

Ten Trends for the Church

Vatican news correspondent John Allen identified ten trends he anticipates for the Church by about 2050. He wrote about them in his book *The Future Church: How Ten Trends Are Revolutionizing the Catholic Church*. Read through the following summary of the list noting how these trends may affect your life as an adult Catholic.

1. A World Church

There are about 1.1 billion Catholics in the world. Of this total, 350 million live in Europe or North America while 720 million live in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Expect more attention paid to the Church of these highly populated areas. Expect more Church leaders from these areas to gain worldwide influence. Pope Francis is the first pope from the Western Hemisphere.

2. Evangelical Catholicism

In past periods of history, Catholicism helped shape the culture, often as its primary influence. Today, oppositely, Catholics are often a cultural minority under attack. Allen anticipates that this will lead Catholics to sharpen their identity. Evangelical Catholicism would be a thrust toward the revival of traditional markers of Catholic thought, speech, and practice. Features of Evangelical Catholicism might include an embrace of traditional Catholic thought, speech and practice, eagerness to proclaim one's Catholic identity, and Faith viewed as a personal choice rather than cultural inheritance.

3. Islam

A total of about 2.3 billion Christians and 1.6 billion Muslims represent more than 50 percent of the human family. Islam competes for converts and social influence in many parts of the world and its influence in Europe has been increasing. Fewer Christians live in predominantly Islamic areas. Recently many Christian churches have been destroyed and Christians themselves murdered in these areas. Pope Benedict XVI sees the main clash to be not between Islam and the West, however, but between believers and non-believers—between a culture that values the supernatural and recognizes a role for religion in public life and one that does not. In any case, Christians and Islam must co-exist in peace for the world to avoid certain turmoil.

4. The New Demography

Demographers believe that sometime in the twenty-first century, the world will no longer increase in population but will begin to depopulate. Catholic parishes and dioceses will find themselves under pressure to act as an alternative support system to elderly people, possibly adding nurses to parish staffs, for example.

5. Expanding Lay Roles

Laypeople will increasingly participate in the Church by proposing and acting on their own ideas rather than simply carrying out the ideas of the hierarchy. More and more, laypeople will take on ministerial and administrative positions once reserved almost exclusively to the clergy.

6. The Biotech Revolution

Biotech is a name to describe several understandings of scientific issues that the Church must address from an ethical standpoint. For example:

- in-vitro fertilization
- human cloning
- embryonic stem cell research
- end-of-life issues

- eugenics/genetic engineering
- genetically-modified organisms

These types of issues will only increase in the years ahead demanding a coherent, moral response.

7. Globalization

Globalization “refers to the transformation of local and regional realities into global ones, uniting the people of the world in a single global market and society.” This issue will impact universal human rights, solidarity, the preferential option for the poor, and other justice issues.

8. Ecology

St. John Paul II initiated conversation about the environmental crisis writing *The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility* in 1990. More recently, the Vatican has “gone solar” and become a carbon-neutral state. Environmental issues—from a personal to world-wide level—will demand close scrutiny, comment, and action from the Church.

9. Multipolarism

From the time of the Roman Empire in 380, Catholicism has been in a world shaped by the Christian tradition. In the twenty-first century, Catholics need to think globally and also realize that non-Christian Faith traditions will exercise a growing share of the influence. Countries expected to grow in influence include Brazil, Russia, India, and China

10. Pentecostalism

“Pentecostalism refers to a movement within Christianity that emphasizes direct personal experience of God through the ‘baptism of the Holy Spirit.’” In the mid-1970s, Pentecostalism made up about 6 percent of Christians globally and now it makes up 20 percent. Within the Catholic Church, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal most closely resembles Pentecostalism.

Name _____ Date _____

Handout 6-D

The Parish Pastoral Council, Scenario 1

A parish pastoral council is a group of parishioners who consult with the pastor in areas related to pastoral activities and anything needed to enhance the quality of parish life. The parish council does not make policy, authorize, prohibit, correct, or enforce. Its scope is limited to pastoral activities and does not extend into the administration of the parish.

Role Play

This handout proposes one issue that a parish pastoral council might realistically face. Either take on the characters presented or make up a mix that might be at your parish. Make sure to discuss the issue and come to a decision based on the description of your character.

Parish

Queen of Sorrows (in a suburb of a large East Coast city)

Council Members

Fr. Brad

Maryann, lawyer (lay)

Steve, deacon

Edgar, non-profit fund-raiser (lay)

Sister Jane, staff member

Anne, certified public accountant (lay)

Bill, parish school principal (lay)

Maria, architect (lay)

Agenda Item

From the pastor: “We live in a neighborhood with a growing number of people over sixty-five years of age, many of whom are our parishioners. At the same time, we have fewer young families moving into the parish. Please consider some of the following proposals to address the needs of the elderly in our neighborhood and parish.

- “If budget allows, add someone to the parish staff with the sole ministry of serving the elderly. If the budget does not allow, we could let our youth minister go or retrain her for this ministry. We could then send the youth to the youth group at the neighboring parish and have them conduct Confirmation preparation as well.
- “Train volunteer ministers to the aging under the supervision of a parish staff member to reach out to the older people in the community.
- “Partner with the local Episcopalian and Lutheran Churches in their ‘elder-ministry,’ which would involve contributing personnel and money for this already established ministry.”

Directions

From your character’s perspective, discuss the best solution to the situation described. You may add a solution not discussed but understand that the pastor has the right to veto it or any other consensus reached by the group.

Name _____ Date _____

Handout 6-E

The Parish Pastoral Council, Scenario 2

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Role Play

This handout proposes one issue that a parish pastoral council might realistically face. Either take on the characters presented or make up a mix that might be at your parish. Make sure to discuss the issue and come to a decision based on the description of your character.

Parish

St. Francis de Sales (in older neighborhood of a large West Coast city)

Council Members

Fr. Jim, new pastor, ordained two years ago

Paul, retired, long-time parishioner, business owner

Stan, permanent deacon

Mary, mother of nine, religious education volunteer, long-time parishioner

Molly, young youth minister (lay)

Mia, single young business professional

Aaron, parish school principal (lay)

Roberto, married, high school teacher

Agenda Item

From the pastor: "Because I will need to take one of the Masses at a neighboring parish for the pastor who is ill, our parish must cancel one of its Sunday Masses, either the 8:00 a.m. or the 9:30 a.m. so that I can take one of the other parish's Masses at the same time. Cancelling the 11:00 a.m. family Mass is not an option. Please prepare questions, concerns, thoughts about how the parish should decide which Mass to cancel, and who will be most affected."

Directions

Discuss what effect cancelling either Mass may have on parishioners and explore other ideas for addressing this issue.

Name _____ Date _____

Handout 6-F

The Parish Pastoral Council, Scenario 3

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Role Play

This handout proposes one issue that a parish pastoral council might realistically face. Either take on the characters presented or make up a mix that might be at your parish. Make sure to discuss the issue and come to a decision based on the description of your character.

Parish

St. Mary's, medium-sized parish in the Midwest

Council Members

Fr. Richard, pastor

Francisco, seminarian, former lawyer

Patricia, director of religious education (lay)

Sylvia, fund-raiser (lay)

Sr. Anne Marie, parish school principal

Roger, construction (lay)

Greg, banker (lay)

Anna, teaching (lay)

Agenda Item

From the pastor: "Because of our dwindling contributions, the parish will need to make some changes in its budget soon. These are some of the ideas suggested by the diocese to reduce costs. What we need to discuss is how each idea will affect the pastoral needs of the parishioners and determine which idea best serves them.

- "Close the parish office one day a week (in addition to weekends) in order to save costs of heating and cooling the building and paying staff.
- "Share resources with Holy Redeemer Parish and combine the religious education program with theirs, letting go of our religious education director.
- "Begin to hold an annual auction to raise the missing funds needed to keep everything 'as is.'
- "Eliminate the parish's practice of donating a percentage of the money given to the parish to immediate needs of our local community: the school, food bank, shelter, and so on."

Name _____ Date _____

Handout 6-G

The Consensus Voting Method in the Parish Pastoral Council

The Parish Pastoral Council is a group of seven to twelve parishioners that advises the pastor on matters related to the pastoral dimension of the parish, as opposed to the financial or personnel dimensions of the parish.

Lessening the “Leadership Gap”

Because there are a variety of ways of doing things, there always exists what might be called a “leadership gap” between the leader and everyone else, in this case the pastor and the parishioners.

Without any advice, the distance between what the pastor thinks that the parishioners need and what they actually need to grow as disciples, stewards, and evangelizers may be great. The role of the Parish Pastoral Council is to *advise* the pastor about the current status of the parish and how best to direct the parish in fulfilling its mission.

The Consensus Voting Method

The consensus voting method respects each individual, provides ways to discover the values a person is trying to preserve, and gives the final decision-maker a sense of the commitment for a particular recommendation.

Once a recommendation is formulated and shared with the group, each person is asked to vote using a scale of +3, +2, +1, 0, -1, -2, -3. A cumulative +1.5 or higher score is a strong indicator that the group is committed to a particular course of action.

+3 means *I am very committed* to this course of action. If the group does not agree with my course of action, I want to speak to it so that all will understand the values I cherish. Perhaps through dialogue my values can be clarified and I can move to a +2. If after dialogue I feel my values are still not respected, I may well have to leave the group.

+2 means that *I strongly support* this course of action. I would be extremely disappointed if the group were to choose another course of action, but I could live with it.

+1 means *I favor* this course of action. I could live with another course of action rather easily.

0 means I don't have enough information, am not prepared to vote, or could live with whatever the rest of the group would decide.

-1 means *I do not favor* this course of action. I could, however, live with this course of action rather easily.

-2 means *I am strongly against* this course of action. I would be extremely disappointed if the group were to choose this course of action, but I could live with it.

-3 means *I am very strongly against* this course of action. If the group does not agree with my position, I want to speak to it so that all will understand the values I cherish. Perhaps through dialogue my values can be clarified and I can move to agreement. If after dialogue, I feel that my values are still not respected, I may well have to leave the group.

Name _____ Date _____

Handout 6-H

Reading Plan

Prepare to teach a peer about your document by doing the following:

1. Determine the historical context:

What do you know about the author(s)?

Why was it written?

What was the reaction to the doctrine at the time of the writing?

2. Classify the source:

What kind of writing is it (e.g., pastoral letter, encyclical)?

Summarize the main argument of the writing.

What problems does it address?

What evidence does the author(s) use?

Comment on the effectiveness of the argument. List and define key words used in the source.

3. Compare the source to other writings:

How similar is this writing to other doctrinal writings on social justice (including non-Catholic writing)?

What were some reactions to this writing at the time of release? How has history judged this writing?

4. Offer your own understanding:

Imagine you are to explain this writing to a classmate. Write a three- or four-paragraph summary in your own words.