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ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP PREPARATION: AN EXPLORATION OF RECENTLY  
ORDAINED ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS

by

MICHAEL W. DRUMM, SR.

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the University of the Incarnate Word  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

May 2018

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For my wife, my muse, my beautiful icon of the Creator's creation, I am forever indebted. Her patience, her understanding, and her acceptance of being deserted while in the same house with me for long hours, can never be compensated. I will spend the rest of my life trying to make up for the time we missed.

Heavenly Father, you gave me the opportunity do more that I thought possible. Thank you for assisting and guiding me in all things. Amen.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Kathy, who stood by me, who shared my stress and my joy, and to whom I pledge my undying love.

## ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP PREPARATION: AN EXPLORATION OF RECENTLY ORDAINED ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS

Michael W. Drumm, Sr.

University of the Incarnate Word, 2018

Priesthood within the Roman Catholic Church necessitates an intense spiritual life, with priests manifesting “qualities and virtues which are typical of a person who ‘presides over’ and ‘leads’ a community” (John Paul II, 1992, p. 28). These characteristics, so meticulously laid out, describe a leader who is not only a spiritual guide but who can also organize a parish community.

This study examines two questions: (a) what did seminarians think their leadership requirements would be once they were ordained and assigned to a parish community; and (b) what were the leadership requirements they experienced? It may be useful in identifying differences that exist between how seminarians are prepared to lead and what skill sets are needed.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the expectations and the experiences of recently ordained Roman Catholic priests as leaders in their parish communities. Role theory was used as the theoretical framework for understanding actions and behaviors that are in accord with certain leadership characteristics. Purposeful sampling of ten Roman Catholic priests ordained within a 7 year period and assigned to parishes in the same archdiocese was used. Data was collected through interviews, using open-ended questions. Data analysis began with a very broad listing of key terms and ideas gleaned by listening to recordings of the interviews and

simultaneously reviewing the transcripts. Four domains were devised: (1) leadership preparation; (2) expectations of a parish leader; (3) approaches to leadership; and (4) leadership obstacles.

Findings indicated that pastoral leadership training, which is focused on emulating Jesus, does not necessarily include many of the leadership skills necessary for a priest's administrative role in a parish community. Leadership skills such as delegation, time management, human relations, financial management, and conflict resolution are generally absent from classes in the seminary. During the participant's formation in the seminary a class entitled "Orientation to Supervised Ministry" and two classes entitled "Theological Reflection for Pastoral Leadership", were introductions to further leadership training through the seminarian's internship. The primary method for assisting seminarians in acquiring some leadership skills was and is through an internship program where they are assigned to a parish for a period of time in order to learn from the example of a parish pastor. In addition, there were limited opportunities for certain leadership skills to be learned during facilitation of a post-ordination training program called *Good Leaders, Good Shepherds*. The gap in leadership skills preparation may also be ameliorated by prior work and life experience, which about 80% of the participants possessed.

Participants identified four main areas, among others, that pose substantial challenges to their parish community leadership. They are (a) organizational complexity; (b) difficulty delegating; (c) conflict resolution; and (d) financial management.

Recommendations included assigning seminarians to parishes for their internship where the pastor is willing and able to help prepare them, inclusion of leadership lessons in seminary classes where they would be appropriate and beneficial, and post ordination training where the intent is to provide new and future pastors the tools they need to wisely shepherd their parishes' material goods and personnel.

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## Chapter 1. Organizational Leadership Preparation

### Context of the Study

The importance of leaders and leadership has long been a subject of study. According to Nahavandi (2009), groups of people may have been forming for at least 50,000 years, and for that same amount of time leaders have risen to provide some level of organization or focus for the group. Good leaders provide directions that make teams effective. According to Nahavandi (2009), a leader is “a person who influences individuals and groups within an organization, helps them in establishing goals, and guides them toward achievement of those goals, thereby allowing them to be effective” (p. 4). Leadership has been described similarly as “the ability to influence a group toward the achievement of a vision or a set of goals” (Robbins & Judge, 2009, p. 385). Robbins & Judge (2015) further suggest that strong leadership is needed in an organization for maximum effectiveness: “We need leaders to challenge the status quo, create visions of the future, and inspire organizational members to achieve the visions” (pp. 332-333). In another definition of leadership, Winston and Patterson (2006) believe that the leader is the member of an organization who

selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more followers who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the followers to the organization’s mission and objective, causing the followers to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission and objectives. (p. 7)

Theories of leadership include (a) trait theories; (b) behavioral theories; (c) contingency theories; (d) the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory; (e) charismatic leadership; (f) transformational leadership; (g) authentic leadership; (h) ethical leadership; and (i) servant leadership (Robbins & Judge, 2015, pp. 333-355). Trait theories of leadership consider personal attributes such as personality, and social, intellectual, and physical characteristics. Today, after

several decades of research, trait theories may look to the Big Five Personality Model, which contends that “five basic dimensions underlie all others and encompass most of the significant variations in human personality” (Robbins & Judge, 2015, p. 125), as predictors of leadership. They are extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience. The most predictive trait appears to be extraversion, although this may be more indicative of the way leaders emerge than of how effective they are (Robbins & Judge, 2015, p. 333).

Behavioral theories were a result of early trait theory research’s failure to clearly identify leadership uniqueness. According to Napier and Gershenfeld (2004), “social scientists have been unable to find consistent evidence that traits are related to leadership, they have shifted focus in recent years to leadership ‘styles’” (p. 206). Styles refers to a collection of behaviors in each scenario (p. 206). While it is mostly accepted that leadership characteristics are a product of heredity and how we are raised, many believe that training and education can have an impact and can assist people in altering their behavior and in adopting more effective leadership styles (p. 206).

According to Robbins and Judge (2015), the Fiedler contingency model, one of a third category of leadership theories called contingency theories, suggests “that effective group performance depends on the proper match between the leader’s style and the degree to which the situation gives the leader control” (p. 337). Other contingency theories include situational theory, path-goal theory, and leader-participation model (p. 337). Contingency theories and models attempt to identify which leadership style works best in each scenario.

Leaders are important to an organization’s group effort. The most important role of a leader is an ability to design and or modify an organization to keep it focused and efficient

despite external and internal changes. For example, leadership design within many organizations is widely neglected today. Peter Senge's (1994) understanding of what Lao Tzu stated in *Tao Te Ching* is that "the bad leader is he who the people despise. The good leader is he who the people praise. The great leader is he who the people say 'We did it ourselves'" (p. 341). Leaders who actively pursue better leadership design find tremendous satisfaction in the quiet work that empowers others and generates outcomes the followers care about (Senge, 1994). Organizational design work of leadership may not be glamorous or appeal to people who desire control, wish to gain fame, or want to be the center of attention. This kind of selfless organizational leadership motivation is most often found in nonprofit organizations employing pastoral leadership and within the Roman Catholic Church. This description fits well with what Pope John Paul II (1992) was describing when he wrote of the demands of a priestly ministry as "those qualities and virtues which are typical of a person who 'presides over' and 'leads' a community" (p. 28).

"I will set shepherds over them [my sheep] who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed" (Jer. 23:4, Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition). So, begins the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, to the Bishops, Clergy and Faithful on the formation of Priests in the circumstances of the present day. Pope John Paul II's (1992) words were carefully crafted to inspire within the Church a revived sense of commitment to the fundamentals of the Apostolic tradition, primarily as a response to the challenges of the current culture. Pope John Paul II describes this ongoing commitment to organizational change:

today, however, the Church feels called to relive with a renewed commitment all that the Master did with his apostles - urged on as she is by the deep and rapid transformations in the societies and culture of our age; by the multiplicity and diversity of contexts in which she announces the Gospel and witnesses to it. (p. 2)

Pope John Paul II's (1992) vision of what sort of leader a priest should be is much broader than descriptions fashioned in previous eras. The priest is called to express in his life the



authority and service of Jesus Christ, the head and priest of the Church. He does this though encouraging and leading his ecclesial community (John Paul II, 1992). For instance, gathering together “the family of God as a fellowship endowed with the spirit of unity” and by leading it “in Christ through the Spirit to God the Father” (p. 71). This is called a *Munus Regendi* which represents a very delicate and complex duty that involves a variety of people, their vocations, and an ability to coordinate Spirit inspired gifts and charisma within the community. The intent is to discern them and to put them to good use for the upbuilding of the Church in constant union with the bishops.

This ministry demands of the priest an intense spiritual life, and a life that requires him to lead a parish community (John Paul II, 1992). From the point of view of the Roman Catholic Church, priests as shepherds are leaders with the highest of callings, expected to lead their flock much as an elder in the noblest and richest sense of the word:

qualities and virtues such as faithfulness, integrity, consistency, wisdom, a welcoming spirit, friendliness, goodness of heart, decisive firmness in essentials, freedom from overly subjective viewpoints, personal disinterestedness, patience, an enthusiasm for daily tasks, confidence in the value of the hidden workings of grace as manifested in the simple and the poor. (John Paul II, 1992, p. 28)

For centuries, Roman Catholic priests have been trained quite successfully to be the spiritual leaders of their parishes. They have been focused almost exclusively on saving their flocks’ immortal souls. However, with the enormous increase in the involvement of the laity and the sharp increase in the parishioner to priest ratio, are the experiences of recently ordained priests as leaders of their parish communities, and the leadership expectations of those priests and those of their flocks, one and the same?

Catholic priests today face a host of new leadership challenges. The ratio of parishioners to priests has more than doubled in the last 50 years, from 790:1 in 1965 to 1,740:1 in 2014

(Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate [CARA], 2014). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2018), priests in the United States serve the most educated laity in the history of the nation— from 1960 to 2015 the percentage of men and women 25 years old and older who completed high school rose from 41.1% to approximately 88.4%. College graduates also increased as a percentage of the overall population. From 1960 to 2015, the percentage of men completing college increased from about 9.7% to 32.3%, and the percentage of women from around 5.8% to around 32.7% (NCES, 2018). Overall, the expectations of parishioners regarding the quality of priestly leadership have grown with the increase in education level (Hoge et al., 1995). To better understand the context of priestly service, a short description of the structure and organization of the Catholic Church is appropriate.

The organizational structure of the Roman Catholic Church can be described as a very traditional and hierarchical one. In the Roman Catholic tradition, when Jesus Christ established the Church, he placed St. Peter at the head of the Apostles (Ciraulo, 2013). Through what the Church teaches as *Apostolic Succession*, that same hierarchy willed by Jesus exists today in the Church, with the Pope (the successor of St Peter) at her head, leading the bishops (the successors of the Apostles), who themselves lead the faithful in their local Churches (McLachlan, 2007). In the hierarchy, below the Pope are the bishops, who together form the College of Bishops.

“The college or body of bishops has no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff” (Catholic Church, 1997, p. 234). Individual bishops provide unity in their own Churches (1997). “They exercise their pastoral office over the portion of the People of God assigned to them, assisted by priests and deacons” (1997, p. 234). The Pope, therefore, is the organizational leader of the entire Catholic Church. Bishops are organizational leaders of geographically defined areas

called dioceses or archdioceses, and priests are organizational leaders of subordinate geographical areas called parishes. Deacons are also ordained clergy. They generally work alongside and are subordinate to the priest within a parish, but are ultimately responsible to the local bishop. Religious brothers and sisters, including monks, friars and nuns, are neither lay nor clerical, but instead belong to the religious state of life. The laity are all other members of the Catholic Church.

As with any large organization, there are exceptions and modifications in this basic structure, including retention of a sizeable staff within the Vatican and in each diocese. The administrative offices within the Vatican and in each diocese's chancery are called the *Curia*. In exercising supreme, full, and immediate power in the universal Church, the Roman pontiff makes use of the departments of the *Roman Curia*, which, therefore, perform their duties in his name and with his authority for the good of the Church and in the service of the sacred pastors (Vatican.org, 2017). Responsibilities of the *Curia* range from performing as the Secretary of State for the Holy See, to overseeing the Pontifical Academy of Sciences (Vatican.org, 2017). Within the United States there are 33 archdioceses, 145 dioceses (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], 2014), and 17,483 Catholic parishes (CARA, 2014). Senior leadership within the Catholic Church comes from the ranks of the corps of priests, and usually after many years of service. Their leadership skills come primarily from their personal experience.

This study attempts to view the issues through the perceptions and lens of the participants, and by applying organizational leadership theories. It is not the purpose of this study to in any way evaluate the curriculum of the seminary.

## Statement of the Problem

Leadership preparation of Roman Catholic priests is an important issue. In a study completed in 2010, the satisfaction of newly ordained priests in their new positions was closely examined in response to large numbers leaving the priesthood in their first 5 years (Ermis, 2009).

Ermis (2009) stated:

The situation, experience, training, and readiness of the newly ordained cannot be anticipated or duplicated effectively and adequately during seminary training. Neither can the newly ordained priests' personal and professional adjustment and overall response to his new life be accurately anticipated. Considering the human condition, there will be both successes and failures during the first one-to-five-year transition phase from seminary to priestly life. (p. 4)

Another researcher, Dean Hoge (1999), asserts that a new priest's desire to understand more about leadership is that they would prefer study leading to spiritual development over more secular topics. Five studies of priests who had been ordained from 1 to 9 years addressed the issue of whether the newly ordained would be interested in workshops, programs, and courses to help build skills in areas of needed growth. Since the data was not clear, programs in spiritual development would be a higher priority than in specific leadership skills (1999).

The *Reluctant Steward study* (Conway, 1992) and the *Reluctant Steward Revisited study* (Conway, 2002) revealed that the topics of leadership, stewardship, and administration are significant topics for the broader understanding of being a priest and pastor. This is especially significant because the 1992 study found that less than one third of Catholic pastors found satisfaction in their role as administrators. The day to day requirements of managing and leading a parish community appear to be furthest from the desires of most new priests.

Administrative matters were the greatest source of frustration for priests (Hoge, 1999). Only 4 out of 10 were interested in learning skills for communication and human resource development; only 3 of 10 showed interest in learning parish management, planning, leadership,

managing change, and stewardship; and, only 2 of 10 show interest in fund raising, the meaning of money and financial resource management (1999).

Within the Protestant ministerial community, similar attitudes were discovered. Once in a position of responsibility as a pastor of a protestant church, many ministers expressed regret at not maximizing their opportunities in seminary. At the Harvard Divinity School, an effort was made to obtain from graduates what they thought about the preparation they received for their ministerial positions. Many of the alumni stated that they wished they had pursued classes in pastoral counseling, courses specific to fundraising, and administration (Cormode et al, 2012). One pastor in particular stated that “I probably shouldn’t have taken that third semester Sanskrit poetry class, and instead should have taken the course on administration” (Cormode et al, 2012, p. 101).

Additional findings revealed that “only about 5 of 10 newly ordained diocesan priests identify the challenge of being a leader of the Christian community as being a source of great satisfaction” (Hoge, 1999, pp. 4-5). Compounding the challenges, there has been a decline in the numbers of priests since 1965 and at the same time an increase in the Catholic population (Hoge et al., 1995). In addition, the education level of Catholics rose, creating “higher expectations about the quality of church leadership. Today each priest, on average, must carry more leadership responsibility than ever in the past” (Hoge et al., 1995, p. 196). Within the parish level of organization, have the leadership requirements changed? Are parish priests adequately prepared for their leadership roles? This study identified the difference between what newly ordained priests expect and what they experience as parish community leaders, and in doing so, it provided insight into an area with little previous research.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the expectations and the experiences of recently ordained Roman Catholic priests as leaders in their parish communities.

## **Research Questions**

The research will be guided by the following questions:

1. What were the expectations of recently ordained Roman Catholic priests in their role as leaders of parish communities?
2. What have been the experiences of the same recently ordained Roman Catholic priests in their role as leaders of parish communities during their first 1 to 7 years as priests?

## **Researcher's Assumptions**

Roman Catholic priests, by following the example of Jesus Christ, and as described in Apostolic Letters, Decrees and Apostolic Exhortations from the Vatican, would appear to be expected to be the personification of a good leader. Thus, the question is posed as to what newly ordained priests thought the leadership expectations would be, and what their experience has been.

## **Overview of Research Methodology**

This basic interpretive qualitative study or basic qualitative study (Merriam, 2009) was designed to explore perceptions of leadership, both expected and experienced by ten newly ordained Roman Catholic priests within a Catholic Archdiocese in the Southwestern United States. The archbishop granted permission to undertake this study and a general letter of introduction was provided. The archdiocesan Curia as gatekeepers endorsed and provided contact information of newly ordained priests needed for this study.

A basic qualitative study uses constructionism (Merriam, 2009). That is, the researcher constructs from the information collected an understanding of the meaning a phenomenon has for the individuals involved in the study. A central characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds. Constructionism thus underlies what I am calling a basic qualitative study. Here the researcher is interested in understanding the meaning a phenomenon has for those involved.

Meaning, however, is not discovered but constructed. Meaning does not inhere in the objects, merely waiting for someone to come upon it . . . Meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. (Merriam, 2009, pp. 22-23)

This study used purposeful sampling of Roman Catholic priests ordained within the previous 7 years and assigned to parishes within the same archdiocese. This group was selected in order to learn if there is a difference between what newly ordained priests perceive their leadership role to be, and what they experience once they are in their parish community.

Basic qualitative studies are probably the most common form of qualitative research within the education discipline (Merriam, 2009). The data was collected from interviews, transcribed, themes identified, and a domain analysis conducted. Semi-structured open-ended questions were used to “explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject” (Patton, 2003, p. 343).

The findings arrive from analysis of cultural key terms and common themes. “The analysis of the data involves identifying recurring patterns that characterize the data. Findings are these recurring patterns or themes supported by the data from which they were derived” (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). The resulting interpretation is based upon the researcher’s analysis of the participants experiences in a form of patterns, in this case their leadership expectations and

subsequent experiences. Spradley (1980) stated “it refers to the systematic examination of something to determine parts, the relationship among parts, and their relationship to the whole. Analysis is a search for patterns” (p. 85). The goal was to conduct a domain analysis that was in-depth, allowing an opportunity to reveal the complexity of a given culture.

Because of the planned narrowness of the study, the results will not be applicable to any other case. Still, “readers can learn vicariously from an encounter with the case through the researcher’s narrative description” (Stake, 2000, p. 439). Additionally, the general is nested in, and information developed from, particular cases and can be extended to general situations (Erickson, 1986).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study used Role Theory. Shivers-Blackwell (2004) describes role theory as a means for understanding actions and behaviors that are in accord with certain leadership characteristics. According to Shivers-Blackwell, associated with every work environment is a set of activities or roles that are defined as potential behaviors to be performed in accordance with a specific job. To understand and describe the process of how work environments engender certain behaviors, many role-related concepts are examined (p. 41). The concepts examined are role set, role expectations, sent role, role pressures, role forces, and role behavior (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, & Snoek, 1964). The definitions of these concepts are included in the definitions section of this document. Shivers-Blackwell would appear to be saying that the role of a leader in an organization is determined by several outside and internal influencers. The combination of roles and pressures from those roles that anew priest experiences within the context of the organization being led determines the chosen method or methods of leadership adopted by the leader (Shivers-Blackwell, 2004).



According to Ashim Gupta (2009), “The most fundamental role of a leader in an organization is to define organization goals, develop plans, and “organize people to achieve the goals through the execution of the plans.” Other authors see it similarly, stating “leadership and administration as well, means working with and through other people to achieve organizational goals” (Ud Din, Khan, & Murtaza, 2011, p. 1). In a parish or church setting, this leadership role would most certainly fall upon the pastor. Leadership theory is one thing; practicing good leadership requires preparation and an understanding of the sacrifice and introspection that comes with it. The leadership role required of a parish priest may be considerably broader than the understanding that recently ordained priests bring to their parish communities.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study is limited by the memory of the participants and their perceptions while seminarians of what they thought would be their post-ordination leadership requirements, and by restricting the research to priests in an archdiocese in the Southwestern United States. The study was also limited to Roman Catholic priests and did not include clergy from Protestant denominations. Studies of other clergy may reach different conclusions.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Laity (Lay Persons).** The faithful who, having been incorporated into Christ through Baptism, are made part of the people of God, the Church. The laity participate in their own way in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of Christ. Laity are distinguished from clergy (who have received Holy Orders) and those in consecrated life (Catechism, 1997, p. 895).

**Ordination (Roman Catholic).** The rite of the Sacrament of Holy Orders by which the bishop, through the imposition of hands and the prayer of consecration, confers the order of bishop, priest, or deacon to exercise a sacred power which comes from Christ on behalf of the Church (Catholic Church, 1997, p. 890).

**Priest/priesthood (Roman Catholic).** “The ministerial priesthood received in the Sacrament of Holy Orders . . . has as its purpose to serve . . . all the faithful by building up and guiding the Church in the name of Christ, who is head of the body” (Catholic Church, 1997, p. 895).

**Pastor/pastoral office (Roman Catholic).** “The ministry of shepherding the faithful in the name of Christ. The Pope and bishops receive the pastoral office which they are to exercise with Christ the Good Shepherd as their model; they share their pastoral ministry with priests, to whom they give responsibility over a portion of the flock as pastors of parishes” (Catechism, 1997, p. 892).

**Religious Brothers and Sisters.** According to canon law, brothers and sisters are neither lay nor clerical, but instead belong to the religious state of life. They live what is called the “religious-consecrated life,” a church term for a life characterized by the public profession of commitment—vows to live the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience (Franciscan Friars, 2018).

**Role theory.** “The means for understanding actions and behaviors that are in accord with certain leadership characteristics” (Shivers-Blackwell, 2004, p. 41).

**Role set.** Refers to “any feature of an organization that is able to send role expectations/requirements and role pressures to the manager” (Shivers-Blackwell, 2004, p. 41).

**Role expectations.** Refers to the degree to which all members of the manager’s role set develop beliefs and attitudes about what the manager should and should not do as part of his/her role (Kahn et al., 1964).

**Sent role.** Refers to the fact that role expectations are sent to the focal person (e.g. manager) (Kahn et al., 1964).

**Role pressures.** Refers to the numerous influence attempts directed at the focal person that make up the process of role sending (Kahn et al., 1964).

**Role forces.** Regarded as psychological forces of some magnitude and direction that result from sent pressures by role senders and are the immediate source of the manager's motivation to behave (Kahn et al., 1964).

**Role behavior.** System relevant behavior (not necessarily congruent with the expectations and requirements of others) that is performed by one who is an accepted member of the system, and whose behavior is reinforced by the formalities of the organization (Kahn et al., 1964).

### **Significance of the Study**

Leadership preparation of Catholic priests is an important issue. This study attempts to provide insight and understanding into the differences between what newly ordained priests think their leadership roles should be, and what they find is required of them as leaders in a parish community. In addition, the findings of the study could lead to development of a survey instrument that could potentially be administered to a much broader population base. The results of this study could be significant to the priests of the archdiocese and especially to its leadership, and could contribute to the body of knowledge concerning the preparation and formation of Roman Catholic priests.

### **Summary**

Only about 50% of newly ordained diocesan priests find any degree of satisfaction with the challenge of being a leader of a parish community (Hoge, 1999). However, their ministry demands an intense spiritual life, filled with those qualities and virtues which are typical of a person who presides over and leads a community (John Paul II, 1992). In addition, the education

level of the Catholic population rose, creating “higher expectations about the quality of Church leadership. Today each priest, on average, must carry more leadership responsibility than ever in the past” (Hoge et al., 1995, p. 196). A review of relevant literature may help establish the context for this study’s exploration of what 10 seminarians thought their leadership responsibilities would be once they were ordained, and what they experienced after ordination.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The review of literature begins with a broad look at pertinent documents focused on the problem being researched. The chapter begins with leadership of business and nonprofit organizations, then leadership within religious organizations. Finally, this review focuses on priestly leadership. There are journals, surveys, and books that address priestly formation and a great deal of literature dealing with Protestant ministry preparation. Much of available documentation deals with the other aspects of the priesthood, including individual satisfaction and reasons for leaving the priesthood.

### **Business Leadership**

Businesses have been compelled to look to leader development to gain a competitive edge, and they have placed the responsibility for that development directly on senior leadership. Barnett and Tichy (2000) think that top leaders are compelled to take direct responsibility for development of subordinate leaders in their organizations. They have a mandate to inspire other leaders to also be teachers and to do it with no delay. Jack Welch at General Electric Co., Larry Bossidy at Allied Signal, Roger Enrico at Pepsico Inc., Andy Grove at Intel Corp., and the late Robert Goizueta of Coca-Cola Co., are examples of leaders of major corporations who are first and foremost learners. More importantly, they are also leaders who can teach others about leadership (Barnett &Tichy, 2000).

Business leaders who are also some of the most respected scholars on leadership maintain that they use a mental model of what leadership should be (Drucker, 1994). They possess a mental image of what the organization or business is designed to do. Leadership decisions depend upon the decision-makers' theory of business and the mental model they possess (Drucker, 1994). In a similar way, newly ordained pastors will possess mental models of what

their leadership should be. The difference is that they must figure out early which mental models they will use: which of the models formed from their experiences before entering the seminary, and which of the models they created during formation in seminary, should they retain, and which should they discard? (Cormode, et al., 2012) The strongest leaders are the ones who are the most self aware and are able to change their assumptions as circumstances change (Senge, 1990).

Effective leaders are not only good teachers; they can teach subordinate leaders to be teachers and, therefore, good leaders. Barnett and Tichy (2000) suggest that businesses must possess a fundamental vision that stresses rapid learning and teaching cycles. This is essential if leadership is to be a part of their organizational core and a consistent path for corporate health and expansion. Likewise, Roman Catholic priests, in the example they set of how they live their lives, in their preaching, and in their ability to teach their flock, can be good leaders, not only working for their parish's survival but also its growth. In this business-oriented model, priests as parish leaders must be able to teach parish lay leaders how to teach and be good leaders. The success or failure of any organization usually starts at the top. Organizations that are excellent at both learning and teaching reflect the leader's values, ideas and enthusiasm. If the leader can capture these things and convey them through his or her teaching, those shared values, ideas and enthusiasms become energy and motivation for leading the whole group to success (Barnett &Tichy, 2000).

The time constraints of parish leadership, however, make opportunities for post-ordination leadership instruction problematic. Time, in today's business climate is at an absolute premium. The need for chief executive officers to share their leadership knowledge with others in their organization as well as continue to grow their own leadership ability is critical. But

simultaneously, the time constraints have never been greater (Barnett & Tichy, 2000).

### **Nonprofit Leadership**

Within the context of non-profit leadership, Knauft, Berger, and Gray (1991) propose that outstanding nonprofit organizations contain four "hallmarks of excellence." The distinct characteristics are:

1. A clearly articulated sense of mission that serves as the focal point of commitment for board and staff and is the guidepost by which the organization judges its success and makes adjustments in course over time.
2. An individual who truly leads the organization and creates a culture that enables and motivates the organization to fulfill its mission.
3. An involved and committed volunteer board that relates dynamically with the chief staff officer and provides a bridge to the larger community.
4. An ongoing capacity to attract sufficient financial and human resources. (p. 1-2).

In the case of nonprofit organizations, characteristic number one is especially important because voluntary nonprofit organizations are not driven by profit, but by a purpose or mission (Courtney, 2002). The leader must be more or less aligned with the organizational culture either by changing themselves or changing the existing culture in order for the organization to be effective (Dym & Hutson, 2005). However, if a leader and the organization are too aligned, the result can be stagnation and can make it difficult for the leader to react to changing requirements (Dym & Hutson, 2005). Characteristic number three is also important to a nonprofit organization's success. "Executive directors of highly effective NPOs recognize the board of directors as a key stakeholder and work to get the board involved in pursuing the organization's mission" (Balsler & McClusky, 2005, p. 312). Board members may perform as positive

representatives of the organization to various external groups and also bring views, beliefs, and perceptions from those same groups back to the organization (McClusky, 2002). In addition to drawing in sufficient personnel and financial resources, a successful nonprofit leader, as in characteristic number four, assesses the organizations resources and aligns the organization to do what is possible. The better the leader is able to do that, the more successful the organization (Dym & Hutson, 2005).

The acquisition and retention of these hallmarks of excellence would be a responsibility of the pastor in the case of a parish community. Some authors have proposed methods for developing nonprofit leaders that are broad and less tangible. Two teams of researchers, Herman and Heimovics (1991) and Knauft et al. (1991), think that clarifying individuals' views of themselves, their skill sets, and how they think others see them is essential to becoming effective leaders. Both groups of researchers suggest that there is a pressing need for training programs to emphasize self-perception to increase skill levels.

The pastor of a Roman Catholic parish is both the spiritual and organizational leader of the parish. A pastor's roles include facilitating the parishioner's enlightenment, assisting with their inner peace, and encouraging generosity toward others (Cieslak, 2001). As the organizational leader of the parish, the pastor see to the management of a parish, which is not unlike running a small, community-based nonprofit business (Boyatzis, Brizz, & Godwin, 2011).

Attributes of good business leaders are still found within the realm of nonprofit organizational leadership are. Knauft et al (1991) pointed out hallmarks of nonprofit organizations that are well led, and at least three of the four characteristics are clearly leader dependent. In addition, more than one study determined that answers lie inside the leader, with a focus on self-awareness (Herman & Heimovics, 1991; Knauft et al., 1991). However, Herman



seems to have changed his view in 2005 and found that “boards of directors of nonprofit organizations hold the prime leadership position and are expected to provide, in large part, leadership in defining their organization’s mission and values” (Herman, 2005, p. xviii). According to Ong (2013), in the case of pastoral leadership, improvement can be realized through increased self-awareness and the encouragement of self-exploration. “The practice of individual and group reflection on leadership is a source of learning that fits smoothly into the spiritual nature of priests’ education and pastoral work” (p. 212).

There appears to be a strong similarity between the sets described above and the Jesuit leadership model. The teachings of St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, believe that the Jesuit’s success is a result of their ability to focus on self-awareness. Their value-based leadership is like authentic and transformational leadership, where they concentrate on transparency, integrity and caring for others (Nahavandi, 2009).

There are significant differences, however, as one writer points out. Private firms for the most part expend their effort toward financial profit. Not for profit organizations, including government institutions, are created to assist or achieve social agendas (Thach, 2012). Thach (2012) also contends that leadership challenges in nonprofit organizations can be confusing, vague and conflicted, requiring leaders to deal with “complex constituencies” (p. 715). This description seems in some ways to reflect the causes of the overwhelmed feeling that newly ordained priest experience. The leadership that priests are expected to provide must deal with everything from plumbing emergencies to the disparate political agendas of some parishioners. On the other hand, nonprofit leaders seem to deal better with crisis. In terms of managing chaos, it appears that maintaining a consistent work schedule by public sector leaders is much more difficult than it is for private sector leaders because they are swamped with crisis and meetings

(Lau, Pavett, & Newman, 1980). Civilians who work in government leadership positions spend much more time in crisis management and “fire drills” than their peers in the private sector (Rainey, 2003). This may be because they are more accountable to multiple constituencies and changes in legislation and budgeting (Ring & Perry, 1985; Self, 1977). Indeed, a more recent study shows that public leaders are actually more innovative managers in times of crisis than may have been previously considered (McMurry, Pirola-Merlo, Sarros, & Islam, 2010).

In addition, a conundrum of sorts confronts nonprofit leaders during crisis in that the extensive body of formal rules and procedures they operate under would seem to hamper their flexibility in responding. Research has shown that public leaders are concerned that they do not have the control they need and the variety of options they need to respond (Blumenthal, 1983; Rainey, Backoff, & Levine, 1976). At the same time, they have strong goal clarity (Lan & Rainey, 1992). This appears to be like the situation many parish priests find themselves in, which is that during crisis, the same rules that restrict their options for action give them a strong basis for what direction to go.

Lastly, like the post-Vatican II Catholic Church, more participative management is encouraged. Just as more of the laity are responsible for parish ministries and have a role in parish community decision making, public and nonprofit leaders are encouraged to use more participative management and engagement. Participative management and engagement is being stressed in some of the newer literature on public leadership. Using this, it is thought that public leaders may be able to improve employee satisfaction and overall organizational performance (Thach, 2012). The role of a Catholic priest as a parish community leader would appear to have become much more difficult after the Second Vatican Council.

## Religious Leadership

For the purposes of this study, the religions, religious organizations, and religious leaders considered in this discussion are considered a subset of nonprofit organizations, especially those that are in a tax free status within the United States. Research in 1992 described competencies that are characteristics of excellent religious leaders and believed them to be distinguishable from the characteristics of what they called typical leaders. The researchers conducted

*Behavioral Event Interviews* with 24 outstanding and 15 typical leaders, these authors found that leadership excellence requires the basic skills of seeking information, administrative adeptness, an orientation toward efficiency, conceptualization, analytical thinking, and mission awareness. These authors hold that these threshold competencies are bounded by personal qualities such as self-confidence and a concern for moderation. Moving beyond the threshold characteristics, the most outstanding leaders had awareness of the presence of God. Still, they were motivated by advancement and social power. (Nygren & Ukeritis, 1992, p. 123)

Beyond the characteristics and basic skills needed is a consideration of the role or roles that religious leaders are compelled to perform. Samuel Blizzard (Blizzard & Episcopal Church, 1956) conducted detailed and elaborate research into ministerial roles; “The six practitioner roles he discerned were preacher, pastor, priest (worship leader), teacher, organizer, and administrator.” In the almost 50 years since Blizzard’s research, changes in the people and their ministry needs have compelled more specialized roles, especially among Protestant churches. “The contemporary role of administrator and organizer are newer to church practice. These offices were not as clearly defined in 1956 as the other functions” (Woodruff, 2004, p. 57).

In many churches a new position has been created, that of the executive pastor. The role of the church has become much more complex and a pastor needs to meet not only the spiritual requirements of the congregation, but also the strategic, operational, and personnel functions (Woodruff, 2004). The executive pastor is a new position in many Protestant churches across the United States. It is a pastoral role and its focus is first and foremost on the development and

maintenance of the paid and volunteer staff, and on the church organization (Woodruff, 2004). In some cases, the executive pastor is responsible for a paid staff member called the business administrator, whose duties can include office management, communicating with parishioners, managing volunteers, assisting with financial management of the church and organizing events. Specific duties depend on the needs and size of the church (Malone, 2017). In the absence of an executive pastor or business administrator, those roles would be the responsibility of volunteers or a priest, as the pastor of a Catholic parish.

Blizzard and Episcopal Church (1956) asked 690 Protestant and Catholic Clergy to rank the roles by how important they were, how effective they were carrying them out, how much they enjoyed the roles, and how much time they spent on them. Like Zurcher's (1999) results described in the introduction, participants said that they enjoyed being a pastor and preacher first, and administrator last. Not surprising was that the amount of time spent on their role as administrator was ranked first. Blizzard described the dilemma confronting a religious leader as the disconnect between the leadership requirements that a minister prefers and the ones where he is required to spend most of his time (Blizzard & Episcopal Church, 1956).

A significant challenge facing new ministers of all denominations is resistance to change. Religious organizations and ethics-based organizations of all kinds usually test and challenge new leadership and may offer significant resistance to change (Fritz & Ibrahim, 2010). Routines and familiarity are foundational to most religious organizations. The leader should be aware of proactive changes that can be viewed as a threat to many of the existing organizational members. Most organizations, but especially religious organizations, develop routines and norms that are not easily changed. Even leaders who have a strong preference for proactive behavior may be reluctant to challenge the existing organization and the existing order. Leaders must plan for

strong resistance in the early stages of their tenure in a new organization. Further, low-tenure leaders may lack the level of trust required to implement changes that may threaten existing organizations. Leaders should be mindful of demonstrating behaviors that are closely linked to high levels of trust such as integrity, competence and altruistic behavior (Fritz & Ibrahim, 2010).

There is a more pronounced distinction between a for-profit organization and a religious organization. Fritz and Ibrahim (2010) described how, within a for-profit organization it is perfectly acceptable and encouraged as a business practice to try moving into new markets. However, entering new markets might be viewed as threatening, or even an abandonment of the central mission, in a religious organization. Therefore, although religious leaders may feel that proactive behaviors will lead to stronger performance, proactive strategies might still meet with significant resistance from members and other stakeholders in a religious organization (Fritz & Ibrahim 2010).

The uncertainties created for religious organizations trying to balance a need for stability and familiarity with social change would seem to require significant investment of time and energy. As the culture moves further away from traditional belief systems, religious organizations and their leaders are in a quandary as to how to deal with them. Hoge (2008) indicated that Protestant Church leaders are just as befuddled by social changes as Catholic Church leaders. One Protestant source indicated that successful pastors are those who try to embody the cultures of the local community (Small, 2011).

The Church and the priesthood are in a state of transition. The future will probably see (a) smaller numbers of priests; (b) an even more conservative ecclesiology; (c) significantly more pressure by leadership responsibilities; and (d) strangely, an organization more accustomed to seeing itself as a professional group than at any time in the past (Hoge et al., 1995).

Similar to clerics around the world, Catholic priests serve in multiple leadership roles at the same time. Catholic priests are spiritual leaders, but they are also leaders of their parish organizations, and in many instances they are community leaders (Boyatzis et al, 2011). About one half of the population of the United States sits in a pew or synagogue each week, making the United States one of the most religious nations in the world (Newport, 2008; Swanbrow, 2003). The impact on parishes by the pastor as a leader “typically go unexamined in organizational leadership studies” (Boyatzis et al., 2011).

### **Priestly Leadership Preparation**

Philip Murnion (1978) studied and analyzed changes that occurred in pastoral ministry structures within parishes of the Archdiocese of New York between 1920 and 1970. The author explored recruitment processes and training for pastoral ministries through interviews and by documenting the viewpoints or central elements of Church and ministry prevalent in the literature of the time. His study revealed information about the motivations behind the young men who decided to attend seminary. He compares the number of times six different motivations were cited among the two groups, those in the 1920’s and those in the 1960’s. While some motives remained constant in their frequency, others, such as “a strong sense of being called to the priesthood” and “Love of God” were not consistent. There was also a significant increase in those citing a general desire to serve.

The changes could be attributed to the not insignificant cultural changes that occurred in the United States and the entire free world in the 1960’s. In the late 1960’s and 1970’s changes in leadership roles of priests included an expectation of greater involvement in growing social justice movements, efforts and motivations.

Catholic priests are required in some measure to exhibit leadership characteristics found

in several leadership theories. Transactional leadership would seem least favored by priests among the theories. Transactional leadership is based on the concept of an agreed upon exchange between leaders and followers. The leader provides followers with resources and compensation in exchange for motivation, productivity, and accomplishment of the task at hand (Nahavandi, 2009). Its *quid pro quo* idea corresponds too closely to the idea of business transactions and of being involved in parish administration, which only 20% of priests surveyed by Zurcher (1999) showed interest. More likely, priests try to exhibit characteristics that can be found in transformational leadership theory or in newer theories of spiritual, value-based, or authentic leadership. There are three factors included in transformational leadership: (a) charisma and inspiration; (b) intellectual stimulation; and (c) individual consideration. When these factors are combined, tremendous change can be achieved by the leader (Nahavandi, 2009).

Transformational leadership also requires establishment of a personal relationship with each of the people who are led. Although treated as individuals, transformational leaders must be sure to treat all of those led equally. Parishioners should feel encouraged, motivated to perform better, and have the pastor's full and complete attention when speaking to him (Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002). The challenge for newly ordained priests would appear to be the amount of time that building those kinds of relationships require.

Perhaps the optimum leadership theory to be considered by newly ordained priests already exists within the Catholic Church. The teachings of St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, believe that the Jesuit's success is a result of their ability to focus on self-awareness. Their value-based leadership is like authentic and transformational leadership, where they concentrate on transparency, integrity and caring for others (Nahavandi, 2009).

A newly ordained priest comes to a parish community with a certain level of credibility

about spiritual leadership. A priest completes his formation over a course of several years in a seminary, studying philosophy, theology and other relevant courses, giving a parishioner some confidence that when the new priest speaks of the things of God, one of his power bases, he is very knowledgeable. In contrast, if a leader does not have a power base in areas such as administration or finance, he or she may not be able to exert the necessary influence to lead the parish. A parish community leader's effectiveness in a specific situation can be explained by understanding the unique relationship between the priest and the parishioner as well as their shared perceptual processes (Kenney, Blascovich, & Shaver, 1994).

A leader's ability to influence a follower is dependent upon the follower permitting the leader to exercise that power of influence. If followers are not allowing themselves to be influenced, the leader is powerless (Kenney et al., 1994).

Important leadership competencies needed to fulfill the parish's expectations were described by Nygren and Ukeritis (1992), using research from the Chestwick Center conducted in 1991. Nygren and Ukeritis discuss two different sets of leadership skills needed by religious leaders, human services and ecclesiastical:

In regard to religious management, interviews with 35 religious leaders conducted by The Cheswick Center (1991) found that respondents felt that the skills needed by today's leaders are very different than those needed in the past. In the human services area, these leaders felt that the most important leadership competencies were (a) knowledge of government regulations; (b) accountability; (c) individual initiative; (d) skills in negotiation; (e) process. In ecclesiastical areas, an ability to (a) envision and communicate effectively with others; (b) comprehend economic and monetary factors; (c) work participative; (d) understand planning; (e) be personally organized; (f) and balance work and play were considered important competencies. (p. 123)

Personal knowledge of government regulations may not be a priority for a new pastor, since each Catholic Diocese retains lawyers, but might become more important depending upon the type and their level of involvement in community activities. In 1999, the National



Organization for Continuing Education of Roman Catholic Clergy sponsored a review of research done during five studies between 1984 and 1993 (Hoge, 2002). They found that many young priests feel overwhelmed and inadequately supervised. The several specific skills required for completion of day to day tasks are skills for which they feel they are inadequately prepared. The identified tasks include administration, management, finances, staff relationships, and conflict resolution (Hoge, 2002).

Newer research provides 21 competencies for Catholic pastors. A Delphi study of competencies for pastoral leadership conducted by Callahan (2003) rearranged those competencies into attributes and themes (p. 55). Attribute number one is where the pastoral leader is a spiritually mature person. The themes associated with it are: (a) prayer; (b) integrity; (c) connects spirituality with life; (d) faith that does justice; (e) self-knowledge and well balanced; (f) sense of humor; (g) flexible; (h) humble; (i) wise judgment; and (j) lifelong learner. Attribute number two states that the pastoral leader is grounded in theology and scripture. Its two themes are theology and scripture. The third and last attribute is that the pastoral leader builds and nurtures communities of faith and action. The themes associated with attribute number three are: (a) listen and know the people of God; (b) Compassion, empathy, understanding; (c) knows and understands human nature; (d) communication; (e) collaboration; (f) servant leader; (g) inspire to vision and mission; (h) inclusion/hospitality; and (i) preaching and worship (p. 57).

Research statistics demonstrate that 72–81% of the priests surveyed thought that their preparation for Church administration was very unfavorable (Hoge, 2002). The surveys also revealed that 23% of active diocesan priests thought that there needed to be more development of administrative, management and human relation skills to more effectively prepare seminarians for priestly ministry (Hoge, 2002). Research reveals that many priests desire better leadership

training. They experience role stress once in position, which is very different from what is expected by them in their role as seminarians.

Evaluations of what seminaries have provided in the past to assist priests with training in the more mundane administrative activities, including fund raising, indicate that it was not a high priority, if even addressed (Reilly, 1975). Additional research indicates that the youngest among priests may not recognize the need for their involvement in the secular administration of a parish community, but more mature members of the priesthood recognize the power they gain by controlling and leading, and may be less eager to share administrative control with the laity (Reilly, 1975). If the dissatisfaction continues among the youngest priests, who move toward becoming pastors on their own, lay control of the physical plant and monetary aspects of the parish is likely to occur (Reilly, 1975).

In 1987 the United States Bishops addressed the important tasks that priests are to perform. They acknowledged the stress of changing from the hierarchical model of leadership to a model of leadership shared and inspired by a communion of the faithful. The bishops observed that priests today must understand the tasks of organizing teams of lay ministers, of counseling and listening, of collaboration, and of matching talents to tasks (Henderson-Callahan & Eblen, 2006).

In the 21st century there are leadership ideas that support the change from a hierarchical model. It has been argued that effective leadership and openness to ideas from others can create an organization where any member may lead or follow, depending upon the circumstance. (Cooksey, 2003). There are new models of organizational leadership, including shared leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003) and team leadership (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). These models stress the presence of multiple leaders in an organization, and the give and take of relationships

between them (Blair, Kunz, Jeantet, & Kwon, 2012). It appears that there is now at least some level of agreement that:

(1) leadership can and should be exercised by those who do not exercise positional authority, that is, those who are not at the center of an organization or community; (2) this leadership does not replace positional authority, but may challenge or supplement it at times; (3) that such leadership should ideally be nurtured and encouraged in the pursuit of positive transformation and (4) organizations or communities that do so will be uniquely equipped to initiate and manage deep change in the years to come. (Blair et al, 2012, p. 128)

A shared leadership model that does not abandon the overall responsibility of the pastor appears to be closer to what the bishops of the Church envision.

The results of the Parish Evaluation Project suggested that each new pastor be given the opportunity to participate in an extended period of team building, perhaps as long as a year. The co-directors of the project contend that the pastor and his staff could become more skilled at conflict management, community building, information gathering, evaluation, and decision making. The idea is that the ministry team is able to encourage mutual support and manage conflicts between team members. The pastor becomes a team leader who functions as an equal and a facilitator (Sweetser & Holden, 1992).

In an interesting comparison of the satisfaction of Orthodox priests to Roman Catholic priests, Krindatch and Hoge (2010) identified a key difference between the two. Orthodox priests do not have the same leadership challenges as Roman Catholics. Most American Orthodox priests, who continue to operate and lead their parishes in a traditional way, are not challenged with issues of changing priestly identity and role. In many ways, American Orthodox clergy remain a community more close-knit and closed to outsiders than the Catholic priesthood. Orthodox priests rely upon greater support from their bishops and fellow priests, while American Catholic clergy draw much more on their non-priest friends (Krindatch and Hoge, 2010). The

difference is significant because Roman Catholic priests, especially newly assigned priests, may discover that early leadership challenges could be more difficult if guidance and counsel gained from lay friends is not completely in line with the bishop's ideas of priestly leadership.

Catholic and Orthodox priests both agree that, providing sacraments and leading worship are their unique priestly roles, clearly distinct from the people in the pews. When performing in their role as shepherds of their flocks, priests in general enjoy their work the most (Krinditch and Hoge, 2010). So as far as what priests from "both lungs of the Church," as Saint John Paul II (1995) termed it, prefer as to their roles, there is no difference (p. 15).

There are more developed ideas as to what priestly identity is and by extension what priestly leadership is. As will be discussed, how a priest identifies himself is equally, inseparably tied to his leadership. In McCarthy's (2006) commentary entitled *Theological Education and Leadership Development*, and Hoge's (2006) research entitled, *Experiences of priests ordained five to nine years: A study of recently ordained Catholic priests*, the two currently predominant theories of priestly identity and leadership are first explained, then discarded and a new one created (McCarthy, 2006). The first theory, generally referred to as the cultic model, is attributed to older priests who attended the seminary in most instances prior to the Second Vatican Council in the mid-1960's. The cultic model "emphasizes the distinctive status conferred by ordination and accentuates the role of the priest as one 'set apart' to serve the Church" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 141). The second theory is often described as the servant-leader model. Servant-leaders are identified by their collaboration with lay people. They emphasize collegial relationships and highlight the common baptismal identity of both priests and laity (McCarthy, 2006). Servant-leadership seems to be a humble and self-effacing approach that more closely emulates the ministry of Jesus Christ. When considering all pastors, including Protestant, because of its self-

emptying and personal diminishment it can have less than positive consequences for women and marginalized groups by preserving a servant/master perception (Pickard, 2012). According to Palumbo (2016), in several circumstances, servant leadership is unlikely to empower followers, and in fact it can discourage their commitment to the organization: “In fact, followers could become reliant on the figure of the servant leader, thus being unwilling to adopt a proactive behavior to meet the organizational instances” (p. 81).

McCarthy (2006) explains that administration means ministry towards or for others. The word implies a dynamic thrust, a generous offer of one’s talents so that the gifts of others may more properly be realized, affirmed and exercised in service. “The spirituality required of one who is an administrator is grounded in the Kenosis, the self-offering of Jesus ‘who did not deem equality with God something to be clung to, but gave himself up, even to death on the cross’ (Phillipians 2:8)” (McCarthy, 2006, p. 142).

This idea of the parish priest as administrator varies greatly from the traditional view where priests of an older generation spoke of it as the burden of “locks, leaks, and lights” (McCarthy, 2006, p. 140). The rabbinic model proposed “captures the fidelity and passion of Jesus in forming a dynamic community of disciples” (McCarthy, 2006, p. 143). Still, a key to leading a functioning parish community would seem to include having adequate financial resources. Younger priests seem to see being an administrator and fund-raiser as difficult but not critical to their pastoral ministry. The reactions to questions about administrative functions point to major differences between priests under 35 years of age and members of all other cohorts. Fund raising is generally unpopular, but the percentage of priests who view it as highly important varies substantially, while evaluation of parish administration is even more startling. This indicates that the youngest clergy do not view these as essential duties of the priestly role, and

would probably prefer to relinquish these functions to lay persons (Reilly, 1975).

McCarthy (2006) does not see the seminary adding additional course work to an already overburdened curriculum, but integrating aspects of leadership training, including group dynamics, conflict resolution and similar skill sets into existing subjects and internships. Kettl (2018) suggests that followers learn what they need to lead from watching good leaders, and that if the ones they watch are indeed good, they may become better leaders than the ones they follow (p. 185). The findings reinforce the idea that early in their career, young priests do not consider administrative and associated leadership activities as important roles (Reilly, 1975).

On the more positive side, Catholic Leadership 360 is an organization that provides leadership coaching for parish communities. Their observations can provide members of the clergy and lay staff with lessons learned and suggestions for improvement to their leadership skill sets. Priests and lay leaders receive a unique opportunity to gain insight into their effectiveness as leaders in the Church. Through 360-degree feedback, each participant receives a report focused on his or her leadership behaviors and one-on-one feedback coaching on how to improve and grow (Catholic Leadership 360, 2016).

## **Summary**

A review of literature was undertaken using the ATLA Religion Database with ATLA Serials. EBSCO host Research Databases were also used in the search for relevant literature. In addition, literature was found in university libraries, the library of the seminary that formed the participants, and a school of theology. The literature review indicated that the challenges facing newly ordained priests are driven by a spectrum of internal and external role forces and pressures. Every document that addressed what new priests would prefer indicated that it does not include day-to-day administrative leadership.

There are many similarities between the leadership of not-for-profit organizations and newly ordained Catholic priests when considering administrative leadership roles. Advantages over normal business leadership requirements can include ease of handling a crisis because of a limited number of options with which to respond, or assisting in achieving social agendas instead of responding to shareholder demands. Disadvantages to not-for-profit institutions like the church include not having as much flexibility in responding to a crisis and having to rely much more on volunteers.

The literature review also illustrated the very limited amount of research and number of publications and documents dealing with preparation for the priesthood. The surveys conducted of priests with more experience than the ones considered in this study revealed two primary reasons new priests left the priesthood; (a) celibacy, and (b) little time for their spiritual growth. The supportive structure of seminary life may have mitigated some of the celibacy challenges faced once newly ordained priests were sent to a parish community and in the “real world.” The second may be a result of a need for additional leadership preparation. New priests seem to be disinterested in leadership skills that could ameliorate some of the apparent lack of time, delegation and time management being two.

The literature review also showed a void in research that examines how well priests are prepared to be parish community leaders. A priest enjoys the religious aspects of his position far more than the secular requirements of his assignment.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the expectations and the experiences of recently ordained Roman Catholic priests as leaders in their parish communities. The study implemented a basic interpretive research design to understand participant meaning and interpretation of newly ordained Roman Catholic priests' individual experiences (Merriam, 2002). "Interpretive studies assume that people create and associate their own subjective and inter-subjective meanings as they interact with the world around them. Interpretive researchers thus attempt to understand phenomena through assessing the meanings that participants assign them" (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991, p. 5). "A central characteristic of all qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds. Constructivism thus underlies what we are calling a basic qualitative study" (Merriam, 2009, p. 24). The researcher constructed an understanding and meaning from collected information. The overall "intent is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world" (Creswell, 2014, p.8). In fact, a phenomenon occurs where "meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting" (Crotty, 1998, pp. 42-43).

This study's participants were Roman Catholic priests ordained within the previous 7 years and assigned to parishes within the same archdiocese. The aim of the study was to discuss differences between what newly ordained priests preconceive their leadership role to be, and what they experienced once they were in their parish community. Basic interpretive qualitative studies are probably the most common form of qualitative research within education disciplines (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with all selected participants.



The following research questions guided this study:

1. What were the expectations of recently ordained Roman Catholic priests in their role as leaders of parish communities?
2. What have been the experiences of the same recently ordained Roman Catholic priests in their role as leaders of parish communities during their first 1 to 7 years as priests?

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences and expectations of recently ordained Roman Catholic priests as leaders in their parish communities. The findings drew on Merriam's (2009) assertion that "analysis of the data involves identifying recurring patterns that characterize the data. Findings from these recurring patterns or themes supported data from which they were derived" (p. 23). The resulting interpretation was based upon the researcher's understanding of participants' comprehension of the phenomenon, in this case their leadership expectations and subsequent experiences.

### **Characteristics of Qualitative Research**

A qualitative study exists within the qualitative paradigm, using a post-positivist lens and with the intention of seeking an outcome. The examination of leadership pre-conceptions and the subsequent actual experiences of newly ordained Roman Catholic priests and newly assigned parish pastors may contribute to an understanding of what can assist in their preparation for leading a parish community.

Qualitative studies, like other qualitative research methods, seek meaning and understanding. This study used the researcher as the primary data collection instrument and analytical tool, using an inductive strategy, and with a product that is rich and descriptive Merriam (2002). Throughout this research endeavor, the researcher explored in depth the cases

of 10 recently ordained Roman Catholic priests with the intent of determining what their expectations were of their roles as leaders within their parish communities, and what their actual experiences have been.

### **Setting of the Study**

The setting for this study included various parishes within a Roman Catholic archdiocese in the Southwestern United States. According to Holiday (2009), the intent is to delve deeply into a definable setting “in which phenomena can be placed meaningfully within a specific social environment” (p. 33). Interviews and observations occurred where the participants live, work, and perform their leadership roles. Holiday emphasizes that “the setting is connected closely to the research question in that it provides an environment in which the questions can be addressed” (p. 33). In-depth open-ended interviews of the participants occurred on the parish sites where the priests are assigned. In addition, observations of their demonstrated leadership likewise occurred on parish grounds during parish events, both social and business.

### **Participant Selection**

A population can be defined as “a group of individuals who comprise the same characteristics” (Creswell, 2005, p. 595). In this case the population is newly ordained Roman Catholic priests within a Southwestern archdiocese. The newly ordained priests were ordained within 7 years of their becoming a participant in this study. Based upon the available pool of participants, 7 years since ordination was the limit for participant selection. In addition, after 7 years many preconceptions from seminary life are not fresh and the initial challenges of being a pastoral leader have been compensated for by the experience that comes with on the job training (Ermis, 2009)

Purposeful sampling was used. Participants came from parishes in the selected archdiocese and were required to be serving in a parish and not assigned to diocesan or other non-pastoral duties. According to Merriam & Tisdell (2015), “Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 96). Potential participants were invited to take part, using a letter originating in archdiocese offices and sent to priests who fit the research participant criteria of having been ordained for 7 years or less. Ten participants were selected. The population represented a variety of prior leadership experiences before entering the seminary. Those differences in experience proved significant. They also helped explain differences between what the participants thought their leadership roles would be and what they discovered once assigned to a parish.

Two forms of data collection were used. The first was interviews using open-ended questions designed to prompt participants to recall their expectations and experiences. The second was a review of interview transcripts. Each participant had the opportunity to provide additional information upon the review. An interview protocol is a “form designed by the researcher that contains instructions for the process of the interview, the questions to be asked, and space to take notes of responses from the interview” (Creswell, 2005, p. 222). The interview protocol this researcher used contained a header for noting basic information about the interview such as the date, time, and place. There was also a description of the study and a prompt for the researcher to ensure that the consent form was signed.

The first question that was asked was based on what Creswell (2005) describes as an icebreaker. Its purpose was to “relax the interviewee and motivate them to talk” (p. 223). The next several questions were based on the research questions and were open-ended in order to

learn what the participants think, without prompting them to say what they think the researcher wants to hear. The last question asked them for ideas on who else should be spoken with. A copy of the interview protocol used is included in this document as Appendix A. The interview protocol document included space between the questions for recording notes.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection primarily involved personal interviews of participants using questions that led to discussions. Questions were open-ended and semi-structured. In addition, each participant was provided the opportunity to edit or revise their transcript of the interview, providing corrections, modifications, and additions, improving accuracy and clarity.

The data analysis looked for themes and other evidence that addressed the research questions. The intent is for the rich descriptions of this study to provide insight into the differences, if any, between what newly ordained priests thought they would be expected to do as new leaders, and what was the reality of their individual experiences.

This interpretive qualitative study, or basic qualitative study (Merriam, 2009) was designed to explore the perceptions of leadership, both expected and experienced, by ten newly ordained Roman Catholic priests within a Catholic archdiocese in the Southwestern United States. Authorization to undertake the study and a general letter of introduction was provided by the archbishop. The concept of the study was endorsed by the diocesan staff, and information for contacting the newly ordained priests needed for the study was provided.

Data collection was performed around participant schedules over an extended period. Transcriptions were performed verbatim and required several months to complete. The researcher was meticulous and participant reviews were completed at the convenience of the participant. Interviews were recorded and some notes were used as a backup in the event of

equipment failure. Two forms of data collection were used. The first was open-ended semi-structured interviews designed to prompt participants to recall their expectations and their experiences. The second form of data collection was a review by the participants of their interview transcripts. Each participant had the opportunity to provide additional information upon the review. “An interview protocol is a form designed by the researcher that contains instructions for the process of the interview, the questions to be asked, and space to take notes of responses from the interview” (Creswell, 2005, p. 222). The interview protocol contained a header for noting basic information such as the date, time, and place. There was a description of the study and a prompt to ensure that the consent was signed. The first question asked was scripted to “relax the interviewee and motivate them to talk” (Creswell, 2005, p. 223). The next several questions were based on open-ended semi-structured research questions to gain an understanding of individual experiences. A copy of the interview protocol is attached as Appendix A.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis is inductive in its form, in that it goes from familiar to general understandings. In many ways, it permits simultaneous analysis of data as it is being collected. In addition, coding of identified text segments may be accomplished simultaneously with collection, once coding is established and identified. The importance in this study was identifying recurring patterns in their interviews that highlighted differences between what the priests thought would be their roles as leaders in a parish community while they were still seminarians, and what their actual roles were in their new leadership positions once in a parish community. The results of this research are in no way to be construed as an evaluation of a seminary’s current course of instruction. It is simply going to show if there is a difference

between what seminarians' expectations were and what their experiences have been as to their leadership roles and requirements in parish communities.

Data analysis began with a listing of key terms taken from the interviews. Each recorded interview was listened to, comparing what was heard to what was written in each transcript. Key terms and ideas were written down to form a list. The list was extensive, so a second list was compiled from the first, eliminating redundancies and selecting terms generally most relevant to the research topic.

The second list of 69 key terms included:

administration	example	organization
annulment	expectations	parish community
apostolate	experiences	parochial vicar
authentic leadership	goals	pastoral
authority	good leaders	presence
balance	good shepherds	responsibility
budget	growth	role playing
catechist	human resources	sacrament
complexity	identity	seminary
convalidation	initiative	servant leader
culture	instruction	smell like your sheep
customs	intern	talent to task
deacon	leadership	training
decision maker	manage	vision
deference	mentor	vocation
delegation	ministry	vocal command

A third list of 15 key terms was refined from the second list. These were:

authentic leadership	example	parish community
changes	goals	presence
complexity	instruction	servant leader
conflict resolution	internship	training
delegate	mentorship	vision

The selection of these 15 key terms was based on the predominant ideas revealed in the participant transcripts. These were terms (a) most frequently used; (b) potentially the most relevant to answering the research questions; and (c) reflected topics most of the participants wanted discussed in depth. The domain analysis began using these 15 key terms.

### **Trustworthiness and Credibility**

According to Merriam (2002), “All researchers aspire to produce valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner. And both producers and consumers of research want to be assured that the findings of an investigation are to be believed and trusted” (p. 22). Strategies to ensure reliability of this study included triangulation and summary checks. Triangulation using multiple data collection methods was employed. “In this triangulation strategy, the researcher collects data through a combination of interviews, observations, and document analysis” (p. 25). The specific methods for triangulating were participant interviews, participant reviews and editing of the transcriptions, and document analysis. All interviews were recorded and participant checks requested in the form of edited transcriptions of interviews provided to individual participants for their review. Their individual proofing of their personal interviews strengthened the credibility of the data collection. Four participants elected to respond to the transcripts that were sent. Of those, two had comments or corrections, and two made no changes. In addition, the researcher’s journal formed an audit trail that “describes in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry” (p. 27). “The

question of trustworthiness has to do with issues of internal validity, reliability, and external validity or generalizability” (pp. 30-31). The researcher’s strategies to help employ verification of trustworthiness included (a) triangulation; (b) member checks; (c) a research journal; (d) an explanation of the researcher’s position; and (e) rich thick descriptions.

### **Research Instrument—The Researcher**

The research instrument as “the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions, and biases at the outset of the study” (Creswell, 2014, p. 207). The researcher is a white, beyond middle-aged male who obtained a BA in Psychology, an MS in Systems Management, and is currently working to earn a PhD in education with a concentration in Organizational Leadership. In addition, he is a Catholic Deacon and a long-time student of the Catholic faith. The researcher also has extensive experience as a leader in numerous capacities, both while employed and in volunteer service to his community. However, this researcher considers himself to be an outsider, even though he is a Catholic Deacon, because insiders are priests. The study for the Deaconate is not the same as for a priest. It contains a different curriculum, different instructors, and occurs on a different campus. Biases include the researcher’s Roman Catholic faith, and his pre-conceived ideas of what a priestly leader should be, based on his experience as a leader. Submitting findings to members of the dissertation committee and peer review will help mitigate all biases and prevent the researcher from finding what he is looking for “through selective attention to detail and selective interpretation of data” (Merriam, 2002, p. 147).

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

Approval to conduct this study was obtained not only from the Institutional Review Board of the University of the Incarnate Word, but also from the Catholic Archdiocese. A letter



to each participant explained why the research was being conducted and how the results would be shared and used. Since anonymity is guaranteed, there is no personal risk to the participants. Each participant received a consent form, which they and the researcher signed. Participants were assured that their participation was always subject to their willingness to continue, and that they may elect not to participate at any time. “Researchers need to protect the anonymity of the informants by, for example, assigning numbers or aliases to them to use in the process of analyzing and reporting data” (Creswell, 2005, p. 225). Confidentiality in this study is maintained using aliases, with all research documents and equipment secured by the researcher in a safe in his residence. All participants are adults so there is no risk to children. A sample consent form is included as Appendix B.

## **Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore expectations and experiences of recently ordained Roman Catholic priests as leaders in their parish communities. This study attempts to examine what recently ordained Roman Catholic priests anticipated their leadership roles to be after ordination, while they were still in the seminary, and what they actually experienced as new leaders once assigned to a parish.

This chapter discloses research findings taken from ten participant interviews. All interviews were recorded and participant checks were requested in the form of edited transcriptions of interviews provided to individual participants for their review. Their individual proofing of their personal interviews strengthens the credibility of the data collection. Four participants elected to respond to the ten transcripts that were sent. Of those, two had comments or corrections, and two made no changes. The chapter begins with a discussion of how the interview process was undertaken, an explanation of the selection criteria, the locations of the interviews, and method for gaining access to the participants. Next, an introduction is provided of participant demographics pertaining to and relevant to the study (see Table 1), followed by participant profiles. Finally, all findings are examined through domain analysis looking at leadership preparation, the expectations of a parish community leader, approaches to leadership, and leadership obstacles.

### **Participant Profiles**

Interviews were open-ended semi-structured using fourteen open-ended questions developed to assist participants in organizing their thoughts. The research questions were divided into two groups. The first group consisted of what the participants expected their leadership roles would be while in formation for the priesthood in a Roman Catholic seminary. The second group

of questions asked what their actual leadership experiences had been during their first 7 years in a parish community.

The participants were selected from a list of priests in an archdiocese in the Southwestern United States. All attended the same seminary. They had been ordained less than seven years before the interview. Research indicated that within the first 5 years, a sizable percentage of newly ordained priests voluntarily leave the priesthood. According to Hoge (2002), “projecting current trends would predict a resignation rate of 10% or 12%” (p. 3). Within the archdiocese selected for this study, the number of priests ordained less than 5 years was insufficient. Therefore, the number of years since ordination was increased to 7.

All participants were most comfortable being interviewed in their own parish office. These locations provided privacy and convenience for the participants. Parish geographic locations were spread over 500 square miles and took the better part of a year to complete.

Permission for conducting interviews required the approval of the archbishop of the archdiocese. The process involved writing a letter to the archbishop and following up with telephone calls and meetings with the archbishop’s personal secretary and the moderator of the curia for the archdiocese. The effort took several months and permission was initially denied. However, after further discussion with the archbishop’s secretary, permission was attained and a letter of introduction for the researcher from the archbishop was provided. In addition, after permission was given, the archdiocese provided a list of names and addresses for newly ordained priests with 5 years or less since ordination. As there were not enough priests with 5 years or less since ordination to make up the 10 needed for the study, a new list was provided containing priests with 7 years or less since ordination. Phone calls, e-mails, and many follow-up messages were needed before 10 priests agreed to participate in the study.

For each interview, a copy of the archbishop's letter was provided and a consent form executed by the researcher and each participant. Strict anonymity was promised by the researcher and great effort has been made to prevent participant disclosure. Non-attribution was essential to obtaining candid and insightful comments from all participants.

These newly ordained Roman Catholic priests share many beliefs despite their diverse backgrounds. They all share allegiance to the Magisterium (teaching authority) of the Roman Catholic Church, and to the bishop under whom they serve. The Roman Catholic Church is a hierarchy, with the Pope in Rome as the head of the Church. The bishops answer to the Pope and the priests answer to the bishops. As there has been throughout history, presently there are many secular challenges priests contend with, including social, economic, informational, and leadership issues. Based upon participant interviews, social issues can include the sudden move from living with a cohort in the seminary to living alone in a parish rectory and establishing new relationships with parishioners and staff in the newly assigned parish. Economic challenges may include managing a parish budget, fund raising, and ensuring fiscal accountability within the parish. Information challenges potentially involve a feeling of limited communication with the archdiocese and misunderstandings with the people of the parish. Leadership issues for newly ordained priests include not only their own leadership identity, but also their superiors while in the seminary and after ordination.

Table 1

*Participant Demographics*

Year When Ordained	Average Age	Prior Leadership / management experience		Education level prior to entering seminary		Education level at ordination	
		Yes	No	High School	Some College	High School	Some College
2008 - 2015	38.2	8	2	2	8	0	10

In 2014, the average age of a priest at ordination in the United States was 34 years (CARA, 2014). The average age of participants in this study was 38.2 years, making participants more than 4 years older than the U.S. average. Some 70% of the participants had graduate degrees at ordination. Eighty percent of participants had manager or leader experience prior to entering the seminary. Manager or leader experience was described to participants as having been able to issue instructions to others in either a work or social setting.

**Individual Stories**

**Fr. Leonard.** At home in the large parish to which he is assigned, Fr. Leonard agreed to meet at his assigned parish office on a warm morning in July. He is a bi-lingual associate pastor and parochial vicar. He would like to be pastor of a parish. He discussed leadership by example and differences between addressing a parish's immediate needs and having long term plans. He is articulate and thoughtful with a growing theory of priestly leadership: "I just see it as being a leader through example in a lot of different ways in the parish. Just if nothing else, being seen, being visible, being present, around with the people." As the interview began Fr. Leonard discussed examples of leadership in parishes: some with vision, and some that lacked vision and leadership:

What I see in some parishes and what I have seen in my experience in different parishes as a seminarian, was pastors that had a vision, and pastors that did not have a vision. Or pastors that saw what the immediate need was, and pastors that saw what the long-term goal was. Or how they bridged that, the immediate versus the long-term. And I think that was what was lacking in a lot of places when I would see it is.

Further, he is self-described as a social person, leading through example in search of his own priestly identity. He said, “I’m very much a people person. And, you know, talking with people. And I like the collaboration with people.”

**Fr. Francis.** Fr. Francis was a teacher before entering the seminary. He had no specific ideas about leadership expectations before entering seminary duties: “I had some general ideas about leadership demands or leadership qualities that would be needed, but until I actually experienced it in detail, now that I’m a pastor it never occurred to me.” After reflection, he concluded that leadership is best accomplished through example. He has a bachelor’s and a master’s degree, and describes teaching as an art form and not an exact science. He described his meaning of leadership through example as follows:

I never thought about the different styles of leadership or what style of leadership I would carry out in the life of the parish. But because my personality type is more service oriented. I would say that perhaps, without really thinking about it, my style of leadership, leading by doing. Like, let me show you I want to serve, and I expect the same.

Fr. Francis described how his parents had a major influence on his leadership development. They taught him that a leader never asks a subordinate to do something they would not do themselves. When asked what he thought his leadership style might be, he said, “I’m going to have to go with servant-leader. I believe in, like whatever I do, I won’t ask you to do something I myself won’t do. That’s what I learned from my parents.”

**Fr. James.** While in high school, Fr. James attained some nascent leadership experience by participating in Boys State events, and by being elected as the president of the local 4H

chapter, although he asserts he had no previous leader or manager experience. While in the seminary he had in the back of his mind the probable need to be a leader once ordained and assigned to a parish, but it was not a priority:

I knew it was coming, but I really didn't care, and I didn't want to care, because it wasn't my forte. I had one management class in my entire life, and I just didn't find it fascinating. So, it just wasn't there. I knew it, I knew it, but I didn't make it a part of my formation actively.

Fr. James entered the seminary with a bachelor's degree and eventually completed a master's degree. He is the youngest member of the participant group. He met with me in his office. He has reflected on his need to understand leadership and believes that he needs to actively manage resources within the parish. He said, "My expectations have shifted based on my role, but just knowing priests too, like they're, to be a good shepherd means to manage, manage the resources of the flock as well. I wish I would have paid more attention, with this job I have".

**Fr. Ignatius.** Father Ignatius attributes his modest ability to lead to a solid upbringing and his attendance at a special school. However, he also had a successful business experience prior to attending seminary, where he supervised a small number of people. Fr. Ignatius is older than the average new priest. His experience has taught him that leading by example is primary in a parish. He said, "For me, ministry of presence is huge. I've got to be everywhere, and I've got to be able to lead by example, in my words and in my actions." He knew his calling to be a parish priest was his priority. However, he believes his formation in the seminary was rushed and that many aspects of development were bypassed:

Well, not everybody, not every seminarian fits into the same box for formation. My formation was much different than someone who was ordained at 24/25. So, I was pushed through pretty quickly, you know, let's bypass this. Let's push him through. So, my formation was lightning speed. I was sort of pushed through, in my opinion, way too fast.

Fr. Ignatius was concerned that even though his formation was rushed, it was still too much like every other seminarian's. All that was changed was that some instruction in the seminary was skipped; instruction that he believes would have been essential. He stated, "Our formation was the same, but it can't be."

**Fr. Hubertus.** Father Hubertus grew up on a family ranch in the Southwest United States. As a quarterback of a football team, he gained an understanding of leadership within a team concept. He explained, "So I grew up ranching and working with other men, and often, I was in leadership responsibilities in that. So, also in sports, I played football. I was quarterback for the football team." He is the pastor of a parish not far from his parent's home. He had entered the seminary with a bachelor's degree and earned a master's degree before ordination. He recognized a call to the priesthood and obtained entry into the seminary. Fr. Hubertus describes a strong connection between his vocation as a priest and his ability to lead:

I know that people need leadership. I know that they need leaders. So, I think, you know, as a personal leader, I know that the most important thing is, I have to be connected to God. I mean, if you don't have that spiritual aspect of the priesthood, you're toast. I think that that's one of the most critical aspects of leadership in the Church. Because if we don't have our prayer life, we don't have anything.

He is concerned that new diocesan priests are placed great distances from each other after being so close in the seminary. The lack of mutual support can be a detriment when compared with religious life, where brothers live together:

In the first years of the priesthood, in the first 5 years, in the first 10 years, and when you have guys that are just thrown out there. And then when we encounter difficulties, and there's no support where you go, you know, you get isolated. And that's a big-time problem in the diocesan priesthood, as compared to the religious life.

**Fr. Edwardo.** Father Edwardo is a musician who enjoys playing for his parishioners. He is accomplished on several instruments and his assembly marvels at his talent:



I play a lot of instruments. Yeah, people love that. People love it more like, wow, Father is pretty good, yeah. In fact, I, we have the English choir at the 11:30 mass, and it's like with two electric guitars and drums and bass. Sometimes I play the last song with the drums.

Father Edwardo met with me in his parish office in the early evening of a cold and overcast fall day. He is among the youngest of those recently ordained. He is from Mexico and he entered the seminary as a teenager. Fr. Edwardo's parish is small but vibrant with a growing attendance and participation consisting of mostly young people:

When the Archbishop came 2 years ago, he was told that he would expect only 35 people in the Mass. And when he came, there were almost 300 people. The youth group, there were nine of them when I came here, every Wednesday. Again, I don't know what happened, but now there are like 35 kids coming to the youth group.

He is an artist and possesses an artist's creativity. When he arrived at his new parish, attendance in the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) program, a program for educating children in the Catholic Faith, was seriously lacking:

Do you have children for the CCDs, CCD classes? And they said, no, they don't come. And I painted the catechists (teachers) as clowns with bowls of candies, and they were on the streets inviting the people, the children. Hey, let us go to the catechism. And as I come, the people, the children were very excited. It's something you don't study in the seminary.

**Fr. Benedict.** Fr. Benedict took time from his busy schedule to meet with me in his office. He is a bit older than the average of the seminarians interviewed. He possesses a youthful enthusiasm for his parish and his pastoral duties. Father Benedict is an astute administrator who is naturally organized:

One of the things that I was fortunate to have, before I entered seminary, was administrative work. I was fortunate to have that knowledge. So, it was beneficial to me once I got ordained and I got to the parish. A lot of the men that come in don't have that.

As a pastor in a relatively small country parish he understands what is and is not possible. He is honest with his parishioners and has taken the time to study his community's rich history and culture:

You know, every community has its own needs. Its own personality. I was in a community, and what did I do? I want to learn the history of the people and who do I need to talk to? Once you learn the history of the people and you honor it, then you'll be able to understand why they do the things they do there.

He has earned their respect because he is decisive, but is always willing to listen to parishioner feedback and concerns. He describes how members influenced his leadership:

I say this to our young guys who just got ordained. Let the people shape and form you. They're going to help you be a good pastor. They will help you be a good priest. When I got ordained, I didn't know everything about priesthood.

**Fr. Dominic.** Father Dominic is a young former engineer who decided to pursue the priesthood. Father Dominic is energetic and loves his parishioners but feels a bit limited by Church policy. He believes that there are a few obstacles on the apostolates he would like to initiate in his parish.

I'm trying to develop a young adult ministry. But I'm afraid that someone is going to come down and say, hey, we already have a campus ministry. You have to do it. If you want to do something, you have to do this program and do it this way.

He has ideas and visions of how to minister to his parish, and he is well organized and able to deal with various leadership challenges faced day to day. He believes in his God-given role as a Catholic priest, and works to understand what the hierarchy of the Church will actually permit him to do. Fr. Dominic believes the Church structure can assist his pastorship:

He asked me, well, what, what was the most challenging thing for you at seminary? And I told him, honestly, dealing with structure, the structure, the policies. I understand there has to be some degree of structure. And that's the eternal debate.

**Fr. Aaron.** Father Aaron is middle aged, intelligent man with advanced degrees. He is articulate, and confident in his ability to lead a parish, primarily because of his past employment and experience.

Yeah, I worked in an office, and I spent quite a bit of time being sent from place to place, where I was being sent to problem areas and trying to patch up relations and communication and things like that. So, I was functioning with a wide spectrum of people, and everything in between, and getting that to work and function well within the system, and then working well with all of the personnel in the office. So, I think, I had to exhibit quite a bit of leadership, as far as that's concerned.

As an associate pastor and parochial vicar, his extensive previous leadership experience has given him tools to handle day to day requirements of his parish. Surprises are not welcome but he can stay calm because of an awareness of the presence of God. He finds himself at a certain peace, so that when surprises do come, he either takes it as the will of God, and that he is being called to respond or to just stay calm and peaceful, with the Holy Spirit. His current parish is not structured or organized as he would like and he is anxious to get his own.

That's part of learning, is how to deal with them, and the more experience you get, you're better at dealing with those surprises, and you're better at not panicking, but staying calm, and just responding. My own personal situation here is that, this parish is not organized like I'd like. So, I'm looking forward to being a pastor where I can try to work on things. I'm a very organized, structured kind of person. Part of the reason why I feel like I'm ready for surprises is, I go through my entire day trying to keep a spiritual focus on what's going on, you know, and an awareness of the presence of God, and just being at a certain peace.

**Fr. George.** Fr. George has a degree in engineering and a graduate degree. He was ordained as one of the most senior participants in this study. But even with his education and experience, he thinks parish administration is difficult:

Leadership is an ongoing process. I need to know myself first in order to be a good leader. I have knowledge about administration, but it's not the same. And I was not worried, because I was, well, I have knowledge about it. I will not have problems, but I was totally wrong.

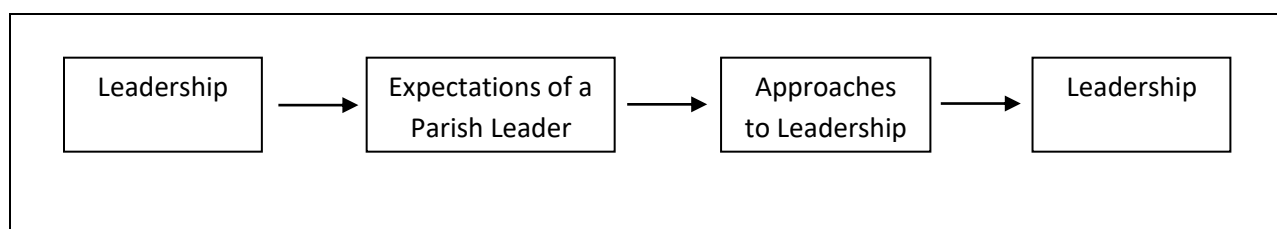
We sat down in his parish office just before lunch in September to talk about leadership expectations and experiences. Fr. George discovered that the community he entered had its own culture, a culture different from his own. He realized self-reflection and personal leadership adjustments were necessary to be an effective parish community leader. He explains, “So the customs are totally different. So, my leadership must change also. Because it’s about the culture, right. And this effects the, our ministry, my ministry.” For Fr. George, finding a way to lead in his parish is all about balance. He wishes to gain the trust of his parishioners and in turn learn to trust them. He also sees a need to be on occasion more decisive and more directive in his leadership style.

I prefer that the people follow me, no, not follow me, work with me. They do because I am in charge of the parish. In a certain way, yes, but is not. So, I prefer that the people trust in me and I have to trust in them. That is hard sometimes. So, when you have this balance, and I’m trying to find this balance.

### **Domain Analysis**

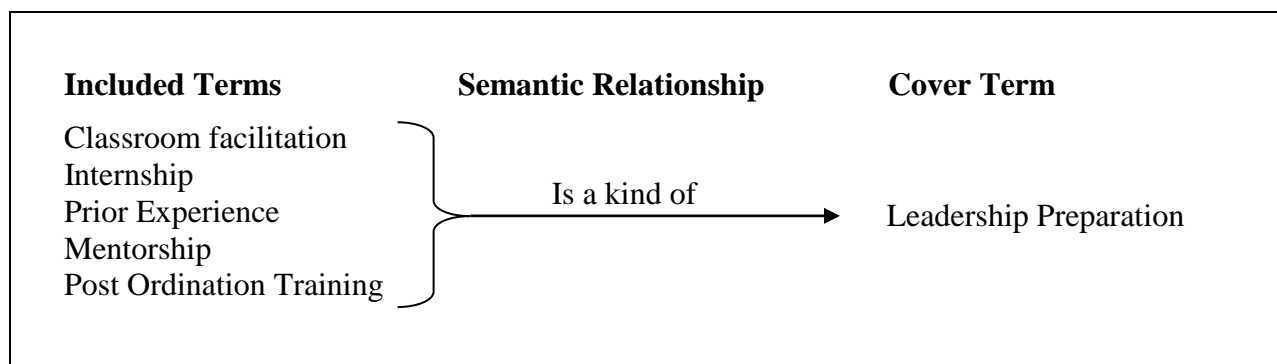
The overall purpose of this qualitative interpretive study was to explore what seminarians in a Roman Catholic seminary in the Southwestern United States expected their leadership requirements to be once ordained as priests, and what they experienced once ordained and placed in a leadership position. The research questions were answered through an analysis of data collected through ten interviews, transcription, theme development, and use of domain analysis. The domain analysis consisted of pastoral cultural language in describing leadership expectations and experiences. Spradley (1980) emphasized that “cultural domains always include the use of language. Cover terms, included terms, and semantic relationships are all words and phrases that define and give meaning to objects, events, and activities you observe” (p. 89). The data revealed four domains: (a) leadership preparation; (b) expectations of parish leaders; (c) approaches to leadership; and (d) leadership obstacles. The first two domains and their semantic relationships

with their included terms formed an understanding of leadership expectations, while the second two domains resulted in an understanding of leadership experiences. Figure 1 is an Illustration of the sequence of domains and their relationship. The identification of semantic relationships includes cover terms and included terms.



*Figure 1.* Domain connections.

**Leadership preparation.** Figure 2 represents priests who thought that classroom facilitation, internship, prior experience, mentorship, and post ordination training were kinds of leadership preparation that may have helped them become better parish community leaders.



*Figure 2.* Domain analysis: Leadership preparation.

Some of the newly ordained priests thought that their leadership preparation was good (3), while others thought it did not happen in any substantive way (7). Four participants stated that their previous experience was helpful, while four others with previous experience said it was not. The three participants who stated their leadership preparation information was good, said it occurred during their internship.

***Classroom facilitation.*** Classroom facilitation is a form of adult instruction that is sometimes used in a seminary to gain an understanding of parish community leader expectations. Facilitation of learning on how to be a parish community leader in a classroom-type setting was rare. Parish community leadership was not something directly addressed, but would come later for some newly ordained priests in a post ordination program called *Good Leaders, Good Shepherds*. Fr. Aaron described the lack of leadership classes, but acknowledged that some classroom facilitation provided leadership preparation:

There were no leadership classes, thank God, because I couldn't sit through them, I don't think. As far as leadership, I think, really, the only leadership instruction that we had, were maybe, in regard to, you know, school projects that we worked on. I would say it was probably limited to that. Even ministry, when we began doing ministry, it was all supervised ministry. We were heavily supervised in what we did.

Fr. John also found that classroom facilitation provided some leadership preparation, but only indirectly through related training subjects such as pastoral care:

Some of them were, were explicitly so; presidential leadership was one of them. But that's the liturgical role and the spiritual role, but also spiritual direction, pastoral counseling. We did also have as a segment of our pastoral care class, the organizational perspective, like, how do you then see yourself as the shepherd of this organization? So, it was about three weeks of instruction on that particular point.

When asked if it included any of the traditional kinds of leadership skills, like delegation, goal setting, having a vision for a community, and conflict resolution, Fr. John said, "Those, not really, no. Again, that came later for us, this program called *Good Leaders, Good Shepherds* that I had."

Fr. Ignatius provided more specific examples of how he and other seminarians learned of their responsibilities outside of classroom facilitation. His experience as a seminarian was different and provided very little understanding of what he was expected to be and do as a parish community leader:

And I say, you know, even if it's a seminarian that comes for the summer, you know, that can help some things. And I will put that kid to work. He will come with me to the gravesite, and you hold the book for me while I read. He'll start to understand the homilies on funerals. And that's what's going to help him. He's not going to learn that sitting in the classroom. Nobody told me how to do a funeral. They said, well, here it is, right here in the book. There wasn't even a class. There was no class on how to even perform a wedding. I go to my brother priests who are seasoned, and they are like, hey I'm glad you called. Here's what we need to do. I didn't get any of that in the seminary. And they're all saying, you didn't get that in the seminary? And I said, no.

**Internship.** The internship seminarians receive is a training that provides exposure and learning about what a parish priest is expected to be, know, and do. In some cases, internship lasts a year, or it can be made much shorter, depending on archdiocese needs. Fr. Aaron was and is an advocate of the internship program:

The internship, that was my most enjoyable year of seminary by far. And it was one of those situations where, I lucked out and got a good pastor who also had a career before he went into the seminary, and so I was able to identify with that. It was kind of funny, we actually had a conversation where, early on, I told him, I hate seminary school, and he said, I did too. And I thought, well, wait a second, I can identify with you now. Yeah, and it was a situation where, he said he considered me a co-minister, and he told me what he expected to be done, and he let me decide how to go about doing it.

Fr. Aaron also recognized program quality could be inconsistent and that it very much depended upon the personality of the pastor to whom a seminarian was assigned:

I was almost more involved in the internship than I am here my first year as a priest, yeah. But the pastor's a completely different style. What it comes down to, and this is a big, big problem, because I did internship with other guys who did internship all at the same time. The two other ones, one of them was a horrible situation. He didn't learn anything. And the other one, after a month and a half, asked to be transferred, because he was with a pastor that wanted him to shadow him in everything he did, and didn't let him breathe. And the way seminarians are matched up to pastors for internship, is almost solely based on, well does the pastor have a good reputation in his community; yeah? Does he have room to take a seminarian? Can they afford to take one for a year? That's it. And it's never based on, is he a good teacher? Is he mentally healthy, in the sense of, can he work together? Can he share experiences? Can he work as a team? You also have so many pastors who are kind of a lone wolf, you know, who have done it on their own for so long, that they don't know how to work as a team. They don't know how to delegate. They don't know how to show their thought process. You know, they don't have a system in place. They just kind of fly by the seat of their pants, you know.

Fr. Benedict suggested that an effective internship was a result of being assigned to a pastor who would provide opportunities to learn. The pastor would allow a seminarian to watch and participate in the life of the pastor. He stated that an internship program is where a seminarian should learn about parish community leadership:

I knew after, as I moved further along in my formation, getting to know some of the priests in our diocese, doing internship and doing summer programs. And then especially on internship, we, where we spend a whole year, he's going to learn all that. If he doesn't have a good mentor (pastor), because it has happened where we sent someone to a parish, and Father just passes him off to someone else. Okay, well, go see what, maybe so and so has something for you to do. Maybe so and so has something for you to do. That's not good. Father needs to have him tethered next to him no farther than six feet to take him to every parish council meeting, every financial council meeting, every funeral, every wedding, every mass, every hospital call, and have him shadow. And I was fortunate that the pastor I was with, he had me next to him and I never was far from him. Even dinner things that he'd get invited to. He said, so and so family has invited me to join them for dinner Sunday, so you need to come with us.

The effectiveness of an internship is a spectrum, with some seminarians benefiting greatly in learning how to be parish community leaders at one end, and others discovering that the program could be interpreted as relying more on self-help at the other end. Fr. Francis was reflective about his internship and its benefit to him:

To be honest, I had a poor experience on my internship here. And I think that was, of course, partly my own, attribute my own failings in that, I think what I expected internship year was for the pastor to guide me more. Like I say, this is what we have at the parish, and let me go introduce you to these heads of these different entities. But in reality, it was just, welcome to the parish, and okay, well, you'll figure out what you're going to do.

Fr. Leonard's internship was full of challenges. He recognized the importance of the experience and exposure that comes with internship, but the pastor overseeing his internship may not have been the best possible choice. For him, internship was the critical time when a seminarian had enough tools and information to decide if the life of a priest was for him:

And see, that is a very important thing with formation that I've seen. I had an internship experience where I had a, the internship is a very key kind of moment in seminary



formation for your, the intern. You're doing your internship at a parish with a pastor, and he's supposed to kind of be your mentor to, to help you, because this is kind of the moment where you decide, okay, this is what I want to do, or, yeah, this isn't for me. And you really see the ins and outs of parish life and priestly life, what it's going to be about. And, I know, mine, my pastor, it was like, I had no clue what he was thinking. Or I had no clue, I would ask him, is there anything I should be doing that I'm not, or that I'm not doing that I should? No, everything's fine. But yet, he would tell people that I was lazy and that it is, so it was, you have some people, priests, that don't have, and I don't blame him necessarily.

Internship for some seminarians was very enjoyable and gave them tools they would need when they became parish community leaders. For some it was the opposite. Instead of learning what they needed, they were neglected or tolerated, or just pushed aside. The value of an internship for a seminarian seems to be driven by the pastor to which they are assigned, and how the seminarian himself is predisposed.

***Mentorship.*** In many ways, the idea of mentorship by a pastor was tied to the idea of internship for a seminarian, although there are indications that some mentors were available at the seminary as well. The participants provided a variety of evaluations of their mentors based on mentorship quality. Fr. Aaron's experience was favorable, compared to others: "I received, I think, the best pastor that functioned as a good mentor." Fr. Ignatius was also grateful for his mentor and thought he had done a superb job of helping him:

And I tell you, my mentor was wonderful. He saw a vocation well before I did. He called me, and says, I need you to be at the church at 10:00 on this day. We have a funeral. You're calling me? He goes, I need an altar server. I said, Father, I've never altar served before. He goes, just come. He goes, I'll have an alb for you and I want you to put on an alb. You just come. I go Father, I don't even know how to ring the bells. And I told you what he did to me. Shaking his foot. He goes when I do this, you ring the bells. But he pushed me. And he says, now I want you to go meet my Deacon, who has now passed. And I want you to go with him to the gravesite. Just watch, learn. Hold the book. Hold his holy water for him. Whatever you've got to do. But watch and listen. And then eventually, I was getting all the calls. I must have done 30 internments.

Fr. Benedict explained two different examples of mentorship, active and inactive:

If that seminarian has a good mentor, he's going to learn all that. If he doesn't have a good mentor, because it has happened where we sent someone to a parish, and Father just passes him off to someone else. Okay, well, go see what, maybe so and so has something for you to do. That's not good. I remember he said, even if you're doing nothing at mass that day, you're sitting there next to me, you're visible. The people need to see you there. The people need to see you visible. And so, I had a great mentor that way, and he worked me hard, but I'm grateful for it.

Fr. Francis mentioned that mentors were not easily obtained and that may be a result of a shortage in priests:

My experience is that, if we're talking about mentors, whatever year level you're at at the seminary, personally, I think those are hard to find, to come by, mentors. And I think one of the reasons is, because once a priest is in the parish, you know, and 10% leave by year 7 because of the 18 things, and one of them being they're so busy they're neglecting their spiritual life. So, if that's true, they're certainly not going to have, not any time for, how can you help mentor someone else if you're not mentoring for yourself, you know?

Fr. Leonard was discouraged by the lack of communication he experienced between the pastor and himself. He emphasized how important the relationship is between the mentor and the one being mentored and sees the role of mentor as crucial in the formation of a new priest:

He just wasn't that . . . at least for me; might be he'd be a good mentor for someone else. For me, it was a difficult mentor relationship. And so, I see that as a very important role for some of the priests, especially for the seminarians as they're coming through, because they need to see that, you know, this is what it's about. And that's where I see having a vision. Because it was like, I need to be able to buy in to your vision so that I know what my role is going to be in this parish. And if everybody knows what the ultimate goal/vision is, where we want to go, we can all get there. And if you don't know what the future is, it's hard to get anywhere. You're, everybody's kind of stumbling around.

After ordination, a normal first assignment for a new priest is as a parochial vicar, an assistant to a parish pastor. Being assigned as a parochial vicar is another way that the new priest completes his training. However, the quality of the training is often a result of the pastor's ability to mentor or willingness to train newly ordained priests. Fr. Ignatius explained that his post-ordination mentor was not selected based upon mentorship competence, but on a need for assistance:

To some degree, I felt prepared for ministry, but when I got out here, there were so many things that we were never taught, con-validations, annulments. It was never even mentioned. We learned all kinds of great stuff. But that's nothing where I can just go to the book and look up and that's all I really need to know is there the resource is to be able to go. But I need to know what is required for a valid con-validation. Well, we were never taught any of this. And they say, oh, well, when you become a parochial vicar, you know, and you go to work 4 years in the parish, 4 or 5 years as a parochial vicar, you're going to learn all these things. Well, no you won't, because they do not do a good job on pairing up the newly ordained priest with the pastor. What they're doing is, there are so many holes in the dyke, they're trying to plug the biggest hole. And wherever that hole is, send that guy over there. It doesn't matter if it's a good fit. It doesn't matter if that guy is a good teacher, a good mentor. That's where we're needed. There was no time for any training. I was formed more by my mentor and my ability to do stuff on my own. See too, that initiative, if you don't have that initiative, it ain't gonna' happen.

Internship and mentorship seem to be inseparably connected and success of both would appear to depend upon a disposition and relationship between intern and mentor. Both roles are essential to how well a newly ordained priest is prepared to become an effective parish community leader.

*Prior experience.* Within this group of participants, 80% stated they had some previous experience in leadership (see Table 1). The kinds of leadership roles varied from being captain of a football team to owning a business with subordinate employees. The other 20% came to the seminary with no real experience leading people. Participants in general believed that prior experience brought with it self-discipline, and expanded their knowledge base. When Fr. Aaron was asked what he thought his leadership requirements were going to be once he was ordained, he described his role and attributed his expectation to his previous work experience in a large firm:

I think, primarily, making sure that the parish operated smoothly in a sense of all of the different ministries in the parish, the worshipping community, taking care of people's spiritual health, maybe problems within the local community around the parish, plugging the right talent into the right positions to get people involved. I would say that sort of thing based upon my past experience. Yeah, I worked in an office, and I spent quite a bit of time being sent from place to place, where I was being sent to problem areas and trying to patch up relations and communication and things like that. So, I was functioning with a wide spectrum of people, and everything in between, and getting that to work and

function well within the system, and then working well with all of the personnel in the office. So, I think, I had to exhibit quite a bit of leadership, as far as that's concerned.

Fr. Benedict saw previous experience as a plus in terms of self-discipline. He felt that older, more experienced men would do well in the seminary, while younger men may have a more difficult time:

So, yeah, seminary gives us tools, but it doesn't give us the experiences that we're going to encounter once we get ordained in the parish. A lot of seminarians are college graduates. Some of them are doctors, attorneys, real estate people. And they have those experiences. Not too many kids right out of high school. A young kid right out of high school hasn't learned to be on his own and to cut Mom's apron strings. And once they enter seminary Mom's not going to be there to say, get up, you have to go to class, get up, you have to be at morning prayer. They're expected to be there. It's like the military. When I was in the seminary, I had to be there at 6:15 every morning. I didn't want to be there every morning at 6:15. But I was there, like I told my rector, I'm their Father because I'm expected there. I said, Father, I'm expected there and that's why I'm there. And that's how formation works in the seminary, and the 17-18 year old kid hasn't learned that yet. Now, someone who's already 30 years old has been working and must be at work at 6:00 a.m. He knows that already. So, he won't have any problems getting up to be there.

Fr. Dominic optimistically explained his views on how the seminary is in the process of finding a way to nurture younger seminarians with the self-discipline needed to be parish community leaders.

I think our seminary is more adult oriented. People with already some experience in life. Mature enough, who've developed some virtue of discipline, of self-accountability, of life experience. I think our seminary is still finding a way to nurture guys right out of high school, to inspire them, to give them basic tools of life so that they can fall back on and build themselves up towards what they want to do.

Fr. Hubertus thinks his prior experience has been a help in leading his parish. He sees what men bring to the priesthood from before their entrance to the seminary as a gift:

So, I grew up ranching and working with other men, and often times, I was in leadership responsibilities in that. So, also in sports, I played football. I was quarterback for the football team. Yeah. That's, see I think that's a leg up. And so, when you see in the priesthood, there's all kinds of different men. All kinds of different backgrounds. And that's not to say any is better than the other, but there are some who are better prepared, who have certain gifts that others don't.

Prior life and work experience is important to the role of parish community leader. Self-discipline and knowledge provide newly ordained priests with practical ideas for situations their parishes may encounter. Whether prior experience is more likely to attract men to the priesthood, or the archdiocese is actively recruiting older men with more life experience, is uncertain. What is known is that in this group of participants, the clear majority were older than the average seminarian in the United States. Overall, they possessed greater understanding of their role as parish community leaders.

*Post ordination training.* For some of the participants in this study, post-ordination training came in their first 5 years as priests and consisted of a program known as Good Leaders, Good Shepherds. This program is considered part of the leadership preparation domain because it is intended to occur early in the post-ordination period to help provide priests with leadership tools. According to the Catholic Leadership Institute (2017):

Given the demands of ministry and the complexity of running parishes—and for many priests, multiple parishes—effective leadership is paramount to creating and building authentic, vibrant Catholic communities. Good Leaders, Good Shepherds is designed to help priests overcome today’s challenges of a diminishing number of clergy and more complex circumstances for priestly ministry. Through formation in Good Leaders, Good Shepherds, priests can minimize the frustration and energy that they spend on their administrative roles, and instead, maximize the joy and time spent on the pastoral duties for which they were uniquely ordained.

When asked if he had received any form of training in traditional leadership skills such as delegation, goal setting, having a vision for a community, or conflict resolution Fr. John stated that kind of training came later in the form of a program known as Good Leaders, Good Shepherds.

Those, not really, no. Again, that came later for us, this program called Good Leaders, Good Shepherds that I had, 2 years ago, maybe 3 years ago. All of that was very well done up there, much more from an organizational management standpoint, cast into what

a priest's image as a shepherd. But no, really not in the seminary. It was not, it was not prominent. It was, I would say, barely present for my seminary formation.

For some of the newly ordained priests, the facilitation provided by Good Leaders, Good Shepherds was not especially useful. Fr. Francis thought much of what was presented was too abstract:

To me personally, to be fair, and I apologize for me saying this, but I should have put more effort into really being attentive to the content. But I, and in my opinion, it was too abstract. I saw a lot of the presentations at the beginning, they were just too abstract. And I'm a native speaker. Can you imagine the Mexican priests? It's like, well, what are you talking about? The language, the terminology, there was too much abstraction. I mean, it was good theory. There were good points. I mean, they tried their best to, like, not modify it to, okay, ministry of the parish. And that's why we had to really take the theory and okay, now, how do I apply it in ministry? And that's where you have the small table discussions. So, in that sense, it was okay, but, a lot of the presentations were just too, at the beginning, too abstract. Do you know what I'm talking about? I think what would have been helpful to me, personally, would be, just say, okay, these are real life case studies of ministerial experiences.

A challenge with Good Leaders, Good Shepherds is the availability of time. Once assigned to a parish, a priest is immersed in the needs of parishioners and dedicating time for post-ordination training is difficult. Fr. Edward explained:

At that time, when I was in the other parish, the archbishop offered for a few priests, the Good Leaders, Good Shepherds like training or something. And I was chosen to attend. And I took the 2 years going each month, but every 3 months, we have to be like three days and it was hard. Yeah, intense course. We learn many things, but when I was moved to another parish, all that stuff not relevant, it was for a big parish, not for a small parish. And they asked me to bring one of the staff to the Good Leaders, Good Shepherds, but if I took the secretary, the office will be closed.

Some priests embraced the instruction and tried to achieve a deeper understanding of what was being taught. Fr. Francis confided, "And then you have people who went through it talking about their thinking through it. Okay, I thought this, and I did this, and then dissect it as a class."

Fr. John did not receive instruction in any of the traditional leadership skill sets such as delegation, goal setting, having a vision for a community, or conflict resolution while he attended the seminary. Instead his attendance at Good Leaders, Good Shepherds provided some of that.

Those, not really, no. Again, that came later for us, this program called Good Leaders, Good Shepherds that I had, 2 years ago, maybe, 3 years ago. All of that was very well done up there, much more from an organizational management standpoint, cast into what a priest's image as a shepherd. But no, not in the seminary. It was not, it was not prominent. It was, I would say, barely present for my seminary formation.

**Expectations of a parish leader.** Figure 3 depicts some of the tasks highlighted by newly ordained priests as to what they were expected to do as parish community leaders. They saw their ability to develop parishioners spiritually and temporally, help them reach their goals, and adapt to external changes, and their ability to have a vision for the parish communities, as mission essential.

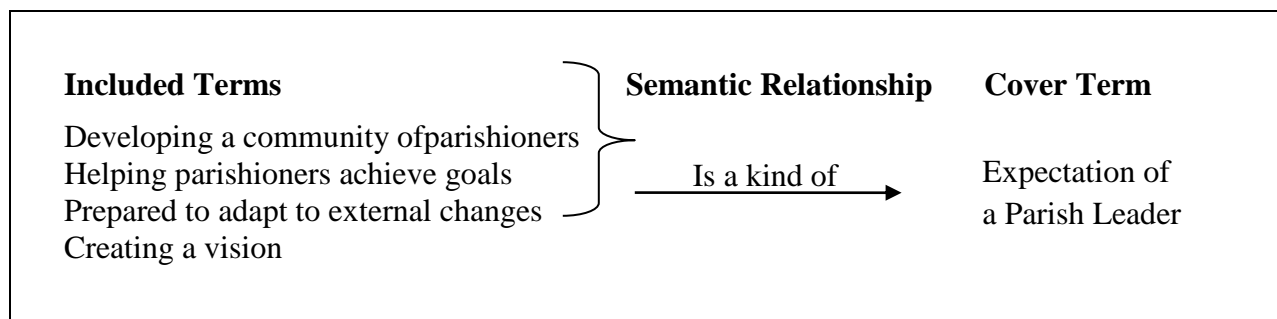


Figure 3. Domain analysis: Expectation of a parish leader.

***Developing a community of parishioners.*** When Fr. Aaron was asked what he thought his leadership requirements would be once he was ordained, he stated that it was making sure the worshipping community and the local community worked smoothly.

I think, primarily, making sure that the parish operated smoothly in a sense of all of the different ministries in the parish, the worshipping community, taking care of people's spiritual health, maybe problems within the local community around the parish, plugging the right talent into the right positions to get people involved.

His ideas were typical of new priests who had prior leadership related experiences. The development of a community of parishioners would require all he described and more:

Yeah, and really, then, beyond that for the necessary things, it's getting creative, in the sense of, this is a parish community. So many people, I'm constantly preaching on getting involved, getting involved. Well, this is where it starts, is at the parish level. I can't ask them to go out in the work force and in their day-to-day lives and do all this amazing evangelization if they can't even do it here in the lab, you know, which is the parish. So, trying to figure out different ministries that can improve the quality of life within the parish that aren't absolutely necessary, but get people involved, you know, and that kind of thing on top of that first level of just subsistence and what's necessary.

Fr. Edward has been especially resourceful developing his community of parishioners. He is creative and well organized. His parish community has suffered a disproportionate number of fatal automobile accidents due to the increased truck traffic associated with the resurgent oil and natural gas business in the southwest United States. He described some of his efforts:

I am encouraging the people to be together. I always have the, we always have the dance, the rosary, and the mass, and the food, the free food for the people. No selling of the food. People are more involved, you know. Because now, it's different. We have had a Novena. And one day is offered for the deceased members of the families, because we have suffered a lot of accidents, bad accidents. And I am using that, you know, in order to encourage the people to say, this is your community. The first picnic, I sold the idea to them to offer the picnic for the deceased members of the parish. And they took photos and more people were coming. The second year, I invited the former pastor. He was a pastor here for almost 6 years. He and his friends build the hall, not the community. The rich friend of his built the hall. And when he came, he brought many people with him, because we were telling people, the former pastor is coming. Let us offer this picnic for him. He's going to celebrate mass. And for that reason, we raised the \$45,000. And this year, we didn't offer the picnic with any particular theme, but we raised almost \$34,000.

Fr. George explained that leadership is an ongoing process that develops with better understanding of the community. He stated that he had no expectations of his leadership requirements once ordained, because he was too involved with his studies while in the seminary:

So, when I was a seminarian, well I was very busy with my studies and other things, so I never thought about it. Yes, I wanted to be a priest, but I never focused about being a leader. Leadership yes, a pastor, but I always thought about celebrating sacraments, with the people and everything that is not only this situation, as I said. As pastor, now I have



to see the administration situation of the parish and the people. I had to work with the community in the needs that they have. So, I think a leader is an ongoing process. That every day, in my case, I'm learning something new, and I'm learning from my community. But the most important, I need to know myself first in order to be a good leader. The contrary would be difficult.

Fr. George says that developing a community of parishioners requires understanding their needs. All the participants expressed an understanding of how significant parish culture is to building a community of parishioners. More importantly, Fr. George stated that having a willingness to adjust to those cultures from parish to parish is equally significant.

*Helping parishioners achieve goals.* When asked if he could help his parishioners achieve goals, Fr. Benedict provided an example of helping a parish community to set goals and attain individual accomplishments. What is obvious to an outside observer may not appear so to those immersed in the community. Again, as with mentors, pastoral attitude and temperament can be the key to successful leadership:

It's a small town, and from the moment I got there, some of the parishioners said, Father, can we just build a bigger church? Can we build a bigger church? And I had to break it down to them that it's not possible. And they understand now. I said, all we could do is improve what's already here. A lot of families returned. It's what happens with everyone else, you know. We have a different pastor, and that pastor doesn't work well, the people leave, and when I got back a lot of them came back to the Church. And so our numbers have grown. I have 350 families. It's never going to grow any bigger than that, I don't think.

To help parishioners achieve their goals requires a priest to be prepared and to have gained the wisdom to provide solid guidance. Fr. Dominic suggested that many newly ordained priests are not ready to assist their parishioners achieve their goals:

Okay. No, not one. There were no classes on that whatsoever. Personally, I had enough of those classes in my college years. What's our vision, what's our methodology, our goals? Are they accessible? But no, I see that many of our guys are very underprepared in that sense.

Fr. Hubertus is helping his parishioners reach their goals through aligning those goals with those

of the archdiocese. He is especially heartened by the reinvigoration of the young people in his parish community:

Like, as a pastor, we were trying to focus on these things. And what came, I think is wonderful, the goals of this Archdiocese. That was huge, and is huge, and is producing so much fruit. And so, it gives us a goal, united as a local Church. And so, we're moving on those goals. Like for example, you know, to the youth. Well I've always been kind of partial to the youth. I tell them all the time that, I tell them, you know, sometimes, they tell you're the Church of the future, but that's not really true. It is in a way, but you're the Church now.

Another example that Fr. Hubertus mentioned was a significant increase in the number of trained catechists in his parish. Catechists are parishioners who have been trained to conduct Catholic religious education. The training for certification at the three different levels is available at the chancery of the archdiocese, but Fr. Hubertus' parish is more than 100 miles away. The goal of the parish was to have more volunteer catechists certified by the archdiocese. It was another goal that Fr. Hubertus took from the archdiocese that his parishioners embraced. They were more than successful through Fr. Hubertus' efforts and are exceeding personal and archdiocese goals:

Like catechists. Okay, so if you look historically at us out here . . . you look back and we're just kind of like forgotten about. Not because of bad intentions, just because we're so far away. You see that, you know, I mean, we struggle a lot because of that in many ways. But with this direction from the Archdiocese, one of the goals is catechesis. And so, it is our goal in our parish, to bring every catechist to a level one, and every level one to a level two catechist. And so, we're offering, last year, we just finished, we did level one in three parishes. And they never had that opportunity, never in the history of the local Church. And so, we have almost 100 new level one catechists. And this year, we're going to level two. So, you know, having these goals and moving towards them, coming from archbishop, coming from the Archdiocese, that's been an incredible blessing.

Fr. John understands the need for parishioner's goals to be set by parishioners. He thinks that the archdiocese setting goals for the archdiocese is a good idea, and that embedding parish goals within archdiocese goals is also a good idea. He also understands participatory management and that to gain approval from parishioners, they need to set parish priorities:

But the idea is that everyone has their hands in what needs to be finished and needs to be done. This idea of everyone working forward, together. So, it's an interesting time in the archdiocese as well. It's been good for us, because we've had the ministries decide the priorities and the goals, and at first everyone's kind of like, okay, this sounds like a seminar. But it really has, it's been helpful. I think all the parishes kind of had these things to think about and really to shape the way they do their ministries.

Helping parishioners set and achieve goals for their parish quickly becomes a priority for a parish community leader. It begins with understanding parish culture and what local parishioners value, and then coaching them into understanding reasonable goals and ones that need additional consideration. In the case of this archdiocese, goals set at archdiocese level assisted more than one parish to set its own internal goals and to accomplish them.

***Prepared to implement and adapt to external changes.*** Fr. Benedict believes that it is important that a new priest entering a parish understand that parish community and its culture before making any changes. He must proactively understand parish community history and its needs. His willingness to understand reasons for the way things have been done in the past, provided him with the good will he needed to eventually implement needed changes:

You know, every community has its own needs. Its own personality. I was in a community, and what did I do? I want to learn the history of the people and who do I need to talk to? I'm going to talk to Mr. Smith and to Miss Jones, all the people who are already in their late 70's who know the history of that community. And they're going to tell me, these are the families who founded. This is the so and so family, or the ones who donated to put that up there. And once you learn the history of the people and you honor it, then you'll be able to understand why they do the things they do there. So, whenever a family says, Father, we've always done this. It's been done for years. There's a reason behind it. If they'll say, well, that's not a good idea. Let's get rid of it. No. You don't change anything. You learn why. Oh, then you find out, well, it makes sense why they've always done it this way. And you leave it alone. What can you do? Well, let's see how we can enhance that?

When Fr. Benedict was reassigned to a different parish, he had to make considerable personal changes to how he related to parishioners. He understood that it was expected of him as a leader to make those changes with no complaint:

I have to find a way to reach out, where I'm at now, I was at a parish that is in a large affluent community. There is never any issue that, well we need this, we need that. We just write a check. We had the funds. And they're world educated people, doctorates, attorneys, doctors, they're plastic surgeons, heart surgeons, real estate, big time real estate people, well educated people. And now, I'm in a little country parish where all, most of them are cowboys and farmers. They raise their cattle. They grow corn, milo, and wheat, and that's their living. And so now, the way I do ministry is different with them, you know. So, I must find a way to somehow reach to the little lady who, all she knows is her little virgin here. And then, you know, compared to the much more affluent Church, where I would talk a whole different language to them.

For Fr. Edward, changes imposed by the archdiocese were confusing. He challenged assertions that he was only prepared to be a parish administrator and was awarded pastoral duties of his parish. The substance of his winning argument was the changes he made to the way things in the parish were habitually funded. He freely invested himself in a parish community knowing he will eventually be transferred elsewhere.

The final situation here, now is, well, people are amazed, you know, because when I came here to pray, it was the pews. And they were doing nothing, only the second collection. But I didn't want too many changes because I wasn't sure if I will be here. Because I was the parochial vicar, okay. And last year, I was called from the Archdiocese with new changes. They told me, we are going to make you the administrator in the parish where you have been the parochial vicar. I said, no. I have been an administrator for 2 years, even though I have the name of parochial vicar. But now the parish is ready for a pastor. I told him, if you don't give me the parish as a pastor, take the parish. I presented to him all the proof. I gave to him the statements of the finance situation before me and now. We did the pews. We got almost \$36,000. They come only 12. In less than one year, we raise that money. And they ask for the floor. We put the floor. And the picnic, they didn't reach \$30,000. When I came here, the first year was \$36,000, and the second year, almost 46. Yeah. Because I was helping the people. We have to work together. This is our Church. This is your Church. I'm going to leave, but you are going to stay here.

For a newly ordained priest, change is a constant reality. For example, (a) personal changes; (b) pastoral changes; (c) parish community changes; and (d) changes imposed by external forces.

Perhaps the one leadership skill newly ordained priests are most prepared to execute is change.

***Creating a vision.*** When Fr. George first came to his new parish he found a vision for the parish already published in the weekly parish bulletin. However, it was not necessarily being

employed. He determined that the parish vision must have the buy-in of the parishioners and so he organized a series of parish wide meetings to try and create a vision that most everyone could share:

When I came here, one of the first things that I tried to see, we have a vision of a parish that's in the bulletin. And my first actions with the pastoral council ministries was to ask them if we are going, or following this. But my first action here in the parish was to call people and to have a meeting. And I invited them to come on one Thursday. The entire parish. Because I wanted to listen to them. And I invited them to, and I gave them a questionnaire to see what's going on, that they express what they feel, what the church needs, and something like that. Because I wanted to listen to them. And then I met all ministries individually to listen to them, and to talk about the vision of the parish. So, when I came here, was not youth, was the first need that the people expressed, we need youth group. So, I started the youth group.

Fr. Aaron sees his parish community as an organization that needs vision. He described how his various ministries would be able to create their own visions, get their members involved, and set goals:

A big part of it is recognizing gifts and getting them plugged in. Seeing the way different organizations, systems can improve situations and being able to visualize that and how to get that in place. You've got to have a vision for the organization, setting goals. Yeah, and really, then, beyond that for the necessary things, it's getting creative, in the sense of, this is a parish community. So many people, I'm constantly preaching on getting involved, getting involved. Well, this is where it starts, is at the parish level.

Fr. John sees the spiritual and temporal aspects of his service as inseparable. He tries to involve his entire parish in moving toward a vision of Christ and toward a vision of community. He partially attributes a renewed emphasis on creating a vision to guidance from the archbishop, but does not want that initiative to be the sole reason:

The idea that you're there to help the community move toward the vision of Christ. And so, if that, that's hopefully what, hope that was reflective of my leadership style. I think it's a good time in general in that regard for the archdiocese, because the whole idea has been, how can we understand the vision of who we are? How are we going to be more invested together in that vision, not just the archbishop saying, let's do this? But the idea is that everyone has their hands in what needs to be finished and needs to be done.

There are many expectations of a parish community leader. Much of the literature suggests that expectations of a priest in a parish community have significantly increased in the last 50 years due to a better educated population, increased proportion of parish members to each parish priest, and an increase in reliance upon the laity after the Second Vatican Council. A newly ordained parish priest must quickly learn how to meet those leadership expectations by developing a community of parishioners, helping parishioners achieve goals, being prepared to implement and adapt to external changes, and by creating a vision for the parish community.

**Approaches to leadership.** As illustrated in Figure 4, newly ordained priests approached leadership by focusing on (a) the wellbeing of a parish community; (b) leading by example; (c) exercising authentic leadership (presence); and (d) being willing and able to delegate tasks and authority.

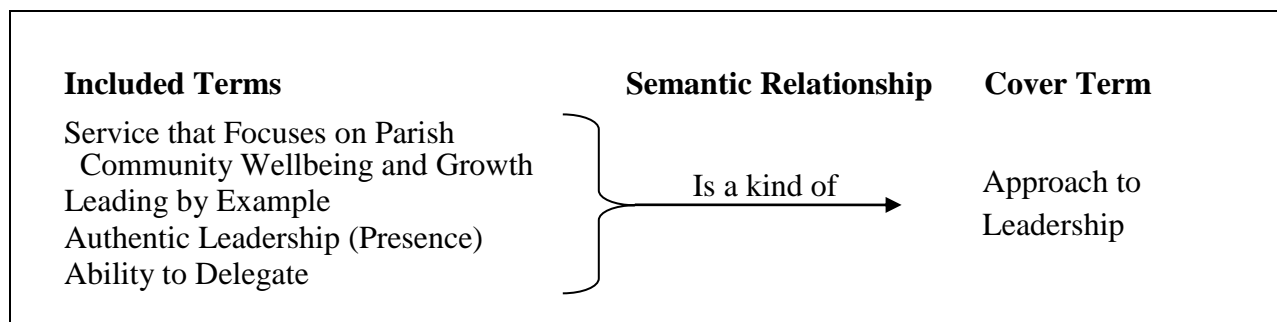


Figure 4. Domain analysis: Approaches to leadership.

Priests as parish community leaders focus on the wellbeing of the parish community. Their attitude of selfless service is ingrained in the seminary. Most new priests thought that their preferred leadership approach was through example, while some described how they lead through their presence, a concept put forward by more than one Pope. However, their recognition of the job demands and very serious time constraints necessitated an ability to delegate.

***Service that focuses on parish community wellbeing and growth.*** The attitude of selfless service that comes with being ordained a diocesan priest sees most newly ordained priests

willing to give freely of themselves, to put the needs of others ahead of their needs, and to have a desire to share in their spiritual and corporal lives.

Fr. Benedict saw how priests lead as a reflection of how they saw their role. Some he described were more intellectually oriented; some more cultic— that is, they are more oriented on the ministry of the sacraments and less on the more secular leadership requirements of the parish; and others as more service oriented. Priests who oriented a role of service toward parish community wellbeing usually did so by developing the lay person led apostolates (ministries) within their parish. All sought to improve the wellbeing of their parish community:

So, you see the very sacramental priests that want to focus on liturgy. You see the word oriented. They want to put books on their preaching. Or the service oriented develop ministries and the laity. So, I think, I think really it comes down to what type of priest that we conceive our vocation to be to develop and grow.

Fr. Dominic described how Pope Francis, through his example of service, inspired new priests to develop apostolates among the laity, and that dictating to the laity was not effective.

We're starting to see the fruits of his pontificate in Vatican II in these young priests. Pope Francis, I think, falls more into the service model. His whole way of life. So, his uprising, his Jesuit background, his southern American, everything falls more into this, just give your life, give yourself works, do.

While Fr. Francis was a seminarian he never considered his approach to parish community leadership. Since his ordination, however, he describes his orientation toward service and using that method to demonstrate his expectations of parishioners. Many of the new priests saw themselves as servant-leaders. When Fr. Francis was asked about his leadership approach he indicated that he sought to be a servant-leader and he attributed his approach to the example of his mother:

I guess I'm going to have to go with the servant leader. I believe in, like whatever I do, I won't ask you to do something that I myself won't do. That's what I learned from my parents. Because my Mom was a leader in her own right. I mean, not a big leader, but she was a, spent a lot of years, 20+ years in the, working in a day care, caring for infants. So,

she was a leader in her room, and she had a lot of experience doing that, that ministry. And so she would always say, look, I'm going to do something. And if I do it, I expect my subordinates to do it as well. So that's what I learned from my Mom. So, whatever I do, I expect also others to do it as well. Whether that be sweeping the floor, picking up the trash, doing my own laundry. Whatever it is.

Service is so much a part of priestly ministry that it is integral to every leadership approach.

Service is how all priests execute the mandate and example of Christ.

*Leading by example.* Most of the priestly approaches to leadership are blends of the styles presented in current leadership publications. Leading by example is a part of values-based leadership. It involves the idea that you listen to others, encourage dissenting opinions, and grant authority to subordinates instead of using power, manipulation, or coercion (O'Toole, 1995).

Fr. Ignatius sought and found opportunities to set an example for his parishioners. His approach is a blend of values-based leadership and authentic leadership:

I've got to be everywhere, and I've got to be able to lead by example, in my words and in my actions. My Knights of Columbus, you know, I said, guys, we've got to trim trees. These oak trees haven't been trimmed in 25 years. We took out 18 trailers and there I am in jeans and gloves and boots. Oh, Father's here, he's doing this? And I was all sunburned, you know. But you must get in there. And that's what the Holy Father is saying. You got to smell like your sheep, you know, and so, you earn their love, you earn their respect. And you can't do anything but go up. It's wonderful. That's all I can try, is, you know, and to try to empower them.

Although he gave little thought to a leadership approach in the seminary, Fr. George soon became aware of the needs within his parish community, including a need for his leadership. He set an example through listening to his parishioners and learning about himself.

So, in that way, we, I had to work with the community in the needs that they have. So, I think a leader is an ongoing process. That every day, in my case, I'm learning something new, and I'm learning from my community. But the most important, I need to know myself first to be a good leader. The contrary would be difficult. As pastor, now I must see the administration situation of the parish and the people.

All priests, whether newly ordained or well experienced, understand that they are under constant scrutiny and that their leadership example is critical to the health of their parish community.



***Authentic leadership/presence.*** It is important to make clear at this point the similarity between authentic leadership and what is referred to in the Catholic Church as “presence.” By being present to their flocks, priests take on the smell of their sheep. Pope Francis stated in his homily, “This I ask you: be shepherds, with the ‘odor of the sheep,’ and make it real, as shepherds among your flock, fishers of men” (Francis, 2013, p. 7). Zimmerman (2017) described Pope Francis' order:

To take on the ‘smell of the sheep’ means to be out amongst the flock entrusted to the priest, personally close to them. It means not simply being available in the office or celebrating the sacraments - as central and primary to the priesthood as that is - but being engaged in the lives of parishioners and others in the community. The priest cannot shepherd the flock from afar, he must be there with people in their journey. He must walk with them, side-by-side.

According to Nahavandi (2009), “Authentic leaders are people who know themselves well and remain true to their values and beliefs” (p. 211). Priests through their formation in the seminary focus on self-awareness and holding themselves accountable.

Authentic leaders live solid values, understand their purpose, personify self-discipline, and lead their followers with their hearts (George, 2003). Fr. Benedict is adamant that being physically present to a parish community is essential to holding the community together. Equally important is being open to each individual and being willing to listen:

The great challenge is again, learning how to be present to the people. If you're not present to the people, then, that's not a healthy thing. Your flock will be scattered. They'll scatter, and that's not good. My role is to always gather them and to bring them together. And so, if a pastor is not present to his community and is always gone. I know we need to take vacations. We're not that, canonically, I'm allowed 4 weeks of vacation. You know, but to always be gone. That's never a healthy thing. I have an open-door policy here, you know. I make appointments, but sometimes people just want to talk. I drop what I'm doing and listen to them. Someone comes in. I don't use my secretary as a guard, you know. She goes, well, Father's busy right now. No. Who is it? Oh, it's so and so. Come on in. Come on in. Sit down, sit down, Mr. Fink. How you doing? And I'll drop what I'm doing instead of, no, I need to be there for them. And that, for me, that's, that has, to be a good leader, you must be present to the people. You can't meet them if you're never there.

In addition, Fr. Benedict believes that the parish community is instrumental in helping a new priest become a better priest and a better leader:

I say this to our young guys who just got ordained. Let the people shape and form you. They're going to help you be a good pastor. They will help you be a good priest. When I got ordained, I didn't know everything about priesthood. That is when my learning began. All seminary did was give me tools. You're going to need this, and you're going need this, and you're going to need that. Here are the tools you're going need. Now the learning begins, when I got to my first parish assignment. And the people shape and form you. And we must allow them to do that.

Being authentic is key to Fr. Dominic's view of parish community leadership. He refers to a genuine interest in his parishioners as essential to becoming an effective parish community leader.

I knew. I think that if you love the people, if you truly love the people, and of course, to love them is to make that love known. It's not just to leave it in a nice sentiment, that leadership will develop. That's, I don't know if it's true or not. But till now, I've seen that that is what's helped me. And that's also what's distanced me from, from some of my leaders, that the interest may not be as authentic. It can be more utilitarian. I'm just placing it there so you can fill a post so you can just fill a requirement. So, the loyalty aspect may not be there, but, I think that's one of the most important things that I saw that I would develop my leadership with, is a sincere interest with the parishioners I would serve.

Fr. Dominic also thinks that priests must be better organizers because they cannot personally reach all members of their parish community:

There's, there has to be a stronger organizational aspect to the priest, because now he can't reach everyone. But he can reach the leaders of the apostolates of his ministry. And he has to learn to inspire them and listen to them.

Fr. Ignatius thinks that if he is well organized, his physical presence is what is important. He said, "For me, ministry of presence is huge. That I've got to be everywhere, and I've got to be able to lead by example, in my words and in my actions." He attributes his approach to leadership to the influence of his mother, his education at a military school, and somewhat to his business experience:

Good upbringing, my Mom, rock solid. My high school years, being sent to an all boys' military prep school. That was powerful for me. I had, yes, some business experience, but not great leadership roles. My office was small. We had five or six employees.

Authentic leadership seems to be the leadership approach newly ordained priests gravitate to, most probably because it is like the "presence" described by Church leadership. However, overall their leadership approaches also seem to be a blend of values-based leadership and authentic leadership.

*Ability to delegate.* The ability and willingness to delegate tasks is so important to effective parish community leadership that it is often a leadership task universally used by newly ordained priests. Fr. Benedict described himself as an effective delegator especially with his deacon. Catholic Deacons are considered ordained clergy by the Catholic Church, but do not have the same or extensive faculties awarded by the Church to a priest. They work primarily as unpaid assistants to the priest. Fr. Benedict elaborated:

And part of having a good deacon is to support him. Support your deacons, you know. Let them be visible. Delegate to him. Trust him with stuff. Deacon, I'm going to be gone now, so hold the fort my friend. And this needs to get done and that needs to get done. And again, you mentioned the word delegation. And trust your deacons. Empower them. And they will be there for you.

Fr. Hubertus views his delegation as a way for parishioners to exercise their gifts. He also holds them accountable:

So, that's the way I approached it. And I know that I'm in charge of everything, but I allow people to exercise their gifts. And you know, if a person is not fulfilling their responsibilities, I won't, I mean, I won't hesitate to, you know, to do what needs to be done.

Delegating tasks to the lay faithful can be a method of getting acceptance and approval from the parishioners. It can also free up the pastor's time for more important functions a parish priest must perform. Fr. Aaron describes his firm belief in delegation:

I see it as all the tasks that can be delegated, or can be shared by the lay faithful, to get them involved in the more image of the Vatican II parish, I think they should do that to have their involvement, so that the parish reflects the fact that, it's not my parish. It's their parish, so that I'm free to go visit the sick in the hospital, to do counseling, to prepare couples for marriage, to celebrate the sacraments, to meet with the kids in their classes, and things like that, so that I'm not working on, you know, the bulletin, on worship aids, on creating the schedule for each class in CCD, which is what I'm seeing.

When asked about the importance of delegating, Fr. Francis explained that he thought it was the key to effective leadership in a parish community. He also explained that delegation may require some training to those being delegated to, depending upon the task:

I think that's really the key is really, like, understanding what needs to be done, and then having a plan to doing it, and then delegating to someone, look, here's the game plan, maybe training to do it, and then do it. I don't have a problem with asking for, to delegate. I mean, I give people the benefit of the doubt and they say, you know, I want to volunteer and do ministry. Well then, I give you something to do.

None of the participants had knowledge of what would be defined as a traditional approach to leadership. Each expressed a willingness to serve and to help their parish communities become stronger in faith. Some were more hesitant about leading and others embraced the idea of taking charge and making a difference. Of all those interviewed, many were happy with their ministry and had a desire to continue improvements both personally and within their parish communities.

**Leadership obstacles.** All organizations are challenged with obstacles to leadership.

Figure 5 lists those obstacles particularly noteworthy as cited by the participants as organizational complexity, an inability to delegate, conflict resolution, a lack of vision, and financial management.

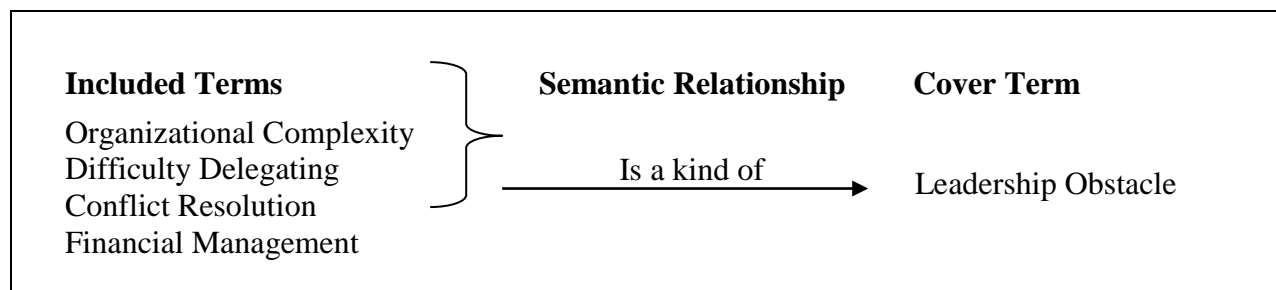


Figure 5. Domain analysis: Leadership obstacles.

**Organizational complexity.** The organizational complexity found in parish communities stems from many internal and external sources. Internal sources may come from little preparation in formation for a new priest or from his personal hesitance at being a leader. Externally it may also come from trying to organize groups that have long established traditions not necessarily in line with the vision of the new priest or not in accord with Church norms. For Fr. Aaron, matching talent to task among his parish volunteers is a complex organizational requirement:

I think I told you earlier, it's such a big part of it is recognizing gifts and getting them plugged in. Seeing the way different organizations, systems can improve situations and being able to visualize that and how to get that in place.

For the most part, newly ordained Catholic priests are not specifically prepared for the challenges that come along with the complexity of guiding various ministries that often have competing objectives, or goals that are not necessarily aligned with the parish community. When asked if he had a Knights of Columbus Council in his parish, Fr. George explained his obstacle:

Yes, yes, I have them. That's been a more problematic. Now we are working much better. One mass during the month, I have to ask them to help me with one mass. There is no way. No, sir. Yes, so again, is because, and I understand them. Because for many years, I'm talking many years, more than 30-40 years, they do whatever they want, and nobody told them anything. So, now you are a new priest. I am very open. And, to be honest, the people do the 90% of everything. But this 10% affects completely. And so, sometimes, and I said, listen, we have rules for this from the diocese. It's hard for them to understand, to understand this, because nobody told them this before. So that they think that it is my way. But the Knights is the same. The last time that I said, listen guys, if you are in, because they were doing whatever they want, and they didn't follow anything. So, and I said, listen, so, if you are under the umbrella of this parish, then you are under my responsibility. Yes, you have your own council and everything, because I'm fourth

degree. I know them very well. I love them. You know why, because I'm an international student, the Knights helped me financially. Because of them, I'm ordained, I'm a priest, because I don't have money. I don't have family either. So, I say, well, why don't you find a place to go. If you don't want to work with me...I have never asked them anything.

Considering human resource issues is another layer of organizational complexity that newly ordained priests may not be adequately prepared to encounter. Fr. Francis described his leadership obstacle with human resources in his parish community:

I think I had some general, general ideas about leadership demands or leadership qualities that would be needed, but until I experienced it in detail, now that I'm a pastor, it never occurred to me, oh, I have to deal with these on a daily basis. I never, I guess one of the things that I would hear would be personnel, personnel issues. Really having to be a leader regarding the people, the staff. The human resources, right. So, I wish that we had perhaps more, better training how to do the nuts and bolts of human resources. We really don't get much of that in the seminary.

Some aspects of an organization can be more perplexing than others. Human resources can be more than a little difficult if the newly ordained priest is unprepared for leading a parish. Fr. Francis explained how he had an occasion early in his assignment to hire a new principal for his Catholic school:

I wish I would have had training in how to hire people. Like when I hired our principal, we had a committee, and we produced, okay, these are the questions we ask of the candidates. And there's a process we're going to follow, but it still didn't work. And I think that's because sometimes people can interview well. But, like, if you check their background checks, like their, call their references, which I didn't do. I did, but I didn't get a call back. You know, that's a red flag. Well, you know, why aren't they calling you back about this candidate? You know, make sure you call. Basically, the best practices of hiring, best practices of personnel.

Complex organizations like Catholic parish communities are often complicated because people are complex in nature. If not prepared through prior life experience, newly ordained priests may have great difficulty leading their parish community because of the many obstacles in human resource management.

***Difficulty delegating.*** Difficulty delegating does not seem to distinguish between old and new priests. In Fr. Aaron's example, the pastor he worked for was older and was reluctant to delegate. Fr. Aaron describes his frustration:

Probably my absolute biggest frustration this first year, after I'd been ordained, is that, here I am, and I see tons and tons of ways that things could be improved here, but the pastor here is almost like a pre-Vatican II kind of pastor. He works himself to death because he has his finger in everything, and he doesn't delegate, and he doesn't have systems in place, and he does it all. He does it all. You also have so many pastors who are kind of a lone wolf, you know, who have done it on their own for so long, that they don't know how to work as a team. They don't know how to delegate. They don't know how to show their thought process. You know, they don't have a system in place. They just kind of fly by the seat of their pants, you know.

Fr. Francis' early attempt at delegation was partially successful, but learning what tasks can be easily delegated, and what tasks may require additional training, is something that may be difficult to train for and might best be learned through experience. Fr. Francis explains this process:

I tried doing that here. Before I arrived, I already had a clear idea. You know, I wanted to establish a team of sponsor couples. And so, I always, my vision was, okay, I'm going to have a team of sponsor couples to help me really training. Which I've, when I arrived, yeah, I did that. But I, as you know, it requires ongoing training and formation with them. Real life happens, you know, people can't be here right now, or other things, they're sick or whatever. I myself will tell you what I want to be done and then tell you how to do it. But unfortunately, what they haven't done was the documentation form. You know, for example, when you meet with a couple, you've got to do the prenuptial questionnaire. So, all the paperwork is, it's back with me now.

Fr. Ignatius described how the pastor he was assigned to during his internship was unable to provide much in the way of instruction or training. This led to an inability to delegate his administration, as he tried to do everything himself. When asked if he was administering to his parish or was he trying to do everything himself, Fr. Ignatius stated:

I loved the pastor. Probably the hardest working priest I've ever met in my life. But, I was sent out there simply to fill a gap, not to get any sort of training whatsoever. He is not a priest the guys should be sent to train. The problem is, that he's at a parish that is

overflowing and he needs help. So, guys are being sent where help is needed the most, not where the formation can continue to occur.

Delegation was an obstacle to effective parish community leadership for about half of the participants. Those who had previous experience, especially in an office or profession, had the least difficulty, while those without it were the most challenged. Knowing what could be delegated and how to control those tasks was an obstacle.

***Conflict resolution.*** For a newly ordained priest assigned to a parish for the first time, conflict resolution can be a confusing leadership task. Conflicts are inevitable because parish communities are made up of human beings. When asked about his ability to conduct conflict resolution, Fr. Dominic explained that he had no training in that leadership skill set, but that the seminary was more adult oriented and seemed to rely on a seminarian's previous life experience to negotiate an obstacle:

There were no classes on that whatsoever. I see that many of our guys are very underprepared in that sense. I think, and I'm sure this, especially with my fellow seminarians. I think our seminary is more adult oriented. People with already some experience in life, mature enough, who've developed some virtue of discipline, of self-accountability.

Having previous life experience as a leader, Fr. Hubertus saw a continuing need for conflict resolution, and his understanding of that constant requirement made it less of an obstacle to effective leadership for him than for others:

Yeah, that's always something that has to, that's a constant reality in the life of the parish. Yeah, you always have to do that. You know, it's constantly the life of the, of a pastor to inspire people to vision and to encourage them towards that. It's a constant effort in leadership to put out fires, to put out conflicts, and to stay focused on the goal and moving to the end for which you're, for which you're going.

Fr. Leonard says he must deal with parishioner's problems that require a certain amount of conflict resolution. For the most part, he must rely on his common sense:



Well, conflict resolution, so, it's trying to help or redirect and help people so that it's not just the, you know, let me tell you all my problems with this. But trying to refocus and trying to help them to see it from a different light maybe, or to see it from a different perspective. So, I've been doing a lot of that. That, to me, is just common sense.

On the positive side, Fr. Leonard explained how his pastor goes about reducing the need for conflict resolution by working collaboratively as much as possible. His inclusion of others in his decision-making processes and gaining acceptance from the different groups diminished the need for conflict resolution and its resultant effect:

One of the first things the pastor told me when it comes to changing anything or wanting to do anything, he goes, we do everything collaboratively here. He goes, we do everything in collaboration. First, we collaborate as the priests. We discuss it, and to see so that we're eye to eye, or that we discuss anything that needs to be changed or anything that needs to be done, so that we know this and we're together. And then, once we come to that, then we take it to either the pastoral council or we take it to the finance council. We get their input on it. And then, we take it from there. And everybody knows what their role is in the parish. I mean, even people that are at least in paid positions. And so, they know. And we trust them to do their work. And then, even the people in the parish, he goes, everybody seems, you know, in my observation, everybody seems to know what their role is, and they, they're good at it.

Conflict resolution can be a serious obstacle to effective parish community leadership if not performed well. Preparation of newly ordained priests has not always included an understanding of conflict resolution. While some priests use their common sense, others are more proactive and find methods of inclusion that lessen the need for it.

***Financial management.*** Financial management, or financial mismanagement, can be a profound obstacle to effective parish community leadership. The pastor has full responsibility for parish finances and much of his credibility, reputation and ability to lead are tied to it. Some newly ordained priests who have previous business experience are knowledgeable of money matters and seek to sort things out from the very beginning. Others get blindsided by the requirement and do not have staff members with financial management experience.

Once again, prior experience can benefit a newly ordained priest. Fr. Benedict's knowledge of finances prompted him to seek a parish audit by the archdiocese. He understood the importance of good financial health:

They don't get that kind of formation at the seminary, how to work budgets, how to work with numbers, how to work with, the roof needs fixing and the air conditioning is out. How are we going to get the money? Savings accounts, CDs, and all that stuff. And so, I was fortunate to have that knowledge. So, it was beneficial to me once I got ordained and I got to the parish. Okay, let's, first thing I do is call the archdiocese. I need this place audited so that I know where I'm at financially.

In some instances, previous pastors may have had other purposes for the money they obtained from their parish community. Fr. Edward was distressed by a lack of financial accountability in his parish. As a new parochial vicar, he assumed some of the responsibility for straightening it out, but it was a leadership obstacle. His predecessor from outside of the United States had a different financial agenda that made it more challenging:

Like one of them, he oversaw an orphanage in another country and he was doing fundraising for the people there. The second collections for many, many years, they were sent there. And the finance situation here was horrible, horrible. And I knew this would be a big difficulty for me. And the Pastor and I were talking, and we said, you know, we need to fix this. It's time to fix it. And he said, if you want to change something, talk to me. We can do it, because this is the time. The first thing we did was asked for the checks, because the staff were signing the checks and not the priests. And even though they received, they were found out about it in 2010, they didn't change nothing. Oh yeah. This is very dirty.

Administration of his parish community is difficult because of a parish debt Fr. George inherited from his predecessor. Before attending the seminary, he described how he had business experience and was familiar with office administration, but for him this was something very different:

As pastor, now I must see to the administration situation of the parish and the people. That is, yes, I have knowledge about administration, but it's not the same. No. And each parish has a reality for example. You see beautiful facilities that are new. But we have a loan to pay to the bank, close to \$300,000. When I came here, was \$500,000. And this community is very limited. So, it's a difficult situation to apply administration. And

sometimes, my leadership must be different, you know, because I depend completely on the people.

Fr. Ignatius was also a former businessman who had good knowledge of finances. He was surprised to find that his predecessor offered no help in understanding the financial condition of his new parish, and in fact he had to have the parish bookkeeper explain it. He was also concerned that some of the seminarians he knew had not even had a checking account before the seminary, and were now overseeing large parish budgets:

There was no time for any training. If I needed to find out anything about the books, I had to take it upon myself to go into our bookkeeper and sit down and say, okay, can you explain all this stuff to me? There is none of that. There's no sort of, the basic accounting in the seminary. I would have guys come to me saying, I just opened my very first checking account. Can you help me balance my checkbook? And now, here these guys are getting sent out to parishes, and they don't know the difference between the black and the red.

### **Curricula for Ministerial Leadership Preparation**

A review of the curricula of the participants' Catholic seminary, the Catholic school of theology the participants attended and the Catholic universities in the archdiocese revealed many leadership related courses of instruction and degree programs. The school of theology offered a Master of Arts degree in Pastoral Ministry which included two semesters of courses titled Theological Reflection for Pastoral Leadership I and II. The seminary itself provides a ministerial internship preceded by a course titled Orientation to Supervised Ministry.

The Catholic universities in the archdiocese provide management and leadership instruction through their ongoing degree programs in business and education. A small selection of the course titles include Selected Topics in Leadership, Foundations of Leadership, History and Theories of Leadership, Multi-Cultural Issues in Leadership Bilingually Taught, Gender Issues in Leadership, and Leadership in Community and Political Contexts.

A similar review of curricula and courses taught at Protestant seminaries within the archdiocese reflect numerous courses oriented on leadership preparation for religious ministry. Courses are available for Church Administration, Leadership in Congregational Life, Conflict Management in the Church, Church Structure, and Administration and Leadership. One course in particular seemed relevant and is described in the Protestant seminary's course catalog as a "Concentration in Pastoral Ministry. This concentration is designed to prepare students for the task of effectively leading the congregation of a local church. The student will have opportunity to develop skills necessary in exercising servant leadership."

Undergraduate college level instruction in subjects ranging from Church History to Bioethics are conducted at a local university. The seminary and the diocese it supports rely upon a 6 month internship and various but irregular post-ordination instruction opportunities for some leadership training.

Within the Catholic seminary there are role-playing and related activities incorporated into some of the classes that can support seminarian leadership development. There are also limited opportunities for seminarians to assume leadership roles among their fellow seminarians while attending the seminary.

### **Summary**

The ten newly ordained priests who participated in this study were introduced and were able to disclose their leadership expectations in the seminary, and what they had experienced as leaders once they were assigned to a parish community. Domain analysis provided answers to the first and second research questions: what were your leadership expectations while you were in the seminary, and what has been your experience since ordination? The first question was answered by analysis of the leadership preparation and leadership expectations domains.

Leadership preparation varied greatly as some seminarians came to the formation process possessing extensive previous life and business or professional experience and others learned some aspects of parish community leadership through their internship alone. An examination of the leadership expectations domain revealed that a small percentage even considered what their role might be as a parish community leader once they were ordained.

The second research question was answered by analysis of the last two domains, leadership approaches and leadership obstacles. The leadership approaches domain revealed that most if not all the participants who described their leadership approach, described a blending of authentic and values-based leadership. The last domain examined, leadership obstacles, provided insight into such problems as financial management, an inability to delegate, conflict resolution, and the overall complexity of the parish community organization.

While in the seminary, many noted that they had not given much thought about leadership requirements post-ordination. The exception was the extraordinary amount of time and effort regarding their development as spiritual leaders.

Most were initially assigned as a parish parochial vicar, or as an assistant to a pastor. In some cases that assignment lasted a short while, as short as 18 months. The usual period is about 5-6 years (Smith, 2017). The shortage of priests has necessitated increased assignments of priests to positions as pastors much earlier in their career.

## Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

### Introduction

The focus of this basic interpretive qualitative study was on newly ordained Roman Catholic Priests with less than 7 years since their ordination. The research questions were developed to explore their expectations and their experiences. The research questions were:

1. Before you were ordained, what were your leadership expectations as a Roman Catholic priest and as the leader of a parish community?
2. What have been your experiences as a Roman Catholic priest and as the leader of a parish community during the first 1 to 7 years as a priest?

The first question required the participants to think back to their years in the seminary, before their ordination. The second question was concerned with their experience since their ordination. The purpose of this study was to explore what they thought they were going to do, and what they found themselves doing, and how their preconceived roles, if any, may have differed from those they experienced.

This study endeavored to identify whether there was a difference between how they were prepared as spiritual leaders and how they were prepared as more secular parish community leaders, responsible for day to day activities of parish communities. In this chapter, literature related to this study is compared to and contrasted with the data discovered through the interviews. A discussion of the theoretical framework is undertaken as well as the limitations of the study. Finally, personal reflections are noted and recommendations for future research are made.

Through the interviews I could learn about participants' backgrounds and how those backgrounds, and/or the instruction they received in seminary, may have helped prepare them for

their eventual assignments. I discussed in detail with them what they expected their leadership roles to be as parish community leaders. Lastly, together, we explored their ideas on leadership approaches and obstacles to effectiveness as leaders.

### **Preparation**

In 1987 the United States Bishops addressed the important tasks that priests are to perform. The bishops observed that priests today must understand the tasks of organizing teams of lay ministers, of counseling and listening, of collaboration, and of matching talents to tasks (Henderson-Callahan & Eblen, 2006)

In 1999, the National Organization for Continuing Education of Roman Catholic Clergy sponsored a review of research done in five studies between 1984 and 1993 (Hoge, 2002). They found that many young priests feel overwhelmed and inadequately supervised. “Their tasks require several specific skills in which many believe themselves deficient, which they identified as administration, management, finances, staff relationships, and conflict resolution (Hoge, 2002, p. 6).

Fr. James explained that there was instruction in liturgical leadership, but no instruction in traditional leadership skill sets such as delegation, goal setting, having a vision for a community, or conflict resolution. Fr. Ignatius and other seminarians learned of their responsibilities outside of classroom facilitation. Fr. Ignatius’ experience as a seminarian was different, and it provided very little understanding of what he was expected to be and do as a parish community leader.

Hoge (2002) continues by citing his statistics that show that 72% to 81% of the priests surveyed thought that their preparation for Church administration was very unfavorable. The surveys also revealed that 23% of active diocesan priests thought that there needed to be more

development of administrative, management, and human relation skills to more effectively prepare seminarians for priestly ministry. Fr. Aaron thought that there were no leadership classes and that the only leadership instruction he had was maybe in seminary projects that they worked on as a group. He also stated that decision making and the preparation for decision making was not present in the seminary at all. It seems that leadership preparation in the traditional secular sense is not a deliberate aim of the seminary. However, pastoral leadership is an essential part of priestly formation.

Pastoral leadership is not leadership in the traditional sense. Fischer (2010) explains that the priests, “through their identity with Christ, allow God’s Incarnate Word to teach, sanctify, and guide the community so that its members may also make the mission of Christ their own. This distinguishes pastoring from leadership (p. 5). Fr. Benedict stated that classes dealing with pastoral ministry were the closest to any sort of formal leadership instruction. The *Program of Priestly Formation*, 5th edition (USCCB, 2006), clearly states that seminarians must acquire the “skills for effective pastoral leadership” (USCCB, 2006, p. 81). While the document describes the priest more as shepherd than a leader, it cites his ability to lead as essential.

In 2008 the National Catholic Educational Association published *In Fulfillment of Their Mission* and affirmed the importance of priestly leadership. There were nine duties listed and number four was the duty to lead the parish administration. Parish community administration included leadership of pastoral and finance councils, the oversight of planning ministry, stewardship, and the supervision of staff, property and communications (Ippolito, Latcovich, Malyn-Smith, & NCEA, 2008). The interviews revealed that none of these specific topics were provided in the formation conducted at the seminary. The curriculum at the seminary attended by all of the participants in this study attempts to provide the kind of leadership preparation



mandated by the Church, but the guidance from the USCCB seems dated and perhaps not quite what newly ordained priests need today to be effective leaders of their parish communities.

When asked if seminary formation contained any of the traditional kinds of leadership skills, like delegation, goal setting, having a vision for a community, and conflict resolution, Fr. James said it was not prominent and that it was barely present for seminary formation. None of the seminarians could remember or describe specific parish community leadership preparation in the seminary.

There were other ways that the participants received their leadership preparation. Fr. Edward thought that his leadership preparation as an intern was very good and exactly what he needed. He credited his pastor and mentor for the leadership education he received, not his years in the seminary.

### **Expectations**

In general, seminarians did not consider what their leadership requirements might be after their ordination. Fr. James knew it was coming, but did not spend much time thinking about it. He said that somewhere in the back of his mind was the idea of priests as administrators of a community, or of an organization. He knew it was coming but he really did not find the topic very interesting and thought that he would just hire a good business manager. This coincides with Hoge's (1999) finding from his surveys that administrative matters were the greatest source of frustration for priests. Only 40% were interested in learning skills for communication and human resource development; only 30% showed interest in learning parish management, planning, leadership, managing change, and stewardship. In addition, only 20% had any interest in fund raising, the meaning of money, and financial resource management (1999).

Within the Protestant ministerial community, similar attitudes were discovered. Once in a position of responsibility as a pastor of a Protestant Church, many ministers expressed regret at not maximizing their opportunities. At the Harvard Divinity School, an effort was made to obtain from graduates what they thought about the preparation they received for their ministerial positions. Many of the alumni stated that they wished they had pursued classes in pastoral counseling, courses specific to fundraising, and administration (Cormode et al., 2012). One pastor in particular stated that “I probably shouldn’t have taken that third semester Sanskrit poetry class, and instead should have taken the course on administration” (Cormode et al., 2012, p. 101).

One of the few priests to consider what he would be expected to do as a leader once ordained was Fr. Aaron. When asked, he said he wanted his leadership to help the parish to operate smoothly, to tend to the spiritual health of the parishioners, and to get people involved by plugging the right people into the right positions. Fr. Ignatius did not consider the parish community leadership aspect of his future priestly ministry while in the seminary, but did consider it before he entered. He researched what life was like for a parish priest, how they lived, how they interacted with parishioners, what their responsibilities were, and even visited their retirement home to see if he could envision himself there at the end of his service. Both Fr. Aaron and Fr. Ignatius had extensive prior experience in business and as leaders. Both wanted to better understand what their roles would be. The other eight participants in this study gave considerably less thought to what their leadership role might be. Fr. James said that it was not until he was placed in a parish community that his expectations shifted based on his new role. He now understood that being a good shepherd means managing the resources of the flock as well.

## **Approaches to Leadership**

Leadership by example, presence, servant-leader, and pastoral leadership were the most frequent terms mentioned in the interviews to describe leadership approaches. In each parish community and in each diocese, like the post-Vatican II Catholic Church, more participative management is encouraged. As a result, leadership for a new pastor has become more challenging. The people he leads usually include a very few paid employees and potentially many volunteers. In some cases, paid employees in one capacity are volunteers in the parish community in a different role. Volunteers require different leadership than a paid employee does, else they will volunteer elsewhere. His leadership tasks include all the same items secular leaders perform, plus a spiritual aspect. The laity are increasingly responsible for parish ministries and have an increasing role in parish community decision making. Simultaneously the pastor can feel an increasing loss of control. Fr. Leonard compared the regimen of the seminary to the leadership he is expected and required to perform in his parish. He explained that in the seminary he and his fellow seminarians became used to doing everything themselves and taking their time. They had some control of their time. But when he came to his parish, other people were doing things and there was very little time left to control. He mentioned he learned a lot about leadership very quickly.

The *Program of Priestly Formation* (USCCB, 2006) describes pastoral leadership as an identity. A pastoral leader is someone who makes a gift of himself and can receive the gift of others. He needs integrity and self-possession to make such a gift. The capacity to be fostered is the affective ability to engage in pastoral leadership with Jesus as the model shepherd (USCCB, 2006). The document further states that the program should provide opportunities for the seminarian and the new priest to “acquire the basic administrative skills necessary for effective

pastoral leadership, recognizing that programs of continuing education and ongoing formation will be necessary to equip newly ordained priests to assume future responsibilities as pastors” (USCCB, 2006, p. 91). The program as it is written expects the newly ordained priest to be able to manage the physical and financial resources of the parish. Both expectations receive minimal attention during the time of formation.

Fr. George explained that his exercise of pastoral leadership met with little or no response from a lay organization that is pledged to his defense and support. Still, his personal desire is that the parishioners work with him rather than follow him, even though it makes getting anything accomplished more difficult. Pastoral leadership compares most favorably with what is described as the servant-leader model. A servant-leader finds his identity in collaboration with lay persons, emphasizing not ontological difference, but collegial relationships that highlight the common religious identity for both priests and laity (McCarthy, 2006). Fr. Francis describes his approach as servant-leader, stating that he learned that approach from his parents and that he would never ask someone to do what he would not do. Fr. Hubertus went further and said that all priests are servant-leaders. Fr. James believes that the servant-leader approach is a needed correction to an older approach that saw many priests, both diocesan and ordered, act as if they were islands to themselves. The current idea of servant-leadership negates that and forms priests from the very beginning to be integrated into the parish community. However, because of its self-emptying and personal diminishment, when considering all pastors, including Protestant, it can have less than positive consequences for women and marginalized groups by preserving a servant/master perception (Pickard, 2012). This potential consequence was not mentioned by any of the participants in this study.

Fr. Leonard developed the rationale for the servant-leader model even further. He sees himself very much a servant leader. He has also seen the cultic leader approach and used the phrase “chalices not calluses” to describe a very different priestly identity. The cultic approach he describes places priests on a pedestal. But Fr. Leonard also emphasized what Pope Francis said about priests, that this is no longer a church about princes and palaces, or kings and castles. He said we must get back to basics, we must be able to see ourselves, and we are not on a pedestal anymore. Forty percent of the participants easily describe their leadership style as servant-leader. The others were more reserved in their leadership approach self-description, but all placed emphasis on service to their parishioners as their leadership priority.

To lead a parish community effectively, the new priest must earn their trust. Fr. Ignatius gave the example of trying to get men in the parish to attend a retreat. Much of what occurs on retreat is personal and Fr. Ignatius avoided providing an in-depth description to the men. Instead he asked that they trust him. Many of them did trust him, they found the retreat amazing, and word got out so that a growing portion of his parish community had and has growing confidence in everything he does. Fr. Ignatius emphasized that his leadership must be consistent in what he says and what he does, and in his presence to the parish.

### **Obstacles**

The complexity of the leadership tasks placed on newly ordained priests contributes to a generalized feeling of being overwhelmed. Fr. Hubertus said that while he was in the seminary, he knew that the work of a parish priest was overwhelming. Fr. Ignatius knew of a new priest who was so overwhelmed with the leadership tasks that he no longer wanted to be a pastor. Leadership challenges can be confusing, vague and conflicted, which requires priests to deal with complex constituencies (Thach, 2012).

Financial issues tend to be a leadership obstacle in parishes where good fiscal management was not employed or not understood. Parish pastors are held responsible by the diocese or arch-diocese for the financial well-being of their parish community. Fr. Edward inherited a very difficult situation in his parish because the financial records were not accurate, with years missing and probable misuse of funds. His predecessor had no training in financial management and left it to lay volunteers. Others, like Fr. George, found themselves coming to a parish community as its new pastor where some of the facilities were new or refurbished, but the parish was in tremendous debt. His hands and any new initiatives are tied for many years.

A significant leadership obstacle facing new ministers of all denominations is resistance to change. In “ethics-based organizations such as religious organizations, there may be significant resistance to untested leadership” (Fritz & Ibrahim, 2010, p. 45). Leaders, especially new leaders, must understand that religious organizations are exceptionally resistant to change. Parish communities develop norms and practices in addition to Church practices that are unique unto themselves, and are very difficult to change. As a result, a new Catholic priest should anticipate great resistance to change when first arriving at a new location. Fr. George explained that it is not prudent to make changes based on what you think is going on. He knows that you must be certain, that you have done the research needed to make an informed decision. When he left his previous parish for a new one he was told by the people in his old parish that no one in his new parish spoke Spanish. After one of the first Masses he celebrated, many of the parishioners said goodbye in Spanish. He now says a Mass on Saturdays in Spanish and his attendance routinely exceeds 1,000 people. His change was a result of close observation and his perception of a need. In this case, the resistance to change came from Fr. George’s old parish, where the people did not want him to leave. They thought if they told him no one spoke Spanish

in the new parish, that he would have a choice to stay. His transfer was not his choice. Fr. George explained that parishioners that are 60, 70, or even 80 years old do not change. They may adjust a little bit, but they will not change.

Successful pastors, whether in urban, suburban or rural areas, take on many of the cultural aspects of the community (Small, 2011). Each parish community has its own personality and its own needs. Fr. Ignatius found that his ability to implement change in the face of strong resistance came from learning about the people in the parish; what their needs were and what their culture called for. He spoke with the elders of the parish, people who had been there more than 70 years and whose families had deep roots. He discovered what they valued and in the case of his parish, it was his presence and participation in their lives that mattered. He immersed himself in their routines and celebrations, attending rodeos and helping to clear land. The conversations he had provided him with insight into those things that looked like they needed changing, but actually had good rationale for not being changed. And when he found things that did need change, he was able to provide guidance that helped the parishioners improve and enhance their way of doing things. For Fr. Ignatius, overcoming resistance to change was about earning trust and credibility with his new parish community. He shared that if you can improve something or do it better without getting rid of it, the parishioners will love you for it.

### **Theoretical Framework—Role Theory**

Role Theory is a way of understanding actions and behaviors that are in accord with certain leadership characteristics (Shivers-Blackwell, 2004). A role set is any feature of an organization that can send role expectations/requirements and role pressures to the leader (Shivers-Blackwell, 2004). The role set described by the Church for priests is explained in many published documents beginning with the *Program of Priestly Formation*(USCCD 2006), through

Pope Francis' (2014) address, *What a priest should be*, to the clergy gathered at the Chapel of Saint Martha in Rome. However, the education provided during formation in a seminary may not be sufficient even though it adheres to the published role set.

As voiced by most of the participants in their interviews, the pastoral leadership training provided does not include much of the leadership skills necessary for a priest's administrative role in a parish community. Leadership skills such as delegation, time management, human relations, financial management, and conflict resolution are not included in the curriculum. The role forces and role pressures participants experienced once in a leadership position in a parish community are very different from their role as seminarians.

Evaluations of what seminaries have provided in the past to assist priests with training in the more mundane administrative activities, including fund raising, indicate that it was not a high priority, if even addressed (Reilly, 1975). Research indicates that the youngest priests may not recognize the need for their role in the secular administration of a parish community. Counter to that attitude, more mature members of the priesthood recognize the power they gain by controlling and leading. They may be less eager to relinquish their administrative role and the increased control they have to share with the laity (Reilly, 1975).

In many ways, the role expectations of newly ordained priests have changed. The expectations of the parishioners are certainly different from before the Second Vatican Council. Research has shown that although parishioners want a bigger part in the leadership of their parish community, their expectations of parish priest leadership have increased. Hoge et al. (1995) found that overall, the expectations of parishioners regarding the quality of priestly leadership has grown with the increase in education level. "Today each priest, on average, must carry more leadership responsibility than ever in the past" (p. 196). Role expectations refers to the degree to



which all members of the leader's role set develop beliefs and attitudes about what the leader should and should not do as part of his/her role (Kahn et al., 1964). At the other end of the role set spectrum, the Vatican and each diocese provide a constant stream of role expectations for priests. As mentioned previously, the *Program of Priestly Formation* (USCCD 2006) and writings and publications from the Pope provide good general guidance. However, for a newly ordained priest with no previous leadership experience, more specificity in the guidance might prove useful.

Are the role expectations of the parish community and those of new priests the same? According to Fr. James, sometimes they are and sometimes they are not. He suggests that although the Church is hierarchical, that aspect is not as pronounced as it has been in the past. But there is a spectrum among seminarians and new priests as to where they think they are in the hierarchy. Those with a self-image of being high in the hierarchy may be disturbed by what is expected of them by both the Vatican and local diocese, and by the people they serve. Fr. James explained that as a priest you are supposed to be there for what the parishioners need. It is important and it is good for parishioners to see that their priest can, for example, go weed the garden, or do his own dishes, or help with the parish picnic and cut meat. Things like that are not necessarily priestly roles in the classical sense, but they are a part of pastoral leadership.

In the 21st Century, theories of shared leadership are important to consider. Cooksey (2003) suggests creating an organization where any member may lead or follow depending upon the circumstance. Additionally, some suggest that (a) on occasion, leadership functions might be performed by people not assigned positional authority and who are not at the center of an organization such as a parish community; (b) this leadership may challenge but does not replace positional authority; (c) shared leadership should be encouraged while seeking a positive

transformation; and (d) parish communities that incorporate team leadership will be in a better position to manage change in the years to come(Blair et al, 2012).

Leadership roles that are sent to newly ordained priests come from many directions, both within and outside of the parish community. What role a new priest is expected to perform in his parish is prescribed by many of the official Church documents. In general, the spiritual roles are clear and preparation is superb. Other roles, including the role of parish community leader, are not as clear and the preparation to perform those roles not as well executed. The role pressures exerted by the role forces from Church hierarchy and from the parishioners can be stifling and overwhelming.

The role behavior of newly ordained priests who are placed in parish community leadership positions without better preparation can easily deviate from what Church authorities think is the role they sent. All the newly ordained priests interviewed expressed some degree of frustration with the level of communication from Church leadership and in many instances expressed feelings of abandonment and a lack of support. The diocese and the seminary could benefit from a better understanding of the roles that priests assume in their parishes today, and implement ways of integrating training and education into priestly formation that actually equips them to perform all of their roles. Internships appear to be the best way currently for seminarians to learn of their diverse roles, but where that internship is conducted and with whom is of critical importance.

### **Practical Implications**

So few of the participants, when in the seminary, even considered what their roles might be in a parish community after ordination that it might be a good place to start considering change. Exploring the Latin root of the word for administration, McCarthy (2006) explains that

*administration* means ministry towards or for others. As he describes it, the word implies a dynamic thrust, a generous offer of one's talents so that the gifts of others may more properly be realized, affirmed and exercised in service. Rather than being ignored or shunned, a priest as administrative leader should be embraced and recognized as integral to the success of the parish community.

Adding additional course work to a curriculum that is overstuffed already is not an option (McCarthy, 2006). Instead he recommends integrating certain aspects of leadership preparation into formation subjects and internships. Subjects such as group dynamics, conflict resolution, time management, and similar skill sets could be addressed in many different subjects. Additionally, internships could be better utilized for developing leadership skills. Unfortunately, many newly ordained priests do not see these activities as essential to their role as parish community leaders until later in their assignment (Reilly, 1975). Knowles observed that much of professional education is out of synch with a student's readiness to learn, and that adults are ready to learn when they confront problems that are relevant (Knowles, 1973). Giving some of the responsibilities of a pastor to seminarians during their internship could prompt greater interest by seminarians in the roles associated with parish community leadership.

Key to improvement in a priest's preparation for leadership in a parish community is a small change in thinking about what a parish priest must be, know and do. The Church might consider recognizing his role as a leader of an organization requiring his daily involvement in its administration, in addition to being a shepherd of a flock.

As in business, what the newly ordained bring with them in the way of a leadership mental model is important. They may have several different and conflicting ideas of what being a leader means, especially if they have never been in a leadership role. The mental models Drucker

(1994) and Senge (1994) describe are ideas experienced leaders use in the changing environment of the business world. The right leadership mental model could greatly assist a new pastor in assuming his new community leadership role.

Currently, what a priest must be needs to be considered. Church authorities might also consider finding a way of providing him with the knowledge and skill sets he needs to be successful as a leader and administrator. Understanding what a priest does from day to day would certainly assist a newly ordained priest perform as a parish community leader. His internship in a place and with a pastor properly disposed to training, including assigning him responsible tasks with commensurate authority, could be all that is necessary for his future success. Perhaps changes in leadership preparation are not needed. If the structure of a Catholic parish included an executive pastor or a business administrator, as in the models described by Woodruff (2004) or Malone (2017), then more of the pastor's attention could be potentially spent on religious leadership, and less on his administrative roles.

### **Study Strengths and Limitations**

This study is limited by the small sample of participants and by the fact that all the participants are the products of one seminary in one diocese. Priests formed in other seminaries may have somewhat different expectations and experiences. However, the studies in the literature review were much broader and still seemed to reinforce much of what was discovered here. The findings may also be limited by the biases of the researcher, who as a Catholic Deacon is sympathetic to the challenges and frustrations of newly ordained priests.

The strength of this study comes from the thick rich descriptions and examples provided by the participants. Their willingness to share their thoughts and ideas were for the most part unrestricted because of their desire for Church decision makers to understand what they are

confronted with. Several of the participants mentioned that there was no opportunity to share their thoughts and criticisms of their formation; no after-action review and no lessons learned. Most expressed gratitude for the opportunity this study provided for them to share their observations and experiences.

### **Researcher Reflections**

There was universal unqualified acknowledgement by the participants that being a priest is exactly what they want to do. All of the priest participants emphasized that they loved Jesus Christ, His Church, and their Bishop. Each one tries his absolute best to emulate Christ and exercise pastoral leadership. Their complaint was with a system that makes requirements, but does not provide the resources to meet those requirements. Natural leadership is rare, but leadership skills can be taught.

I was surprised by the candor and openness of the participants. I was equally surprised by what each of them could accomplish within their parish communities in the short period since their assignments. Priests with prior life and organizational experience had a significant advantage over the ones who did not. Still, each priest was enthusiastic and proud of his parish.

Pastoral leadership as it is described is a good direction to start leadership preparation for seminarians, but it assumes many of the skill sets required for day to day leadership of a parish community will just fall into place. Much more can be done.

### **Recommendations**

Perhaps the best place to develop the needed leadership skills is during internship. As Kettl (2018) stated, followers become good leaders by watching good leaders. Carefully selecting pastors who are willing and able to provide training in those skills is essential. Not every pastor is so inclined or able to do it. Sending interns to a parish that needs assistance is not

the correct criteria for selection. Providing each intern with a superior experience in a parish community and with a pastor who is excited about teaching him is an investment in the quality of future priestly ministry, not a luxury. Perhaps providing more than one internship with different pastors would be possible as well.

The results of the Parish Evaluation Project suggested that each new pastor be given the opportunity to participate in an extended period of team building, perhaps as long as a year. The co-directors of the project contend that the pastor and his staff could become more skilled at conflict management, community building, information gathering, evaluation, and decision making. The idea is that the ministry team is able to encourage mutual support and manage conflicts between team members. The pastor becomes a team leader who functions as an equal and a facilitator (Sweetser & Holden, 1992). The Parish Evaluation Project (PEP) is composed of a team of Pastoral Consultants (Parish Evaluation Project, 2018). PEP Pastoral Consultants perform as resources to Catholic parishes, dioceses, religious communities, and pastoral ministries throughout the United States (Parish Evaluation Project 2018). PEP pastoral consultants can provide on-site consultation with parish staffs to assist in their ministry, including facilitating skills for collaboration, conflict management, goal-setting and leadership (Center for Congregations, 2018).

There are also post-ordination leadership training programs for newly ordained priests. One such program, Good Leaders, Good Shepherds, has been implemented in many dioceses, and was used briefly in the archdiocese in this study. A single cohort of 20 priests was formed in the archdiocese, and some of this study's participants attended the 2 year program. However, the program was discontinued after the first and only cohort completed training. The same archdiocese is currently in the process of forming its own post-ordination training effort that will

include, but not be limited to leadership training. However, Good Leaders, Good Shepherds was not a requirement for every priest and many who could benefit from it simply did not have the time to be away from their parishes. There is also an online master's degree program provided by The Catholic University of America's Busch School of Business. It is a correspondence program that leads to a Master of Science in Ecclesial Administration and Management. Its aim is to "give current or future pastors the tools they need to wisely shepherd their parishes' material goods and personnel" (Smith, 2017, p. 7). Topics of instruction include items such as fundraising campaigns, economic transparency, how to organize and manage employees, effective communications, and crisis management (Smith, 2017, p. 7).

In every interview, each participant suggested or implied that additional leadership preparation would have been very useful. Even priests with past business experience suggested that so many of the leadership requirements are unique to the position of parish pastor that additional preparation is essential. Perhaps a different answer lies in each parish employing a professional administrator as in some Protestant churches, responsive to the pastor and relieving him of those administrative leadership duties.

Future research is recommended in the form of a quantitative study on a much broader sample and potentially using questions derived from the findings of this study. Exploration of what newly ordained priests think about the adequacy of their leadership preparation during formation, and what they would like to see changed or added to the curriculum, could be addressed. Future research on what can be done to ameliorate their feelings of isolation and sequestration could help lead to happier priests. One of the participants described how, in rural Mexico, a parish may have two or three priests or more that live together and service as many as 12 villages. Perhaps that is a model for the more remote areas of the southwestern United States.

## Conclusions

This basic interpretive qualitative study revealed that there are differences between what was expected by seminarians and what they experienced later as priests. The literature review revealed many of the same leadership obstacles experienced by priests in the interviews. The emphasis given to spiritual leadership education is appropriate, but the price for ignoring the need for more secular leadership skills is a steep learning curve for new pastors, with commensurate frustration and confusion.

The domain analysis contained in this study provided answers to the first and second research questions. The first question was answered by analysis of the leadership preparation and leadership expectations domains. Leadership preparation varied greatly. Few considered what their role might be as a parish community leader once they were ordained.

The second research question was answered by analysis of the last two domains, leadership approaches and leadership obstacles. The leadership approaches domain revealed that most participants described their leadership approach as pastoral leadership, which includes a blending of authentic and values-based leadership. The last domain examined, leadership obstacles, provided insight into such obstacles as financial management, an inability to delegate, conflict resolution, and the overall complexity of the parish community organization.

This study explored the leadership expectations of newly ordained priests and discovered a difference between those expectations and what they experienced once in a position as a parish community leader. Many of the challenges they experienced could be mitigated by revisions to their leadership preparation. This study has the potential to provide a basis for considering modification to seminary curricula and a resultant increase in priestly leadership preparation.



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## Appendices

## Appendix A, Interview Protocol

**Project:** An Exploration of Organizational Leadership Preparation of recently ordained Roman Catholic Priests

**Time of Interview:**

**Date:**

**Place:**

**Interviewer:**

**Interviewee (Alias):**

**Position of Interviewee:**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this case study is to explore the leadership experiences of newly ordained Roman Catholic priests to determine if there is a difference between what they expected their role as a leader to be, and what their experience has been. Ten priests, all ordained within the last seven years, will be interviewed and observed to try and capture their leadership experiences within their parish settings. The data collected will be analyzed and used as a part of the dissertation the researcher is completing. **Only aggregate data will be reported.** All information will be held in the strictest confidence with only aliases used and no information provided as to who or what parish provided the information. All records will be secured in a safe owned by the researcher. The interview should not exceed one hour. **At this time please sign the consent form.**

**Questions:**

*Part I – Preordination.*

1. Can you describe what you thought would be your leadership requirements once you were ordained?
2. Did you think much about what kind of leadership you might need to provide in your assigned parish beyond spiritual?
3. Did you have any leadership background before entering the seminary such as business or military experience, or even as a young man in the Boy Scouts, Boys State, school council or clubs, sports, or anything that would put you in a position to lead?
4. Were there specific leadership classes in the seminary?

**Project:** An Exploration of Organizational Leadership Preparation of recently ordained Roman

Catholic priests

5. Was leadership training embedded in any of your seminary classes such as role playing?

***Part II – Post-ordination***

6. What have been your leadership requirement experiences since ordination?

7. Do you generate goals, conduct conflict resolution, delegate responsibilities, oversee employees, or perform other leadership functions?

8. Do you have a personal theory of leadership? Can you describe it?

9. Do you see yourself as a cultic leader or servant leader?

10. Are there methods, styles, or other characteristics of leadership that you think are of primary importance?

11. Are there differences between your leadership expectations and your leadership experiences?

12. How long have you been ordained and what positions have you had.

13. Have any pastoral or other leaders taught you things about leadership that you embraced?

14. Are you attending or have you attended a post-ordination leader's program?

15. What have been your greatest challenges as a parish leader?

16. Have you experienced an occasion or occasions requiring your leadership when you did not feel prepared?

## Appendix B, Subject Consent Form

### Organizational Leadership Preparation: An Exploration of Recently Ordained Roman Catholic Priests Consent to Participate in a Research Study University of the Incarnate Word

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by PhD student Michael Drumm, under the supervision of Noah Kasraie, Ph.D. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences and the expectations of recently ordained Roman Catholic priests as leaders in their parish communities – in other words, we want to know when you were a seminarian what you thought would be required of you as a parish leader, and what your actual experience as a leader has been since then.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will participate in one or both of the following procedures:

1. 1-hour or less, interview with research questions from me about your expectations and your experiences.
2. Observation of you during one of your many opportunities to perform as the parish leader, such as during a pastoral council meeting, or festival planning meeting, etc.

You are being asked to take part in this study because you were ordained within the previous 7 years. Since all the information provided is completely anonymous, your privacy is completely protected. There will be no references in the final document as to who was interviewed and observed, or where any of the information was collected. The paper will only refer to an Arch-Dioocese in the Southwestern United States.

I cannot guarantee that you will benefit from taking part in this study, however, it is hoped that the study results will help the community of Catholic Seminaries identify a difference between seminarian preparation for pastoral leadership, and what the pastoral leadership experiences of newly ordained priests are based on their individual experiences.

Everything I learn about you in the study will be confidential. If I publish the results of the study, you will not be identified in any way. Only aggregate data will be reported.

Your decision to take part in the study is voluntary. You are free to choose not to take part in the study at all, or to only participate in the interview, or to stop taking part at any time.

If you choose not to take part or to stop at any time, it will not affect your future status at UIW or within the Arch-Dioocese.

Your interview will be recorded and a transcript produced for your review. You will also be provided with the results of the study.

If you have questions, please ask them at any time. If you have additional questions later or you wish to report a problem that may be related to this study, contact:

Michael Drumm  
(830) 491-2217  
drumm@student.uiwtx.edu

Noah Kasraie, Ph.D.  
(210) 829-3133  
kasraie@uiwtx.edu

To contact the University of the Incarnate Word committee that reviews and approves research with human subjects, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and ask any questions about your rights as a research participant, call: UIW IRB, Office of Research Development (210) 805-3036.

If you completely understand the expectations and rights of participants in this study, all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction, and you are willing to participate in this study please sign and date this consent form in the space provided. To sign this consent form, you must be 18-years-old or older by today's date.

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Participant Signature

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Date Signed