



## CARA'S SEVEN ELEMENTS OF PARISH LIFE

*The following seven elements are ones present in every parish, and aspects of parish life related to these seven elements form the bulk of the questions on our CARA questionnaires. Questions 2 to 8 on the included document, "CARA's Typical Survey Format and Frequently Used Questions," are our most general measures of these elements, allowing the parish to compare how well it is succeeding in each area in relation to the others.*

**Community:** The sense of community within a parish includes the sense of belonging at the parish and how it welcomes people in a friendly, inclusive, non-judgmental way. This area also includes parish outreach, which refers to how well the parish reaches out to parishioners and involves them in parish life. Community, then, has an internal focus.

**Worship:** The expression of the sacramental and prayer life of parishioners at Sunday liturgies and other sacred celebrations is the area of parish life CARA calls "Worship." This area includes all components of worship, such as homilies, lectoring, distributing communion, and the art and environment of worship. It also includes the fostering of individual spiritual growth, such as that related to personal prayer and private devotions.

**Leadership:** The leadership of the pastor, pastoral staff, parish council, and key organizations are included under the area of parish leadership. Leadership involves forming a vision for the parish, planning for the future, and evaluating the success of parish efforts. The organizational structure of the parish and related organizations or activities (such as school leadership) are also included here.

**Formation:** Formation in the parish includes all aspects of parish life involving explaining, informing, and forming parishioners of all ages in Scripture, Church teaching, and tradition. This includes religious education programs at both parish and school (where there is a school), as well as sacramental preparation programs and adult formation programs. Homilies, which play a significant role in the ongoing formation of parishioners, are included in this section as well as in the section on worship.

**Stewardship:** Stewardship involves challenging parishioners to share their time, talent, and treasure with the parish. Time and talent includes any volunteering that parishioners do either directly for the parish or in parish-related activities. The treasure of the parish refers to the amount of money contributed to the parish as well as its current buildings and properties.

**Social Justice:** Social justice and social action include all parish work directed at advancing social concerns in the wider world, nation, and local community. It also includes all charity, advocacy, and action on behalf of justice. Social justice has an external focus.

**Evangelization:** Evangelization includes all efforts to witness to the Gospel. It focuses especially upon reaching out to inactive Catholics and the unchurched. Evangelization also encompasses efforts at ecumenism and those directed toward building relations in the broader community. Evangelization also has an external focus.