

EMERGING MODELS OF PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

A Joint Project, Funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc.

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Survey Finds Significant Shift in Leadership Models in U.S. Catholic Parishes \$2 Million Grant Funds Project to Study Parish Leadership

(WASHINGTON D.C.) – The number of Catholic parishes without a resident priest serving as a pastor has nearly doubled since 1993, resulting in a new surge of lay leadership in American Catholic dioceses, according to a new research study. The findings are the first results of a five-year project, funded with a \$2 million grant from the Lilly Endowment, to learn about and enhance pastoral leadership in parishes across the country.

The *Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership* project, a joint project of six national organizations, commissioned the research by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to provide a clear picture of Catholic parishes across the United States that have “parish life coordinators” (PLCs) instead of resident pastors.

Currently, more than 530 parishes in the United States have a lay person, deacon or other religious entrusted with the pastoral care of the congregation. This represents a significant change in how parishes are run in the United States Catholic Church.

The survey found that 45 percent of these coordinators are religious sisters or nuns, 24 percent are deacons, 3 percent are religious brothers and 2 percent are part of a team. The remaining 25 percent are other lay Catholics – three out of four of these are women.

Parish life coordinators, also known as pastoral administrators or parish life directors, are found in two-thirds of U.S. dioceses – usually where there are fewer active diocesan priests than parishes and where there is a great distance between parishes. They are least common in the Northeastern states and most common among smaller parishes. However, Catholic Church laws allow a bishop to decide when and where to entrust the pastoral care of a parish to a PLC.

The research also found that parish life coordinators are:

- an average age of 61, with two-thirds age 55 or older.
- highly educated. They are more likely to have attended college and graduate school than the average American Catholic of the same age.
- usually eligible for health and retirement benefits.
- paid between \$20,000 and \$24,999 (median). One in ten earned \$40,000 or more per year.

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- not “temporary fixes.” Four in ten PLCs have been in their current parish for five years or more.

The results of the full study and analysis, including a diocese by diocese breakdown, can be viewed at www.emergingmodels.org.

The *Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership* project will use the research information to look closely at these parishes and others in an effort to gather and share information about creative ways parishes are operating.

“This project is about how our lay people are stepping forward and using their education, expertise and ability and are working side-by-side with priests to provide parish leadership,” said Marti Jewell, project director for *Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership*. “It’s about our pastors, parish staffs and parishioners working together to create healthy, vibrant ministering communities. Our project is going to gather information about these successes and spread the word to parishes across the nation.”

The next step of the project is hosting eight regional gatherings of leaders. Each will include about 100 people who are involved in church leadership roles – pastors, parish life coordinators, pastoral associates, deacons and parish pastoral council representatives. The first of the three-day regional gatherings will be held Nov. 8 in Seattle and Nov. 18 in Chicago.

“We’re inviting them to tell their stories,” Jewell said. “We’re hoping to learn about creative ways to do things. The research is showing a changing face of leadership. The Project will be able to share these creative initiatives with parish leadership around the country.”

In addition to the research and eight regional gatherings, the project will include two symposia, 15 diocesan consultations and conclude with a National Ministry Summit in the Spring of 2008.

Some of the areas the project aims to address include:

- multicultural diversity and its impact on pastoral leadership.
- how to develop leadership in very large parishes or when multiple parishes share the same priest.
- how parish pastoral councils provide leadership.
- ways national associations can work together to serve the local church.
- resource and information sharing.

About *Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership*

The *Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership* project is one of sixty-three projects funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. to design programs that will enhance pastoral leadership in parishes and congregations across the country. The project is a collaboration between six national organizations including the National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM), the Conference for Pastoral Planning and Council Development (CPPCD), the National Association of Church Personnel Administrators (NACPA), the National Association of Diaconate Directors (NADD), the National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association (NCYAMA), and the National Federation of Priests’ Councils (NFPC).

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