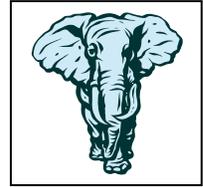


## ELEPHANTS IN THE LIVING ROOM DISCUSSING WHAT NEEDS TO BE DISCUSSED

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### DEAN HOGE PRESENTATION

Our Lady of Fatima  
Oak Park, MI  
October 25, 2004

Sponsored by The Elephants in the Living Room.  
Hosted by Fr. Paul Chateau, Pastor, Our Lady of Fatima

Purpose of the meeting: To develop and understanding of differences between older priests and newly ordained priests and of where the priesthood and lay ministry may be heading.

Opening Prayer: Fr. Bob Wurm, based on the liturgy for weddings.

Facilitator: Fr. Paul Chateau

Introduction: Bishop Tom Gumbleton

Dean R. Hoge, Ph.D., is a professor of sociology at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. He has pursued sociological research for three decades serving American Churches. He has also been a professor at The Harvard Divinity School. He has been the author of fifteen books, the most recent are:

- ❖ *The First Five Years of the Priesthood*, The Liturgical Press, 2002
- ❖ *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood*, The Liturgical Press, 2003.

Dr. Hoge is Presbyterian by faith and is active in his congregation in Washington. Dr. Hoge will explore the *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood*, based on his most recent book.

#### Dean Hoge's Presentation

- ❖ Where are today's young Catholics?
  - The average age of the readers of the National Catholic Reporter (NCR) is 66.
  - There is a disconnect between the teachings of the Church and the experience and understanding of young people.
    - Their spirituality is strong but not connected to Catholic teachings.
  - The identity of the young generation is not the same as it was.
    - What does Catholic identity mean?
  - There is a basic division between those born before 1940 and those born after that.
  - There have been evolving visions of the priesthood since Vatican II.
- ❖ Trends:
  - The American Catholic population is growing at a rate of 8%-10% per decade.
  - The number of priests is shrinking at a rate of 13% per decade.
    - The number of religious priests is shrinking at a rate of 20% per decade
    - The number of diocesan priests is shrinking at a rate of 9% per decade.
    - The average age of priests is 58.
    - Ordinations are shrinking at a rate of 12% per decade.
      - The output from seminaries is 30% - 40% of what is needed.
      - We are not going to have a change in the near future!
  - Lay ministers are growing at a rate of 70% per decade.
    - 80% are female.
    - 50% have masters degrees.
    - Average age is 52.

- The number of deacons is rapidly increasing
  - But not as fast as lay ministers
- The number of parishes will remain unchanged.
  - Therefore, parishes will be larger.
- Interfaith marriages are increasing at a rate of 45% - 50% per decade.
- Giving is up!
  - The impact of the sexual abuse scandal has been less than expected.
  - Endowments are going up.
  - There is more wealth in the Catholic Church than is known.
    - Wealth is higher than any time in history.
    - The money is there if the Church meets peoples' needs.
- There are priest shortages only in modern nations.
  - There are no priest shortages in developing nations.
  - The United States is considered a priest rich nation.
- ❖ In ten years the post-Vatican II era will be over!
- ❖ There is a huge shift in priests' identity.
- ❖ Old vs. young distinctions:
  - Ecclesiology:
    - The excitement of the Vatican II era ended in the 1980s.
    - Young priests hold a different view of the Church and the value of changes in the Church than the older priests.
    - Young priests are not interested in the issues of the post-Vatican II years or any effort to realize "the spirit of Vatican II."
    - Young priests don't see why some pre-Vatican II practices were bad and couldn't be reintroduced today.
  - Theology of priesthood, i.e., what a priest is:
    - Cultic model:
      - Prevailed before 1950
      - A sacramental mediator
      - Teacher
      - Icon of the faith
      - Set apart – separate from the laity.
    - Servant – leader model:
      - Vatican II model
      - Fit the culture of the 1960s
      - Discarded cassocks
      - Spiritual leaders of the flock – "We're in this together."
      - Deemphasized differences between clergy and laity.
  - The cultic model is coming back. Why?
    - John Paul II had a strong influence.
    - John Paul II priests reflect this influence.
    - But the number of new priests is down ⅔.
- Liturgy:
  - Young priests would like to add beauty and transcendence to the liturgy through special vestments, Latin prayers and chalices.
  - They would reintroduce kneelers and bells
  - They view the liturgy as too plain – too Protestant.
- Increases in lay ministry:
  - Better educated
  - What kind of priest better serves these people?
  - The cultic model priest does not best serve these people.
  - 80% want a say in the selection of pastors.

- ❖ Survey of priests in 2001:
  - Priests' morale is not markedly different from other professions.
    - There is no morale crisis.
  - What gives priests satisfaction?
    - Administration of the sacraments
    - Preaching
    - Being with people at important times in their lives
      - A sense of being of help.
  - What gives priests dissatisfaction?
    - Organizational/administrative tasks
      - ½ would be satisfied/ ½ would be dissatisfied with sharing organizational task.
  - 88% of priests would enter priesthood again.
    - Morale is up since 1970.
    - The rise in morale is mostly in younger priests.
  - Problems priests face today:
    - The way authority is exercised in the Church – top down.
    - Too much work – it's getting worse.
    - Unrealistic expectations of lay people.
    - Loneliness of priestly life.
    - Being expected to teach Church teaching they don't agree with.
  - Other observations:
    - 72% agree to welcoming Episcopal priests in the presbyterate.
    - 23% agree to allow parishes to select their own pastor.
    - 47% agree to allow priests to select their own bishop.
    - 52% agree to allow married priests to return to the presbyterate.
      - ⅓ would come back.
- ❖ Problems in the Church today:
  - Will tomorrows Catholics still support the Church?
  - Some priests have sexually abused young people.
  - Some bishops have moved sexually abusing priests without informing affected parishioners.
  - The shortage of priests and religious.
  - Young people are not as involved in the Church as they should be.
  - Parents don't teach the faith the way they should.
  - Too many men in the priesthood with homosexual experience.
  - The Church's sexual teachings are out of touch with people's experience.
  - Bishops and priests do not hold Catholics accountable for teachings of the faith.
  - Lay people are not consulted on matters of faith and morals.
  - 62% of Catholics do not believe that all the facts are coming out.
    - Serious credibility problem.
- ❖ Parish decision making:
  - 82% of lay people should have the right to decide financial decisions.
  - 73% want to be able to select their pastor.
  - 71% want the pastor to make serious financial decisions.
  - 81% want to be informed on the money spent on sexual abuse settlements.
  - 40% want to withhold contributions.
- ❖ Skills needed for lay ministers:
  - Lack of preparation in managing conflict.
  - Better training in counseling.
- ❖ Miscellaneous comments:
  - There is one priest per 1300 people in the Unites States
  - There is one priest per 7000 in poor countries.
  - Vocations are up in poor nations.
  - Vocations are down in Europe and in the United States.
  - We need to find a way to empower lay people!
  - The average Catholic parish is eight times the size of the average Protestant congregation.

- Be slow in closing parishes.
- Sooner or later, the Church will really ordain married men in order to serve the faithful.
- Rome may disagree, but would Catholics prefer a remnant Church?
  - We may not live to see the change!
  - Big changes may cause a split.

Comments of Fr. Tom Lumpkin – representing older priests:

- ❖ If I were born in 1964 instead of being ordained in 1964
  - I might not have been ordained
  - But I would likely be a different person due to how I was shaped.
  - My seminary formation was significant
    - Especially the exposure to Scripture.
- ❖ The difference between older priests and younger priests are tensions between:
  - Preservationists
    - Represented in Scripture by Peter and James.
  - Adaptors
    - Represented in Scripture by Paul.
  - I am presently peaceful with the two visions,
    - But I wish we could talk about it.
- ❖ Baptism is more important!
  - I can't understand those who believe ordination is more important than baptism.
    - John XXIII said that the day of his baptism was the most important day in his life.
  - Who I am is a beloved child of God.
- ❖ The Kingdom of God is more important than the Church!
  - I'd like to talk about that.
- ❖ New Testament image of the Church:
  - The vine and the branches.
  - God as Father.
  - Concern for the weaker members.
  - How does this square with the corporate model of Church?

Comments of Fr. Michael Verschaeve – representing middle aged priests:

- ❖ I have read Dean Hoge's book, *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood*.
  - We priests are not reproducing ourselves, i.e. Vatican II priests.
  - What is the Spirit saying to us in these statistics?
    - New ministry is emerging.
    - If it is of the Spirit, we can't resist it.
    - We've had centuries of squashing clericalism.
      - No more of that!
- ❖ Who are our heroes in the priesthood?
  - They are in the servant-leader model:
    - William Cunningham
    - Gabriel Richard
      - He would have been the first bishop of Detroit if he weren't in jail.
  - In 1870 most of the priests in Detroit were Belgian.
- ❖ The pastoral need can bring younger and older priests together.

Comments of Fr. Tony Richter – representing young priests:

- ❖ Background:
  - I came from a city parish that should have been closed.
  - I became a priest out of love for people.
  - I have been ordained for 18 months.
  - I am happy being a priest.

- ❖ Seminary:
  - Sacred Heart Seminary has 25% foreign born students studying for the priesthood.
  - One classmate was an Episcopal priest who was ordained for the Diocese of Lansing.
    - He now serves a parish in Grand Blanc, MI.
  - I'm 39 – most students are older.
- ❖ Why didn't more young priests come today?
  - Young priests have experienced angry people at other meetings (other than Elephants in the Living Room meetings).
    - Young priests experience angry people in the parishes they serve.
    - They don't need to encounter more angry people.
  - All the priests of the archdiocese were invited to Sacred Heart Seminary to meet the new rector.
    - 75 (10%) came.
    - 1/3 were retired.
  - When I was a seminarian, I was told by an older priest, "I don't wasn't any graduates of Sacred Heart Seminary serving in my parish."
- ❖ Priests do not look to Cardinal Maida or to downtown for leadership.
  - I'm a self-starter.
  - I know what my job is.
  - I don't need someone else telling me how to do my job.
- ❖ Get to know seminarians.
  - Seminarians need support to continue toward the priesthood.
- ❖ What I didn't like about the seminary:
  - Entering the seminary at 32, I had my own life.
  - All the regulations and constraints were restricting.
    - Be here at this time and in this place.
    - If you weren't there, someone came to check up on you.
    - I'm not 13 years old, just out of grade school.
    - Not much has changed in seminary life.

#### Closing Comments from Dean Hoge

- ❖ Leadership should recognize the negative aspects of regimentation!
- ❖ There is a 10% - 12% attrition of priests in the first five years.
- ❖ The number one issue of priests is Church leadership and how authority is exercised.
  - Church structures demand consultation (Canon 536)!
  - We are not using it!

This forum was recorded by Fr. Joe Dailey and Mark Raddeke, and is available on 3 CDs for \$10.00. If you would like a recording of Dean Hoge's Forum, please send a check and your return address to:

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*Tom Kyle*