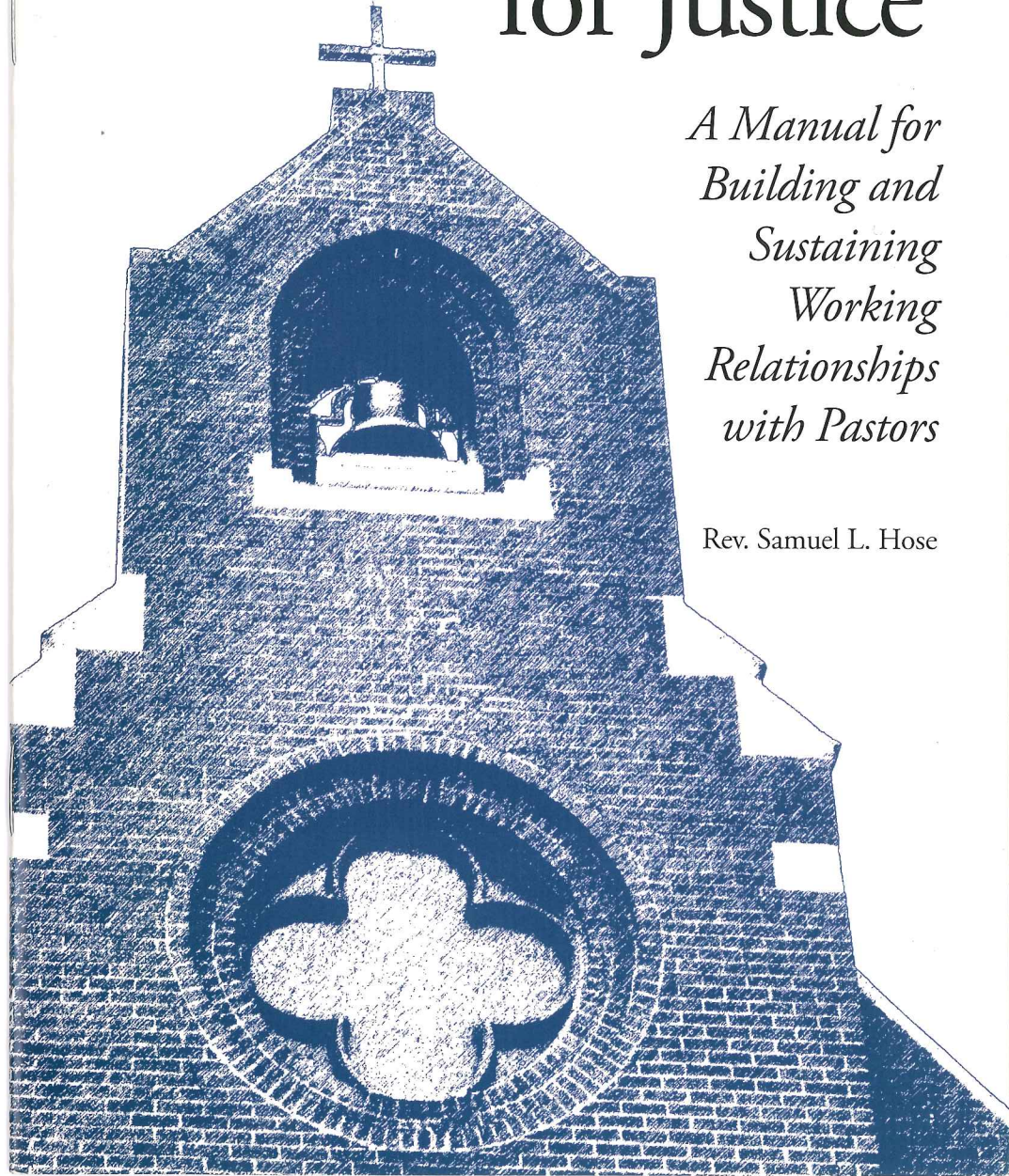


# Together in the Work for Justice

*A Manual for  
Building and  
Sustaining  
Working  
Relationships  
with Pastors*

Rev. Samuel L. Hose





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Catholic Charities USA • Alexandria, Virginia

## Introduction

### Acknowledgements

This manual would not have been possible without the groundwork laid by the Pastor Project. This project was conducted in 2003 under the direction of the Parish Social Ministry Office of Catholic Charities USA; specifically, Sr. Brenda Hermann MSBT MSW, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Fellow; Ms. Kristi Schulenberg, Director, Parish Social Ministry; and Mr. Tom Ulrich, Vice President for Training, Convening, & Mission. A special acknowledgement goes to the more than 100 priests from nine dioceses who participated in this project. Thank you also to the members of the Parish Social Ministry Section Leadership Team for their assistance.

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In 1985, Most Reverend Joseph Sullivan wrote that the “leadership in Catholic Charities acknowledged that many of our agencies, programs and services were distanced from the life experiences of parishioners. Charities’ directors genuinely desired to deepen roots in the life of the Church, to open up opportunities for communication, for participation and for integration of social ministry into the parish mission.”<sup>1</sup>

Today that desire is visible in action, as we see Charities’ agencies making strides to build and sustain the connection with the parish. We understand that Catholic parishes offer agencies the opportunity to stay connected to the foundation out of which our mission grew, the Catholic social mission. Parishes provide us with an ally in carrying out this mission to work with individuals, families, and communities to help them meet their needs, address their issues, eliminate oppression, and build a just and compassionate society. The relationships and the process have been both fruitful and challenging.

In 2003, Catholic Charities USA led a listening session to uncover some strategies for building and sustaining relationships with parishes by hearing the pastor’s perspective. The results were insightful, and we knew that we were on to something that needs to be shared. This manual is a sharing of these insights gained for anyone who wants to build and sustain fruitful relationships with parishes.

Blessings in your efforts,

Rev. Larry Snyder  
President  
Catholic Charities USA

<sup>1</sup> Peeler, Alexandria. *Parish Social Ministry: A Vision and a Resource: A Catholic Charities Perspective*. The National Conference of Catholic Charities. Washington, D.C. 1985. p. xii.

## Reality Check: Eight Questions to Ponder Regarding Your Assumptions About Pastors

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The more than 100 priests interviewed for the Pastor Project indicated that the lives and challenges faced by pastors are not what agency and even diocesan personnel might think. The reasons for that are varied and often complex, and will be discussed in the following chapter of this manual. The findings of the project indicate that what has resulted, in many situations, is a disconnect between agency and diocesan offices and pastors in their parishes. Often one finds situations in which there is even an ongoing aura of tension between agency personnel and pastors. That develops as they live and work and build assumptions about one another without substantive contact and interaction with each other. Such contact and interaction could help them to become better partners in the fuller integration of the Catholic social mission into the life of the parish.

As you consider the following questions think about your own “understandings” or preconceived ideas about pastors. Put a checkmark on your response for each. Write out on a separate sheet of paper anything else that comes to mind. Then take a look at the “Reality Check” section that follows and see how close you are. Consider how you might be called to some new and richer understanding that may help you find a better way to work with pastors in the Catholic social mission.

1. As seminarians and as associate pastors, priests undergo long processes of education and formation for their work as pastors. They are well trained for the variety of things, from sacramental and pastoral work to administration that they must do as parish leaders.  
 I know this to be true.  I have always assumed this to be true.  
 I know that this is not true.  I don't know.
2. Since Catholic social teaching is so central to the Church's view of issues that require a parish priest's response both in the context of liturgy and in

ministry to their people, pastors know that they must have a good foundational knowledge of that teaching.

- I know this to be true.                       I have always assumed this to be true.
- I know that this is not true.             I don't know.

3. Pastors' daily lives are focused primarily on sacramental and pastoral work.

- I know this to be true.                       I have always assumed this to be true.
- I know that this is not true.             I don't know.

4. Pastors are trained to think systemically since they are part of a universal Church and they are called to work and to speak prophetically in the contexts of the systems of human society.

- I know this to be true.                       I have always assumed this to be true.
- I know that this is not true.             I don't know.

5. The support of the pastor is the primary key to implementing the social teaching of the Church in the context of parish programs and ministries.

- I know this to be true.                       I have always assumed this to be true.
- I know that this is not true.             I don't know.

6. Most parishes understand that the baptismal call to service includes being actively concerned about the greater community and that the Gospel calls all the faithful to be forces for positive growth of justice and charity within that community.

- I know this to be true.                       I have always assumed this to be true.
- I know that this is not true.             I don't know.

7. Most pastors are aware that I am in my role to help them to do their jobs.

- I know this to be true.                       I have always assumed this to be true.
- I know that this is not true.             I don't know.

8. Most pastors in my diocese know what I do.

- I know this to be true.                       I have always assumed this to be true.
- I know that this is not true.             I don't know.

## What Do Pastors Tell Us About These Questions?

Now, compare your responses with what pastors told us in the Pastor Project.

1. Pastors reported overwhelmingly that, unless they had the good fortune to receive training in other contexts (education and/or careers before entering seminary) they are ill prepared for most of what they do.
2. Most pastors reported spending most of their time on administrative matters and significantly less time than most would like in pastoral and sacramental work.
3. The pastors interviewed ranged in ordination dates from 1954 to 2002. All reported their training in Catholic social teaching to range from none to minimal.
4. Priests do think systemically or perhaps better said, hierarchically, in terms of the unity and teaching of the universal Church. However with social issues, as with ministries in general, the prevailing tendency is a fragmented approach focusing on specific local issues and needs.
5. Pastor buy-in is crucial but gaining that buy-in is complicated and often difficult.
6. Catholic social teaching continues to be one of the Church's best kept secrets.
7. Many pastors report that they see diocesan social ministry and agency personnel as meaning well. However they report a strong perception that diocesan and agency personnel see pastors as being there primarily to help them to further their own programs and initiatives. .
8. By and large, pastors report very limited knowledge or understanding of what charities and social ministry offices on the diocesan and community levels do.

How did what you knew, thought you knew, or assumed compare with the eight responses in this reality check? Perhaps you are wondering why is it that the lives and work of pastors may be at variance with what you might have thought.

What lies behind the reality that Catholic social teaching continues to be such a challenge for pastors? How might you come to a better and fuller understanding of the lives and work of priests and pastors, so that you might work better with them and so that they might be more willing to work with you in implementing Catholic social mission more fully in the life of the Church, beginning at the parish level? The following summary will give you more insight into these and other issues, as you work to build and to sustain more effective working relationships with pastors and with their parishes.

## **The Pastor Project**

### **Summary of the Primary Issues Affecting Pastors' Knowledge, Understanding and Commitment to Catholic Social Teaching**

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**T**he Pastor Project was a listening process done by the Parish Social Ministry Office of CCUSA between September 2003 and March 2004. More than 100 priests from 9 dioceses in six states and the District of Columbia participated. 62 met in small groups, 31 were interviewed individually and 31 responded through questionnaires. The priests interviewed ranged in ages from 26 to 85. They had been ordained between 2 and 50 years. Their time as pastors ranged from new to 40 years.

Integral to the questions and discussions were the daily lives of pastors, issues affecting them, their seminary formation in general and in Catholic social teaching in particular, issues faced by foreign born priests, characteristics of ministry within parishes, pastors' perceptions of the laity, their perceptions of and relationships with diocesan and agency leaders including bishops, and desire/vision/hopes that pastors have for the work of charity and justice in their parishes.

Pastors overwhelmingly reported that they spend most of their time on administrative matters. Those include day-to-day life of the parish and diocesan demands. They handle routine administration, supervision of parish employees and volunteers, plant management and financial matters. They spend significantly less time engaged in pastoral and sacramental work. While a minority reported that they found satisfaction in administrative work the majority saw the demands of administration keeping them from what they feel that are really trained to do—the sacramental and pastoral care of the people. Pastors reported that a significant source of stress for them is that most have little or no real training for much of the administrative work that takes up so much of their time. Parish administration receives almost no emphasis in seminary formation and very often priests receive little preparation as associate pastors to become pastors. In parishes that could afford to hire business administrators that was usually significantly less of an issue. Pastors in those parishes reported higher levels of satisfaction with how they spend their days.

Pastors are affected by a number of issues surrounding them in their parishes, communities, and society in general. Within many parishes various issues arise from the diversity of people sitting in the pews. Many congregations now include people coming from a wide spectrum of demographics and from varying economic and political viewpoints. Many times, as well, they hold differing understandings of what it means to be Catholic in modern society and of what really are the priorities to which the Church calls them. Those understandings often affect their approaches not just to things such as prayer and worship but also to Catholic social teaching.

Secular political culture affects parishes and their responses to social issues. In the context of Catholic social teaching, categories such as liberal, progressive, moderate and conservative are of little relevance. However, contemporary polarizing political trends in American society do affect responses to any presentation of Catholic social teaching. Politics often creep into parishes in ways that may cause pastors to feel pressure to conform to prevailing local political attitudes even if that means ignoring or being at odds with the teaching of the Church. Pastors who attempt to speak prophetically from the Church's teaching often find themselves labeled politically. That can cause divisiveness in parish life – a sort of divisiveness that many pastors seek to avoid.

Other issues and trends cause pastors to lead cautious lives in regard to many things including Catholic social teaching. The sex abuse scandals continue to have effect. Many pastors perceive that those scandals have undermined the laity's faith in the priesthood. Many pastors report that they feel less trusted. Also, in various parts of the country, the Church is undergoing significant demographic change. In some areas parishes are experiencing declines in population. In others, numbers are rising. In many situations, the faces of the people are changing as new population groups move in. These changes bring an element of stress and uncertainty to parish life.

The issue of trust enters in as well with the perception by pastors that they are being watched by "orthodoxy police," conservative groups within the Church who watch pastors and report actions that they perceive to be "unorthodox" to the bishop or even to the Vatican. These groups are on the rise as conservative elements have focused on "traditional values" in American life in general. Often that vigilance by conservative groups is focused on liturgy but a priest who is perceived as "liberal" or "progressive" on social issues can find himself under report as well. In some cases pastors do not feel that they have the support of their bishops. Some have reported that, after preaching on the Church's teaching on particular social issues, they have received letters of reprimand from their

bishops or have even been called to the chancery to account for themselves. That builds a sense of insecurity among priests that can lead them to back off on any issue within the Church's teaching that might cause controversy. On the other hand, a large number of priests indicated that they feel that they have the trust and support of their bishops. Nevertheless, the "orthodoxy police" give them pause as well.

Seminary education and formation during the past 50 years has had effect upon priests' understanding, support, and commitment to Catholic social teaching. The bottom line is that for a number of reasons priests have very little training to be heralds of that teaching. While the last half of the 20th century, the time period in which all of the interviewed priests went through seminary formation, was a time of monumental change both in U.S. society and in the Church, seminary formation focused on the latter but not on the former to any great extent. Indeed, changes in the Church in the wake of Vatican II led to an ambience of confusion that exacerbated the lack of formation in the Church's social teaching. For about 20 years, seminaries were primarily trying to understand their roles in the Church and the implications of Vatican II for priestly formation. Because of that, the previous trend of ignoring Catholic social teaching or approaching it with very narrow focus continued.

Priests in formation just before Vatican II, in the 1950's, reported their seminary experience as being that of a very closed system with no exposure to Catholic social teaching or the issues of the day. They were left with the understanding that such things were not central to the work of the Church and its priests. During the 1960's and the 1970's seminarians did experience more exposure to social issues, as seminaries became aware, although in a confused way in the wake of Vatican II, of the world around them. However, with the confused search for renewed mission and vision of seminary formation, those issues had little impact. Further, seminary formation was focused on trying to understand many other things in the Church during that time of change. Thus while seminarians did see more of what was going on in the world around them there was little effort to guide them into reflection on those issues in the context of Catholic social teaching.

In the United States, the concepts of social sin and unjust economic and social systems did develop more fully in the 1970's and in the 1980's. Various papal encyclicals published during those times aided that development. However there was little integration of those concepts with the Church's theology of charity and the liturgy. Where linkage and integration did occur it was largely in the area of moral theology rather than within the context of Catholic social teaching. Indeed a certain hierarchy of sins seems to have emerged with those understood to be

moral sins at the top and those understood as social issues often controversially at lower levels of importance. That results, for example, in priests being strongly encouraged to be outspoken on abortion, which many see as the primary moral issue of our day, but to hold off on capital punishment, which often is viewed more as a social or even a political issue, in spite of the Church's consistent pronouncements in recent decades. Deeper systemic linkages between those and other life issues are often resisted or even ignored. According to the respondents to the Pastor Project that tendency has been reinforced, in recent years, in seminary training. From the 1990's to date where there has been reflection on social sin in seminaries, abortion has been the "great moral sin." Other issues that typically are central to the concerns of Catholic Charities and parish social ministry within the context of Catholic social teaching are viewed as less important in the hierarchy of evil confronting the faithful in modern society. Hunger, access to adequate health care, education, domestic violence, immigration issue and all the rest are important. However, they do not carry the imperative that moral forces within the Church have brought to abortion and a few other moral issues.

In speaking of seminary formation mention needs to be made of two other groups of priests now serving as pastors in churches in the U.S. First are those who were born in the United States, but who went through seminary formation in Europe. Among the respondents to the Pastor Project who are part of this group, that formation happened primarily in Belgium and in Rome. Second, and especially important now that many dioceses in the U.S. are bringing in missionary priests, are those who are both foreign born and foreign trained. Such priests interviewed for the Pastor Project included priests from Canada, Argentina, India, Ireland, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, Venezuela, and Vietnam.

American pastors who were educated abroad experienced the same sorts of trends within seminaries as did their counterparts in the United States. There was, however, a significant factor that may affect their comfort with and openness to implementing Catholic social teaching within their parishes. This is the fact that while they were well prepared intellectually and spiritually for the priesthood, they often returned to the U.S. lacking cultural preparation and awareness. That was especially true of those in seminary in the 1960's and in the 1970's, when significant changes happened in American society while they were away.

Foreign born/educated priests reported experiences in seminary formation that differed from those of their American counterparts. Most of them have had significant exposure to poverty and to a lack of basic human rights. Many had more exposure to Catholic social teaching. However, like their American counterparts, they have had little training in the integration of that teaching with the pastoral

and the sacramental life of the Church. Further, foreign born priests face the challenge of their own integration into the Church in the United States. They tend to be less likely to take on systems or to be outspoken out of their desire to fit in and to be accepted by their dioceses and by the people they serve. They also indicated less awareness of political, economic and social systems within the U.S. That, too, inclines them to be less likely to challenge those systems or even to vote.

The dynamics of pastors' daily lives and the backgrounds and preparation of priests are just two factors, although significant ones, that affect the integration of the social teaching of the Church into parish life and ministry. Of major significance as well are the models of ministry that exist within parishes. Generally speaking, fragmented models of ministry prevail.



*In all of the Pastor Project interviews, only one priest spoke of an integrated model within his parish, where social ministry was understood as a natural outgrowth of solid education and formation. To him, the Sunday liturgy was the place where the serving community came to be nourished to go back out and continue to serve. However he faced the difficulty of paradigm shifting among his parishioners. They, having functioned in the context of fragmented models of ministry before, tended to see parish life in segments. Nevertheless he continues to work to call his pastoral council to view the parish as an integrated whole. He calls his staff to integrated and strategic planning and collaboration. He believes as well that, little by little, his parishioners will grow into an integrated approach in which the Catholic social teaching will become part of all aspects of parish life and ministry.*

Most respondents to the Pastor Project spoke of social ministry as consisting of committees or programs within the parish. Most involved direct aid. Some were involved in community efforts such as providing food and shelter for the homeless. However, ministries involved in these efforts often function with little or no connection with one another and without overall coordination in the context of common purpose, mission or vision.

Fragmentation exists as well on other levels within dioceses. Parishes working together are often the exception rather than the rule. This is not necessarily due to lack of desire to work on programs together. Often an infrastructure supporting cooperative effort just doesn't exist. Also, due to the structures of parish systems, pastors tend to be loners. In an age of declining numbers of priests, each pastor "calls the shots" with his parish and is generally overwhelmed by work. Reasons for this range from training and inclination to parish culture. However



an important outgrowth is that they tend not to initiate intra-parish effort and cooperation. Examples of this fragmentation often do exist on the diocesan level as well. Diocesan offices, Catholic Charities agencies, schools, and other diocesan ministries typically function with lack of coordination and common vision. Many parishes dioceses often lack good strategic planning. Furthermore, in many dioceses, tactical planning is left to individual offices functioning without coordination with others. This leads to competition for resources, duplication of efforts and programs, and greater disconnect not only with one another but with parishes as well. Frustrated pastors often respond to such scenarios on the diocesan level with passive resistance or with the attitude that they can function best by staying as far away from the chancery as possible. When cooperation is mandated, often their response is a grudging and cautious one.

There are a number of other issues within parishes that cause pastors to be reluctant about the implementation of Catholic social teaching in the context of parish life and ministry. Pastors often see a lack of desire among parishioners to be challenged to put their faith in action in support of the social mission of the Church. Some even find resistance to basic works of charity. Another issue arises from the fear of being politically labeled. It is difficult in the context of American politics to bring parishioners to an understanding that Catholic social teaching is meant to function on a level apart from partisan politics as a challenging force for all parties. Often, in parish settings, the “prophet” is without honor.

Related to that is another issue for parishes that derives from the lack of understanding and appreciation for Catholic social mission. The social teaching of the Church continues to be one its “best kept secrets.” Catholics in the pews typically have limited and even misguided understanding of a call to anything beyond basic charity. They get a variety of information on systemic issues that, more often than not, leave them confused about Catholic teaching and often looking at that teaching through secular political lenses. Catholic media, including the proliferation of websites claiming to speak within the framework of orthodoxy have not helped matters because many of them tend to be narrow in focus and agenda. Some are even antagonistic to elements of Catholic social teaching. Such things lead to little consensus on social issues and, at times, even to resistance to the Church’s teachings on issues. Compounding that, respondents to the Pastor Project reported the perception that there is little guidance from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. They perceive bishops making statements when together and then going home and doing their own thing within their individual dioceses. In the end, these issues and others leave pastors feeling that they are alone in their parishes without any real support or guidance that could

help them into a coherent approach to implementing Catholic social mission in the faith lives and ministries of their people.

Many Pastor Project respondents suggested that Catholic Charities agencies typically have not helped matters much.



*Many pastors report only an indistinct understanding of what Catholic Charities does in their dioceses. In addition, as with all diocesan offices, pastors see Catholic Charities as being there to support them in their work within parishes. However, as was reported almost universally, pastors perceive diocesan and Catholic Charities offices as seeking primarily to bring them into conformity, support and participation in their programs – programs mostly devised and implemented without input from or consultation with the very pastors who are expected to buy into them.*

One often hears, from pastors, comments such as, “So-and-so sits in an office in the diocese coming up with all sorts of programs that are supposed to be good for my parish with no idea of the realities of my parish.” As a result pastors often see programs devised by charities agencies as irrelevant to the lives of their people. That issue points to a significant disconnect on the level of vision.



*Many Catholic Charities’ agency personnel take their vision from the broad view of Catholic social teaching. Pastors tend to build their visions upon the realities of the lives of the people in their parishes. Between those two visions their often lies a gulf of lack of connection and misunderstanding.*

There are exceptions to that gulf, but those are more the exception rather than the rule. Some pastors who have organized Parish Social Ministry (PSM) in their parishes do see more of connection between Catholic Charities and the lives of their parishioners. However, that is not true in all parishes with PSM. Pastors who have had parishioners go through the JustFaith formation program sponsored by Catholic Charities USA often find that they have no structures within their PSM programs to direct the heightened awareness and energy of JustFaith formed parishioners. That happens because many PSM programs lack a comprehensive approach to social ministry.

Another exception is a pastor who has a heightened awareness of Catholic social teaching from his formation, his identity as a priest, and/or his life experience in service to people. They are those who are most likely to offer parish programs, although they are most often charitable in nature. Most pastors, with heightened awareness of Catholic social teaching, lack experience in community organizing or in taking on systemic injustice in a coordinated way. Thus they tend not to

push their congregations in those areas even though they may be sympathetic to such activity. These pastors indicated a desire for Catholic Charities to take the lead on the diocesan level.

Ultimately the pastors who responded to the Pastor Project expressed a desire to have Catholic Charities see them as partners in the mission of Jesus in the world. Because of their lack of training in the social teaching of the Church and its implementation, pastors expressed a desire that Catholic Charities provide guidance and organizational support for such a partnership. They ask for teaching tools to help their parishioners come to greater awareness of Catholic social teaching. Such tools need to be more accessible than the official documents coming from the hierarchy.

## Strategies

***Goal:** To build better relationships between Catholic Charities' personnel and pastors, so that they might collaborate on Catholic social mission and so that that mission might be more fully integrated into the life of parishes.*

1. *The initiative must come from you.* The reality is that pastors, for the most part, will not do that. The basic work of administration and sacramental and pastoral care generally has them already overwhelmed. Further, many do not see Catholic social teaching as central to their work as priests. It is up to you to do the initial work of relationship building.
2. *Start where they are.* The parish vision must come from them. Talk to them. Listen to them. Try to learn what they see as important for the people of their parishes. All pastors have hearts for charity and justice. Let the pastor tell you how he would like to see those things developing within his parish community and start there in support of his vision.
  - a. Don't let the word "should" be part of your thinking about or discussion with pastors. Each time you use the word "should" in regards to what a pastor thinks, understands, sees as important, or does, you are imposing your own vision and expectations. Work to understand not what "should be" but "what is" in the lives and work of pastors and their parishes.
  - b. You may find that things move very slowly. The important thing is that they are moving. Be willing to put time and effort into activities that may produce few results in the short run but which may hold possibility for long term benefit. Very often, within parishes, the work of charity and justice starts as a "mustard seed."
3. *Spend time with pastors and other priests who work in parishes.* If you spend most of your time in your office working on programs that you think will

work, you will not be successful. Let priests show you and teach you, so that you might come to show and teach them.

- a. Venues for meeting with priests are limited but take advantage of those that are there. On the deanery level you might contact the deans of your diocese and ask to be permitted to come to talk to priests about what they see as the needs of their parishes and deaneries. Or you might ask individual pastors to meet with you at their parishes.
- b. However you meet with priests be clear about how much time you are requesting. Be clear about your agenda. Let them know that you are asking for their input and advice. Come to your meeting with questions not solutions. Listen a lot. Take notes. Go back to your office and think about what you heard. Allow yourself to be changed by what you hear.

When visiting a parish, if you have time, you might ask the pastor to give you a tour. Let him show you what is going on. Often this is a good way to get him to talk about his hopes, dreams and vision. You may, as well, pick up hints on ways in which you might be able to link up in support of his hopes, dreams and vision as they touch Catholic social mission.

- c. Double check what you hear. When meeting with groups such as a deanery or with individual pastors do a brief summation of your discussion at the end of the meeting. State what you heard and ask them to make sure that you are on the right track with what they said. You might even ask for permission to contact them later with more questions or for more input as you think about what they have told you. This will go a long way toward building good relationships with pastors since, in general, many are not used to diocesan personnel, seeking their input and advice.
4. *Do offer workshops (preferably no more than one day long, with lunch) for priests and deacons.* However be careful not to waste their time with what they already know. If you waste their time once it is unlikely that they will come back. Make sure that the levels of the workshops are clearly stated. In that manner those who have foundational knowledge won't find themselves sitting through a 101 level when they thought that they would be receiving more advanced material. Also, offer workshops that are pertinent to the real issues and challenges that pastors are facing in their parishes – issues and challenges that through listening and relationship you will have learned about from them.

- a. Priests and deacons respond well to workshops in which they learn new information, have opportunities to share with each other, and have time to be with each other. Therefore, don't do all the talking. Priests, especially, respond well to workshops in which they get to talk.
  - b. Be aware that there are times when it is better to bring priests and deacons or priests, deacons and lay leaders together in the same workshop. There are times as well when it is better that they are structured just for priests. For better or for worse, pastors and priests are in unique leadership roles that require acknowledgement. That is a basic reality of the Church. Be aware of how you can access that reality to good ends.
5. *Do take the lead where pastors ask you to do so.* The Project indicated that there are pastors and priests out there with heightened awareness of Catholic social mission but who lack community organizing or advocacy experience. Provide leadership and training for them. Involve them in ways that enable you to work with them as supportive partners. Give them the tools they can use to live out the prophetic aspects of their priestly vocations. As they learn they will bring their people with them.
  6. *Become better schooled on the deeper theological, ecclesial understanding of the relationship of the diocese and the local parish.* Keep in mind that the principle of subsidiarity, which states that all things should be done on the lowest possible level, is part of that understanding. Within that principle the parish should be the frontline of action. Many pastors do not see diocesan and Catholic Charities personnel as understanding that. It should, as well, be a primary force in informing higher levels – diocesan offices – of how those offices need to form their understandings of their missions and tasks in the work of ministry. In essence, each higher level is there both to support the lower with its function: the diocese supports the parish. Then the higher level takes on as its responsibility those things that lower level cannot do. How well is that operating in your diocese?
  7. *Don't forget permanent deacons.* They can be a significant resource in those dioceses in which a good number of permanent deacons are present. Priests are ordained primarily to the sacramental life of the Church. Deacons are ordained primarily to the service aspects of the Church's work. Both reflect aspects of the work of Jesus in his ministry on earth. Explore possibilities for including instruction on the social teaching of the Church into diaconate formation. Other possibilities might include workshops and other training opportunities as part of the continuing education of deacons already ordained.

8. *Become a resource for parishes.* Develop and make available to pastors for their parishes, clear and concise statements of Catholic social teaching. Develop concise and accessible materials to help in basic instruction on Catholic social mission. Also, use opportunities in which people might be inspired to ask questions about what the Church teaches. Those often occur when there are major issues in the news. Become a primary source of solid information on Church teaching on those issues. However, again, make it accessible and readable. Be concise and put it into the language of the people.
  - a. Building upon this sort of information it may then be possible to move on to become a resource in helping parishes to understand how to respond within the context of its ministry to Catholic social teaching. Again meet them where they are. Based upon what they want to do provide clear and concise information on things such as the components of parish social ministry and how they might fit into the mission of the parish. Make sure that it relates to the gospel. How does implementing any aspect of Catholic social teaching, even on the most elementary levels further the work of Jesus in the evangelization and care of his people? How does it draw people more fully into living the gospel? How is it related to the sacraments and the life to which the sacraments call us? How can it help the priest to serve the good of the people of his parish and possibly the surrounding community?
9. *Accept a basic reality about direct mailings.* They often end up as wasted postage. They can be effective tools if used wisely, judiciously and infrequently. Keep them simple and within what you know, from your contact with priests, will be of interest to them. Never try to build support for new initiatives using mailings. If a good foundation is not already there in a priest's awareness and interest it will not be built through a mailing. A basic rule of thumb is that if your mailing does not catch the priest's interest when he opens it it will just end up in the trash or on a stack of things that he might get to someday.
10. *As pastors become interested in building within their parishes the infrastructure for parish social ministry access to training programs is helpful.* Provide information on training/formation programs within your diocese and others such as Catholic Charities USA Parish Social Ministry Regional Training and JustFaith. Be clear about what these training programs are designed to do, and work to help parishes to know when such programs might be right for them.

- a. On more foundational levels stay real with what is possible in developing such programs.
 

Don't try to build participation in hopes that it will somehow have effect in parishes that are resistant. Work to help parishes to get to places, in their integration of Catholic social teaching into their ministries, in which those who are trained will have fertile ground in which to work.

Keep most training sessions simple and focused. Half-day or one-day trainings for particular ministries and awareness such as domestic violence, women in crisis pregnancies, culture of poverty, immigrant concerns, family issues, legislative advocacy, methods for direct service, etc, can do much to help a parish to lay foundations. Here one can play off the usual fragmented models of ministry in most parishes by training laity to do focused aspects of social ministry. Just plant the seeds and be ready later to assist in building more integrated models when the parish is ready for your help.

Always take your cue from the pastor on what is needed for his people. Help him to come to see you as supporting and fulfilling the needs of his parish.
11. *Explore possibilities for bringing parishes with similar interests together in hands-on ministry efforts.* This has the good effect of building collaboration and of bringing the people of parishes into direct contact and relationship with the poor. It helps as well to build stronger sense of and commitment to community involvement. In one diocese the diocesan Parish Social Ministry office sponsors an annual Habitat for Humanity house build inviting local parishes to participate. It uses a vehicle that is already attractive to large numbers of people to plant yet another seed for social ministry within parishes. Another example is a mobile Loaves and Fishes program. Starting from an effort by a Catholic Worker group to feed homeless day laborers in a particular city, it has expanded to a coordinated multi-parish program with parishes organizing hundreds of parishioners to cover the days of the week for which they are responsible. Catholic Charities agencies can provide coordination that enables people of parishes to do good on very large scales.
12. *In parishes with a PSM director on staff, work with those ministers to develop means of building cooperative, integrated approaches to PSM within their parishes.* Explore means of bringing together the usual fragmented models of ministry found in many parishes and of involving parish organizations such as the Knight of Columbus, ladies societies, youth ministry, and others who

have service and charity as part of their mission into coordinated effort with one another.

13. *Facilitate the formation and convening of parish PSM directors (staff and volunteer) in your diocese into cluster groups to share ideas, best practices and inspiration.* Periodically invite pastors, other priests, and deacons to participate as those groups work on vision and directions in ministry for their communities. Allow them as well to be sources of information for you. These groups can become means for occasional convening in larger settings for dialogue on issues affecting the world, the diocese and the local Church.
14. *Explore possibilities for working collaboratively with other diocesan offices* such as Religious Education, Youth Ministry, Respect Life, Stewardship, and others to provide parish groups with opportunities for works of charity and service within the context of integrated models of ministry.
15. *Avoid one-size-fits-all approaches to ministries and programs of charity and justice on the parish level.* While there are common elements in all parishes, those are more on the level of foundational teaching and call to mission and service. Beyond those, other factors such as history, diversity, ethnicity, location (urban, suburban, rural), pastors' preferences and so on cause parishes to need, not programs given from "on high," but templates upon which they can build programs and ministries of charity and justice based on what works for them. Handbooks containing suggested materials including scripture passages, sample brochures, suggested guidelines, prayer materials, basic and accessible summaries of Church teaching on particular charities and justice issues and so on are helpful on the parish level. They allow parishes to start from the ground up. They also enable the pastor to delegate to staff and volunteers.
16. *Become familiar with how to access demographic data from the United States Census bureau.* A curious American cultural reality as noted by figures such as Jacob Riis in the 1890's, who was instrumental in the "discovery" of poverty in American cities with his book *How the Other Half Lives* and Michael Harrington a mid 20th century sociologist who noted that the poor in the U.S. often tend to be hidden in our midst. Census data can help you, and pastors know who is really there in the diocese and within parishes. The census bureau does updates, so much of the information is quite current. You can access – on very local levels – information on income, ethnicity, age, language spoken at home, household composition, and other information that can be very useful in building an understanding of the situations of the people in your diocese. It can help as well to move both you and

pastors beyond what you think you see based upon your own observations and assumptions to what and who is really there.

17. *Pay attention to the needs of the growing population of immigrant priests.* Catholic Charities can become a vital participant in developing and implementing for them programs of formation and acculturation. As with native born priests, meet them where they are and begin working there in collaboration with them.
18. *Don't work in a vacuum.* Share your experiences and best practices through Catholic Charities USA, especially through the professional interest sections.