

Dear Group 5,

Please read the following background for our 1/12 meeting.

## **If the Church's structure and culture is found inadequate why not aspire for the IDEAL Structure?**

As Faithful (Cleric & Lay) in the Church we are challenged to use God's gifts to us in accomplishing the mission of the Church. Why shouldn't the structure of the Church facilitate the full utilization of the faithful's gifts to accomplish its mission? Doesn't the church teach us that God's plan for our life is to use our gifts in service to the church and our fellow man?

Group 5 has responded to God's call to address lay involvement in the Church, especially women who historically have had very little opportunity to serve in the clergy dominated functions of the Church. Today's Church structure restricts lay involvement and the corresponding authority to act.

### **The basic question before us now is, repair or replace that structure?**

To answer that question let us take a walk back into 2000 years of Church history. From the time the Roman Empire embraced Christianity up until the last couple hundred years, there were very few formally educated faithful and most of the educated were clergy. The laity, for the most part, were illiterate and were families involved in trades and agriculture. Leadership structures were and are today empirical.

In the last few hundred years society has evolved significantly. Today the clergy in the church are very well educated in the spiritual aspects of the Church. Most of the laity are literate and many are very well educated in the temporal vocations of society.

Vatican II gave laity more significant roles in liturgical ministries in the Church. Women are well represented in most of those ministries. It was a good first step involving laity into ministry but implementation has been inconsistent. There wasn't any sharing of authority regarding the administration of the Church.

Since Vatican II we've faced several crisis in the Church's leadership. One would suspect that some of the moral lapses that have only recently come to light, the culture of cover-up and clerical protectionism, has likely existed for centuries made possible by an inadequate, antiquated structure.

So back to the basic question, repair or replace?

**Start with a clean slate and define the ideal structure by answering these formative questions.**

- What is the mission of the Church given to us by Jesus Christ?
- In scriptures, are there any non-negotiable instructions given to the Church regarding leadership, structure, or authority?
- What principles need to be reinforced and safeguarded in the ideal structure? These principles should encompass both human rights and good management.
- Are those principles safeguarded and promoted at all levels of the organization?
- Are we optimizing the talents and skills of all the faithful in fulfilling the mission of the Church?

Once the ideal structure has been defined, ascertain what changes can be made to the existing structure under the current canon law. Can the revised existing structure accomplish the objectives of the ideal structure?

**Vatican II, Dallas Charter, and Canon Law define what the Clergy has been willing to give the Laity.**

**The Ideal Church Structure is what the laity believes is best for their Church.**

**Eliminating the gap is the objective of negotiations between the laity and clergy.**

Where do we start in defining the ideal structure?

Perhaps starting at the parish level and building up is our best approach. It's the structure we're most knowledgeable and familiar with as laity. The ideal structure at the parish level could help clarify the structure needed at each succeeding level.

Annunciation Parish in Elma has been blessed with a pastor who appreciates the unique skills and talents of the laity. His collaborative style of management has resulted in a parish structure and processes that could be modeled successfully throughout the diocese. **Structure and Culture and Process are three legs on the same stool. All are needed for the stool to function properly.**

Annunciation is not the ideal structure, it does aspire to be ideal.

Unfortunately Annunciation's structure/culture is as temporary as the pastor assigned to the parish.

Annunciation's structure/culture, with emphasis on the planning process, will be presented 1/12 for your consideration.

The basic tenants of the ideal structure are as follows:

- The structure has two independent branches,
- Faith and morals headed by the clergy,
- Administration headed by the laity.
- The two independent yet inter-dependent branches would exist from the parish level up to the hierarchy in Rome.
- The laity will become a formal body in the church with its own governing boards at all levels (parish, chancery, etc.)
- The boards will be elected at all levels and have term limits.
- This structure does not preclude clergy from any administration positions but their authority and direction comes from the Lay Board.
- Also, the structure does not preclude laity from clergy functions but their authority and direction comes from the Clergy.

We believe that the solution for today and for the future of the church is a structural change with co-responsibility. That in turn will bring about a cultural change. That new structure will require collaboration, will inhibit abuse, make bishops accountable, utilize the best talents of the faithful, allow the diminishing numbers of the clergy to focus on faith related issues, give women equal opportunities for administrative authority in the church, give the faithful at the parish level true ownership in their faith community; its spiritual health, its culture, its growth, and its future. The Church thrives and grows at the parish level, conversion starts with a personal invitation. The journey continues with a vibrant faith community.