucial in multicultural parishes. Success was more likely if the pastor presented an inclusive vision for the parish, modeled good listening skills and made sure the cultural groups were well-represented on the Pastoral Leadership Team. It is not always possible

for smaller parishes to hire teams to ensure representation since their numbers are fewer. Other ways of including all groups will have to be considered.

2. When ministering in a parish with a variety of ethnic/racial subgroups, it is essential that pastoral outreach extends to all. It begins with practicing intentional listening, both informal and structured, and then assessing needs according to what was heard. To respond adequately, parish staffs and pastors need to be well organized and provide a liaison for each group from the leadership team, even if there is not a staff member from every constituency.
3. Shared experiences, as well as language and culture specific activities, need to be planned and orchestrated. Contact alone is not enough to create relationships; structured opportunities for more extended time together are desirable if relationships are to develop. Numerous concrete examples of bringing groups together in worship, ministry, faith-sharing, and religious education led to successful interaction.

Other factors leading to success include putting in position Pastoral Leadership Teams who get along well with each other, confronting problems when they are identified, and following through on plans and promises. Working with a highly qualified pastor may be advantageous, but in the cases presented here, it is clear that there is no need for them to be perfect. One was not assertive enough, the other was too loud and intense, but their common goal of creating a well-functioning parish overcame any tendency toward destructive egotism. Their regular presence was greatly appreciated. A thought-provoking comment by the author suggests that multicultural parishes work best when there are few whites. This observation deserves serious reflection.

Selected Parishes Representing a Range of Circumstances

One of the tasks of Bryan and Mary Froehle was to study the reasons for the effectiveness of the INSPIRE process by understanding the nature of INSPIRE's contributions and how these might be replicated for other parish staffs in the future. Their paper, *Renewing and Sustaining Effective Parish Ministry: Crucial Interventions, Exceptional Opportunities*, focuses on three parishes in varied contexts and circumstances, each with different goals for engaging in the process. The authors conducted individual and focus group interviews with the participants and, in addition, combed the transcripts of other INSPIRE parish interviews to add depth and breadth to their findings.

Of the three parishes analyzed by the Froehle's, one was located in the City of Chicago, a large Hispanic parish of primarily Mexican origin. The core ministry team included two deacons and the pastor, who was assigned after the parish had been four years without a pastor. He sought help from INSPIRE at the recommendation of another priest. The pastor's priority was to enable staff to work as a unit rather than out of self-interest. It is unclear how many staff members were working in the parish apart, from the two deacons; in reporting about the parish, the "core staff" and one former staff member served as the sources of information about the state of the parish. The positions and activities of the other staff members are not mentioned. Certainly the notes portrayed a dysfunctional group of "others." The early involvement of the INSPIRE consultant seemed to focus more on the larger parish community. One concrete outcome was the decision

to seek the services of a layperson to serve as a kind of pastoral supervisor or personal leadership coach for the Pastoral Leadership Team.

The second parish was located at the western edge of the city of Chicago in a parish that had a long heritage of Polish parishioners, recently supplemented by Mexican and Filipino immigrants, and smaller numbers of those with other backgrounds. The pastor applied to participate in the INSPIRE process and told the staff about it only after his application was accepted. The goal was specific: to help youth become more central to the life of the community, a priority of the parish staff for a long time. The limited scope of the consultation likely explains why the pastoral team as a whole seemed unbothered by the fact that they were not consulted before the application was made. Only the staff in the parish who worked with the youth comprised the 'team' for this project; they achieved their goals and learned from the opportunities provided by the INSPIRE consultant. It seems that the whole staff put a premium on serving youth as a key part of the mission of the parish and so in a sense all had a stake in accomplishing what they set out to do.

The third parish was located in a north suburban town with a profile unlike the other two parishes and with different pastoral concerns. The pastor had been involved with INSPIRE in his previous parish and, as was true of the other pastors, he initiated contact. The goal of the relationship with INSPIRE was to help them work on personal plans and on the parish plan as it transitioned into new leadership. The expectation was for collaboration among staff members, thus involving extensive work with individual staff members and with the group as a whole. Before the current pastor was in place the model of leadership was hierarchical, so the challenge was to communicate in ways that would transform not only the staff but also the parishioners. As a result, the whole staff was able to assist in new ways of providing services that were needed as a result of external circumstances. A deeper sense of community was an important outcome of parishioner-to-parishioner assistance.

Critical Contextual Factors for INSPIRE'S Success

The Froehle's identify three factors that contributed to INSPIRE'S success in the three parishes recognized above; the findings also represented the larger work of INSPIRE. Highlighted were the context of parish life in the United States (in particular in Chicago), the commitment of the pastor to develop teamwork, and the vision of the pastor, especially his expectations of the Pastoral Leadership Team.

Broadly speaking, parish life in the United States has changed drastically since 2002, characterized especially by merging and clustering parishes. As a consequence larger parish units are being formed, often calling for more members on pastoral teams, including full and part-time members. At the same time, a smaller pool of experienced priests is available; younger priests who need mentoring are becoming pastors shortly after ordination, and the crisis brought on by clergy who sexually abused youth is having a long-term impact. As the Church continues to experience growth in immigrant numbers, language and cultural barriers are exacerbated not only among parishioners, but also among priests coming to serve from other countries. All of these changes require staff development and mentoring, opportunities made available by INSPIRE.

The role of the pastor proved to be significant in the three selected parishes treated in this paper and also in virtually all the other parishes that are part of the project. Their level of commitment and investment in the process can make or break the success the parish experiences in reaching its goals. Focusing on the pastor, his vision must be clear and connected to the pastoral staff, since their participation and willingness to engage in the activities recommended by the consultants are essential to success.

The vision of the pastor and his willingness to cultivate teamwork go hand in hand. Essential to implementing good ideas, insights, and plans, is having a clear vision built with broad input, but led by a convincing and committed pastor. The capacity to work together in a serious and trusting environment is enhanced when the vision belongs to all. In working with an INSPIRE consultant, it was necessary for the pastor to embrace the process and accept the advice given. Generally a secure pastor welcomed the input, and the staff followed his lead. To ensure success, the pastor had to be ready to move the vision forward since without his leadership the efforts to implement plans would fall flat. The pastor is in a key position to ensure these positive outcomes, but he needs collaboration. Team fragmentation would be destructive, so team building exercises were built into most consultations.

Critical Internal Elements Catalyzed by INSPIRE

The internal elements identified as critical in the Froehles' paper all dealt with staff relationships – staff meetings, mutual respect and affirmation among staff, and identification and adoption of collaborative practices. The matter of needing to hold **regular staff meetings** seems self-evident if the meetings are to be productive. INSPIRE staff were especially helpful in scheduling the meetings, usually weekly, and in modeling how meetings should be conducted. In order to be effective, regular meetings had to be scheduled with an agenda that set goals and priorities, covered major undertakings in the parish, and allowed for all to participate and collaborate according to one's role, talents, and experience. As in so many situations, weak communication lines created problems; regular opportunities to meet made it possible to share ongoing activities and concerns, as well as build relationships, provide mutual support, and test new ideas.

Growing naturally out of coming together for well-planned meetings were **mutual respect and affirmation**. Changes happened for participants as they developed a sense of trust and gained greater self-esteem by having their ideas heard and valued. For pastors, the teamwork increased their reliance on staff and appreciation for their gifts. It seems the entire environment was transformed in some parishes where tensions, friction, and disrespect had prevailed.

Other **collaborative practices** flowed from the meetings. Some staff discussed articles and books on pastoral ministry, others used means such as the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, and many shared aspects of their spiritual life in order to learn of people's strengths, preferences, and needs. In the process they became more comfortable with each other and were able to engage on a deeper level in all aspects of their ministry. By learning together, their theological understandings deepened and ministry took on greater meaning. Leaders were able to discern more effectively how to move forward with the projects in the parish.

Three Observations about the Role of INSPIRE in Other Parishes

1. An urgent need for INSPIRE's services was evident in the parishes that were part of the project; in part, this need was due to changing parish sizes, combining parishes, and more diverse parish membership. The result was weightier and more varied demands on personnel. With fewer priests who have shorter periods of apprenticeship before becoming pastors, their need for guidance and counsel from experts is great. In most INSPIRE parishes transformation to a better state of organization and operation was apparent, making it possible to be more centered on the church as a community, fully involving leaders and parishioners.
2. The role of the pastor has always been significant, so the manner in which he exercised authority was decisive in how well the parish functioned. Even though they often have limited exposure to the variety of people and problems they face, they are expected to lead more complex and often larger parishes with many staff members who depend on their initiative and common sense. In such circumstance the pastor who can clearly articulate a vision for the parish, in consultation with staff and parishioners, will succeed in achieving the goals for the parish.
3. The conduct of staff meetings was an important determinant of success. Regular well-planned meetings provided time to develop a deeper level of communication. With increased knowledge and understanding of each other, staff members grew in mutual respect; affirmation followed naturally. By spending time together, the pastor and staff gained a greater realization of the value of each person and looked for other means to grow in their collaborative style of ministry.

Opportunities for the Future

In light of the success of the INSPIRE process, it is clear that many parishes would benefit from similar programs. With the major shifts that are taking place in parish organization, the need for, and hopefully the demand for services such as those described in the project research and reports, should increase. The Froehle's paper outlined seven "opportunities" evolving from the findings, some within the parish and others for organizations related to the parish. If demands for training and consultation do in fact increase, more institutions of higher education may provide training for consultants, such as retired pastors and others with pastoral experience. The usefulness of building networks made evident through the project can be implemented at little or no cost. Since funding is likely to be an issue in almost every parish, the Froehle's propose the idea of interventions of a limited duration to reduce the cost. Another possibility is to raise funds specifically for the purpose of building a stronger community, including grants and interested donors.

PART III. Observations Related to the Project based on Other Research

At least three major features of parish life in the United States touch on the INSPIRE project and demonstrate what a valuable contribution it has made. Furthering the efficacy of the whole endeavor were the reports of results from the interaction of the consultants with pastors and staffs and the papers produced by the researchers who analyzed the relevant documents. To

conclude this presentation, I will address these three themes: the composition of parish personnel, including clergy and laity, increasing parish diversity, and restructuring parishes. First let us look at a few basic facts involving church personnel:

- The Catholic population is presently 69.4 million, 24 million more now than it was in 1965;
- The number of parishes and missions has declined somewhat from 22,184 to 20,723, resulting in many larger parishes;
- The number of permanent deacons (18,121) and lay ecclesial ministers (about 40,000) increased greatly – from no deacons and few lay ministers to a combined personnel resource of almost 60,000 by 2013;
- The number of priests, sisters, and brothers has declined greatly during those years – a combined reduction of over 150,000; and
- The number of diocesan priests declined by about 9,000 and religious priests by 10,000 since 1965.

Basic Statistics: U.S.					
	1965	1985	2005	2010	2013
Catholics	45.6 m.	52.3 m.	64.8 m.	68.5 m.	69.4 m.
Priests – Dioc. & Rel.	58,432	57,317	43,422	40,788	39,368
Lay Ecclesial Ministers	Less than 3000 est.	15,000 est.	30,632 (DeLambo)	37,929 (NALM)	40,000 est.
Sisters	179,954	115,386	69,963	58,724	52,557
Permanent Deacons	None	7,204	15,027	17,165	18,121
Parishes/ Missions	22,184	22,793	22,198	21,052	20,723

Data from *The Official Catholic Directory* in given years or as indicated.

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As we take into account the demographic changes over a period of almost fifty years, it is obvious that ministers, ministry, and parishes have undergone dramatic adjustments to accommodate the shifts in numbers and composition. Let us look briefly at recent research on clergy and lay ministers.

The Composition of the Clergy

Almost everyone who works in parishes is familiar with the decades of in-depth research produced by Dean Hoge and his associates. He explored many aspects of the life of priests, including *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood* (2003), one of his last books written with Jacqueline Wenger. In it he described changes in Catholic clergy from Vatican II to the turn of the new century. The two models of priesthood he describes: the “servant-leader model” and

the “cultic model.” For the sake of relating their characteristics to present parish ministry and the INSPIRE project, I will make note of some of the descriptors he associated with each model.

Pastors and other priests who are said to be expressing the “servant-leader model” of priesthood, are usually in their forties and older. They see themselves as serving most effectively when they are in relationship and communication with all members of the parish. They make an effort to understand the unique ministerial requirements of individuals, families, and groups. They assess goals, challenges, and gifts of the people they encounter so that their reading of the signs of the times in their place of ministry is accurate. As leaders and catalysts, they exercise their authority in a collaborative manner, “the community style” described by Bill Clark. They form vibrant communities by drawing people together, by respecting them, by enlightening their minds and nourishing their spirits. Staff and parishioners are encouraged to reach out in service to the broader community. Obviously, this form of leadership requires collaboration with the laity, especially with lay ministers.

Many of recently ordained fit into what Hoge describes as the “cultic model,” but it by no means includes all of them. They are well-intentioned and pious, and usually can fit in easily and work successfully if the staff and parishioners are of the same mind about how the parish should operate. However, more experienced pastors often have difficulty working with these men who lack curiosity about or have little interest in the customs and traditions of the local parish. If the concerns of parishioners do not match their ideological preferences, they would rather impose their own particular spirituality and worship style on the existing community rather than adjust to those they are called to serve. These priests begin their role as pastor with limited experience in parishes beforehand because of the urgent need for priests to replace the many who are retiring. The newly ordained may not even be aware of the incongruity between their beliefs, practices, and attitudes and those of their parishioners. They are more likely to see themselves as separate and ontologically different from the laity and often are reluctant to embrace an approach to ministry that includes the laity. In these situations, reports circulate of disheartened and dispirited parishioners who flee their home parish, because they feel like they are in an alien land under the imposing power of these priests. One of the ecclesial dilemmas the church currently faces is the disparagement of the servant-leader model by new generations of priests precisely at a time when the number of priests is declining and meaningful collaboration with the laity is indispensable.

The chart shows some of the areas of difference between various generations of priests. Note that while there are differences in percentages, not all in the millennial generation are of the same opinion.

Attitudes of Priests from Four Different Generations

	Pre Vatican II Priests	Vatican II Priests	Post Vatican II Priests	Millennial Priests
Open to discussion about collaborating with lay ministers	83%	78%	76%	65%
Open to discussion about working with lay administrators in parishes	76%	65%	63%	56%
The Church should allow women greater participation in all lay ministries	84%	89%	82%	65%
Ordination makes a priest essentially different from the laity	75%	61%	77%	88%

From Same Call, Different Men: The Evolution of the Priesthood since Vatican II, by Mary L. Gauthier, Paul M. Perl, and Stephen J. Fichter, (2012).

At the same time that the number of American-born priests has declined, priests and seminarians have come from other countries in greater numbers than in recent decades. The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) research shows that about 17 percent of priests serving in U.S. dioceses in 2004 were foreign-born, and 87 percent of them were diocesan priests. Some 30 percent were educated in United States seminaries; the others were already ordained when they came. In the latter group, 70 percent of priests from other countries usually entered directly into ministry after only a brief orientation to United States religious practices. Most of these priests would benefit greatly from special formation related to ministry in the United States since they are unfamiliar not only with diocesan policies and procedures, but more importantly, with American parishioners, their backgrounds, spiritualities, and other church-related issues.

Lay Ministry in Today's Parishes

Preparation for ministry varies considerably among lay ministers. Two academic degree types are common: the Master of Divinity (MDIV) is the usual highest degree requiring about three years of study; the other Masters' degrees, requiring two years of study, are variously named as Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies (MAPS), Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry (MAPM), and Master of Arts in Ministry (MAM). About one-fourth of those in church ministry earn one of these degrees, but few are at the MDIV level. The three-year length of the program is a deterrent for many. Most serving in parishes earn a certificate from dioceses in a wide variety of specialized areas.

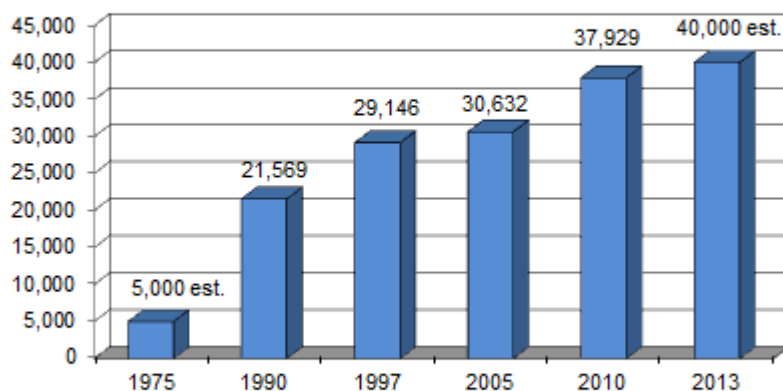
Graduate Degrees Offered for Lay Students in Seminaries/Theologates

- Master of Divinity (MDIV)
- Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies (MAPS)
- Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry (MAPM)
- Master of Arts in Ministry (MAM)



The number of lay ecclesial ministers has grown significantly, with an increase of about 10,000 by the decades from 1990 to the present. Exact numbers are not readily available since all dioceses do not routinely report them to the editors of the Official Catholic Directory (OCD), however special reports prepared by other agencies over the years accurately reflect the increases.

Number of U.S. Lay Ecclesial Ministers



Source of 1990, 1997, and 2005 data: [Lay Parish Ministers](#), David DeLambo, 2005; 2010 NALM data; 1975 and 2013 estimates

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According to David DeLambo's research, the ecclesial status of lay ministers changed dramatically from 1990 to 2005. Since then the numbers are moving in the same direction, that is, many fewer sisters and many more laity, especially lay women, are working in parishes.

Ecclesial Status of Lay Parish Ministers

Ecclesial Status	1990	1997	2005	% Change 1990 – 2005
Religious Brothers	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%	---
Religious Sisters	41%	28%	16%	- 25
Laywomen	44%	54%	64%	+20
Laymen	14%	17%	20%	+6
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	

DeLambo, David. *Lay Parish Ministers*. New York: National Pastoral Life Center, 2005, p. 45.

Adaptations in parishes have resulted from changing church personnel; in countless ways all who minister in parishes have inconspicuously and generously adjusted to the immense cultural and demographic shifts among their own numbers and among parishioners. Approaches and understandings about ministry vary among pastors and lay ecclesial ministers. In a thorough study of the state of the question, *Lay Parish Ministries*, (National Pastoral Life Center, New York, NY, 2005), David DeLambo found notable differences in the views of the two groups. Lay ecclesial ministers believe that the five most important ministry skills are: communicating one-on-one, recruiting volunteers, planning, collaborating, and facilitating events/meetings. They believe that the five least important ministry skills are: counseling, visiting (e.g., homes, hospitals), accessing social services, doing spiritual direction, and preaching.

Pastors have a somewhat different set of qualifications that they believe to be most and least important. Among those they consider important are: that the person has good relational skills, is prayerful, has experience in ministry, has a similar ecclesiology, and has a degree in a ministry-related field. The least important qualifications from the pastors' viewpoint concern personal attributes rather than actual qualifications: it is not important whether or not the person is married, that the person's ethnic background matches the parishioners, or that the person is bilingual; they also express no preference for hiring a woman or man as a minister. The desire for both experience in ministry and a degree suggests that pastors have high expectations of lay ministers.

Lay Ministers' Views of Ministry Skills

Five Most Important Ministry Skills

- Communicating one-on-one
- Recruiting volunteers
- Planning
- Collaborating
- Facilitating events/meetings

David DeLambo, *Lay Parish Ministries* (National Pastoral Life Center, New York, NY), 2005

Lay Ministers' Views of Ministry Skills

Five Least Important Ministry Skills

- Counseling
- Visiting (e.g., homes, hospitals)
- Accessing social services
- Spiritual direction
- Preaching

What Pastors Consider Most Important in Hiring

Five **Most** Important Ministry Qualifications

- That the person has good relational skills
- That the person is prayerful
- That the person has experience in ministry
- That the person has a similar ecclesiology
- That the person has a degree in a ministry-related field

What Pastors Consider Least Important in Hiring

Five **Least** Important Ministry Qualifications

- That the person is married
- That the person's ethnic background matches the parishioners
- That the person is bi-lingual
- That the person is female
- That the person is male

In reviewing the responses, lay ministers were more likely to name tasks, while the pastors were more likely to mention personal characteristics. Though not immediately evident, the overlap between the lists can be sorted out. The tasks of communicating, collaborating, and facilitating would likely be identified with good relational skills and knowledge of ministry, either by earning credentials or through experience. Perhaps most telling, in light of the discussion about clergy, is the pastors' desire for the lay minister to have a similar ecclesiology. As noted in the discussion above, differences in pastoral approaches can make or break a parish. In such

circumstances, an outside consultant as provided by INSPIRE may be able to intervene and help resolve differences.

Increased Parish Diversity

Diversity in parishes has many faces: generational variations, ethnic/racial differences, and ideological preferences in worship and administrative style, among others. The two topics I will discuss are generational variations and ethnic/racial changes.

Generational Differences. The diminishing strength of Catholic identity represents a grave concern for the church of the future. Research reported in *American Catholics Today* conveys the serious problem of weakening commitment through four generations. The level of agreement was measured by response to statements such as: “Being Catholic is a very important part of who you are,” “It is important to you that younger generations of your family grow up as Catholics,” and “You can’t imagine yourself being anything but Catholic.”

Strength of Catholic Identity by Generation, 2005

	Low %	Medium %	High %	Generational %	
				1987	2005
Total Catholics	29	46	24	100	100
Pre-Vatican II	22	45	33	31	17
Vatican II	31	44	25	47	35
Post-Vatican II	27	50	24	22	40
Millennials	47	46	7	0	9

Adapted from: *American Catholics Today*, D’Antonio, Davidson, Hoge, Gautier. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007. (Top chart pp. 11 and 21; text pp. 18-19)

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The strongest sense of identity is found among **Pre-Vatican II Catholics**, those born before the mid-1940s. For them, being Catholic was a central facet of their life and the content of their faith was as clear as a bell. For about a third of them, being Catholic was highly significant to their understanding of themselves, and for nearly another half it was moderately significant. A low sense of Catholic identity was reported by only about one in five of the Pre-Vatican II group.

The strength of identity of the **Vatican II cohort**, those Catholics born from the mid-1940s to the early 1960s, is weaker than the Pre-Vatican II group, but stronger than the millennial generation. They came of age when the Church was changing, opening up, and updating as a result of Vatican II. Their identity as Catholics underwent change as they began to question the centrality of Catholicism in their lives and wondered about the content of the core of the faith. Thus the strength of their identity declined, with nearly a third at the lowest level. Some in this group were disappointed with what they saw as a retreat from the implementation of Vatican II.

The profile of **Post-Vatican II Catholics**, born from the mid-1960s to 1978, was similar to the Vatican II cohort. Like their older counterparts, uncertainties about the centrality of their catholicity began to emerge. This group saw their commitment as voluntary and they became more autonomous in their thinking about issues of faith and morals. Catholic laypeople were increasingly willing to disagree with the Church on what some viewed as optional teachings. Meanwhile the hierarchy was trying to restore order in what it perceived as a chaotic Church, but this cohort felt secure enough educationally and socially to reduce their dependence on the Church.

Unlike any of the three older cohorts, the **Millennial generation** is characterized by a significant loss of Catholic identity. Born between 1979 and 1987, only seven percent sees itself as highly committed to the Catholic Church. Many of them raise questions about the importance of being Catholic, the substance of the faith, and the porous boundaries they see between Catholics and others. The sex abuse scandal was a traumatic shock for these young people, some of whom responded with disgust and removed themselves from the Church. Ideological differences within this group have created a split, with a small percentage highly committed and ideologically conservative and most others estranged and more progressive. How the Church responds to this youngest generation will make all the difference in their future association with the Church.

The consequences of this split are enormous for parish life because of the conflicting experiences of Catholics on either side of Vatican II, those who were adults in 1965 and those who were children or not yet born at that time. An important element to examine is the proportion of each group (see Table on Strength of Catholic Identity, right-hand columns). The dilemmas and divides created by various commitments continue to affect Catholic practice and are vital to understanding what might be the future of parish life. Contact with the church, in the person of local pastors and parish staffs, will carry a significant burden in providing an inviting spiritual home for so many whose pastoral needs are so dissimilar.

Multicultural Parishes. Diversity extends beyond generational differences to include an array of ethnic and cultural groups. Although 54 percent of church membership is Caucasian, changes mirror national trends in its move toward an equal number of Anglo/Caucasians and all other ethnic groups. At present the percentages indicate the following distribution of Catholics: Latino/a Hispanic (35-40 percent); Anglo/Caucasian (50-5 percent); Native American (percent);

African & African American (3 percent); and Asian/Pacific Islanders (4-5 percent). One of the lead articles in *America* (October 11, 2013), reported on research completed by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) about the percentage of multicultural parishes in the United States. The researchers estimate that approximately 6,700 parishes, amounting to about 38 percent, can be classified as multicultural. Growth is especially strong in Hispanic/Latino membership, which represents 40 percent of all growth in parishioners in U.S. parishes from 2005 to 2010 and over 70 percent since 1960.

The numbers and characteristics of each group require ministry that addresses specialized needs. In some cases educational and economic development are important, especially for those who have immigrated recently to the United States. In all cases the character of the liturgy and other spiritual concerns are crucial in sustaining close ties with the Church. The sheer numbers of Latino/a Hispanic Catholics and the rather high proportion of recent immigrants indicate the necessity of providing extensive parish programming. Their practices of popular piety are unfamiliar to many North Americans and some may view these devotions as unacceptable for use in official liturgical celebrations.

A second example of growing diversity is found in a smaller and more recent immigrant group of Catholics from Southeast Asia. They have been particularly faithful and involved parishioners who have provided more than their share of priestly vocations. Vietnamese Catholics, for example, have preserved their faith and made significant and steady progress in evangelization while adjusting to United States culture. They were able to make these advances because of the development of pastoral activities that embraced their own culture. Their participation in and contribution to the life of the local community by lay members in parishes is exemplary. As Brett Hoover's research shows, helping these groups cooperate with each other in ministry is essential as nearly 40 percent of parishes serve more than one community.

Diversity in Parishes

Ethnic and Cultural Variety

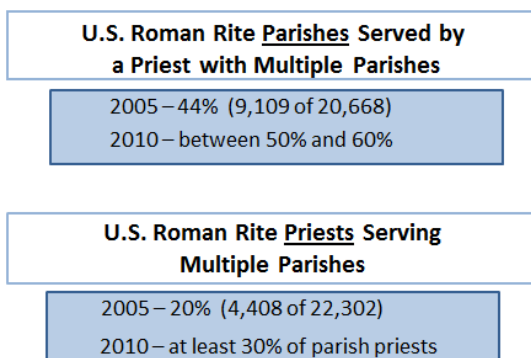
- Latino/a Hispanic Catholics (35-40%)
- Anglo/Caucasian Catholics (50-55%)
- Native American Catholics (1%)
- African & African American Catholics (3%)
- Asian Catholics (4-5%)

Diversity resulting from economic and educational disparity is reflected most clearly in parish life when the majority of parishioners (other than Caucasian) are from the groups identified above

Restructuring Parishes

Although the number of parishes and missions has dropped by more than 1,500 from 1965 to the present, more priests than ever are serving more than one parish. Parishes have clustered, merged, or been closed, and parish sizes have expanded. Necessarily, the numbers and roles of those who serve in parishes, especially permanent deacons and lay ecclesial ministers, have shifted. The pastors of at least fifty percent of parishes are responsible for more than one parish; in turn, some thirty percent of priests serve in such a situation, percentages that have increased considerably since the publication of my 2006 book (*Priestly Ministry in Multiple Parishes*, Collegetown: Liturgical Press, 2006).

Since a resident priest is not available for every parish, lay ecclesial ministers have adapted their roles to accommodate the temporal and spiritual needs of parishioners. Inexperienced priests and priests with little interest in collaboration find it more and more difficult to lead a parish that depends on a significant number of lay staff. The task is exacerbated as the sizes of parishes grow in urban settings and the number of parishes served by one priest increases in rural areas. Thus, the proportion of larger parishes (over 1,200 parishioners) has grown from 50 percent to 61 percent from 2000 to 2010, and the number of smaller parishes has declined from 50 percent to 39 percent. The bulk of smaller parishes are, of course, in rural areas.



Parish Sizes of All Parishes

Type of Parish	Percent 2000	Percent 2010	# Registered Parishioners	# Registered Households
Mega Parishes	25%	33%	more than 3,000	more than 1,200
Corporate Parishes	25%	28%	1,200 – 3,000	550 – 1,200
Community Parishes	26%	24%	450 – 1,199	201 – 549
Family Parishes	24%	15%	fewer than 450	200 or fewer

From National Parish Inventory of 2000 and 2010 (CARA)

The multitude of changes in the demographic configuration of the church requires new approaches to ministry, as provided by both pastors and lay ecclesial ministers. Every parish

would benefit from engaging more conscientiously in social analysis to uncover real and perceived pastoral needs. More parishes than ever find themselves enveloping several ethnic/racial groups and a wide range of ages among their members. Some parishioners have belonged to the same parish for a very long time and see newcomers as intruders. Parish leaders need to persuade them that the only way forward is together. Accepting the reality of diversity without destroying essential unity requires careful planning and persuasive powers on the part of staff.

At the same time that parishioners are being required to adjust to diversity, so are pastors and staffs. In light of the divide among clergy and of the new set of pastoral ministers constituting Pastoral Leadership Teams, a major task is to bring into compatible working relationship those with ideological differences and those with varied preparation who must minister together. All those who expect to serve well in parishes need to be equipped both spiritually and intellectually, so that they are prepared to work collaboratively for the sake of all. Tasks like identifying problems, assessing and analyzing sticking points, confronting difficulties, and empowering people must be undertaken. Phrases like mutual respect, active collaboration, and spiritual growth provide the life-blood to the making of vibrant parishes. INSPIRE has already led the way in demonstrating how to assist existing teams in acquiring an understanding of what makes parishes successful.

A Scripture passage from Habakkuk (1:2-3, 2:2-4) is not one of my most frequently quoted books of the Bible, but the message seems to fit perfectly with the goals of INSPIRE:

Then the Lord answered me and said: 'Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets, so that one can read it readily. For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint; if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late.'