

Implications of the Emerging Models Studies for Human Resources
Executive Summary
Thomas P. Schroeder and Charmaine Williams

We are a sacramental church centered on the Holy Eucharist and our ministry to and with one another flows from that Eucharist. In our Catholic parishes, our ministry involves the provision of the sacraments to the faithful, the education and formation of our young people, outreach to the poor and the elderly and the administration of our parish communities. By its nature, ministry is very labor intensive and all that we do in church depends on the tremendously rich, diverse, and highly gifted work force available to do it.

The Catholic Church, as all other living organisms, is always in transition. The change may be gradual, perhaps to the point of being almost imperceptible. Or, it may be more dramatic and, to some, be very disconcerting. Overall, we need to realize that without change there is no growth and without growth, we fail in our mission.

In a 1998 address to the National Association of Church Personnel Administrators, Bishop Robert N. Lynch of the Diocese of St. Petersburg noted that: “As we look to the 21st century, we can anticipate an increased demand for ministers committed to the mission of the church. We will need competent and caring church workers, spiritually formed with the ability to be sensitive to all the faithful in the community.” Further, he asked “What about the anticipated needs of these future ministers? How will the church respond? What will Catholic Ministry look like in the future?”¹ The Emerging Models project is all about addressing these questions.

When one looks back over time, our parish structures and staffing have changed dramatically. Perhaps a half century or so ago, parishes were staffed by a pastor, one or more additional priests, a housekeeper/cook to take care of their household needs and a maintenance person to take care of the buildings and grounds. Ministry was provided by the priests, if there was a school it was taken care of by a religious community and a devoted parishioner may have been the secretary/bookkeeper who was paid a minimal stipend for his/her time and effort.

More recently, ministry became more complicated and the needs became more numerous. Although the larger parishes still had a number of priests in residence, staffing now included a few more lay people to help in the office, to help with religious education and to help with some of the other parish activities, programs, and ministries. Many, if not most, were parishioners who had a sense of ownership in the parish and staff relationships were more like a family than a workplace. Volunteers still provided their time and talent, however, payrolls began to increase and there were more and more paid employees on staff.

Today few parishes have more than one priest. Many parishes are being merged or clustered under the leadership of a single pastor or a canonical pastor and a parish life coordinator. Also some parishes are being closed because there are no priests to serve as

pastor. Ministry has become more complicated, volunteers are often replaced by professionally trained personnel and it's become necessary to look upon the parish more and more as a workplace. Leadership of the parish has become complicated and it's becoming apparent that our priests and parish life coordinators will require a new set of skills that are more related to business than those related to ministry. In days gone by, parish staffing consisted mainly of those who were formed as ministers in the church. Today, parish staffing must consist of people who lead, people who manage, people who minister and people who provide the support services that allow ministry to be effective and responsive to the needs of the faith community. Although we may lament the passing of the church of a half-century ago, we must develop systems that will assure effective parish ministry for today and beyond into tomorrow.

Spencer Johnson, author of the book Who Moved My Cheese, made note of the need to recognize that change happens and that it is better to prepare for it than to become a victim of it. As it turns out, the writing on the wall has been very clear that serious change is happening in the Catholic Church...we just paid too little attention to the signs posted along the way. From a statistical perspective, the many indicators of change include a significantly increasing number of culturally diverse Catholics. In a 2006 presentation to the Canon Law Society of America, John P. Beal noted that the increase in the number of Catholics is about 10% per decade and that much of the growth is the result of Hispanic immigration.ⁱⁱ At the same time, the Church is experiencing a serious decline in the number of priests and members of religious congregations of women and men, while a growing participation of the laity is providing ministry in parishes across the United States.

The Church is growing; however, the components of its ministry workforce are shifting. Within the last year or so, college enrollments in seminaries appear to be up by about a hundredⁱⁱⁱ and some bishops have reported that they have seen an increase in vocations. On the other hand, there is no denying the magnitude of the problem that is being experienced by the church. "The number of priests, both an absolute number and the number relative to the Catholic population continues to decline. The shortage of priests has reached crisis proportions in many places and will only get worse for the foreseeable future".^{iv} The total numbers of diocesan and religious order priests are down roughly 34% between 1962 and 2006. This is a significant decrease but, when coupled with a 583% decrease in seminarians (37,834 to 5,540 in the same time period); it doesn't take a statistician to see that the models of pastoral leadership are changing. Members of men's and women's religious communities are down 158% for the same time period. Statistics on the number of deacons were not included in the Official Catholic Directory until 1972, but their numbers have grown about 83% since that time. The total number of Catholics increased 35% from 1962 to a 2006 figure of 66,081,550.^v Even though ministry support personnel were not included in his calculations, David DeLambo and the National Pastoral Life Center estimated that in 1990 there were 21,569 lay parish ministers working at least 20 hours per week. In 2005 the number had grown to 30,632. "In 1990 and 1997, a lay parish minister was operationally defined as a layperson or a vowed religious (considered "lay" in church law) working at least 20 hours a week in a paid position as a member of a parish pastoral staff as distinct from support staff, maintenance

staff and parochial school staff.^{vi} This definition was also used in the 2005 study, however, limited data was also collected and included for volunteers working at least 20 hours for a parish as well. It is interesting to note that no one attempts to accurately track the numbers of lay ecclesial ministers or other members of the laity working in the church today.

Ministry in today's church is very labor intensive and all of what we do depends on who we have to do it...lay, religious and clergy...priests, deacons, vowed religious women and men, paid pastoral and support staff and unpaid volunteers. The human resource implications here are tremendous and we must:

- Be aware of and responsive to changes in our workforce

It is important that church planners and human resource people work together in researching, tracking and communicating information regarding demographic trends in the workforce as well as the make up of the faith community itself. Issues related to culture, ethnicity, gender, race, and age need to be considered along with the possible effects of generational differences. Potential labor shortages and skill deficits need to be understood in advance so that efforts can be developed to offset their negative effects on future of ministry in the church.

- Focus on recruiting not only vocations to the priesthood but also developing initiatives to recruit lay ministers

All that we do in ministry depends on who we have to do it...clergy, religious and lay. As we move into the future, it is important to recognize all of the various roles and responsibilities and actively recruit for all segments of our workforce. How often is the Catholic Church represented at a job fair? How often do prayers for vocations include the laity?

- Develop effective and capable leaders who are skilled in ministry as well as administration

In the church, people are usually appointed or hired to perform in one of four essential roles: leader, manager, minister and ministry support. Although, on occasion we may function in all four, the key is to recognize that each requires a different set of skills. The ability to lead must not be assumed with ordination, the ability to manage in the church must not be assumed for people coming directly out of industry. The ability to minister must not be assumed because someone is considered to be a "good Catholic". As change continues in the church, care must be taken to establish comprehensive systems that provide adequate formation, training and skill development for all roles.

- Formulate and implement comprehensive human resource management systems that are not only professional but also in proper alignment with our Catholic social teachings

It is important to recognize that even though the relationships between clergy, religious and lay to the church may differ, human resource management systems must be developed to provide fair and just treatment to all who work in the church. These systems must be caring of the individual, fiscally sound and legally appropriate

- Establish an infrastructure that supports ministry as a career option as well as a vocation

As more and more lay people move into ministry, it is important that systems be established that allow ministry to be considered as a career option. Job security, advancement opportunity, opportunity for personal and professional development, fair and just pay and benefits are essential elements of a career infrastructure.

- Care for the well-being of those who currently minister in the church

Very often the zeal for ministry can have serious side effects for those who minister in the church. Issues related to heavy workload, unreasonable expectations, and the inability to say “no” frequently result in physical, mental, emotional, and behavioral problems for those who minister. As the numbers of priests continue to decline, for example, more and more are expected to pastor multiple parishes. As parishes merge, cluster or close, lay staff face employment uncertainty and those who remain often face additional responsibilities and an unreasonable workload.

The challenge for the organizations that are part of the emerging models project is to identify strategies to address these implications and to take responsibility for their implementation at both the organizational and the individual member levels. In an organization such as NACPA for example, an organizational strategy may be to strengthen its advocacy for the just treatment of all those who work in the church by extending its sphere of influence to parishes. A related strategy for each of its members would, perhaps, be to conduct an internal audit of their human resource systems to determine the degree to which their individual systems are aligned to the principles of just treatment.

March 12, 2008

ⁱ Exploring Catholic Ministry in the 21st Century, Most Reverend Robert N. Lynch,, NACPA Issues February 1999

ⁱⁱ Consultation in Church Governance: Taking Care of Business by taking After Business, Beal, John P., CLSA Proceedings 68, 2006

ⁱⁱⁱ CARA Report, Spring 2006

^{iv} Consultation in Church Governance: Taking Care of Business by taking After Business, Beal, John P., CLSA Proceedings 68, 2006

^v Statistics were obtained from the Official Catholic Directory, Kennedy and Assoc. 1962-2007.

^{vi} Lay Parish Ministers, A Study of Emerging Leadership, DeLambo, David, NPLC 2005