

# Listening Session Results

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**Keep the Faith  
Change The Church** VOTF

**NOTHING is  
Impossible with  
GOD**

Four challenging questions about our church, greeted the participants of the March Listening session at the Bordini Center FVTC. Professional, facilitator, Carol Tyler, a retired instructor from FVTC and a highly qualified facilitator, walked us through small group sharing and then writing tasks to allow for individuals to learn from others and then independently write their personal conclusions.

Eleven, different parishes from the Fox Valley were represented by parish members who came out of concern for their church. Recent changes in the church and how they are affecting people's connectedness to the church brought not only awareness but participants also offered a variety of solutions.

How would you answer the question: "If someone asked you how the Roman Catholic Church views the role of women in the Church what would you say?" The overwhelming comments concluded there was deference given to men both in leadership allowed and gifts re-

ceived. In an attached question on women priests, the group was in total favor of ordaining women.

From question #3, participants described a wide range of involvement of the laity in Church matters. Some described involvement, some observed that involvement is for a chosen few, and many described a lack of any involvement because it was uninvited and unwelcome.

The final answer was to identify and prioritize the American Bishop's agenda this year in November. Ten areas were suggested: expand priesthood to women and married priests, emphasize inclusiveness and ecumenical thinking, social justice, reduction of authoritarian management, parish autonomy, women's role in the church, youth, stem cell research, adult education and looking for successful church models that are following the mission of Jesus Christ, and copy it! For a full 22 page report, go to our website.

<http://www.bohlightofchrist.org>

## Looking for Father McBrien?

Many people are disappointed that Father McBrien has been removed from the Green Bay Diocesan newsletter. Considering that Beacon of Hope had over 900 people come to see him at our first speaker presentation, we thought many of you may want to read an article he wrote recently called **The Nature of Human Error**.

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/essays-theology/nature-human-error>

# Parish Vitality Project Focuses on the People of God

By Bill Kessenich

As a member of St. Bernard Parish, Appleton, one of three parishes (including St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Manitowoc, and Holy Family Parish, Brillion), that have participated in the Parish Vitality initiative, I have been able to observe first hand the results of 18 months of this project. The Parish Vitality Project was initiated by a concerned group of adult Catholics who felt the Green Bay Catholic Diocese was losing many young people to other denominational practices and thus putting the future of our Catholic parishes in jeopardy. While each parish chosen to pilot the initiative implemented the project in its own style, the common theme areas for improvement included Fellowship, Music, Teens & Youth, Technology, Scripture, Schools, Homilies, Seniors, and Young Adults.

This group got commitment and support from Bishop Zubik while he was in his last year in Green Bay (2007), and also studied what makes successful Catholic parishes using research from the Paul Wilkes book, Excellent Catholic Parishes. The group also put their money where their mouth was and anteed up financial support through the Catholic Foundation to make improvements in technology for worship spaces in the designated parishes, and to fund other initiatives that have a proven track record of driving parish participation.



St. Bernard started its initiative with a parish panel of baptized adults who put together a plan to demonstrate hospitality and emphasize the importance of the individual parishioner through a program of greeting and personal name tags for parish members and visitors. Hospitality was seen as a key ingredient of being a welcoming parish! A strong connection with the social justice mission of the parish was emphasized throughout, in particular through messages delivered in homilies by our pastor, Fr. Dennis Ryan. Fr. Ryan has committed to enabling St. Bernard's to become a model of welcoming "all."

The Parish Vitality Program is unique in the Diocese in that it has been a grass roots project from the start and witnesses to the Vatican II principle of an involved and active laity. I believe that Parish Vitality deserves support because it makes explicit the "priesthood of the laity" and emphasizes the image of the Church as the "People of God." This is especially apparent in the initiatives that emphasize outreach to youth, teens, and young adults. After 18 months, the results of the initiative so far hold much hope that the next generation of young people will value their Catholic heritage.

If you are interested in knowing more about Parish Vitality, please contact Jim Hyde at 920-731-7277 or e-mail him at [JHYDE@NEW.RR.COM](mailto:JHYDE@NEW.RR.COM).

# Thoughts on the Absence of Catholic Church Leadership

By Tom Wiltzius, PhD

The recent dismissal of Catholic Eucharistic minister Ruth Kolpack by Bishop Robert Morlino of the Catholic Diocese in Madison WI will be seen as most egregious by contemporary members of the Catholic Church, both laity and ordained. Such terminations are not new in recent years, nor should they be seen as incidental.

As the Catholic Church continues to diminish in size, with its message and influence marginalized, at least two realities within the Church begin to appear. One reality comes from the traditionalists. Their hope for a “smaller, purer Catholic Church” will be realized. Blind to the purpose of the Church, the ordained and faithful who seek this route prize adherence to select Catholic past practices and absolute authority to the ordained hierarchy as a way to salvation.

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While their conclusion may be right, the tenets of their premise are questionable.

As the progressive activists within the

Church continue to be marginalized, they tend to either organize to preserve strength of influence or they leave quietly, seeking a spiritual home more enlightened, or seeking no home at all. Formalized groups such as Call to Action, Voice of the Faithful, Beacon of Hope-Light of Christ, and Corpus represent such groups in the United States where the most vocal of the Catholic Progressive movements seem to exist.

Often blind to the reality of Church history and practice, the faithful and ordained who seek this route prize enlightened leadership practices and inclusive, shared leadership roles with the ordained as a way to effective Catholic Church ministry and growth, while also contributing to individual salvation.

While their conclusion may be right, the tenets of their premise also beg examination.

## Who is in control?

The spate of notable public scrutiny and subsequent actions by the Bishops of the Catholic Church should make it clear that the Church hierarchy is presently in control. It is also clear that members of the hierarchy are leveraging the traditionalist movement within the Church as a hedge in their desire to retain the controls the hierarchy has maintained for centuries.

What is lost on them through preservationist thinking is the likelihood of losing a viable Catholic Church in the future. The very purpose of Christ’s Church was not to provide a vehicle for control by few over the behaviors of many, but to offer a place of community where the consistent and relevant teaching of Christ’s message can be found.

Today, the hierarchy is heavily invested in ensuring institutional control of member behavior; they rely on a mode of leadership no longer relevant to the membership. When challenged, this historic form of leadership does not tend to seek enlightenment or relevance but rather digs in, retrenches, and asserts control in a manner consistent with terminations of the “misguided”.

It is anathema to them that anyone should question their authority and decisions, and they

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behave that way. What the faithful see is what the faithful will get until and unless the cycle is broken. Only the most enlightened of the traditionalists within the ordained and faithful will see the dangerous direction the current Catholic Church hierarchy is heading.

Does reason require reasoned response?

The same public scrutiny focused on the Catholic Church due to the misdeeds of a small number of ordained clergy who engaged in sexual

***Significant changes to institutional governance require justification, motivation, resources, movement and sustainment***

or financial misconduct, and the subsequent (albeit delayed) response of the hierarchy, had given hope to many progressively-oriented Catholic faithful that there would be Church

reform. Adding reason to faith, equipped with a level of theological knowledge never before seen within the faithful body, these Catholic laity and ordained believed that simple enlightenment of the hierarchy through informed logic and a sharing of modern leadership practices would lead to changes of governance within the Church.

What was lost on them was an understanding of what sharing control might mean for those who would have to share such control. These faithful see an “upside” to shared governance, but few see the “downside”.

Significant changes to institutional governance require justification, motivation, resources, movement and sustainment.

While progressive thinkers can readily point to the needs for change of governance (justification), they rarely create a shared vision

and plan (motivation), offer the means and methods (resources), provide the guidance and direction (movement) or offer a methodology to preserve the dynamic of relevant change (sustainment).

Will Catholic change occur?

Change is constant and inevitable. It occurs everywhere and at all times. It can show as evolution or revolution, but it is always, always present. While too rapid and tempestuous for some, change seems to stand still or even retract for others.

In her two thousand year journey, the now seemingly ponderous Catholic Church has seen days of revolution and evolution. She is seeing change now.

And as a result of change, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church has been at times praised and at times vilified...and at other times, both. Individually or collectively, members of the Church hierarchy have brought about significant positive social change; and at other times preserved or participated in injustices. Judgments of behavior should not be confused with change itself.

In Catholic tradition, when community is formed with God, recognition begins with prayer, “Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit...” and continues with “...as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.” The beginning segment of this call to prayer is designed to center the faithful to a purpose and relationship to God as Trinity. The second phrase is designed to ensure that such purpose remain forever.

In the process of change, preservation of purpose is essential, while preservation of form is impossible. In the preservation of purpose, sustainability of the Church is

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founded. The change of form in the Church ensures relevancy for its members. Both sustainability and relevancy are required for any institution's vitality and longevity, and the Catholic Church is no exception.

The early Church was, as the Church of today is, of single purpose; in fact the word Church in its present form is derived from early Greek *kyriake*, which etymologically translates "belonging to the Lord."

From the beginning to the present, the purpose of the Catholic Church remains the same, but her form and governance have seen many changes.

In an historical perspective of 2,000 years, the changes to Church policy and practices adopted during what is commonly called Vatican II from the 1960's seems all too recent. The document of *Lumen Gentium*, providing for inclusion of the laity in Church affairs and giving shared governance, has yet to be fully accepted by some, while many wait impatiently for full effect.

#### What shapes change?

Expectations for change only occur in the present. They can be developed from awareness, informed understanding, education, positive and invigorated vision, and from common bonds. Expectation, desire and demand for change also can arise from pain, anger, want, and self-preservation or selfish motives. Neither set of change criteria is mutually exclusive.

Neither evolutionary change nor revolutionary change is easy.

Those eager for rapid change are tested with impatience, having to tolerate perceived and often real injustice. They judge slow response as non-responsiveness.

Those wishing to preserve the value of what presently is, or return to a perceived value of what may have been, are tested with tolerance and adjustment. They often judge rapid response as reckless and unwarranted.

These change expectations demonstrate the polarity of change movement...always a push or pull; always a resistance or diversion. Change, although always occurring, is often met with challenge.

#### How will Catholic change occur?

Sustainable, relevant change must occur from a shared vision that recognizes both common purpose and meaningful needs. Unless change is necessitated as a response to significant threat, this process is and should be deliberate. The change process yielding best results is slow and durable if inclusive; the process is slow and weak if it is not inclusive. Rapid change, unless required, is often unsustainable and can leave irreparable direct or collateral damage.

Change almost always means a shift in the balance of control, and it is difficult for those who wish to preserve strength

and power to release control to those who wish to gain relevancy through shared governance.

In the Catholic Church today, the Church hierarchy has dominant control, as they have had for centuries. This was not always the case, and Church historians are quick to point out that for many prior centuries, there was at best a symbiotic relationship of Church control between the Catholic hierarchy and members of the various aristocracies in power at times.

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If those desiring change in the Catholic Church were to acknowledge that the purpose of the Church is immutable and that the changes they desire are that of form, then a focus to bringing about such change(s) is possible. Focus alone does not bring assurance of change, but it is a place to start.

Focus brings into play common awareness, understanding, knowledge, acknowledgments, and assumptions; and once exercised leads to common vision. Dialogue becomes necessary. Patience becomes requisite. And leadership becomes a premium.

#### Does Catholic leadership exist?

Today Catholic leadership exists in several forms. The Church hierarchy is the governing or institutional form of leadership, while from the ranks of the ordained and lay faithful influential forms of leadership exist.

Credible data suggests that the Church has

***Rapid change, unless required, is often unsustainable and can leave irreparable direct or collateral damage***

stagnated in her overall population growth. This fact is not disconcerting to those who seek a smaller, “purer” Catholic Church. However, those who seek constancy of purpose for the Church and relevancy to the times recognize that growth is a reflection of vitality, and stagnation is cause for alarm.

This polarity has created dialogue in the Church, and leaders are emerging to focus on this matter, just as recently leaders had to emerge and focus on matters of clergy sex abuse and financial misconduct. While the responsiveness of the Church hierarchy in acknowledging and addressing the latter issues has been called into question, the fact is that

changes to Catholic Church policies and practices are underway.

Leadership tested is leadership revealed...and many times judged and reviled.

The Catholic Church today is a global Christian denomination. Its size and scope make demands from governing leaders that few organizations can fathom. The most knowledgeable and articulate proponents of governance change reside in lands with small percentages of the faithful, and it is from among these small-numbered regions that both the institutional and influential leaders emerge.

The institutional leaders (the ordained) are seldom, if at all, schooled in modern democratic leadership principles. Principles of inclusion, shared and servant leadership behaviors, empowerment, and delegated responsibility with accountability are lost on many if not most of them.

On the other hand, many if not most of the educated faithful residing in industrialized countries have been schooled in modern leadership principles that serve the institutions they work in, the communities they live in, and the governments they empower. They expect transparency, access, inclusion, input opportunity, influence, participation, and forms of shared governance as a matter of course. Such is what defines relevancy for them.

To revile the Catholic Church hierarchy for leadership knowledge and skills they lack may serve no purpose but to inflame feelings and lead to retrenchment, slowing the time frame for relevant, sustainable changes in Church form and governance. Suggesting that Church leaders should find more effective tools to bring about a stronger, growing Church might prove more fruitful.

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Leadership is love at its best.

While leadership can be reflected in defined behaviors, it can be summarized as Christ's greatest calling to his followers. In fact it is His commandment – to love. Christ as God, as Son, as founder of the Church on earth called His followers to love one another, knowing such love would ultimately be a reflection of His love for the Father and therefore the faithful's love of the Father, too.

We are told repeatedly by example and behavior by Christ and through the Holy Spirit's movement in the New Testament what love is. Recall words like patient, kind, understanding, forgiving, enemies, children, sacrificing, and giving generously. Recall actions such as visiting/caring for the sick, visiting the jailed, feeding the poor, and using one's talents as examples of loving behavior.

Leadership at its best is love and as such is servant leadership...feed my flock, feed my lambs.

*If* the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, and all those who wish to lead change for relevant and beneficial gain, come together in love and not in enmity, with focus on how to more deeply and fully love others, then changes will occur through the grace of the Holy Spirit.

When leadership focus turns from what Christ calls Catholics (and all Christians) to do...love one another...then change is less likely to occur or be sustained. When the sheep are hungry and are not fed, the sheep will find food elsewhere.

*If* the focus of Catholic Church hierarchy is on preserving control and the focus of influential Church members is on sharing governance, the flock will not be fully fed.

*If* the focus of the institutional leaders of the Catholic Church is on itself or its dogmas, precepts, and doctrine, the flock will not be fully fed.

*If* the focus of governing leaders of the Catholic Church is behavioral adherence to codes, laws, and tradition, then the flock will not be fully fed.

A well-tended flock, fully fed, will grow, be healthy and respond fully to the calls of the shepherd.

Love is key to Catholic Church change and health.

An absence of fully realized love within the Catholic Church can and does demonstrate itself frequently. At best, it is reflected when adult Catholic Church members leave the Church for "greener pastures". Or, at worst, it is when the lambs of the Church find alternative forms of fulfillment through experimentation with high-risk behavior.

An absence of love in the Catholic Church also demonstrates itself when internal strife is rampant and flares into school closings, parish mergers, or dismissal of leaders among the flock itself. The ordained and laity who push for change are most often simply guilty of pointing out that the sheep are hungry...and suggesting or demanding that it is feeding time.

Sometimes such demands for sheep to be fed from the laity and ordained are not gentle...the greater the hunger, the louder the call.

***Those who seek constancy of purpose for the Church and relevancy to the times recognize that growth is a reflection of vitality, and stagnation is cause for alarm***

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So, again, the recent dismissal of Catholic Eucharistic minister Ruth Kolpack by Bishop Morneli in Madison, Wisconsin will be seen as most egregious by contemporary, influential leaders within the Catholic flock, both laity and ordained. Such

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may also be seen as indicative of a Catholic Church leader having lost his focus. Because such actions seem all too regular, including the actions of other Bishops in St. Louis,

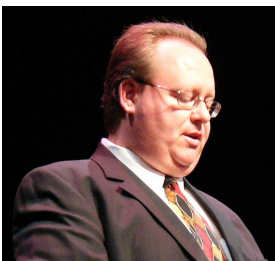
Green Bay, Boston, Los Angeles, Ireland, France, and countless other places, it is reasonable to conclude that focus has been lost throughout the Catholic Church hierarchy.

Let us not conclude in enmity, but realize that these men, these governing leaders of the Catholic Church, are deeply and fully loved by God and they are called to tend His flock through the Church Christ founded Himself. The scales on their eyes must be gently removed so that their focus can turn completely to tending the sheep and teaching the message and commandment of love. Those who would want change, a change of focus, a change of governance, a change of participation and inclusion, must themselves start with a focus on love. To do otherwise would simply substitute one misfocus for another.

Let us fully love one another.

## From the President

By Greg Stock



I'm sitting down to write this note on April 14<sup>th</sup>, the day before Tax Day. While some may fear Tax Day as the deadline for filing taxes (especially if they owe tax and have to write a check to

the IRS), others are rejoicing that their long days are behind them for another nine months (of course, these are the people that prepare tax returns for others).

Similarly, Easter was a time for Jesus' followers to fear (his arrest and crucifixion), but then rejoice (when they found out about his resurrection). To this day Christians everywhere rejoice

in Jesus' resurrection as a sign of new life and hope for our world.

Another item to rejoice about is the listening session Beacon of Hope sponsored on March 26<sup>th</sup>. We received some excellent feedback to our questions from the participants, as you will read about in another article in this newsletter.

I also received a call today from Bishop Ricken's office, and he and members of his staff will be setting up a meeting with some of the board members of Beacon of Hope in the next couple of months, probably June. We will send him the results of our latest listening session, see what comments he has, and discuss how Beacon of Hope can assist the Diocese.

**Rejoice in the Lord always..again I say rejoice!**

# Israel Trip: Essential for Today's Youth

By Tom Wiltzius, PhD

Faith does not rely on anything other than the Holy Spirit. He is the Giver of Life...the life Christ called all believers to through Him. Each person simply has to be open to the working of the Holy Spirit to come to faith. Faith comes to each of us at a time and a pace determined by the Holy Spirit and our readiness to accept.

As believers, people of faith, we are called to love one another and to teach the Word.

As parent-believers, we attempt to teach the Word in both active and passive ways. We try to model Christian behavior. We try to have our children receive formal religious education.

And if we are patient and modestly knowledgeable, we try to explain life's ups and downs through our own understanding of the Word.

Let me suggest that what we as parents, relatives, and close friends may be trying to do is to keep our children "open to the Holy Spirit". If that is the case, then let me offer an idea that I think will throw the doors to readiness open even further.

Having spent a great deal of my professional life with young adults, I have found that many if not most of them are on a journey to find interest, meaning, and purpose in life. For most of them, this journey will lead to these conditions sequentially.

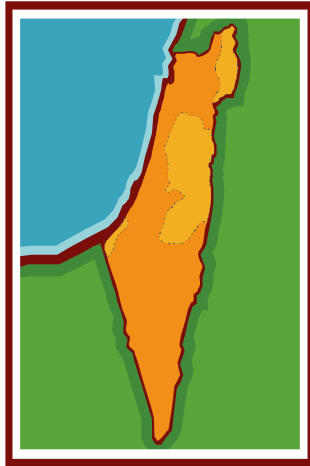
First will be interest, a sorting out of the pretend from the real. Next will come meaningfulness...the part of the journey to find value. And finally will come purpose...each person's effort to define his or her "reason for being" by adding to life through love. Somewhere in this threefold journey, the Holy

Spirit will come and if each person is open, the faith will come, too.

After several observations, I have come to the conclusion that many of us have had a catalyst in life that can throw open the doors, confirm readiness for faith, or both.

Because of what I

have seen myself on my trips to the Holy Land...to Israel...I have come to believe that such a trip for youth could indeed be the catalyst that many parents seek and should offer to their children. To see the caves that David hid from Saul in, to walk the paths that Christ walked on in Galilee, or on His journey to the cross, and to touch the stone that Jesus was laid on following His death...those are the experiences that throw the doors to readiness wide open. And then watch the Holy Spirit at work! I ask that you think and then ask yourself, free from fear, "What can I do to better prepare my child for their faith, for the Holy Spirit?"



## The Origin of GREEN

From the  
**Book of Genesis:**

**G**od created the Earth in its entirety;  
it was good.

**G**od created Adam and Eve,  
placing them in the Garden of Eden.

**H**e commissioned them  
to take charge of every living thing.

**G**od passed  
this responsibility  
through  
**A**braham  
to  
the **J**ews,  
the **M**uslims,  
the **C**hristians,  
and other  
seekers.

**G**od passes  
this responsibility  
to all people  
to restore the Earth  
to its original  
**B**eauty,  
**H**armony,  
and  
**P**urity.

Curtis L. Biggar 2009

*More than 1,500 men and women took part at the National Church Demonstration in Luzern/Switzerland on March 8, 2009. Delegates of the "Petition Vaticanum2" were between those who supported the call for more participation in the church and for an open minded church. For more information go to: [www.petition-vaticanum2.org](http://www.petition-vaticanum2.org)*