



TOUCHSTONE

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Dear brothers and friends,

Welcome to Volume 25, Issue One of *Touchstone*.

NFPC's 48th annual Convocation will take place from **April 18-21** at the Indianapolis Marriott East Hotel in Indianapolis, Indiana. We have an excellent program lined up and hope you will consider joining us. All priests are invited! Besides a great program, one of the most important features of NFPC's annual Convocation is it gives us a chance to meet as brother priests for friendship and fellowship. Many of us minister alone. Sometimes there's a thin line separating being alone from loneliness. So think about joining with us, reconnecting with old friends, meeting new ones, and strengthening and rejuvenating your ministry.

The theme of the Convocation is "**Keeping Up with Pope Francis: Bringing the Message to Parish Life.**" All presentations will focus on practical parish application.

Our major speakers include **Father Ralph O'Donnell**, Executive Director of the US bishops' Secretariat on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations; **Father Thomas Rosica, CSB**, CEO, Salt and Light Catholic Media Foundation and English Language Media Attaché, Holy See Press Office; **Dan Misleh**, Executive Director of the Catholic Climate Covenant; **Paul Jarzembowski**, USCCB, Coordinator Ministry to Youth & Young Adults; and , **Michael O'Loughlin**, National Reporter for *Crux* and author of *The Tweetable Pope*. Michael will moderate a panel discussion on the topic. Also as part of the Convocation, NFPC is privileged to announce this year's Touchstone award will be presented to **Father Ronald Rolheiser, OMI**. Likewise, NFPC is honored that the **Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate** will receive the *Mandatum* award.

The Convocation Mass will take place on Wednesday, April 20 at the historic St. John the Evangelist Church with **Most Rev. Joseph W. Tobin, CSsR**, Archbishop of Indianapolis, as principal celebrant and homilist. A reception and the awards banquet will take place immediately afterward at the Crowne Plaza Hotel a block from the church. Please go to our website - www.nfpc.org - for Convocation registration and hotel accommodation information and more information on the presentations. **Daily registration is also available.**

We begin this issue of *Touchstone* where we left off in Volume 24; finishing Joe Ollier's presentation to last year's NFPC Convocation, "Spiritual Fatherhood and Ordained Priesthood." Volume 24, No. 1 is available on our website under the Media tab.

The second article is an essay that originally appeared in the 2015 *Official Catholic Directory*. It is titled, "The Four Disciplines of a Smart, Healthy, and Holy Church," by Matthew F. Manion, President and CEO of the Catholic Leadership Institute. We are grateful to National Register Publishing for permission granted to reprint this excellent essay.

As always, your brother, in Christ,

Fr. Tony Cutcher, President



Spiritual Fatherhood and Ordained Priesthood – Part II

In Part 1 of Joe Ollier's presentation he focused on two features of "spiritual fatherhood" as he relates it to the priesthood. This concept was developed by Sociologist Nicholas Townsend in a 2002 book titled, "The Package Deal: Marriage, Work, and Fatherhood in Men's Lives." Within the confines of being "married to our Mother, the Church," priests need to maintain a healthy relationship by "Taking Care of Yourselves," and "Taking Care of Us" (the Church). He went on to explain two of four aspects related to the latter when we ended part one: Provision and Emotional Closeness. We begin and conclude Part II with the final two aspects of "Taking Care of Us": Protection and Endowment.

Protection

The third aspect of Fatherhood Townsend identifies is Protection: making sure that wives and children are safe from threats, fear, and danger. Often that means not just finding a safe neighborhood to live in, but shielding children from social and moral threats as well.

It's very hard to protect our families from those threats if we don't protect ourselves first. I think we accomplish that first through the Sacramental life, but I think we also accomplish that through the support of others. And so when it comes to Protection, I encourage you as spiritual fathers to first protect yourselves by carving out time to tend to your own spiritual needs, and remembering that even if you are the only priest for miles around, you are not alone. There are priest support groups, deanery meetings, and other opportunities to gather as brothers. And don't forget us lay people - we can't hear your confession, but we can definitely provide holy friendship. Many a parish priest lives alone these days, but rectories weren't made to be hermitages – and that's for a reason. We are made for community.

Endowment

Endowment relates to those things Fathers wish to leave their children - their legacy, if you will. And this has very little to do with material legacy – it's all about providing opportunities, character and the skills and disciplines their children will need to succeed. So what does Endowment have to do with the spiritual Fatherhood of the priest? I think it means providing lay people with opportunities to grow in holiness and to take a share in Jesus' roles of Priest, Prophet and King. If emotional closeness implies walking among the flock and getting the smell of the sheep on you, Endowment is a combination of both leading and pushing the flock where it needs to go.

Lead us in prayer and the Sacraments. But also, empower us to lead with you. It's so easy for lay people and priests alike to slip into clericalism, to put all spiritual leadership into the hands of the priest or religious, or the "professional minister", but that is a temptation we must avoid. How can we bring the Gospel to the world if that skill is not nurtured within our own parish?

And so Endowment means leading by calling forth and affirming the gifts of your parishioners. Lay people understand that the Church is not a democracy, but we also understand that it is not a dictatorship. And just like the family is healthiest when everyone chips in and takes responsibility, the Church is healthiest when all of us, lay and cleric, share in the evangelizing mission of the Church and the sanctification of the workaday world. And for that to happen, we need your pastoral leadership. We know that can be messy – that sometimes it seems easier in the short run to just do something yourself – believe me, my wife and I know that from teaching our own kids how to mow the grass or clean the bathroom or drive a car. But it's critical that our kids share in the work – the fact that our kids have their own responsibilities and handle them serves a dual purpose – it allows my wife and me to tend to more important things, and it serves to unify our whole family.

In the long run, the more you give us opportunities to minister and lead, the more the parish as a whole can unify around a shared mission, freeing you to do the important work that only you can do. It's a lot easier to lead the flock when you have gathered people around you who are ready and able to help you shepherd the rest of flock in the right direction.

Sometimes, though, we need a gentle push. So challenge us. Raise the bar. Set expectations high. Don't be afraid to speak the Truth in love. Don't be afraid of offending people. Don't be afraid to lose parishioners. We live in a world awash with post-modern relativism. We can get wishy-washy anywhere. If we want fluffy preaching we can go to the Vineyard or any other megachurch that has a stage instead of an altar. (and then we'd probably get free coffee and great worship music as well). In Revelation the Lord says to the Church at Laodocia, "I know your deeds; I know you are neither hot nor cold. How I wish you were one or the other – hot or cold. But because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of my mouth!" You see, we don't want wishy-washy marshmallow fluff. We want something we can chew on. We want to be challenged – to be called to radical discipleship. We want to wrestle with hard questions without easy answers and to know that the Truth of the gospel is higher, deeper, and richer than anything the world has to offer. We want you to preach about the things that smack us every day because we need to know the Truth about how to live out our faith in a world that assaults it constantly.

Some of us may be one-issue voters come election time, but none of us can be one-issue believers. The gospel can't be pigeon-holed into labels like conservative or liberal. The Truth of the Gospel stands on its own merits because it is the very truth of God. Being a disciple should not be easy. The Church stands in sharp contrast to the culture, and that is as it should be. We want you to embrace that contrast, and, as Spiritual Fathers, help us to embrace it as well.

So when it comes to Endowment, lead us into fuller participation in the life of the Church, and push us to be the people God calls us to be.

So Please as spiritual fathers, take care of our Mother – pay attention to your relationship with the Church; take care of each other as brothers and men; and take care of us, remembering that we don't need you to be perfect. We don't need you to be Superman. But we do need your Provision, Companionship, Protection, and Leadership. Last of all, please know that we lay people love you and that we pray for you.

Joe Ollier is coordinator of Youth Ministry at Ascension Parish in Kettering Ohio. He also is adjunct professor of Religious Studies at the University of Dayton. Joe gave a keynote presentation at the NFPC April 2015 Convocation in Louisville, Kentucky. This essay is based on his address.

The Four Disciplines of a Smart, Healthy, and Holy Church

By Matthew F. Manion

Do you know which department in the hospital is by far the most effective and efficient in fulfilling its mission? According to Patrick Lencioni, best-selling author and leadership guru, it is the emergency room.

In a hospital emergency room everyone is clear about their purpose – to save human lives. When someone comes in with a life-threatening trauma you don't hear the staff in the emergency room saying, "That's not my job," or "That's not my role." While it is clear that nurses, doctors, orderlies and staff all have specific skills and roles to play, in an emergency you see people pitching in and doing whatever they can to save that life. Any organizational politics or morale issues or indifference are forgotten in order to save a patient.

In order to create a parish and diocesan experience better aligned with the vision of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church, we must learn something from what goes on in an emergency room and apply that to our local church. As Pope Francis said, "I see clearly that the thing the Church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the Church as a field hospital after battle." Saving lives in an emergency room is noble and important, but fulfilling the Great Commission and participating in the salvation of souls is even more crucial and is why the Church exists. Yet we do not always fulfill this commission with the effectiveness and efficiency seen in a field hospital or emergency room.

The Catholic Church, like many organizations is filled with very smart people. Our priests and bishops all have advanced degrees and are extremely learned individuals. Many parish and diocesan staff have years of practical experience and advanced study in their vocational fields. The church is blessed with excellent talent when it comes to catechesis, evangelization, worship, youth ministry, service and outreach and so many other areas. We have the most educated laity in history and there is a wealth of expertise in the pews and on some staffs when it comes to financial management, facilities planning, strategic planning, and people management.

Unfortunately, in today's world being "smart" is no longer enough. The reality is that the greatest barrier to an organization in fulfilling its purpose is not a lack of "smart" but a lack of organizational "health." Healthy organizations have minimal politics, high morale, high engagement, role clarity, and low turnover of key leaders. Yet most organizational leaders spend 98% of their time on becoming "smarter" and only 2% of their time on creating a healthier organization.

This is as true for the Church as it is for any other organization. We are always looking for the next program, the next course, the next initiative that will move our people forward. And while those programs, courses, and initiatives are good and help people, perhaps we would have greater success and impact in spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ if we spent more time on organizational health.

So many good and holy people who love the Lord have given their lives in service to the Catholic Church. Yet when asked what is most challenging in their roles or what are the greatest obstacles they face as a parish or diocese, 9 times out of 10, the answer has to do with organizational health. They are frustrated with a coworker, with the shortage of people who care about their faith, with a lack of volunteers, or with a lack of clarity about what is expected of them. They may disagree with the direction of the local church or more frequently, the lack of direction in their local church. They may question the allocation of resources and disagree about what is most important.

They are exhausted by the turf wars and lack of cooperation and collaboration among ministries, parishes, and diocesan departments. They want to belong to a smart, healthy and therefore holy Church.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, it makes sense that we would live disciplined lives as individuals, but that mindset needs to be expanded so that we also have disciplined corporate lives in the holy ordering of our parishes and dioceses. We have seen numerous examples of how a commitment to the four disciplines outlined below has renewed the life of parishes and dioceses. There is an energy and enthusiasm in these communities. There is a commitment to grow spiritually and to invite others to encounter the Lord and grow in their Catholic faith. The sense of mission unites people and turns their focus outward in service to others. The People of God experience more of the mission and vision of Jesus Christ as it is lived out today in the Catholic Church.

Leaders who practice the Four Disciplines of a Smart, Healthy, and Holy Church:

- Build and Maintain a Cohesive Leadership Team
- Reinforce Clarity through Persons, Ministries, and Structures
- Over-communicate Clarity
- Create Organizational Clarity

Discipline 1: Build and Maintain a Cohesive Leadership Team

Years ago there was a diocese where the youth ministry office and the evangelization office worked together to plan a series of diocesan holy hours to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life. They had lay volunteers lined up to get the word out, they had priests and parishes that agreed to host the first year's worth of holy hours and the archbishop had a tentative date on his calendar to join them. Unfortunately, the youth ministry office and the evangelization office were in two different secretariats and their leaders were not part of a cohesive leadership team at the time. When the leaders heard of these plans, they immediately killed the concept because neither wanted the other to get credit for the idea.

While this is one of the more egregious examples we have seen, a lack of unity in the leadership team often leads to decisions and actions that compromise or conflict with the work of the Church.

Jesus is the ultimate model of leadership and we need to encourage leaders of smart, healthy, and holy churches to follow his example. One of the first things Jesus did when he began his public ministry was to recruit a team of 12 apostles. He spent three years living with them, serving with them, and forming them for the ministry for which they had been called. He poured into them and developed them so they could carry on his mission with one voice.

Good leaders who want to more effectively shepherd and lead their local church should begin by building and maintaining a *Cohesive Leadership Team*. This team is recruited by the leader because of their technical competence for their given roles and because their gifts, talents, and inter- personal skills complement the gifts, talents, and skills of the leader. This is a team that trusts one another, prays together, engages in constructive conflict, commits to group decisions, and holds one another accountable. It acts like the team in an emergency room or field hospital with a lack of ego and unified commitment to the mission.

One of the more encouraging signs we have seen in recent years is the number of bishops and pastors who have made the courageous and difficult decision to build and maintain this type of leadership team. It takes time to think through the needs of the team and then to make the changes necessary to put a team like this in place. Once a leader has the right people, it takes more time to set them up and "charter" the team, so they understand their purpose, values, behavioral norms, ground rules, over- all goals and outcomes. That investment upfront pays huge dividends in the long run as you will not have a smart and healthy organization if it does not start at the top. The discipline to build and maintain a cohesive leadership team is the first key to creating organizational health, but by itself it is insufficient.

Discipline 2: Create Organizational Clarity

I love to ask parish and diocesan leaders how many people they have in their parish or diocese. They usually reply with one of two answers – the number of people who go to Mass each week or the number of Catholics in their parish or diocese. Either of those answers reveals an understandable yet very dangerous misunderstanding. Canonically, the bishop or pastor is responsible for all of the souls living in a particular geography, whether those souls are Catholic or not.

It is extremely inspiring to see the shift in thinking when leaders embrace this responsibility. For example, one parish had 14,000 people living within its boundaries, 3,500 of whom were Catholic and approximately 800 of whom attended Mass each week. Mass attendance had been steadily declining for about 20 years and many in parish leadership were focused on how to meet the needs of the 800 so that Mass attendance would not continue to decline.

Focusing on declining Mass attendance is a good thing, but leadership had lost sight of their core purpose as a parish. When asked to prayerfully consider what it meant to be the Catholic Church for the 14,000 souls in their parish and not just the 800 that came to Mass, their priorities changed dramatically.

They rediscovered their call to evangelize and focused on becoming a people and a parish that would bring the love of Jesus to their community. They realized a need to grow personally in their faith so they could more effectively witness to others. They evaluated their service and outreach from the perspective of the 14,000 and reframed much of their communication and methodology to include the possibility of discussing how God was present in the ministry along with an invitation to follow Jesus.

In addition to the blessing of the ongoing conversion of its members, there were other, more measurable, results of shepherding the larger community. Over time this focus on being Church to the 14,000 led some of the Catholics who had stopped going to Mass to come back. Others who were not Catholic responded by joining the Church. The consistent decline in Mass attendance stopped and the number of people experiencing the grace of the eucharist is increasing again. This happened because a cohesive leadership team was able to create organizational clarity.

Healthy, vibrant dioceses and parishes *Create Organizational Clarity* by definitively answering a series of questions regarding vision, values, purpose, and priorities. This helps parishes and dioceses clarify why they exist and what difference it would make if they no longer existed (purpose), how they make decisions and interact with one another (values), and where the Lord is calling their local community (vision).

A key component in creating organizational clarity is to assess a church's effectiveness in fulfilling five foundational ministries:

- Sacraments and Worship
- Education and Formation
- Governance and Administration
- Service and Outreach
- Evangelization and Vocations

While a particular diocese or parish might change the order or terminology, most agree these reflect their core, ongoing work. They know that they must attend to them, their mission is dependent on them, and others benefit from them.

When these five ongoing foundational ministries are understood along with the changing needs, opportunities, demands, and resources of the parish or diocese, certain pastoral priorities begin to emerge. The prayerful discernment of no more than three pastoral priorities at any time helps to create organizational clarity. These are thoughtful and discriminating initiatives that rise to the top of the church's leadership agenda for a period of 2-3 years. They become the driving initiative for action and leadership in service to the parish or diocesan vision and all other decisions are made with these three priorities in mind.

Limiting the pastoral priorities to three or fewer has several advantages. First, if everything is important then nothing is important and there will be a lack of organizational clarity. Second, most reasonable people in a parish or diocese agree on the top two or three issues that need to be addressed, but will disagree vehemently about what is number six or eight on the list. The objective is to focus on what unites and is most important and tackle those first. The final reason for three priorities is that most people can remember three things. Three pastoral priorities will provide the focus and clarity that is key to organizational health.

Discipline 3: Over-Communicate Clarity

Research has consistently shown that most people need to hear a message seven different times and often in several different media before the message sticks. Experience shows that this is not true when it comes to the Catholic Church. People need to hear the message not seven times, but, "seventy times seven" times!

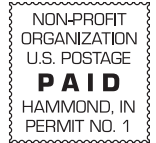
When a parish or diocese has taken the time to build and maintain a cohesive leadership team, and that team has led the church in prayerfully creating organizational clarity about its purpose, values, vision, and priorities, the next step is to over-communicate that clarity. All leaders take on an additional role for the community as the CRO, or Chief Reminding Officer. They need to consistently promulgate the vision and priorities in a variety of settings and forms. The work of over-communicating clarity is only done when everyone in the parish or diocese can easily articulate the vision and priorities and begins to make decisions in light of those discerned priorities. This point leads to the fourth discipline of a smart, healthy, and holy Church.

Discipline 4: Reinforce Clarity through Persons, Ministries, and Structures

The fourth discipline moves the vision for the organization from a concept to reality. Many organizations who invest in the first three disciplines can make a common mistake and sabotage their good work in implementation. The mistake is to announce the new vision and priorities and expect everyone to put time and effort into them in addition to everything else they had already been doing. The more effective leadership action is to help every person in the organization re-evaluate their roles and activities and align them with the vision and priorities.



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Parish and diocesan leadership reinforces organizational clarity when it not only gives people permission to let go of certain things, but when it requires it. Our faith tells us that we must abandon the old ways of doing things in order to participate in new life-giving activities. This is true on a personal level and on an organizational level.

This will mean that certain activities, functions, and ministries will need to be stopped or at least put on hold for a while so that the appropriate attention can be placed on the discerned pastoral priorities. The parish and diocesan structures should support the priorities and may need to be adjusted to make the vision a reality. This requires courageous leadership from the bishop or pastor and unified support from the cohesive leadership team.

The Catholic Church is filled with very smart people who know how to lead and serve very smart communities to increase our effectiveness in carrying out the mission and vision of Jesus Christ. We must focus on becoming healthy as well. These four disciplines have been shown to improve the organizational health of a wide variety of parishes and dioceses in the United States. The most important thing to remember is that the goal is not simply to be smart and healthy but to grow in holiness and help others in the field hospital to do the same.

Matthew F. Manion is the President and CEO of the Catholic Leadership Institute (CatholicLeaders.org) and has delivered workshops for bishops, priests, and lay leaders throughout North America. He partnered with Pat Lencioni to bring the Four Disciplines to the Catholic Church.

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