



# EFFECTIVE PASTORING IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

## Overview

This white paper is a summary from Catholic Leadership Institute's Virtual Symposium on Effective Pastoring for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The symposium, hosted November 30 - December 1, 2022, included 36 leaders from 15 arch/dioceses and various apostolates and religious communities across the United States and Canada. Their perspectives and experiences included that of clergy and laity. They brought experience and wisdom from parish, diocesan, academic, philanthropic, apostolate and movement contexts.

Catholic Leadership Institute intentionally invited the attendees based on their experience as pastors themselves, serving alongside a pastor in parish ministry, or providing support to pastors through ministry in an apostolate or the diocesan central administration.

Of all the topics addressed in Catholic Leadership Institute's virtual symposia over the past three years, this one had a particular resonance with the ministry of Catholic Leadership Institute. Beginning in 2001, Catholic Leadership Institute began contributing to the ongoing formation of priests especially through the governing office of pastor. More than two decades later, Catholic Leadership Institute has served close to a third of the diocesan priests in the United States. Building off this rich experience, Catholic Leadership Institute has been studying the unquestionable correlation between the role of the pastor and the overall vitality of a parish. With the support of major philanthropic partners such as the Lilly Endowment and the Porticus Foundation, Catholic Leadership Institute has delved deeper into this question, researching the preferences, passions, and perspectives of more than 1,700 priests and over 2,500 parishes in 50+ dioceses.

With this robust foundation and in consultation with leaders throughout the Church, Catholic Leadership Institute developed thought prompts and background for attendees to review and comment on, prior to the symposium. Attendees were invited with the following objectives outlined for the gathering:

1. Solicit feedback and input on the role of an effective pastor.
2. Learn and broaden perspectives on what the expectations of a pastor should be in our world today, especially with regards to ministerial context.
3. Identify practical ways for seminarians and priests to grow in "pastor readiness" in an apostolic age.

It should be mentioned from the outset of this paper that both this document and the symposium are not addressing the ministerial priesthood in general, but rather the specific office of pastor.

## Symposium Format and Preparation

The format of the symposium included an opening prayer and a general overview of the feedback received by participants prior to the symposium, followed by two rounds of breakout groups to maximize the dialogue and interaction. The participants then gathered to share individual comments via chat as well as high-level themes. Each small group was provided a facilitator and a scribe to ensure participants could fully engage in the experience. The process repeated on the second day.



In the preparatory reflection that Catholic Leadership Institute sent to each attendee to complete before participating in the symposium, participants were asked to read excerpts from Tradition specifically related to the duties of a pastor from the Code of Canon Law (Canons 515-534, Book II, Part II, Sec. II, Title III, Ch. VI), paragraphs 6 and 18 from the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (Presbyterorum Ordinis, 1965), and paragraphs 3-10, 66-71 from "The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelizing mission of the Church," from the Congregation for the Clergy's 2020 Instruction. In addition, participants were given an excerpt of "From Christendom to Apostolic Mission" by Msgr. James Shea: "Developing Pastoral Strategy for this Transitional Time." Equipped with these resources, participants were invited to suggest other documents or texts that would support conversation on this topic. They also were asked to articulate the purpose, values, key responsibility areas, and mindsets and skillsets most necessary for effective pastoring today. Lastly, they were able to share any feedback they had on changes to formation and ongoing formation based on the current and future landscape of pastoring.

This white paper seeks to summarize Catholic Leadership Institute's research on the topic and the most significant themes of feedback, propose a role description for a pastor today, and offer recommendations to help strengthen and equip our priests for proclaiming the Gospel today and tomorrow. This summary is the result of Catholic Leadership Institute's discernment of the dialogue and is not meant to imply universal agreement or approval by any particular attendee.

### **Context: Why This Topic?**

It all comes back to *father*. Some may read that sentence and bristle. After Lumen Gentium, the sexual abuse scandal, conferences and seminars about co-responsibility, can the growth or decline of a parish community really still be centered around the effectiveness of the pastor? The answer is, statistically, yes. For the average weekly mass-goer in North America today, the pastor seems to be the only factor that matters, not only in the parishioners' willingness to recommend their parish, but also in whether they believe the parish is helping them grow spiritually as Catholics. According to Catholic Leadership Institute's Disciple Maker Index (DMI), a parish-based survey that has reached over 500,000 Catholics in more than 2,500 parishes across 50 dioceses and 22 languages, parishioners are 11 times more likely to recommend their parish if they recommend their pastor, and more than four times more likely to say the parish is helping them grow spiritually. Beyond his leadership, other factors such as hospitality, preaching, and the quality with which Sunday Mass is celebrated are distant runners up. In the case of preaching and Mass, these factors are still directly connected to the pastor.

Leadership matters. Leaders matter. Despite the quest by some to find or develop "the pastor-proof" parish, it doesn't exist. A Catholic community of faith can persevere through bad leaders. It can hold on with no leader. But it can't *thrive* without a leader. The flock needs a shepherd. A good leader does not necessarily always make a good shepherd, but a good shepherd definitely needs to be a good leader, especially in today's return to an apostolic age.

While the priesthood has lost its luster to most baptized Catholics and the ever-increasing complexity of leadership has laid bare the disparity in expectation between many priests and their people, the gap between the availability or desire of most lay leaders to assume greater responsibility and their actual readiness to do so is even wider. Even if they could fill in as pastors, most lay leaders would struggle



with the current demands, let alone the missionary needs. To make matters more challenging, the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. The trends of those in formal lay ecclesial ministry or even those of dedicated parish volunteers are on a similar trajectory as our priests – aging, dwindling, and, unlike our pastors, lacking any formal formation on the theological foundations of the faith.

So, what makes an effective pastor? Catholic Leadership Institute has been able to isolate certain behaviors that were shared in common among top-performing pastors (as assessed by Mass-going parishioners) that were not shared by low-performing pastors. The below list names the top ten behavioral characteristics shared by those pastors most recommended by their parishioners.

1. **Open to Innovation:** Parishioners seem to respond to a pastor's willingness to be open to new ideas and unique solutions. Pastors who exhibit this behavior seek out and enjoy new ideas and strategies. While pastors who exhibit this behavior may bring their own ideas to the table, often, these men enable their staff members or key volunteers to bring ideas forward and encourage them to take the next step, further flesh out concepts, and try new things - even without any guarantees of fruitfulness. These pastors emphasize the importance of cultivating engagement and ownership by their closest collaborators. They also dedicate resources of their own time, staff, and finances, where appropriate, to support innovative efforts in the parish.
2. **Little Need for Recognition:** Parishioners seem to respond to a pastor who demonstrates more intrinsic motivation. Such a pastor seems to have a deep love of the priesthood and parish life as it is, not as it *could* or *should* be. He gives witness to the joy of ministry in the small and large moments. The pastors who exhibit this behavior do not seek out or require external praise from parishioners, their brother priests, or the diocese. While they are grateful to receive authentic appreciation, excessive displays of recognition in the parish make them feel uncomfortable. The recognition that matters the most comes from their identity as a son of the Father.
3. **People Orientated:** Parishioners seem to respond to a pastor who is naturally supportive and encouraging of others. He seems to make time to listen to parishioners' concerns and generally takes a compassionate approach with others. This pastor prioritizes a ministry of presence and is willing to put things aside to make himself available when people need pastoral and spiritual guidance. These pastors also seem to focus on others' strengths and inherent dignity and look for the good in their actions. This pastor does not limit his interaction to one group of parishioners or expression of faith, but rather is present to the various charisms of his parishioners in balanced and appropriate ways.
4. **Paced According to Ministry:** Parishioners seem to respond to a pastor who is able to adjust their sense of urgency to a situation in ministry. These pastors generally exhibit a standard, even-paced approach to ministry, yet they are still able to multi-task at times and can speed up a process when necessary. These pastors are not the fastest in executing tasks or making decisions, but they are not the slowest. Discernment is a primary tool used in decision making, but with a pace aligned with that of the parish community. The situation in the parish is what prescribes their pace more than personal comfort.
5. **Optimistic:** Parishioners seem to respond to a pastor with a pragmatic optimism. These pastors demonstrate trust in those who have proven themselves in the past and, while they consider some potential negatives before taking action, more often than not, they tend to focus on the good and the possibility in the situation. These pastors naturally communicate a sense of hope despite the difficult circumstances surrounding them or the parish.

6. **Demonstrates EQ:** Parishioners seem to respond to a pastor who has a reasonable amount of emotional quotient. These pastors have a moderate awareness of others' thoughts and concerns and will spend some time listening to and cheering up others. While these pastors don't overly fixate on or try to change the feelings of others, they seem to be able to discern when it is appropriate to make time to solicit those emotions and they can adequately read the room as to where staff, volunteers, or parishioners are in the situation.
7. **Sociable:** Parishioners seem to respond to a pastor who is drawn to spending time with people. These pastors easily build rapport with others in the parish and are motivated by spending time with others. When interacting with staff or key volunteers, these pastors see their role beyond simply the work, and carve out time for prayer and fellowship with people not simply as the leader but as a fellow disciple. These pastors don't shy away from small talk or casual interactions, or larger group settings with the people they lead. The pastor uses appropriate boundaries for interactions with parishioners and staff, particularly those with whom they are more comfortable with, to avoid any indication of favoritism.
8. **Appropriately Risk Taking:** Parishioners seem to respond to a pastor who doesn't make "perfect the enemy of good." These pastors lead with a reasonable amount of efficiency, seeking to get things done in a timely manner, even if it means there are a few mistakes along the way. These pastors tend to acknowledge - but not become paralyzed by - real or perceived obstacles. Parishioners tend to appreciate these pastors' willingness to keep things moving and on track.
9. **Cooperative:** Parishioners seem to respond to a pastor with a servant's heart. These pastors are not consumed by a personal agenda or so focused on their schedule that they cannot roll up their sleeves and help. These pastors seem to "get in the trenches" alongside volunteers and staff with small and unimportant tasks. While these efforts can be distracting from these pastors' personal priorities, this behavior builds a collaborative spirit with other parish leaders and communicates a sense that he is in it with them.
10. **Authentically Humble:** Parishioners seem to respond to a pastor who knows himself well and isn't afraid to be appropriately vulnerable. These pastors have a solid self-awareness and do not discount their God-given gifts, nor do they hide their opportunities for growth. In fact, these pastors may tend to emphasize their shortcomings to a fault, but generally do so because they view others as equally important as themselves. While showing vulnerability, they do not dwell on their shortcomings as a way to gain sympathy. These pastors are aware, care how others view them, and are willing to calibrate behavior based on those expectations. They accept feedback from their parishioners and staff as a gift and an opportunity to continue to develop their leadership potential.

The above characteristics seem reasonable and can be instructive in the support of human and pastoral formation. Of the nearly 2,000 priests that Catholic Leadership Institute surveyed, about 27% share these behaviors, with another 31% demonstrating the ability to strengthen these behaviors with the right support and development. However, do these behaviors constitute the entirety of the "secret sauce" of what makes a great pastor? After all, these traits are what define an effective pastor to those parishioners who are mostly still in the pews, mostly over age 50, and mostly comfortable with an experience of Church that would still be considered Christendom.

What makes a pastor effective for *tomorrow*? What makes him effective for the next generation? What makes him effective to the now seven different living generations each with their perspective,



formative experiences, and understanding of the Church? What are the fair expectations of a shepherd during an experience of Church that seems to be quickly reverting to the Church of the early disciples? Examining the preferences of priests today, one sees an expectation for a maintenance church. That may sound like a criticism or a critique, but the reality is that most priests today would freely admit that they were not formed to be pastors of an apostolic age, nor is that the call they thought they were answering. One priest shared, “I was not formed to be a missionary. I was formed to be a caretaker.” Another more crassly noted, “This ain’t the cruise ship I signed up for.” Among the values most important to them in a parish community, the vast majority of priests Catholic Leadership Institute surveyed never ranked “sharing the faith with others” higher than their fifth priority. “Access to the sacraments, prayerfulness, family-focused” all ranked higher. Likewise, when asked, more than half of priests surveyed indicated that their preferred method to bring others to Christ is through their celebration of the sacraments or being visible in the community. While these are wonderful things, they are also passive dynamics. In fact, 43% of priests surveyed prefer to bring others to Christ in a one-to-one approach, yet many acknowledged that it is the *people* who come to *them*.

Have we experienced “apostolic pastors?” What would a parish community look like when led by such a shepherd? These questions are challenging to entertain in and of themselves, because of the response that might be required, not only from those priests already ordained, but also the faithful who may need to recalibrate their expectations of living in a community led by a leader defined by a missionary impulse.

### **Major Themes of Feedback from Preparation Reflection**

The below section seeks to capture the themes that were present in the reflections offered leading up to the virtual gathering.

To begin to discuss how pastors can be effective in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must first understand the complex situation of the present apostolic age. In his book, *From Christendom to Apostolic Mission*, Msgr. Shea articulates eight attitudes that are necessary to pastor in an apostolic age. Symposium participants were asked to indicate which of these eight mindsets require the biggest shift among today’s pastors. Unsurprisingly, just over 55% of participants indicated that “gaining an apostolic attitude” is most important in this endeavor. “Rethinking priestly life and education” was ranked second most important at 45% and “readiness for the mess” was third at 26%. Notably on the other end of the spectrum, cultural influences and feeling trapped by social analysis were deemed least of the eight provided mindsets.

When it comes to defining the specific role of a pastor, participants were given the open-ended prompt: “briefly describe the role of a pastor.” Central themes emerged, including pastors “call forth the gifts of those they serve,” “live and proclaim the Gospel with apostolic inclination,” “share in the ministry of the bishop,” “live as Other Christs within a particular community,” and “lead souls to Christ especially through the Sacraments.” One participant summed the role up as “to lead and inspire his flock to a deep life of prayer and sacrifice in order to discern a vision and plan to make disciples.”

When asked to consolidate all of the key functions of a pastor into only a few categories, most responses fell into the doctrinal duties of “teach,” “govern,” and “sanctify.” This emphasizes the opportunity to clearly define these specific areas. In terms of specific mindsets and skillsets, there was





high agreement among participants on those most important for pastors. The top five mindsets were identified as: openness to the Holy Spirit (75%), desire to deepen relationship with Christ and parishioners (68%), collaborative (46%), self-awareness (35%), and comfortable with risk (25%). The top responses for skillsets were pastoral and interpersonal skills (68%), development of leaders (54%), discernment (50%), culture-building (39%), and delegation (18%), with one participant clarifying “delegation but not abdication.”

With a clearer vision for the role of pastor in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is imperative to understand how to form effective, that is, *apostolic* pastors. While this may be most directly addressed in seminary formation, additional, on-going formation must not be overlooked. Catholic Leadership Institute believes that a key component to this is the support of diocesan leadership, and many obstacles likely stand in the way of pastors in this day and age.

### **Major Themes of Feedback from the Virtual Symposium**

Over the course of two stimulating days of dialogue, several clear themes emerged among the virtual symposium attendees. The below section seeks to capture the themes that were present among many of the breakout groups. With respect to what the primary focus of a pastor should be in an apostolic age and the greatest challenges that accompany him shifting his vision from a Christendom mindset, participants shared the following:

#### **Leading a Church Now on the Peripheries**

The Church used to be central to society and therefore, the pastor was also central. Now, pastors need to rethink the line between what is essential and what is not, how to reach people in and out of the pews who are skeptical at best, hostile at worst, and minister at a time when the Church is dominated by culture versus the other way around.

#### **Leading with Higher Standards of Professionalism**

Pastors are receiving inherited expectations and ways of doing things that are structured around a better-staffed parish life. This is not just the culture in the pews, but how people are prepared to live and work in the actual realities. Parishioners have higher expectations for the organizational management of the parish.

#### **Leading in a Highly Reactive and Increasing Transient Environment**

Pastors struggle to build individual relationships in a community of “church shoppers.” Without these relationships and amidst fear of scandal, pastors have less confidence in taking risks to form relationships with people. Some of the biggest obstacles facing pastors is the fear of failure, rejection, and calumny. Meanwhile, the larger Church in America operates from an extremely risk-averse posture, further discouraging pastors from trying anything different than what has always been done. There is a lack of imagination among pastors which bleeds into a lack of imagination for the lay vocation – who should be formed into lay apostles.

#### **Leading the Most Generations in History**

Pastors today must minister to seven living generations -more simultaneous generations than ever before. Each of these generations of parishioners have their own experience of the Church, their own expectations of pastors, and those who are most present are those most comfortable with a Christendom mindset. The intergenerational nature of the Church today is presenting pastors with an



even greater challenge to “be all things to all people,” especially now that different generations have very different expectations from the Church. Consequentially, how do we design a church experience from generational expectations that will meet these very different needs? Might there be a real need for an intergenerational approach?

### **Leading Without Guarantees**

There exists a tension between wanting pastors to take risks and the fact that most pastors have a strong instinctive desire to maintain harmony and relationship. We want them to blaze new trails and innovate as long as it doesn’t change our preferred Mass time or ministry of choice. We want them to lead boldly but only if there is 100% guarantee no one will be offended or leave. Despite the sharp decline across every trendline, Christendom is still considered “the safer” strategy among clergy and lay leaders. It is not difficult to see that the current system of parish life is not working and the change needs to move from a fundraising, institutional, maintenance mindset that is focused on programs, structures, and buildings to a relational mindset, focused on inviting people into a shared, personal relationship with Jesus.

### **Proposed Purpose Statement of a Pastor**

While difficult to capture the role of the pastor in a single sentence, most small groups during the symposium pointed to a need to include the Holy Name of Jesus, the Eucharist, and the Catholic Church in its description. It was difficult for most groups to differentiate between the role of a priest and the specific – and unique – role of a pastor. However, this challenge illustrates the need for a shared and articulated role description for this office. While the ministerial priesthood exists to teach, sanctify, and govern, the office of pastor cannot simply be defined as fulfilling the three-fold munera in a parish setting. Based on the contributions of participants before and during the symposium, Catholic Leadership Institute proposes the following purpose statement for the role of pastor.

#### **The Role of a Pastor**

*A pastor leads his flock into a life of deep prayer and sacrifice, rooted in the Sacraments, that enables the community to discern a vision and fulfill a plan to make disciples of Jesus Christ.*

As participants discussed the purpose of a pastor, several key themes emerged:

- Above all, the role of pastor must be rooted in the primary identity as son of God and beloved disciple, and all his work and pastoring must flow from this. His purpose must focus on holiness first, and then equally imperative, it must focus on mission.
- Humility and co-responsibility are related – an effective pastor must be able to recognize his areas of weakness, be able to identify and call forth gifts of those around him, specifically in these weak areas, and then delegate and entrust these areas to his leaders. He then imparts this responsibility to his parishioners.
- There is a tension between a pastor’s need to be apostolic in a post-Christendom world and his key responsibility to inspire and lead his parishioners to be lay apostles in the world. Too many pastors are doing neither effectively. Through Baptism and Confirmation, the laity’s role is equal to, though distinct from, that of the pastor.



- To be innovative and apostolic, a pastor must ask, “What would need to be true for us as a parish to accomplish this?” Too often the resting disposition is “no.” A pastor must recognize the joy that comes from the Lord and willfully allow this joy to be his disposition.

### Proposed Values for the Role of Pastor

Any effective role description lists not only what one does, but more importantly, how one does what one does. This is especially true for a shepherd of a community. Catholic Leadership Institute believes that every role should have between three to five operationalized values that guides one’s decisions, behaviors, and actions. These are often attributes that are essential to the role but may not all come naturally to the person fulfilling the role. The opportunity to proclaim these values enables, in this case, a pastor to invite God’s grace and the community’s support to lead most effectively.

1. **Vision** – The pastor aligns the parish community toward the vision of the local diocese and the universal vision of Holy Mother Church to go make disciples. Some examples of this value operationalized include:
  - The pastor connects and enrolls the parish with diocesan initiatives that flow from the bishop’s vision.
  - The pastor actively leads in casting vision for his parish and renewing that vision every three to five years.
  - The pastor consistently articulates the parish vision and is intentional about connecting programs, activities, roles, and responsibilities to the vision.
2. **Co-responsibility** – The pastor extends the responsibility to share the Gospel with all the baptized in the parish, with the ability to call forth their gifts and talents to execute the vision for mission. Some examples of this value operationalized include:
  - The pastor regularly solicits feedback on his leadership and input into decision-making through high functioning advisory bodies.
  - The pastor consistently sponsors teams that do not include him and have an appropriate amount of autonomy and decision-making authority.
  - The pastor consistently shares information with the entire community with the appropriate level of transparency (e.g. financial status of the parish, challenges and opportunities).
3. **Apostolic** – The pastor understands and embraces the mission of the Church to go out to all the world and tell the Good News, accepting the consequences, persecutions, and costs to oneself that may come. Some examples of this value operationalized include:
  - The pastor regularly proclaims the kerygma inside and outside of Mass.
  - The pastor can be seen out in the larger community, beyond the parish grounds, engaged in the lives of his people and actively inviting others to connect with the Church.
  - The pastor is willing to sacrifice ineffective ministries and correct any behavior of staff, volunteers, and parishioners that may be creating a barrier to welcome.
  - The pastor creates and is present for opportunities to discuss people’s challenges with the Church and facilitates dialogue that is open and authentic.



4. **Joy** – The pastor shows to all the joy that comes from living out one’s baptismal call to discipleship with Christ (John 10:10), and the special joy that comes from imitating the Good Shepherd. Some examples of this value operationalized include:
  - The pastor regularly shares his own journey of faith with the community.
  - The pastor regularly speaks about the joys and challenges of his priestly vocation.
  - The pastor is judicious about how and with whom he vocalizes complaints or concerns with the diocese, brother priests, the bishop, the Holy Father, etc.
5. **Innovation** – The pastor is willing to try new things or rethink entire systems; he has the ability to see opportunity for lasting fruit and overcome the fear of failure or rejection. Some examples of this value operationalized include:
  - The pastor invites or asks the question “what would this take?” before concluding that it is not possible or feasible.
  - The pastor celebrates learnings from disappointing outcomes and does not dwell on what has not worked.
  - The pastor continues to model authentic effort and does not blame or despair in the increasingly secularized landscape.

### Proposed Key Responsibility Areas of a Pastor

According to Catholic Leadership Institute, any full-time role should be defined by at least three, and no more than five, “key responsibility areas.” These areas are broad buckets that define the ongoing functions of a role and answer the question, “does, what, why?” There was near-universal agreement among the symposium participants that the three-fold office of priesthood was the most helpful framework for encapsulating the key responsibility areas of a pastor. As part of the symposium, small groups wrestled with what tasks within these key areas the pastor must do himself in an apostolic age, what he could delegate, and what he definitely should not be doing. This question proved more challenging for participants to reach a consensus. While there was the constant mantra of “delegate more” when discussing specific tasks that a pastor might delegate, there was often an assumed or real constraint that he could not delegate certain tasks. The assumed constraints revolved around a comfort or nostalgia with “what the priest does,” as well as the presence of volunteers or staff who are properly formed or equipped to take on the task in question. While the lack of formation is a reality in many cases, it may be overblown for certain tasks and can be remedied.

Additionally, participants struggled to isolate what is unique to the office of pastor versus the ministerial priesthood. In many parishes this is understandable with a priest being the sole member of the clergy in the community or, even more challenging, being the sole member of the clergy for several parishes. There was some broader agreement that pastors could create more bandwidth for the most important and unique functions by delegating certain administrative burdens such as bulletin letters, ministry meetings, paperwork, scheduling, and calendaring. There was also clear agreement among participants that most pastors need to play a more significant role in offering paternal/fraternal correction to strengthen culture, recruiting and forming leaders across generations, and prioritizing the spiritual growth of his staff and key volunteers. Pastors also would do well in this apostolic age to prioritize time spent off-campus – in the homes of parishioners, at the little league field, and in representing the parish in civic or ecumenical situations that provide opportunities for apostolic witness.



The below table illustrates proposed key responsibility areas for a pastor and seeks to further define those tasks within that area that are uniquely the pastor's responsibility.

AREA	KEY RESPONSIBILITIES
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>TEACH</b></p> <p>Proclaim, instruct, and accompany the Christian faithful in the Truths of the faith so that they can grow in personal holiness and missionary discipleship.</p>	<p>The pastor's unique responsibilities in this office include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring authentic and consistent catechesis through preaching from any priest/deacon in the parish.</li> <li>• Ensuring that pastoral staff and key ministry leaders are properly formed and catechized and are equipped to catechize others.</li> <li>• Ensuring the parish response to larger societal issues that affect his community are in alignment with Church teaching.</li> <li>• Orienting the people of God in his parish to their vocation and identity beyond parish membership.</li> <li>• Seeking to be a visible presence in the territory of the parish boundaries (beyond simply the parish campus).</li> <li>• Directing a tiered, targeted approach to growing people's faith (with different entry points and paths to holiness for people at various places in their faith journey).</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SANCTIFY</b></p> <p>Plan, promote, and celebrate the Sacraments devoutly and frequently to facilitate God's grace imparted upon the Christian faithful.</p>	<p>The pastor's unique responsibilities in this office include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discerning and articulating the liturgical and worship style for the community that is in alignment with the Church's teaching and reflects the unique needs of the community.</li> <li>• Championing and promoting moments of sacramental encounter for parishioners, increasing opportunity for sacramental grace.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GOVERN</b></p> <p>Seek and steward the God-given temporal and human gifts present in the community in order to facilitate opportunities for the Christian faithful to experience encounter with Christ.</p>	<p>The pastor's unique responsibilities in this office include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring a vision and pastoral plan for the parish.</li> <li>• Discerning the proper alignment of gifts and talents of staff and volunteers.</li> <li>• Cooperating and acting in communion with the bishop and presbyterate of the diocese.</li> <li>• Providing a ministry of presence to individuals and in the community.</li> <li>• Prioritizing and discerning the stewardship of parish resources.</li> <li>• Defining and modeling behaviors that demonstrate self-leadership and support a Christ-centered, mission-oriented culture.</li> </ul>

## Formation and Ongoing Formation for an Apostolic Age

The Early Church had no seminaries, no conferences, no Catholic Leadership Institutes and yet, Christianity spread throughout the world despite the most challenging landscapes. The earliest leaders of the Catholic Church didn't embrace an apostolic mindset, they defined it, they exuded it. While passion and zeal for the Kerygma cannot be manufactured, it can be cultivated and focused.



The last breakout session of the virtual symposium focused on the changes or additions necessary to seminary formation and ongoing formation for priests that would provide more relevant preparation for the Church of today and tomorrow.

### Reflections on Seminary Formation

Discussions among the symposium participants shared three themes related to the formation of men prior to the ordination of the priesthood:

- **Emphasizing the human and spiritual pillars as much as the intellectual and pastoral:** Seminaries/dioceses need to be intentional about caring for the seminarians' interpersonal skills, such as, how to pursue friendships once they are in parish life, how to handle difficult conversations, etc.
- **Exposure to the apostolic landscape:** Seminarians should have strategic and routine encounters with the secular world in order to expose them to life outside the parish – that is, the life of the laity they will one day serve. There is a great need to develop in future pastors intangibles that are vital to successful and effective pastoring: humility, growth-mindset, how to identify and empower gifts in others, etc.
- **Discerning pastors and priests:** While not every priest is ordained to be a pastor, the office of pastor, its demands and expectations, especially for this apostolic age, need to be more at the front and center of formation. It is becoming more common for priests to be made pastors within the first five years of ordination. They may have only one example of a pastor before assuming the office. It is imperative that seminaries help seminarians focus on the idea that their vocation is not just to be a priest, but to be a pastor of a particular parish at a particular time.

### Reflections on Ongoing Formation and Diocesan Support

Symposium participants also discussed what changes at the diocesan level - in particular, how ongoing support is offered - would support a more apostolic mindset among pastors. Five themes emerged among the small groups:

#### Bishops Need to Model the Apostolic Way

As the chief pastor of the diocese, several participants shared that the bishop needs to be modeling the values mentioned and align his office to the same charism. He needs to be out among his people. He needs to be taking risks and pouring himself out as a spiritual father and brother into his closest collaborators – the priests of his diocese. As it relates to his relationship with his men, he needs to play the role of coach and challenger, recognizing and calling forth fruit from pastors when things are good, not just reprimanding them when things go awry. In his assignment of men, he needs to commission them toward a mission, not simply plug a hole or fill a need. The bishop also needs to consistently encourage and remind his pastors that if they are taking risks for the Gospel, he may offer them feedback, but he will have their back when people push back.

#### Better Support During Pastoral Transitions

The lack of guided and formal transitions between pastors means most new pastors spend a lot of time and potential political capital stepping on landmines from the last pastor. Participants suggested that the diocese help facilitate more robust introductions, coaching, and/or handoffs, especially between the



old pastor and the new pastor. This would ensure incoming pastors are set up for success from day one and not thrown into the fire of leading a flock while also getting to know them/the culture of the parish.

### Networks of Mentors

Additionally, formal mentorship between effective pastors and non-pastor priests was mentioned frequently as a best practice that is already underway in a few dioceses. However, it was noted that formal training and formation for those pastors serving as mentors was necessary in order to make sure the relationship is fruitful.

### Fraternal Forums

Participants suggested creating spaces for pastors to share confidentially and candidly about how things in their parishes are going with one another. Again, it was clear from participants that some format and peer facilitation would be necessary in order to ensure that such discussions would not become simply venting sessions.

### Prioritizing Diocesan Effort

Diocesan leaders themselves need to be coached on how to coach and develop others. Time should be spent investing mostly in the pastors who will be responsive rather than trying to change hard hearts.

### Recommendations and Next Steps

As a result of the symposium, Catholic Leadership Institute is committed to partnering with willing attendees and others to implement the following recommendations:

1. **Refining and proposing the role description of a pastor:** Catholic Leadership Institute will continue to incorporate the feedback shared during the symposium and refine the role description of the pastor, attempting to strike the right balance of flexibility within a diocesan context. A current draft of the model based on the feedback is included in Appendix A.
2. **Developing frameworks and tools for better pastor transitions:** As part of the ongoing national pilot, *Called for More*, Catholic Leadership Institute will develop templates to facilitate better transitions between pastors that can be deployed by the diocese. These guides will provide some structure to a very important period of time in the life cycle of parish and facilitate better discovery and dialogue to orient the pastor and the parish toward mission.
3. **Offering ongoing formation for bishops and vicars for clergy:** Catholic Leadership Institute offered its annual ongoing formation session for bishops on leading a multigenerational presbyterate and helping bishops cultivate a renewed sense of mission among their presbyterate. Additionally, CLI will be offering retreats for vicars for clergy and ongoing formation to help augment their vital care and support of their brother priests. The materials from these opportunities will be available free of charge to any bishop who requests them.
4. **Offering training for priest-led growth groups:** Catholic Leadership Institute is piloting a format for a peer-facilitated growth group for priests. The goal is to create a system of support and accountability for priests to challenge each other to stay focused on mission, be bold in their leadership, and know they have a confidential and supportive community that will encourage them along the way.



5. **Proposing an apostolic curriculum for seminaries:** Catholic Leadership Institute will seek to partner with others to humbly propose a curriculum for consideration by seminaries that would augment the current course of study.
6. **Going deeper on research related to pastors and parishes embracing the apostolic age:** As Catholic Leadership Institute continues to build its database of priestly and parish perspectives, identifying truly apostolic pastors and communities and studying them qualitatively and quantitatively will enable the distillation of factors, interventions, and best practices that can present opportunities for ongoing formation and support for current pastors as well as future enhancements to seminary formation.

## Conclusion

Catholic Leadership Institute is extremely grateful to the Porticus Foundation and the incredible women and men who contributed to this conversation. We did not arrive in an apostolic age overnight, so it would not be fair to expect that, as we wake to the demands of our current landscape, our pastors will be able to shift mindsets and approaches on a dime. The solution to the vitality of our parishes is not a “pastor-centric” model nor is it a “pastor-proof” model. It is a “pastor-forward” model. We believe in the fullness of pastors exercising their vocation so that the faithful can likewise exercise the fullness of their vocations.

We still need shepherds. However, we need our shepherds to shift from tending to us in a field to leading us to greener pastures. Our pastors deserve our thoughtfulness in clarifying and agreeing on challenging and realistic expectations for what it means to lead in the Church in 2023 and beyond. They need our patience, our perspective, and our persistence in making the shift to this new reality. Together, we all must be open to be led by the Holy Spirit who inspires the Church no differently today than at the birth of the Church at the first Pentecost.





## Appendix A: DRAFT Role Description for a Pastor Pastor in the Diocese of “X”

**Purpose:** A pastor in the Diocese of X leads his flock into a life of deep prayer and sacrifice, rooted in the Sacraments, that enables the community to discern a vision and fulfill a plan to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

**Value:** In fulfilling this sacred purpose, a pastor seeks to model for his community the following values:

1. **Vision** – The pastor aligns the parish community toward the vision of the local diocese and the universal vision of Holy Mother Church to go make disciples. Some examples of this value operationalized include:

- The pastor connects and enrolls the parish with diocesan initiatives that flow from the bishop’s vision.
- The pastor actively leads in casting vision for his parish and renewing that vision every three to five years.
- The pastor consistently articulates the parish vision and is intentional about connecting programs, activities, roles, and responsibilities to the vision.

2. **Co-responsibility** – The pastor extends the responsibility to share the Gospel with all the baptized in the parish, with the ability to call forth their gifts and talents to execute the vision for mission. Some examples of this value operationalized include:

- The pastor regularly solicits feedback on his leadership and input into decision-making through high functioning advisory bodies.
- The pastor consistently sponsors teams that do not include him and have an appropriate amount of autonomy and decision-making authority.
- The pastor consistently shares information with the entire community with the appropriate level of transparency (e.g. financial status of the parish, challenges and opportunities).

3. **Apostolic** – The pastor understands and embraces the mission of the Church to go out to all the world and tell the Good News, accepting the consequences, persecutions, and costs to oneself that may come. Some examples of this value operationalized include:

- The pastor regularly proclaims the kerygma inside and outside of Mass.
- The pastor can be seen out in the larger community, beyond the parish grounds, engaged in the lives of his people and actively inviting others to connect with the Church.
- The pastor is willing to sacrifice ineffective ministries and correct any behavior of staff, volunteers, and parishioners that may be creating a barrier to welcome.
- The pastor creates and is present for opportunities to discuss people’s challenges with the Church and facilitates dialogue that is open and authentic.

4. **Joy** – The pastor shows to all the joy that comes from living out one’s baptismal call to discipleship with Christ (John 10:10), and the special joy that comes from imitating the Good Shepherd. Some examples of this value operationalized include:

- The pastor regularly shares his own journey of faith with the community.

- The pastor regularly speaks about the joys and challenges of his priestly vocation.
- The pastor is judicious about how and with whom he vocalizes complaints or concerns with the diocese, brother priests, the bishop, the Holy Father, etc.

5. **Innovation** – The pastor is willing to try new things or rethink entire systems; he has the ability to see opportunity for lasting fruit and overcome the fear of failure or rejection. Some examples of this value operationalized include:

- The pastor invites or asks the question “what would this take?” before concluding that it is not possible or feasible.
- The pastor celebrates learnings from disappointing outcomes and does not dwell on what has not worked.
- The pastor continues to model authentic effort and does not blame or despair in the increasingly secularized landscape.

**Key Responsibility Areas:** The pastor exercises the three-fold office within the territory entrusted to his care and in collaboration with the other clergy and lay leadership of the community. The following areas identify his unique responsibilities to the community.

AREA	KEY RESPONSIBILITY AREAS	PERSONAL GOALS FOR YEAR 1
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>TEACH</b></p> <p>Proclaim, instruct, and accompany the Christian faithful in the Truths of the faith so that they can grow in personal holiness and missionary discipleship.</p>	<p>The pastor’s unique responsibilities in this office include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring authentic and consistent catechesis through preaching from any priest/deacon in the parish.</li> <li>• Ensuring that pastoral staff and key ministry leaders are properly formed and catechized and are equipped to catechize others.</li> <li>• Ensuring the parish response to larger societal issues that affect his community are in alignment with Church teaching.</li> <li>• Orienting the people of God in his parish to their vocation and identity beyond parish membership.</li> <li>• Seeking to be a visible presence in the territory of the parish boundaries (beyond simply the parish campus).</li> <li>• Directing a tiered, targeted approach to growing people’s faith (with different entry points and paths to holiness for people at various places in their faith journey).</li> </ul>	



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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SANCTIFY</b></p> <p>Plan, promote, and celebrate the Sacraments devoutly and frequently to facilitate God's grace imparted upon the Christian faithful.</p>	<p>The pastor's unique responsibilities in this office include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discerning and articulating the liturgical and worship style for the community that is in alignment with the Church's teaching and reflects the unique needs of the community.</li> <li>• Championing and promoting moments of sacramental encounter for parishioners, increasing opportunity for sacramental grace.</li> </ul>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GOVERN</b></p> <p>Seek and steward the God-given temporal and human gifts present in the community in order to facilitate opportunities for the Christian faithful to experience encounter with Christ.</p>	<p>The pastor's unique responsibilities in this office include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring a vision and pastoral plan for the parish.</li> <li>• Discerning the proper alignment of gifts and talents of staff and volunteers.</li> <li>• Cooperating and acting in communion with the bishop and presbyterate of the diocese.</li> <li>• Providing a ministry of presence to individuals and in the community.</li> <li>• Prioritizing and discerning the stewardship of parish resources.</li> <li>• Defining and modeling behaviors that demonstrate self-leadership and support a Christ-centered, mission-oriented culture.</li> </ul>	