

## Duquesne University Duquesne Scholarship Collection

---

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

---

Fall 2008

# Seizing the Catholic Moment: Kairos and the Rhetoric of Diocesan Administration

Craig Maier

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dsc.duq.edu/etd>

---

### Recommended Citation

Maier, C. (2008). Seizing the Catholic Moment: Kairos and the Rhetoric of Diocesan Administration (Doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University). Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/etd/857>

This Immediate Access is brought to you for free and open access by Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Duquesne Scholarship Collection. For more information, please contact [phillips@duq.edu](mailto:phillips@duq.edu).

SEIZING THE CATHOLIC MOMENT:  
*KAIROS* AND THE RHETORIC OF DIOCESAN ADMINISTRATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College  
and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Craig T. Maier

April 23, 2008

Copyright by

Craig T. Maier

April 23, 2008

Craig Maier

“Seizing the Catholic Moment: *Kairos* and the Rhetoric of Diocesan Administration”

Ph.D. in Rhetoric

April 23, 2008

APPROVED \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Ronald C. Arnett, Dissertation Director  
Chair and Professor  
Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies

APPROVED \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Janie Harden Fritz, First Reader  
Associate Professor  
Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies

APPROVED \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Calvin L. Troup, Second Reader  
Associate Professor  
Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies

APPROVED \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Francesco Cesareo, Consultant  
President, Assumption College

APPROVED \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Ronald C. Arnett, Chair  
Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies

APPROVED \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Albert Labriola, Acting Dean  
McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

# ABSTRACT

SEIZING THE CATHOLIC MOMENT:

*KAIROS* AND THE RHETORIC OF DIOCESAN ADMINISTRATION

By

Craig T. Maier

April 23, 2008

Dissertation Supervised by Ronald C. Arnett

No. of Pages in Text: 247

*What can Roman Catholic diocesan administrations in the United States learn from rhetorical studies in the postmodern moment?* This dissertation attempts to help American dioceses to respond to a postmodern moment of increasing secularization, changing human resources, and declining institutional trust. In this moment of challenge and uncertainty, it finds Richard Neuhaus's (1987) metaphor of the *Catholic Moment* to be particularly powerful for diocesan administration because it finds within the tensions of postmodernity a new sense of possibility that both the Christian and rhetorical traditions have understood through the metaphor of *kairos*.

The rhetoric of diocesan administration is best understood not as the implementation of communicative or managerial "techniques" but as a form of playful engagement that flows out of the pastoral acknowledgement of the call of a homeless world. "Part I: The Call of the Catholic Moment" describes the challenges that American dioceses currently face, frames the rhetorical dimensions of diocesan life, and seeks to ground the rhetoric of diocesan administration in the institutional *roots* that give it a

human face: the stewardship of the gift of the Catholic faith and the pastoral care of persons. In the moment of postmodernity, dioceses that fail to attend to these roots compromise their identity and their ability to respond to the Catholic Moment.

In the Catholic Moment, diocesan administrations are constantly invited and challenged to learn how to become better dioceses—more confident, more competent, more caring, and more self-consciously Catholic—than ever before. “Part II: The Response of Diocesan Administration” approaches the rhetorical challenges of postmodernity in a constantly constructive fashion. Building on the notion of interpretive play so important to Hans-Georg Gadamer’s (1960/2004) philosophical hermeneutics, it will propose an understanding of diocesan rhetoric framed by the metaphor of *administrative play* that transforms diocesan administration from a bureaucratic structure into a *communicative home*. By allowing Catholic dioceses to see the historical moment of postmodernity in ways conducive to administrative play, Neuhaus’s metaphor of the *Catholic Moment* transforms postmodernity into an occasion of *kairos*—as long as dioceses are open and willing to seize it.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all those who work in Roman Catholic diocesan administration in the United States, whose humble, unsung labors provide the foundation for the American Catholic Church.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

While scholarly writing is a solitary activity, no one writes a dissertation alone. There are always those who are willing to take the journey alongside you, offer support, and set an example to follow.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my parents, Thomas and June Maier, whose support—and dinners—were invaluable throughout this time, as well as my sister and brother-and-law, Gretchen and Jeffry Pattison. I am grateful for your love and willingness to listen as I struggled to think through my ideas.

Second, I would like to thank those who work with me at the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh and who have taught me—a Presbyterian no less!—so much about the practice of corporate communication within the Roman Catholic Church. In particular, I would like to thank my co-workers in the Department for Communications—Robert Lockwood, William Hill, and Darlene Peterson—as well as John Flaherty, Associate General Secretary of the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Third, I would like to thank the assistance and insights of my dissertation director, Dr. Ronald C. Arnett, as well as my committee, Dr. Calvin L. Troup, Dr. Janie Harden Fritz of the Department for Communication and Rhetorical Studies, and Dr. Francesco C. Cesareo, President of Assumption College. Both Dr. Arnett and Dr. Troup have contributed to my scholarly approach in immeasurable ways. In particular, though, I would like to recognize Dr. Fritz, whose interest in me as an undergraduate and constant encouragement started me on the path to graduate study in communication and rhetoric in the first place.



And finally, I would like to thank the numerous bishops, clergy, and religious who have taught me the blessings and challenges of diocesan administration. Though there are too many to name each individually, five have been most important to me: Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl of Washington, DC, whose constant and courageous example impressed upon me the need to do the right thing at the right time, even though those actions may be controversial; Bishop David A. Zubik of Pittsburgh, who constantly demonstrates the importance of blending administration with a pastor's heart; Fr. Ronald P. Lengwin, who demonstrates the necessity of communicating with charity and grace; Fr. Lawrence A. DiNardo, whose realistic practicality and wit constantly grounded my reflections on diocesan life; and Sister Margaret Hannan, RSM, who always encouraged me to keep smiling.

I am grateful for all of you.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract.....	iv
Dedication.....	vi
Acknowledgement.....	vii
<b>Part I: The Call of the Catholic Moment.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 The Challenge of Diocesan Administration .....</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	2
1.2 Responsiveness, Challenge, and the Rhetoric of Diocesan Administration.....	4
1.3 Postmodernity and the Catholic Moment .....	10
1.4 The Invitation of the Catholic Moment.....	31
<b>2 The Rhetorical Possibilities of Diocesan Administration .....</b>	<b>37</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	38
2.2 Diocesan Administration as a Rhetorical Phenomenon .....	39
2.3 Diocesan Administration as a Nexus of Permanence and Change .....	50
2.4 The <i>Topoi</i> of Diocesan Administration.....	59
2.5 Learning from the Rhetoric of Diocesan Administration.....	67
2.6 The Rhetorical Praxis of Diocesan Administration .....	79
<b>3 The Roots of Diocesan Administration .....</b>	<b>82</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	83
3.2 Diocesan Administration and Theological Stewardship .....	84
3.3 Diocesan Administration and the Care of Persons.....	94
3.4 Diocesan Administration and the Crisis of Modernity.....	103

3.5 The Roots of Diocesan Administration in the Postmodern Moment .....	119
<b>Part II: The Response of Diocesan Administration.....</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>4 Permanence, Change, and Administrative Play .....</b>	<b>126</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	127
4.2 Administrative Play as Constructive Organizational Engagement .....	133
4.3 Engaging Permanence and Change .....	152
4.4 Administrative Play and <i>Kairos</i> .....	164
<b>5 The <i>Kairos</i> of The Catholic Moment .....</b>	<b>168</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	169
5.2 A Postliberal Moment .....	172
5.3 A Gnostic Moment.....	185
5.4 A Moment of Dialogic Demand .....	195
5.5 <i>The Naked Public Square, The Catholic Moment, and Kairos</i> .....	209
<b>6 The Catholic Moment as the Postmodern Turn .....</b>	<b>212</b>
6.1 Introduction.....	213
6.2 The Joy of Diocesan Administration.....	220
6.3 Diocesan Rhetoric in the Catholic Moment.....	232
6.4 The Invitation of Diocesan Administration .....	244
References.....	248

# Part I: The Call of the Catholic Moment

“Part I: The Call of the Catholic Moment” invites Roman Catholic diocesan administrations in the United States on a journey to discover and develop their ability to respond rhetorically to the challenge of postmodernity. Michael J. Hyde (2006) has observed that rhetorical life begins in acknowledging the *call* of the moment. Hyde’s observation is based in the pattern of the Old Testament, where the wonder of a burning bush, an urgent whisper in the night, or a theophanous encounter with the Lord himself calls persons to respond to God. For Moses, Samuel, and Isaiah, though, this call is not a moment of triumph or clarity but an experience of uncertainty and even fear. For diocesan administrations today, the call of postmodernity is no different. Chapter 1 begins by describing how diocesan administrations are invited to acknowledge the call of postmodernity as “The Challenge of Diocesan Administration.” Chapter 2 describes how this call can be understood in terms of “The Rhetorical Possibilities of Diocesan Administration.” Finally, Chapter 3 uses the work of Simone Weil (1949/1952) to describe how “The Roots of Diocesan Administration” can give American dioceses the sustenance and confidence to respond to the call of postmodernity as an organization with a fundamentally human face.

# Chapter 1

## The Challenge of Diocesan Administration

*What can Roman Catholic diocesan administrations in the United States learn from rhetorical studies in the postmodern moment?* From the perspective of some, the question of this dissertation is a strange one. American diocesan administrations and the discipline of rhetoric emerge from ancient, but contrasting, traditions. The Catholic diocese, as an institutional arrangement, is the cornerstone of one of the longest living organizations in human history, an organization that establishes itself in its claim to eternal permanence. Rhetoric, as a formal area of study, reaches back to the Sophists of Greek antiquity, who emphasized the necessity of embracing the opportunities presented by omnipresent change. With these differences in mind, however, this dissertation will advocate an essential role for rhetoric in helping American dioceses respond to a decisive moment of change in Christian history: the moment of postmodernity.

### 1.1 Introduction

Michael J. Hyde (2006) reminds us that scholars have long recognized that rhetoric does not exist of its own accord. Something—a situation, a decision, a problem—always calls it into being. *Rhetoric responds*. But while the response of

rhetoric to the moment is vital, we cannot begin to understand what the proper response is until we understand that which is calling rhetoric into human life. As a result, this chapter will begin its exploration of diocesan rhetoric by acknowledging the challenges and problems that confront American Catholicism in the moment of postmodernity. Some of these challenges may be all too familiar for some in diocesan life. Yet, acknowledging the challenges and dangers of postmodernity is not an announcement of defeat but merely the beginning, the beginning of what could be seen as a moment of unique opportunity for the Church.<sup>1</sup>

For many in the United States, the Roman Catholic diocese has become the public face of an anachronism, an object of derision, and an example of everything that is “wrong” with religion. When considering this adversity, however, this dissertation will emphasize rhetorical theory’s potential to invite an alternative understanding of diocesan administration, in which the very anachronistic strangeness that makes dioceses seem so weak becomes a source of strength. The challenge of diocesan administration, it contends, lies not with “modernizing” the diocesan model or rendering Catholicism more “relevant” but with using rhetoric to maximize the American Catholic Church’s strengths and transform the seemingly intractable problems of postmodernity into opportunities.

This dissertation enters the discussion through the metaphor of *kairos*. Playing between the tradition of the past and the needs of the present, between the needs of the individual and the call of the community, and between the part and the whole, it will explore how *kairos* exposes new possibilities for diocesan administrations in the tensions brought by the historical moment of postmodernity. As the work of Hans-Georg

---

<sup>1</sup> As a matter of convenience, the word “Church,” when capitalized, will refer to the Roman Catholic Church. The lower case “church” will refer to the Christian church in a universal (i.e., in a lower case “catholic”) sense.

Gadamer (1960/2004) suggests, moments of kairotic revelation are *incarnational* glimpses, in which the mysteries of eternity are made present through—yet constantly limited and shaped by—language within particular historical moments. The possibilities revealed in *kairos* are always situated and limited by the historicity of the questions being asked. Obscured by human limitation, *kairos* does not release one from the cares of the historical moment but enables one to answer it. The opportunities that *kairos* brings are consequently never unmixed but situated in the tension between light and dark, hope and despair, confidence and uncertainty, and permanence and change. In embracing *kairos*, this dissertation’s message is consequently realistic but not despairing. It is written in the hope that, like Elijah listening to the howling winds and firestorms outside his cave, diocesan administrations may yet hear the words of a still, small voice: “*This* is the Catholic Moment, a moment of opportunity! Grasp it!”

## 1.2 Responsiveness, Challenge, and the Rhetoric of Diocesan Administration

In the moment of postmodernity, diocesan administrations in the United States are faced with responding to a variety of rhetorical challenges. Yet, no matter how difficult these challenges are, this dissertation is based on the proposition that the postmodern world still has much to learn from Catholic dioceses, and that rhetoric holds the key to helping dioceses respond to the challenges that postmodernity presents. An invitational essay, it is crafted in the hope of encouraging scholars, American diocesan administrations, and American Catholics in general to view the rhetoric of diocesan administration in different, more constructive ways.

*1.2.1 Reading the rhetoric of diocesan administration.* A persistent challenge in any applied communication research lies in respecting the communicative Gestalt—the

foreground practices and background context—in which the studied discourse exists. If one does not attend to this Gestalt adequately, one risks suggesting foreground applications that do not match the organizational environment in which they will be deployed. Consequently, in pursuing this project, this dissertation will put philosophical hermeneutics to the various “texts” of diocesan administration and organization—scholarly literature, news articles, practitioner literature, and Church documents—to reveal the communicative Gestalt and rhetorical praxis of diocesan ministry. This engagement is undertaken in the hope of awakening the rhetorical concerns of diocesan administration to show how communication scholars can find diocesan administration an important area of study.

Philosophical hermeneutics seeks to understand organizations through the “reading” and interpretation of organizational discourse. Stanley Deetz (1982) describes organizational interpretation as a type of *exegesis*, in which researchers focus on developing ever thicker descriptions of organizational life, uncovering the structures of meanings that make organizational life possible, opening new paths of criticism and challenge, and enabling new forms of theory-informed action and practical discourse. Such readings can unfold in a number of ways. For instance, Dennis Mumby and Cynthia Stohl (1996), in many ways mirroring Deetz’s work, emphasize the potential and even necessity for organizational readings to allow suppressed voices to speak, differing rationalities to present themselves, problems of organizational life to emerge, and tensions between the organization and society to appear. Such an interpretive engagement, Deetz suggests, treats the texts of organizational life through a hermeneutic of *critical love*, revealing the harmful and taken-for-granted communication practices that



it understands to be hindering an organization's success. For organizations to be improved, it is assumed that they first should be treated with suspicion, broken apart, and reassembled according to critically appropriate categories. As a result, the hermeneutic is often a *deconstructive* one.

Despite the power and utility of deconstructive hermeneutics, some scholars have come to question its foundational presupposition that a scholarly "reader" can be placed in a theoretically unassailable point from which organizational problems can be diagnosed and solutions demanded. James Taylor (1993) urges organizational scholars to recognize that organizations cannot be so neatly divided into foreground practices and background contexts. The organization, he says, is both the picture and the canvas. There is no Archimedean point of absolute objectivity from which organizations can be understood and engaged. Organizational readers and actors are embedded agents within organizational life, and their readings and activities are deeply implicated and interwoven with the texture of organizational life. A posture of deconstruction, if pushed too far, can erode the very interpretive ground under the critic's feet.

Taylor's concerns push toward a theoretical posture that understands the importance of a hermeneutic that is *constructive*, not merely deconstructive. With Clifford Geertz (1973), a constructive hermeneutic contends that persons are inherently embedded within their cultures and denies the existence of Archimedean points from which human organizations can be objectively understood. Interpretation becomes, as Gadamer notes, not an exercise of instrumental objectivity but a form of *play*, in which significance and being manifests itself in the unfolding experience of an organization in time. Constructive hermeneutics in organizational research, while accepting the need for

deconstructive discourse within some historical moments, retains its footing by consciously engaging the ongoing story of an organization's life.

Unlike the perspective of modernity, which assumes that a single paradigm for organizational effectiveness holds true for all time, constructive hermeneutics is aware not only of the multiplicity of traditions and perspectives present in organizational life but also of the historicity of its own interpretive questions. As a result, rather than imposing preconceived notions on organizational life as if they were theoretically unassailable givens, constructive hermeneutics begins by announcing its *interpretive bias*, publicly declaring and acknowledging the "rules" of the interpretive "game" so as to invite the participation of the organization in the interpretive act. In addition, the historical situatedness of interpretive play means that organizational readings are always provisional and open to revision. Its flexible give-and-take can be repeated again and again with different results, each repetition offering a new lesson and different understanding of the organization in question. Instead of seeking interpretive closure, the interpretive engagement of constructive hermeneutics is cumulative and constantly evolving in its understanding of the richness of organizational experience.

Constructive hermeneutics also recognizes that interpretive play never occurs without the existence and participation of the *organizational text*, prompting interpreters to reevaluate their posture to organizational life as well as the purpose of their research. Gadamer reminds us that the text "is not an object that stands over against a subject for itself" but is understood to possess "true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it" (p. 103). Interpretive play centers not on the interpreter or on the organization but on the interaction between them. Instead of

demanding that an organization exist in a certain preconceived way, its interpretive give-and-take seeks to allow the organization to speak for itself. Instead of being preoccupied with what the organization is not, its constant concern lies in enabling the organization to become what it might be.

The goal of constructive hermeneutics lies in the experience of meaning found in the *presentation* of organizational life within a particular historical moment. It asks: *How does this organization, this group of persons, show itself to us now, in this time, in this historical moment?* In practical terms, this presentation takes the form of a *public conceptual map* of the organization's life, what Geertz calls its "webs of significance" (p. 5). Ronald C. Arnett (1998) emphasizes the importance of metaphors as providing interpretive coordinates for these conceptual maps, particularly in contexts framed by religious narratives. In revealing and unpacking these metaphors and showing the relations of these guiding terms to each other, the play of constructive hermeneutics invites a praxis that blends organizational understanding and human action within a particular historical moment.

This dissertation, as a constructive, invitational essay, builds its reading of diocesan administrative life through the articulation and description of the conceptual map that makes it intelligible and significant in a changing historical context. Prompted by the concerns faced by diocesan administrations in the moment of postmodernity, it will ask questions that suggest new metaphors and new understandings of old terminologies. In the process, it seeks not to refashion diocesan administration in a predetermined image but to invite a new understanding of what diocesan administrations could be within this decisive historical moment.

1.2.2 *The central metaphors.* Throughout its analysis, this study will emphasize the metaphors of *kairos* and the *Catholic Moment*. The metaphor of *kairos* is important because it suggests a point of overlap between the Christian tradition of diocesan administration and the rhetorical tradition. As Dale Sullivan (1992) has argued, *kairos*—a sense of time differentiated from chronological time by its sense of fullness and opportunity—is part of both the rhetoric of Saint Paul and Sophistic rhetoric, though in different ways. In the Catholic tradition, *kairos* is always situated in the Christian belief that the human experience, while perceived through a glass darkly, ultimately holds together (Cf., 1 Cor 13:12; Col 1:17). The rhetorical tradition of the Sophists, essentially agnostic by nature, brackets Christian claims to ultimate significance, choosing instead to seize the playful quality of *kairos* and little more. This dissertation, however, will contend that these seemingly incompatible understandings of *kairos* suggest a rhetorical praxis of diocesan administration that recognizes the value of institutional permanence while seizing moments of opportunity in a moment of postmodern uncertainty.

With a realistic, constructive perspective in mind, this dissertation views the metaphor of the *Catholic Moment*, which comes from the title of Richard Neuhaus's (1987) book on postmodern Catholicism, as suggesting one such appearance of interpretive opportunity. Neuhaus, one of the foremost commentators on the relationship between religion and American life, suggests that in the Catholic Moment, the bitter divides and chaos of postmodernity that Christians frequently assume to be a time of secularization, loss of influence and control, and despair may be phenomenologically "turned" to become possibilities for faith and life. Such interpretive labor is never easy, nor does it promise perfect freedom or organizational clarity. As Kierkegaard

(1843/1985) observed, it requires the graceful ballet of the soul that only the knight of faith can truly perform, and the knight of faith's path is never clear and constantly fraught with paradox and pain. Yet, the Catholic Moment, despite its challenge, adversity, and uncertainty, invites diocesan administrations to find a way to join in the dance.

### 1.3 Postmodernity and the Catholic Moment

For many Americans, and particularly for many American Christians, the moment of postmodernity is taken to be a difficult and even terrifying time, though few may know exactly what postmodernity really means. This dissertation frames postmodernity in five ways: first, as a *social-spiritual condition* in which the texture of cultural, epistemological, and ethical standpoints that was so self-evident in the moment of modernity has been lost, giving rise to a moment of narrative confusion and virtue contention (Lyotard, 1979/1984); second, as a form of *technological consciousness* engendered by massive advances in technology and social technique (Ellul, 1954/1964); third, as an *economic transition* from an industrial economy to a globalized, radically complex postindustrial economy (Bell, 1973); fourth, as a *loss of intelligible public culture* and vibrant institutional life in favor of hyper-individualistic, privatized narcissism (Sennett, 1977); and fifth, as a *mediated hyper-reality* in which the radical differences and conflicts of the world meet unhappily in the strange tribalism of an emerging global village (McLuhan, 1994). Postmodernity gives rise to violent conflicts between permanence and change, in which pretensions toward absolute technological domination are belied by realizations of the system's fragility, and paeans to the "knowledge economy" are ironically juxtaposed with the inability to define what

knowledge truly is. In a postmodern world where institutions collapse overnight and human life is saturated by information without meaning, confusion is rampant.

These concerns define the ecclesial environment of American Catholic dioceses. Though no diocese wants to admit weakness, and while some dioceses may indeed be quite strong and vibrant, the organizational strength of many American dioceses is often uncertain. American Catholic dioceses enter the moment of postmodernity facing the burgeoning religious diversity of postmodern American life, dramatic changes in the human resources available to support their pastoral and organizational objectives, and, most recently, a profound crisis in organizational confidence following the 2002 sexual abuse scandal. While all of these realities are uncomfortable ones, acknowledging them prompts important questions for diocesan administrative rhetoric.

*1.3.1 Religious diversity and uncertainty.* Many American Christians experience postmodernity as a spiritual crisis, in which the decline of previously unquestioned religious narratives, the inroads of secular media, the dislocations of economic transformation, and the overwhelming distrust of public religious life seem to undermine everything that matters to them. They may associate postmodernity with the rise of a *post-Christian society* in which the growing religious diversity of American life means that traditional expressions of Christian faith are increasingly greeted with ignorance, apathy, or even anger.

The challenges of postmodernity are experienced by all Christian denominations. David Roozen (2005) has remarked on how the great denominational organizations of the Protestant mainline have experienced the spiritual confusion of postmodernity as a time of frustration, fragmentation, and loss of influence. Debates over homosexuality and

other issues awakened by the intellectual and religious uncertainty of postmodern life, he contends, have cracked the once-venerable walls of denominational strength and seeped into the fissures, forcing these segments apart until a denomination's sense of identity as a body of Christ is destroyed.

For many Protestants, long accustomed to a privileged and largely unquestioned place in American life, these developments may be particularly disturbing ones. Only half a century ago, Will Herberg's (1956) magisterial account of American religion observed the emergence of a religious *melting pot* based in a common respect for what he described as the *American Way of Life* and rooted in an amorphously conceived—and highly syncretistic—alliance of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. While he admitted that the strength and depth of this public expression of religious faith were often unclear, he nevertheless believed that the breadth of the religious consensus at mid-century made atheism a thing of the past and allowed for members of these traditions, particularly Christians, to take a place of privilege at the center of American political, social, and intellectual life. He proclaimed a moment of triumphal Hegelian clarity, in which the conflicts of American culture, after a century of immigration and industrialization, had been resolved into what was understood to be a common spirit and cultural vision. The moment of postmodernity, however, shattered this façade of conformity and unity, and in the process, it threatened the previously unquestioned importance of the Judeo-Christian tradition in the American public sphere.

American Catholicism's experience of the apparent marginalization of Christianity in American society is in some ways different than that of its Protestant peers because from the very beginning of its history, it has had to adapt institutionally to life

outside of—and, at times, in spite of—the American religious mainstream. George Marsden (1990) has noted the struggles of American Catholic immigrants amidst a tide of Protestant anti-Catholic resistance that made the humiliation and denigration the Church a constant concern. *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*, a horrific—and entirely untrue—account of life in a Catholic nunnery that cast priests as sexual predators and child murderers, was the third highest selling book in the nineteenth century behind the Bible and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Lockwood, n.d.), and as late as the 1950s, when Herberg was proclaiming what he took to be a growing détente among Protestants and Catholics, Jaroslav Pelikan (1959) noted that the vast majority of American Protestants still viewed Catholicism as a suspicious “riddle.” Even after the turn of the millennium, Philip Jenkins (2003) makes a strong case that routine and unreflective anti-Catholic prejudice remains a persistent theme in American popular culture.

As it weathered the challenges of its early history, Marsden notes, the Church in the United States maintained its identity through a strict program of neo-scholastic theological education, liturgical discipline, and deep patriotism. This form of American Catholicism was what is often called a *ghetto Catholicism*, and its inwardly directed discourse, while undoubtedly parochial and insular, ensured strong identification among its members and set a firm foundation for institutional strength. For immigrant Catholics, Philip Gleason (1970) notes, the primary concern in this early historical moment lay not in influencing the broader culture but in preserving their identity against assimilation. Catholic dioceses, by building a network of institutions to serve their people, were intended to meet this objective, and they were highly successful in their mission. As Herberg notes, American dioceses, particularly through their establishment of Catholic



schools, were essential in preserving the unexpectedly and disproportionately high level of religious observance among American Catholics in the 1950s.

With the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, however, the walls of the ghetto gave way, and American Catholicism entered into a period that Gleason describes in terms of *identity crisis* and *disintegration*. Eugene Kennedy (1988) has observed that in this period American Catholicism abruptly moved from what he describes as *Culture One Catholicism*, defined by a careful and studious adherence to tradition, toward *Culture Two Catholicism*, in which Catholics would increasingly find it possible to take a much more eclectic, individualistic attitude toward their faith. This trend has continued. In a broad sociological survey of American Catholicism, William D'Antonio and his co-authors (1996) describe large percentages of American Catholics who now openly reject the Church's teaching on abortion, contraception, and other issues, breaking from the Church in ways that would have been unthinkable before the Council.

The next generation of American Catholicism—and, indeed, American Christianity as a whole—is far more complex. Even as Colleen Carroll (2002) lauds the return of a small, but substantial, percentage of American young adults to the orthodox faith of their grandparents, she concedes that her highly anecdotal study is often at odds with broader demographic trends. David Kinnaman and Dave Lyons's (2007) research with the Barna Group has found that a significant and perhaps disturbing percentage of American youth and young adults report that they have encountered Christ, heard the Christian message, and rejected it, not because they find it inconvenient with their lifestyle or because they are spiritually uninterested but because they find Christianity incapable of addressing the complex personal, relational, and cultural challenges they

face in a moment of postmodern uncertainty. This new generation—young believers and young agnostics alike—asks different spiritual questions and interacts with the Church in markedly different ways than their parents and grandparents did, and all Christian traditions are struggling to respond to the urgency of their questions.

The research of Carroll and of Kinnaman and Lyons reveal that the next generation of Catholics moves beyond Kennedy's two-fold scheme of "Culture One" and "Culture Two" Catholicism. If their grandparents tend to be what Robert Wuthnow (2005) calls *exclusive Christians*—those who continue to cling to their faith while shutting out the diversity around them—and their parents tend to be *inclusive Christians*—those who, as Paul Wilkes (1996) notes, have come to reject the Catholic orthodoxy and orthopraxy of *good Catholics* and seek instead to be merely *good enough Catholics*—young Catholics today are much more complex. While a devoted minority, as Carroll notes, seems drawn to Christian exclusivism in their spirituality, sexual mores, morality, and politics in an effort to find a sense of structure and clarity in an ambiguous world, a significant and perhaps larger percentage of young American Catholics have become what Wuthnow describes as *spiritual shoppers*, abandoning traditional Christianity altogether in favor of a superficial spiritual eclecticism that Thomas Luckmann (1967) describes as *invisible religion*.

Catholic dioceses can bank on the adherence of the substantial minority of determinedly orthodox young Catholics that Carroll describes. The spiritual shoppers, however, are much more problematic. Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven Tipton (1991; 1996) have written with deep concern about the growing religious individualism in American society, in which religious belief is often

constructed outside of and in opposition to the very sorts of institutional structures that diocesan administrations represent. “I believe in God. I’m not a religious fanatic,” they quote a young nurse named Sheila as saying. “I can’t remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way. It’s Sheilism. Just my own little voice” (221). In such a context, traditional expressions of the Catholic faith may be understood to be anachronistic and inherently oppressive, the impersonal imposition of institutional religious authority on free individuals. Such reactions, while often grounded in *emotivistic* assessments based on little more than personal feeling (MacIntyre, 1981), reflect the sharp questioning of authority in the postmodern context noted by Richard Sennett (1980). As Jenkins (2003) contends, these presuppositions have also created a disturbing resurgence of old anti-Catholic ideas, not only from the traditional venues of fundamentalist preachers and professional atheists but also from many American Catholics themselves. Many Catholics, he argues, can now no longer distinguish the true Catholic faith from the caricature created by anti-Catholic rhetoric: that it is anachronistic, that it hates women, that its views on homosexuality kill gays, that it is inherently oppressive, that it is home to thousands of “pedophile priests”—an epithet, Jenkins adds, crafted not by the secular press but by the *National Catholic Reporter* (p. 64)—and that it has been involved in conspiracies and pogroms for thousands of years.

With these changes in sentiment comes a marked weakening in Catholic sacramental participation. Bryan Froehle and Mary Gautier (2000), in a report on the state of the Catholic Church written for Georgetown University’s Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), note that weekly Mass attendance—a sacramental precept of the Church and the bedrock of Catholic devotional life—has dropped to 30

percent from its high of 74 percent in 1958, and sacramental participation in general—baptisms, marriages, confessions, confirmations, and funerals—has been in steady decline since the 1960s. The numbers reflect generational divisions: 64 percent of Catholics who came of age during the Second World War report weekly Mass attendance, while only 21 percent of young adults attend Mass as frequently. Since Mass attendance and sacramental participation are often over-reported (Hadaway and Marter, 2005), these numbers may actually be much smaller and, given generational trends, getting even worse.

Taken together, all of these trends suggest that the current religious moment of American Catholic dioceses is one of deep uncertainty, and it raises important questions for their rhetoric to address. The first question speaks to the current moment of pastoral confusion: *What does it mean to address a Church that is divided among a variety of religious perspectives?* Of course, as Marsden reminds us, American Catholic culture, informed by myriad ethnic traditions and spiritualities, has always been characterized by diversity, and American diocesan administrations have always faced the problem of rhetorical identification. The difference in the moment of postmodernity, however, lies in the depth, diversity, and unpredictability of the divisions any particular diocese is faced with bridging and the complexity of the rhetorical labor required to achieve the same level of institutional coherence. In the past, Marsden notes, even Catholics of different ethnicities could still find identification through a common faith and common forms of sacramental life and pastoral care. However, in postmodernity, where divisions are ideological and generational as well as cultural, dioceses may not be able to assume

that religious unity exists or that traditional forms of pastoral care and sacramental life meet the spiritual needs of all their people.

Amidst the complexity and ambiguity of the post-Christian American society, many Catholics, particularly those who fall into Wuthnow's category of exclusive Christians, may be tempted to look back to the moment of modernity with nostalgia, longing for the days when Christian truth was believed to be self-evident and readily available through strict readings of neo-scholastic theology. They may long to speak forcefully, making claims that presuppose a theological clarity that no longer exists, a rhetorical power they no longer wield, and a social importance they no longer have. This dissertation recognizes the pull of this longing. However, unlike Christians steeped in the mindset of modernity, it will contend that postmodernity is not to blame for these challenges but rather brings possibilities that modernity often masked. The breakdown of religious tradition and the rise of the individual, after all, is not a *postmodern* but a *modern* phenomenon. But more important, modernity, fascinated by speed, efficiency, and calculation, views experience as an inescapable, linear progression, what the Greeks would call *chronos*. This is an essential distinction because *chronos* offers no space for faith or religious life. Postmodernity, in rejecting modernity's inescapable linearity, allows for a new understanding of experience in which life is framed by moments of *kairotic fruitfulness*. Postmodernity's openness to *kairos* brings with it a sense of dynamic possibility that, contrary to what many Christians fear, may actually allow religious belief to reenter the cultural conversation, albeit in a different way. Consequently, this dissertation recognizes that far from destroying the Church, postmodernity may actually offer what it needs.

Instead of destroying the Church, postmodernity merely invites a reconsideration of its rhetorical posture. *How can dioceses articulate religious claims in an increasingly secular and pluralistic culture where religious truth is never self-evident and the Church is no longer the center of people's lives?* This is an essential question for Christian rhetoric in the postmodern moment because the tendency to assume the self-evident unassailability of the Christian faith is now actually hurting the Church more than helping it. Kinnaman and Lyons contend that though it may be painful and difficult for many exclusive Christians to admit, their unreflective rhetorical practices have often made them as hypocritical, intrusive, homophobic, narrow, politicized, and judgmental as many non-Christian young adults believe. Kinnaman and Lyons describe this “shadow side” of Christianity in terms of *unChristian* faith. UnChristian faith, they argue, not only drives people from the Church but also speaks to profound problems within Christianity in a postmodern, post-Christian society. As a result, in a moment of religious transition, they call for what amounts to a new Christian rhetoric that engages diversity while remaining rooted in Christian belief.

*1.3.2 Changing human resources.* People—the priests who celebrate the sacraments; the women and men religious who give their lives to service in schools, parishes, and countless other ministries; and the laity whose dedicated support of the Church with their time, talent, and treasure is often overlooked—are the Church's most important institutional resource. The moment of postmodernity, however, is marking a transition in how the Church uses its human resources. This transition is an organizational problem for diocesan administration because these human resources provide the financial resources and personnel that Catholic parishes, schools, and non-

profit organizations need to survive, and it is a rhetorical problem because changes in these resources invites debate as to complexion of Catholic ministry in the years to come.

In the middle decades of the twentieth century, many American dioceses were blessed with a large number of vocations to the priesthood and religious life and steady economic and demographic growth, which in turn allowed for several assumptions about pastoral planning. Confident in the power of the sacraments and a ministry model that established parishes much as a county established municipalities, parishes could assume that their people would come of their own accord, and overflowing with more clergy and religious than they knew what to do with, they felt little need to include laity in substantive ways. The Catholic faithful, on the other hand, became accustomed to a certain level of sacramental life and pastoral care and—through an unspoken agreement—often learned to receive these services without being asked to give much in return. As long as the health, strength, and influence of the American Church grew, there seemed to be little incentive to change the status quo.

Though the picture varies from region to region, American Catholicism in a global sense continues to experience the extraordinary numerical growth of the past. Froehle and Gautier note that the American Church has grown six hundred percent since 1900 to become the largest Christian denomination in the United States, accounting for fully 27 percent of Americans at the turn of the millennium. At the same time, however, a radical decrease in vocations to the priesthood and religious life in the United States is making its institutional status quo increasingly untenable. The literature has long recognized that the numbers of ordinations and active priests have been declining for decades. In their definitive study of clergy decline in the United States, *Full Pews and*

*Empty Altars*, Richard Schoenherr and Lawrence Young (1993) projected that by 2005, the population of active diocesan priests would number 21,000, a 40 percent decline from the 35,000 active priests in 1966. The most important factor in the decline, they contended, lay not in attrition through death or an exodus from the priesthood but in the dramatic decrease in the number of men seeking and being ordained to the priesthood. They cautioned that these changes were profound and largely irreversible: Even a 25 percent increase in ordinations, they observed, would not be enough to stem the tide.

The reality has been even more pessimistic. Rodger Hunter-Hall and Steven Wagner's (2007) nationwide survey of diocesan health indicates that by 2005, the number of diocesan priests available for ministry had actually dropped to 18,102—fewer than the number of Catholic parishes—with 48 dioceses, or 27 percent, reporting no ordinations at all. As the number of priests declines, the effectiveness of the “core technology” (Schoenherr and Young, 1993, p. 18) that has defined American Catholicism is weakening, seriously threatening both the traditional positions of clergy and the traditional expectations of laity in American Catholic life. Schoenherr, Young, and Vilarino (1988) have projected that clergy decline will continue to be a problem but will abate in the early decades of the twenty-first century, not because of any miraculous upswing in vocations but because the size of the priestly population will have finally declined to a naturally sustainable level. If they are correct, and the evidence suggests that they are, the decline in the priesthood is now a permanent organizational problem in American diocesan life.

While the decline of the priesthood is the most visible sign of the current personnel crisis in the Church, the decline of vocations to consecrated life, particularly



among women religious, is equally and perhaps more important. Helen Ebaugh (1993) notes steep declines in the population of women religious in the United States since the Second Vatican Council, as feminism and increased educational attainment allowed women to pursue the sorts of leadership and professional opportunities that had previously been available only to women in consecrated life. Froehle and Gautier show that the number of women religious dropped 52 percent between 1965 and 1998, a decline even steeper than the slide in the priest population projected by Schoenherr and Young. The loss of women religious in Catholic schools and hospitals has required those institutions to hire increasing numbers of laity. In addition to being more costly— attracting high quality lay staff requires competitive wage and benefits packages that women religious never demanded—the new lay staffs also come from more diverse and often less well-formed faith backgrounds that make them a far less stable foundation for organizational growth. As Catholic schools and other institutions continue to replace women religious with laity, personnel costs and organizational complexity have consequently increased dramatically.

Acknowledging the stresses and challenges that trends in the priesthood and religious life bring poses an important question for diocesan rhetoric: *How can diocesan administrations sustain organizational success without the human resources that they had once assumed to be constant?* Decreasing numbers of priests and religious are forcing dioceses to adopt new ministry models, particularly those that allow for the greater inclusion of laity as leaders and workers within parish life and diocesan administration. Hospitals and universities begun by religious communities are turning over to lay governance, with the possibility of losing Catholic identity. Changes in

human resources are forcing once-vibrant parishes and schools to share resources, merge with others, or close altogether. Each of these challenges invites administrative rhetoric that invites and coordinates the action of the diocesan faithful in new and creative ways.

Inviting Catholic laity to participate, however, is often easier said than done. Bishops, priests, and religious are faced with the challenge of finding ways of delegating responsibilities and seeking lay participation without diluting their own unique purpose and role within the Church, a task that requires both spiritual discernment and managerial skill. At the same time, fewer clergy and religious also means doing without the high level of spiritual and institutional formation that they currently bring to their positions, formation that Lynne Zucker (1991) recognizes as being essential in the survival of any significant institution. As Mary Ann Glendon (2002) observes, the current “hour of the laity” presents unexpected challenges because American Catholic laity, situated in the religious confusion of postmodern society, often lack the textured understandings and the strong Catholic identities necessary to assume leadership roles within the Church, even though they may be just as or even more highly educated and professionally competent than the clergy or religious they replace. Consequently, this moment of transition invites bishops, clergy, and religious not only to find new ways of delegating responsibilities but also to develop and enhance the formation of laypersons to deepen their identification with the Catholic mission and identity of the organizations they serve and to strengthen the coordination of organizational action within the Church.

The changes in the human resources available to meet the Church’s pastoral and organizational objectives are also difficult because they invite American Catholics to modify and come to new agreements about often cherished understandings of the Church,

the role of clergy, and the role of the laity. They raise an important question regarding the purpose and goals of diocesan administration as well: *What is the organizational purpose of diocesan administration, and what objectives can—or should—it attempt to accomplish?* Many dioceses and parishes operate under a human resources paradigm that is no longer adequate, and they bring with them the assumptions of a ghetto Church that believed that it had to provide for its people's every need. In the current moment of changing resources, dioceses are invited to engage in an administrative rhetoric that re-visions priorities and constantly refines its mission and purpose. Constructively engaged, this discussion is not an exercise in nostalgia, an announcement of defeat, or a negation of the theological frameworks that have guided the Church for two millennia. Rather, it seeks to reinterpret and re-envision the ministry of diocesan administration to discover what it can be in the future.

*1.3.3 A crisis in confidence.* In the past, American Catholics may have trusted their dioceses to make decisions that affected the lives of thousands of people with little or no consultation. The 2002 clergy sexual abuse scandal, however, shattered this trust. Throughout the country, the scandal was received as nothing less than a “betrayal” (*Boston Globe*, 2002), and it initiated perhaps the greatest crisis of organizational confidence in American religious history. Though not every diocese was directly touched by the scandal, enough bishops were found to have either ignored or covered up allegations of sexual abuse to raise serious doubts as to whether diocesan administrations were truly able to accomplish the tasks that they set out for themselves. Even as the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2006) sought to create an unprecedented regime of policies, procedures, and background checks through their *Charter for the*

*Protection of Children and Young People*, the damage had been done. From now on, bishops could no longer assume that their decisions would be accepted as legitimate, not only regarding sexual abuse but regarding the whole scope of diocesan ministry. In the new climate of diocesan administration, financial disclosures, clergy assignments, parish and school reorganizations, and pastoral planning initiatives would be greeted with increased scrutiny and even suspicion.<sup>2</sup>

To some extent, the scandal also reignited battles over authority that had dominated the American Church in the nineteenth century, when the unpredictable growth on the American frontier invited many Catholic laity to take upon themselves the episcopal tasks of organizing parishes and assigning clergy in places where diocesan authority was weak. This phenomenon, known as *trusteeism*, did not last, and Patrick Carey (1987) has chronicled the often bitter conflicts between laity and their bishops as diocesan structures became strong enough to exercise authority over their people. Laity, encouraged by the anti-Catholic press's antipathy for episcopal governance, chafed under diocesan authority and fought openly for control over clergy assignments and parish life. Over time, diocesan bishops prevailed, but Casey's work describes how the conflicts sparked by trusteeism persisted under the surface of American Catholicism.

---

<sup>2</sup> While the sexual abuse of minors is often seen as a "Catholic issue" unique to Catholic priests and diocesan administration, Philip Jenkins (1996) contends that this perception is actually an inaccurate social construction sustained by remnants of anti-Catholic prejudice, ideological conflicts within the Church, and several other societal factors. The current discussion about the issue, he concludes, is not a considered debate but a *moral panic* in which American Catholicism, as an "Other" within American society, is made a scapegoat for larger questions and concerns about social values. A recent study by three insurance agencies covering the bulk of Protestant churches in the United States, for instance, report an average of 260 instances of child sexual abuse by Protestant clergy every year ("Data shed light on Protestant sex-abuse cases," 2007). In addition, Charol Shakeshaft and Audrey Cohan's (1994) study of the incidence of sexual abuse in public schools reveals a disturbing lack of knowledge concerning the rates of sexual abuse and harassment in those settings. While the clergy sexual abuse scandal is indeed a challenge and serious problem within the Church, these studies provide essential context and caution against any claims that child sexual abuse is limited to Catholicism or somehow "caused" by Catholic beliefs.

With the clergy abuse scandal, this uneasy truce was broken, and the rebellion and dissent of trusteeism reemerged. As Carey predicted long before the scandal broke, diocesan administrations are learning that the questions over the role of laity within diocesan governance are, in many minds, still open. Lay writers increasingly demand greater oversight (Bane, 2004; Cahill, 2004; Nichols, 2004; Pope, 2004), and activist groups like Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) and Voice of the Faithful have arisen to hold the hierarchy accountable through a critical publicity that simultaneously demands a revision of Catholic ecclesiology. Catholic dioceses fail, they often contend, not only because they are incompetent but also because they subscribe to theological positions that make accountability and competence categorically impossible. As a result, they often conclude, true justice in the Church can only occur once the bishops are relieved of their unquestioned authority in diocesan life, the differences between clergy and laity are erased, and the diocesan hierarchy is dismantled.

Such critiques are significant and important. Yet, as Karl Weick's (1979) work reminds us, any large organizational structure—a school system, a governmental agency, a multinational corporation—will lag behind the demands of the historical moment, making it prone to moments of organizational failure and crisis. We should not expect Catholic administrative life to be any different. Perhaps the greatest lesson of the scandal for Catholic dioceses—and, indeed, for any organization of significance—is that organizational complacency is a recipe for disaster, and this lesson has been a difficult one not only for dioceses but also for many non-profits and private sector agencies to learn. Public policy scholar Kevin Kearns (2000) notes that throughout the moment of modernity, the American public sector of governmental and non-profit organizations

operated along four guiding assumptions. First, because they understood themselves as fulfilling a particular and unchanging *mandate*, their organizational focus was on maintenance of services instead of articulating a guiding *mission*. Second, because their mandate often established them as the sole providers of services in their particular area, they could assume an unchallenged *monopoly* over their markets—that is, assuming that they even thought about serving markets at all. Third, the unchallenged nature of organizational mandates meant that organizations could afford to be *static* and *complacent*, assuming that growth would always be both inevitable and easy. And fourth, because the actual outcomes of programs and services often mattered less than offering them in the first place, responsiveness and efficiency were often sacrificed. Only the *outputs* mattered, not their quality, desirability, or effectiveness. Kearns contends that each of these assumptions, while perhaps accurate for the time, led the public sector to develop deeply problematic habits that need to be rectified within the more complex and demanding institutional environment of the twenty-first century. American diocesan administration often struggles to break the same habits.

In the current historical moment, diocesan administrations are faced with the daunting rhetorical challenge of regaining the trust of their people by demonstrating their ability to ask serious and constructive questions about their own organizational effectiveness. Today, then, diocesan administrations are faced with answering a fundamental organizational question: *What does it mean to be an organizationally competent Catholic diocese?* In posing this question and engaging it seriously, diocesan administrations are constantly invited to become more sharply focused and more deeply interested in effectiveness and results in meeting their pastoral missions. In the process,

they can begin to rediscover their fundamental competencies and rebuild confidence in their organizational performance.

In this moment of crisis and organizational challenge, Catholic diocesan administrations, whose handlings of the sexual abuse crisis were sometimes evasive and difficult (Maier, 2005), are also faced with another central question: *How can diocesan administrations improve their interactions with their stakeholders and publics?* In the past, many dioceses may have communicated in limited fashion with their stakeholders, if at all. In the aftermath of the sexual abuse scandal, however, the American public finds such poor responsiveness to be simply inexcusable. Today, diocesan administrations are challenged to develop different, more sophisticated, and more constructive rhetorical responses to the hostility and unpredictability they face in a moment in which their organizational competence is seriously questioned.

*1.3.4 The Catholic Moment.* The theological, demographic, and organizational uncertainties of the current historical moment pose difficult questions as to whether Catholicism and diocesan administration as a central organizational structure within Catholicism are capable of meeting the opportunities that postmodernity brings. As they look at a European Church where priests currently celebrate Mass in empty cathedrals (see, for instance, Shorto, 2007), at American mainline Protestant denominations that seem to be slowly falling apart, and at their own pews, where generations thoroughly exposed to postmodern secularism restlessly sit, one can imagine the painful questions that permeate diocesan administrations. Should they change? Can they survive? And, in the wake of the sexual abuse scandal, should they survive?

Some observers are pessimistic. William McSweeney (1980), a Catholic sociologist whose analysis of Catholicism during the moment of modernity will become important later, contends that the struggle to make the Church “relevant” to the modern world—epitomized by the Second Vatican Council—ultimately shattered the carapace of traditional Catholic belief to create a postmodern Church of traditionalists, liberals, charismatics, and heterodox “cafeteria Catholics” who pick and choose what they want to believe. McSweeney contends that the Second Vatican Council, which was in theory intended to modernize and strengthen the Church, actually weakened it by moving too quickly away from the Church’s past of unquestioned permanence into a world of constant change. As a result, the problems posed by fallen away Catholics, shortages of priests and vowed religious, financial troubles, and the clergy sexual abuse scandal are now faced by an American Church without the institutional means or spiritual authority to handle them. In such a reading, decline and irrelevancy are inevitable for American Catholicism, and diocesan administration exists merely to turn off the lights in an increasingly empty Church.

Even so, not all authors are convinced of American Catholicism’s imminent demise. Richard Neuhaus, one of American Catholicism’s most important contemporary writers, believes that Catholicism possesses an extraordinary potential to respond to the challenges of the postmodern moment. In fact, he goes as far as to title his 1987 book *The Catholic Moment*, arguing that Catholicism—and Catholicism alone—has the ability to save American Christianity, and by extension, the world. Neuhaus bases his claim in Catholicism’s very strangeness and permanence in a world of constant change. The key, he contends, lies in the Church’s ability to understand and use the overlapping tensions



and paradoxes that Catholicism currently encompasses: new and old, liberal and conservative, traditional and innovative. For Neuhaus, the Second Vatican Council, in recognizing these paradoxical divisions, was not a moment of *weakness* but a moment of *maturation*, in which the Church came to understand and grasp a new role in world history. *Neuhaus sees the divisions that McSweeney believes reveal the downfall of the Church as potentially salvific opportunities!* But his argument has other implications. Could it really be that the survival of American society, and perhaps even humanity itself, rests in what so many see as an ecclesiastical relic? Could it really be that the survival of the Church rests not in its ability to become “updated” but to stay as it is?

But critics may have their own questions. After all, they may ask, is not American Catholicism a shattered façade of theological disagreement, weakening institutional vitality, and organizational incompetence? Is not the Catholic Moment that Neuhaus describes—if it existed at all—now long gone? Yet, though it is certainly audacious and, for some, perhaps outlandish, Neuhaus’s declaration of the Catholic Moment is actually rhetorically and theologically sophisticated. As John Poulakos (2002) notes, skilled rhetors need not wait for opportunities or prove that they exist. But Neuhaus does not declare the Catholic Moment out of thin air. His justification, rooted in the tradition of Christian discernment, lies in the recognition that the air is never thin but always thick with fruitfulness, that the meaning of a single metaphor can multiply like loaves and fishes, and that defeat, no matter how dark, is never complete. Today, the challenges facing American Catholic dioceses are as profound as any that the Church has known, but the challenge of diocesan administration in the moment of postmodernity is not to drown in despair and nostalgia but to move forward in its pilgrim path.

As a result, this dissertation recognizes that the Catholic Moment of the third millennium of Christian life is indeed a time of unique importance and challenge, but it is neither more important nor less of a challenge than any other time in the life of the Church. For Neuhaus, postmodernity is a moment of *kairos* not because studious social scientific research or a wise strategic plan or even speculation about religious megatrends tells him so. The metaphor of the Catholic Moment transforms postmodernity through power of faith and rhetoric to discern, reframe, and turn the weaknesses and worries of the Church into sources of rhetorical strength. For Catholic diocesan administrations looking out onto the postmodern landscape, Neuhaus reminds them that *every moment holds an opportunity for constructive response. Every moment is the Catholic Moment, if only the Church embraces the challenge of transforming its problems into opportunities.*

Neuhaus reminds us of the constant “possibility of possibility” contained both in Christian faith and in the rhetoric of *kairos*. There is no need for dioceses to wait in perpetuity for a perfect moment, for a perfect moment will never come. Worries about the future do not bear fruit. This dissertation contends that diocesan administrations are constantly faced with the rhetorical challenge of transforming moments of challenge and existential threat into energy-giving, faith-sustaining, Spirit-led opportunities. *American Catholic dioceses are challenged to transform each and every moment into the Catholic Moment.* This new challenge invites a different sort of academic research on Church administration, one that looks into spaces that are often left unexplored.

#### 1.4 The Invitation of the Catholic Moment

This dissertation will explore ways in which diocesan administration can seize the Catholic Moment through rhetorical action. This is, in some respects, a difficult task.

Several observers of American Catholic life—including James Drane (1969), Eugene Kennedy (1988), William Rademacher (1991), and Paul Wilkes (2001)—deride diocesan administration as an almost unending source of institutionalized doublespeak, almost inexplicable abstruseness, procedural bungling, and missed opportunities. Though the ideological perspectives of these critics may encourage some in diocesan administration to dismiss their criticism, the consistency of their concerns suggests that something is deeply wrong with the rhetorical life of American dioceses. The problem is that no one knows what to do about it.

Communication, as a professional field, is almost ruthlessly oriented toward *foreground technique*. A foreground perspective on the rhetoric of diocesan administration would seek to respond to the challenges that diocesan critics make by discussing the structuring of the communication function vis-à-vis other organizational units, the pros and cons of diocesan newspapers, the importance of the diocesan website, the latest in fund raising strategies, strategies to improve the use of mass media, and so on. But while this dissertation recognizes the importance of these foreground questions, it will contend that the most important rhetorical problem facing diocesan administration lies not in the tactics, structures, or technologies a diocese uses to communicate its message but in its understanding of the *background context*—the ideas, the sense of history, the broader sense of theological, spiritual, and philosophical purpose—that makes those tactics, structures, or technologies intelligible and meaningful to a diocese's stakeholders. In many ways, such an analysis is overdue. In the early 1970s, Catholic media scholar Marshall McLuhan openly worried that the Catholic Church had become enamored with the foreground communication techniques and strategies of modernity

without appreciating the implications of those techniques on the life of the Church (Gordon, 1997). Though nearly four decades have passed since then, this dissertation shares his concern about the ways in which the Church's adoption of communication techniques can outstrip its theoretical reflection.

In moments where unreflective foreground application is the norm, sometimes the most useful thing to do is to look the theoretical and philosophical background of communicative practices—concerns that more practical minds often deem to be useless. This dissertation hopes to be useful in the latter fashion. Instead of seeking a better set of foreground “strategies” to “fix” diocesan life, it will seek to broaden the gaze of the rhetoric of diocesan administration to understand the background upon which diocesan administration depends. Though its analysis will suggest different ways of approaching communication problems, its bias throughout will be toward what Ronald C. Arnett and Pat Arneson (1999) describe as *additive change*, seeking not to remake the rhetoric of diocesan administration into a more “modern” image but to discern ways in which its traditional strengths can be used toward new ends. Its posture will be one of invitation, using the twin metaphors of *kairos* and the *Catholic Moment* to suggest a new approach to the rhetoric of diocesan administration that will unfold differently in different rhetorical situations.

Central to this dissertation's project will be the importance of developing the rhetorical responsiveness of diocesan administrations. The essay is divided into two parts. “Part I: The Call of the Catholic Moment,” will lay the groundwork for a constructive response to a postmodern moment of contingency and confusion. As this chapter has shown, rhetorical responsiveness begins by acknowledging the call of the

postmodern moment as a form of challenge. Yet, great challenges alone are not enough to formulate a rhetorical response. The second chapter, “The Rhetorical Possibilities of Diocesan Administration,” will unfold the ways in which rhetorical theory can engage diocesan administration in a constructive manner and suggest opportunities that rhetorical research on diocesan administration holds for scholarship, diocesan administrations, and American Catholicism in general.

The work of Simone Weil (1949/1952) reminds us that a diocese’s constructive engagement of human life always begins with the roots that give it a human face. The third chapter, “The Roots of Diocesan Administration,” draws upon Weil’s *The Need for Roots* to describe the roots of the Catholic organizational tradition, described here in terms of the pastoral stewardship of the gift of faith and the pastoral care of persons. Yet, as the work of William McSweeney (1980) so trenchantly describes, the Church’s organizational responses to the challenge of modernity—which he describes through the metaphors of *ghetto*, *control*, and *relevance*—weakened its sense of rootedness and, consequently, threatened the organizational capacities of diocesan administrations to respond in humanly intelligible ways. As a result, this dissertation will contend that any constructive response to postmodernity begins with the acknowledgement, rediscovery, and rehabilitation of the roots that offer diocesan administrations the strength necessary to engage the historical moment constructively.

“Part II: The Response of Diocesan Administration” invites diocesan administrations to form a constructive response to the violent conflicts between permanence and change that so often characterize moment of postmodernity. Even as it recognizes that observers of the American Church will propose their own “solutions” to

the challenges of postmodernity, the fourth chapter, “Permanence, Change, and Administrative Play,” builds on the constructive hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1960/2004) to suggest that the challenges of facing diocesan administration cannot be imposed exogenously from above but can emerge only from diocesan life itself. The Church, it will argue, cannot be *managed*—a term that comes laden with the modernist presuppositions of quantification and control—but only *engaged*. Building on the notion of *interpretive play* so important to constructive hermeneutics, it will propose a model of constructive organizational engagement of permanence and change through the metaphor of *administrative play*. Playfulness, which for Gadamer is not a childish activity but an encounter endowed with “its own, even sacred, seriousness” (p. 102), proves an essential metaphor for diocesan administration because it integrates the Church’s sacramental vocabulary of presentation and re-presentation into its organizational life. By recognizing the *charism* that guides diocesan life and engaging the *organizational texts* that emerge in its ministry, administrative play invites an experience of *public meaning* that transforms diocesan administration from a bureaucratic structure into a *communicative home* that grounds religious life not in a physical place or an institutional structure but in a sense of meaning and spiritual depth.

Richard Neuhaus’s (1987) metaphor of the *Catholic Moment*—a metaphor that, along with *kairos*, will be a recurrent theme throughout this dissertation—provides an essential point of entry into the postmodern moment. The fifth chapter, “The *Kairos* of *The Catholic Moment*,” will discuss the moment with which diocesan administration now contends and suggest ways in which Catholicism can speak to the postmodern moment. As a *Postliberal Moment*, the Catholic Moment invites dioceses to spread its faith

unapologetically in a *Gnostic Moment* of intellectual confusion. As a *Moment of Dialogic Demand*, the Catholic Moment invites dioceses to wield their authority in intelligible ways that invite trust and improve their decisions in a complex world. In grasping the Catholic Moment, diocesan administrations have the opportunity to embark on a journey of kairotic opportunity, in which the seemingly intractable problems of the American Church become occasions of impossible possibility. The sixth chapter, “The Catholic Moment as the Postmodern Turn,” invites diocesan administrations on this journey—a journey that this dissertation hopes will enrich not only diocesan administrative ministry, but also the understanding of communication in religious organizations and American Catholicism as a whole.

# Chapter 2

## The Rhetorical Possibilities of Diocesan Administration

*How can seeing diocesan administration as a rhetorical phenomenon open possibilities for research and practice within a postmodern context?* Rhetoric responds to the call of the historical moment. The last chapter acknowledged the challenges that American diocesan administrations experience in the moment of postmodernity. In some dioceses, the challenges and uncertainties of the current environment of religious diversity, changes in human resources, and crisis in confidence may have become threats to their very viability as organizations. Yet, focusing solely on the challenges and threats to diocesan administration presents only a partial, not to mention highly negative, picture of what diocesan administration is and what it can accomplish. This chapter will tell the other side of the story, providing a basic theoretical framework for the study of the rhetoric of diocesan administration and describing in constructive fashion the opportunities that rhetorical research on diocesan administrations presents for scholars, diocesan administrations, and American Catholics.



## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will frame this dissertation’s conversation on diocesan administration by describing what rhetorical inquiry into diocesan administration has to offer communication scholarship and the organizational practice of diocesan life. It will proceed first by introducing readers to seeing diocesan administration through the lens of rhetoric by considering the rhetorical dimensions of diocesan life. Then, it will examine the literature for spaces where learning can occur, not only for scholars of organizations but also for diocesan administrations and American Catholics as a whole.

Readers steeped in the rich traditions of Catholic ecclesiology or canon law—and perhaps more than a little familiar with the Platonic criticism of rhetoric as nothing more than the cookery, cosmetics, or flattery one uses to “dress up” bad ideas—may find the notion of seeing diocesan administration as a rhetorical phenomenon to be a strange one. This chapter, however, hopes to expand their understanding of rhetoric by describing the rhetoric of diocesan administration as a theoretically rich and potentially important subject for research. After laying this groundwork, it will describe two important issues of organizational rhetoric. First, because it recognizes that every organization negotiates the tension of maintaining its mission and identity in a changing world, this chapter will consider how diocesan administration, as a particular type of religious organization, uses rhetoric to weather the dynamic of *permanence* and *change*. Second, because it recognizes that every organization has its own set of unique *rhetorical commonplaces*—shared concerns and rhetorical questions that govern inquiry and rhetorical invention—it will discuss the *topoi* that define the administrative praxis of diocesan administration. In considering each of these issues, it will emphasize a constructive reading of diocesan

administrative life, seeking always to acknowledge Catholic diocesan structures as representing a deep intellectual tradition in their own right. By doing so, it hopes to see diocesan administration not as a “problem” in need of “fixing” but a phenomenon capable of teaching important lessons to scholars, diocesan administrations, and American Catholics alike.

## 2.2 Diocesan Administration as a Rhetorical Phenomenon

As Thomas Reese (1989) notes, many people have misconceptions as to what diocesan administration actually does and how it actually operates, and these misconceptions can paint problematic caricatures of what diocesan administration actually is. These caricatures can have both “angelic” and “demonic” dimensions. In the angelic caricature, diocesan administration is a place where diocesan employees glide about their days thinking deep spiritual thoughts, fighting the good fight of the faith, and making perfectly just and noble decisions in an atmosphere tinged with incense. In the demonic caricature—a view, unfortunately, that is more prevalent in American popular discourse since the clergy abuse scandal—diocesan administration is a place where the bishop and his priestly “yes-men” huddle together in his office to compile lists of theological enemies, dole out excommunications, and cover up their incompetence. This dissertation, however, contends that neither picture is accurate for diocesan administration. A Catholic diocese is a human institution where matters of ultimate significance are limited by historicity and where fallible human beings attempt to serve the Church with as much wisdom and charity as they can.

In many ways, this sense of historical limitation—the feeling of uncertainty in moments of crisis, the experience of everyday human finitude and fallibility, the

contingencies of the historical moment, the transience of success and failure—is where rhetorical life begins. From its very beginning, rhetoric has sought to come to terms with humanity's common gift for persuasion and common responsibility to make decisions in moments of conflict and confusion. For those in diocesan administration who are used to seeing rhetoric primarily in terms of the persuasive and edifying discourse of homiletics, in which the Word of God is revealed in the experience of the Church's liturgical life, the rhetorical tradition's broad understanding of its art invites them to widen their perspective to see the rhetorical dynamics at work in a whole host of situations: in the sometimes heated conversations and debates over policies and programs, in the difficult decisions about the life of the Church, in the coordination of groups and organizational processes, and even, too, in the tender pastoral communication at a patient's bedside.

In framing the phenomenon of diocesan administration in terms of rhetoric instead of organizational technique, theology, or canon law, this dissertation stands within a significant tradition of inquiry. Reminding us of the central role rhetoric played in the pre-modern world's understanding of organizational development and functioning, Phillip Tompkins (1987) writes of the increasing sensitivity of organizational scholars to the importance of rhetoric in explaining the qualitative aspects of organizational and human experience that positivism and functionalism often miss. Within the field of organizational communication, he argues, rhetorical theory is essential in understanding and interpreting the symbolic and metaphorical nature of organizational life, the role of persuasion in organizational decisions, the creation and maintenance of authority, and the necessity of identification in shaping organizational motivations and mission. For

Tompkins, rhetorical theory is no abstract pursuit but part of the working wisdom of organizational life.

In contrast to the standpoint of secular rhetoric, which sees communication as a purely human activity, Avery Dulles (1988) emphasizes that rhetoric in a Catholic context has always been grounded in the belief that it is God who “brings about attitudes, convictions, and commitments connected with religious faith” and that it is God who has given the Church its unique message to the world (p. 110). Such persuasive communication in the Catholic context is at turns *hierarchical, heraldic, sacramental, communal, and secular-dialogic*. All of these metaphors describe various aspects of communication in the Church: that it proceeds from an institutional structure; that it carries the message of Jesus Christ; that it conveys meaning through liturgical action; that it lives in informal forums as well as formal ones; and that it is always situated within a broader secular, ecumenical, and interfaith world.

Tompkins’s argument for the importance of working rhetorical theory in organizational life and Dulles’s expansive understanding of the role of rhetoric in the Church both ground and define the scope of a working definition of the rhetoric of diocesan administration: *The rhetoric of diocesan administration engages the Church’s administrative and pastoral life through the dynamics of homiletics, media ministry, apologetics, advocacy, interpersonal interactions, deliberative processes, and countless other formal and informal forums and endeavors as they further the needs of diocesan life through interpretation, persuasion, motivation, and mission*. The challenge of the rhetoric of diocesan administration consequently lies in inviting a working rhetorical theory that is supple and adaptable but grounded in a sense of identity and purpose,

rooted in a substantive statement of Christian truth, yet dynamic enough to engage an ever-changing world.

*2.2.1 Grounding diocesan administrative rhetoric.* As Dulles’s description of the hierarchical, heraldic, sacramental, communal, and secular-dialogic aspects of Christian rhetoric suggests, rhetoric in the Church can ground its rhetorical life in any number of perspectives that have their own theoretical lineages. In particular, though, this dissertation places the rhetoric of diocesan administration in what John Poulakos (1984) describes as the tension between the *metaphysical* and *Sophistic* rhetorical orientations. This tension is significant because it creates the tension from which diocesan administration can come to experience the sense of Spirit-led rhetorical opportunities found in *kairos*.

Within the rhetorical tradition, both the metaphysical and Sophistic orientations are understood to reflect sharply different philosophical points of view. The metaphysical orientation, consistently and consciously rooted in statements of what “truly is” that are verified and maintained by a careful and conscious *epistemology*, offers certainty and stability for a group’s life together. The metaphysical position—exemplified in the rhetorical theories of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero—can be seen as the “default” position of the rhetoric of diocesan administration. Whether it has emphasized the Ciceronian unity of substance and style, the careful disciplines of Thomistic dialectic, or the Platonic passion for the beauty and splendor of truth, the Church’s rhetorical approach assumes the mantle of purveying the religious truth and knowledge that it believes it has received from Christ himself. What is more, the metaphysical posture corresponds closely to historical importance of scholastic dialectic in the Church. As the

constant handmaiden of the expert discourse of professional theologians, administrators, and canon lawyers, metaphysical rhetoric lies at the core of the Church's institutional life. As a result, the rhetorical life of diocesan administration is intrinsically content-rich and substantive, interwoven with the dense theological, philosophical, spiritual, liturgical, ethnical, and canonical texture that has emerged through the Church's two thousand years of history.

However, in the moment of postmodernity, when the grounding of knowledge and the verification of truth claims have become hotly contested, the posture of metaphysical rhetoric, which understands itself as transmitting irresistible truth and knowledge, seems increasingly naïve. Poulakos (1995) notes how the care and precision of metaphysical rhetorical theories can often devolve into "logophobia" (p. xii). The ardent desire to speak correctly leads one to avoid communicating at all, leaving metaphysical rhetoric at the mercy of crises that lie outside its epistemological purview. Poulakos (1983; 1984; 1995) and Susan Jarratt (1991) have been articulate in describing and advocating Sophistic rhetoric in opposition to metaphysical rhetoric, matching fidelity in the name of truth with Heideggerian rebellion in the name of new beginnings; caution with risk; complacent consistency with flamboyant novelty; rational terminology with the magical power of speech; and official seriousness with dynamic playfulness. For Sophistic rhetorical theories, the texture that sustains diocesan life so well can also be a weakness, threatening to bog diocesan rhetoric down in intellectual minutiae at the very moments where it needs to be the most dynamic and responsive.

Neo-Sophists see their understanding of rhetorical theory as incompatible with the understandings that define metaphysical rhetorical theories. Following their view would

place the rhetoric of diocesan administration in a substitutional, either-or dilemma, in which it would be forced to choose between its foundational claims and the power to speak to a changing world. But other authors suggest that this dilemma is a false one. Indeed, George Kennedy (1999) sees metaphysical rhetoric—what he calls *philosophical rhetoric*—and Sophistic rhetoric as being equally valuable and even overlapping parts of the same rhetorical tradition. This dissertation takes a similar reading. Instead of seeing metaphysical and Sophistic rhetoric as being at odds with each other within diocesan administration, it will emphasize their playful interaction. At some moments, dioceses may need to look to metaphysical rhetoric to define and articulate rhetorical substance. At others, dioceses may need to look to the relaxed, playful nature of Sophistic rhetoric to explore their world and develop powerful and imaginative responses to it. In playing back and forth between the two, the working rhetorical theory of diocesan administration straddles permanence and change.

In his work on the rhetoric of Saint Paul, Dale Sullivan (1992) uses the notion of *kairos* to define a Christian rhetoric that bridges the gap between its metaphysical and Sophistic rhetorical concerns. *Kairos*, a term without clear translation into English, is a crucial metaphor in Western intellectual history. In Homer, *kairos* refers to a decisive, critical point of attack (Sipiora, 2002b). In ancient Greek medicine, it refers not only to the crisis point in individual illness but also to the ability to discern the appropriate response at that critical time (Eskin, 2002). In Pythagorean mysticism, it speaks to an experience that attaches the person to the deepest order of the universe—the harmony of the spheres—and the ideals of justice and harmony that lie there (Rostagni, 1922/2002; Sullivan, 1992). And in American thought, it suggests a constant search for new

beginnings and better ways of life (Thompson, 2002). For all of these understandings, *kairos* speaks to the transformation of *chronos*—the experience of linear, historical time—into a sense of momentousness. Through *kairos*, the mundane becomes transformed, the weaker challenges the stronger, decisions are made, and opportunities are seized. Most important for Christian rhetoric, however, *kairos* breaks through the mundane façade of human life to create spaces for faith.

The rhetorical tradition has recognized the importance of *kairos*, though different rhetorical thinkers have recognized different dimensions. For Sophistic rhetoric, as Poulakos (1983) notes, *kairos* reflects the discernment of the *opportune* and describes a space within that constant flux of human experience, a moment of power, purpose, and decision defined by the *appropriate* and the *possible*. But where Isocrates understands this moment to speak to a real historical situation that has to be engaged on its own terms (Sipiora, 2002a), and where Aristotle emphasizes the careful analysis of and proportionate responses to the exigencies, audiences, and constraints of the rhetorical situation (Bitzer, 1999; Sipiora, 2002b), Sophistic *kairos* is willing to move beyond the confines of the historical moment to discover new, unexpected possibilities in the endlessly shimmering play of language. The Sophistic understanding of *kairos*, as Poulakos (1984) observes, always invites the constant *possibility of possibility*.

In his study of early Christian rhetoric, Sullivan notes that *kairos*, much like Sophistic rhetoric, emphasizes the ability to discern the fullness of a particular moment that enables a rhetor to sense the proper timing for action, grasp opportunities, and offer fitting responses. Moreover, it recognizes the constant presence of impossible possibility. Within the Christian tradition, the essential *kairos* of human history—the quintessential



moment of unexpected opportunity—centers on the Incarnation of Christ, his life, death, and resurrection, and his ultimate return. In embracing the scandal of an eternal God entering the temporality of history, the *kairos* of Christian rhetoric recognizes, with the angel Gabriel, that nothing is impossible with God (Cf., Luke 1:37).

The work of Paul Tillich (1936; 1963), however, expands this Christological *kairos* to describe a broader awareness of historical challenge and the calling forth of prophetic discourse to meet that challenge. “Tillich’s proposal is that a new awareness of the time of crisis and opportunity is the key to the recovery of history as the meaningful development of what matters most in human life,” John Smith (2002) observes. “Tillich proposed to generalize this concept to apply to the interpretation of history, in which the dynamic is found in those individuals and movements that seek to identify the opportunity in some crucial juncture of history and to seize it in the form of transformatory action undertaken in the name of an ideal” (p. 55-56). Ecclesiologically, Tillich moves Christian life from a posture of constant preservation to a posture of discerning theological and rhetorical action. The Church is charged not only with maintaining Christ’s message and waiting for his return but also with responding to the world as the Kingdom of God unfolds within it.

But unlike Poulakos’s Sophists, whose aesthetic and situational use of the term doubts any understanding of permanence whatsoever, the Christian understanding of *kairos* is firmly grounded in belief in an eternal God who entered into history through the Incarnation of Christ and continues to enter into history through the actions of the Holy Spirit. The Christian conception of *kairos* recognizes that its rhetorical substance is always at some level *pneumatological*—that is, rooted in the actions of the Holy Spirit—

instead of being entirely *epistemological* or *Christological*.<sup>3</sup> The Christian rhetor surrenders to the power of the Holy Spirit much as a Sophistic rhetor surrenders to the powerful lordship of speech. But unlike Sophistic rhetoric, whose agnostic perspective acknowledges no sense of ultimate purpose or origin for the dynamic environment of rhetorical experience, Christian rhetoric emphasizes that change has a Source in truth as revealed in Christ. The *changeability* of human experience is paradoxically a constant reminder of an *unchangeable* attribute of God.

In a moment of change, the Christian understanding of *kairos* consequently becomes essential in helping to show how the rhetoric of diocesan administration can negotiate the conflict between metaphysical and Sophistic rhetoric. Christian *kairos* recognizes that God is indeed permanent—that God can be known and understood—but simultaneously welcomes change as God’s gift. It grounds itself in the beliefs and resources of traditional Christian witness but simultaneously recognizes the constant need to reframe and restate that deposit of faith in new and dynamic ways. To understand diocesan administration as grounded in *kairos* is to see it as grounded in moments of God-given grace in which the tension between permanence and change awakens challenges and opportunities. The mundane work of the rhetoric of diocesan administration becomes an exciting, faith-filled embrace of both the past and the possible.

2.2.2 *The past and the possible in diocesan rhetoric.* For many rhetorical scholars, the emphasis is often on the individual rhetor’s competence in meeting the needs of the historical situation. Rhetorical competence is in many ways understood to be *individual competence*. The experience of rhetoric in Catholic life, however, is

---

<sup>3</sup> Cardinal Walter Kasper (2006) describes the need for similar grounding for ecumenical discourse, in which Christological demands for unity and clarification of doctrinal errors among Christian groups is replaced by the Spirit-led discernment of opportunities for shared action.

different than secular or even other Christian contexts because it takes place within the experience of an institution whose corporate life transcends the life of the individual rhetor. Rhetorical competence is not merely *individual competence* but is also *corporate competence*. The success of individual rhetors is in many ways connected to and situated in the success of the Church as a whole. No matter how eloquently a rhetor speaks, the rhetor will fail if the Church fails, and no matter how ill-spoken a rhetor is, the rhetor will succeed if the Church succeeds. This guiding assumption constantly challenges Catholic rhetors to reframe and reassess their understanding of and expectations for their communicative labor. “If priests today so often feel overworked, tired and frustrated,” Pope Benedict XVI (1991/1996) reminds us, “the blame lies with a strained pursuit of results” (p. 129). This does not mean that Catholic rhetoric believes that results are bad or that Christians should embrace lassitude and failure. Rather, it recognizes that too much emphasis on individual rhetorical success and individual rhetorical effort can lead one to cynicism and perhaps even despair.

James Farrell (2004) writes of learning precisely this lesson while working with others in his diocese to address the challenge of the clergy sexual abuse scandal. “In a moment of impatience,” he observes, “I lamented that our efforts could ultimately prove fruitless” (p. 500). A friend, however, corrected him. Failure, he said, is impossible. “This may not accomplish our immediate goal,” his friend said. “But we know it is for some good purpose, and it may be that two or three hundred years from now, in some other place, this document could inspire a lay person to call his own bishop back to holiness at a time appointed by God for another purpose we don’t understand” (p. 500). For Farrell, Catholic rhetoric always takes place within the humbling scope of eternity.

“Even when I disagree with a particular conclusion as taught by the Church, I pause before arrogantly assuming that my private understanding is superior to that of the collective wisdom of theologians, the pope and bishops, and the lay faithful throughout the centuries,” he writes. “I am ready to suspend or yield my individual opinion in favor of a conclusion that carries the force of authoritative teaching founded on two millennia of intellectual effort and moral reasoning” (p. 507). Catholic rhetoric is always aware that it participates in a history and is responsible for sustaining a tradition broader than the actions of any individual person. This sense of tradition within the Catholic context is seen as grounding Catholic rhetoric within what could be called a *dance of historicity* that allows constraint and possibility, the individual and the corporate, and the past and the future to present themselves in relation to each other. This dance of historicity allows for experiences of *kairos* to appear.

The kairotic dance of historicity manifests itself in two important ways in the rhetoric of diocesan administration. One of the most important manifestations occurs in what rhetoric describes as the relationship between *permanence* and *change*. Rhetoric steps into the friction that people experience between what they take to be unchanging—a diocese’s understanding of its Catholic mission and identity, for instance—and the vicissitudes of time that both demand new forms of action and call those absolutes into question. A second important manifestation of rhetoric lies in the practical sorts of “stock discourses”—what rhetorical scholars call *rhetorical commonplaces* or *topoi*—that shape the administrative life of Catholic dioceses. This dissertation will treat both of these issues in turn as contributing to a broader rhetorical praxis in diocesan life.

## 2.3 Diocesan Administration as a Nexus of Permanence and Change

As Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) have shown, human societies have always contended with the problem of maintaining the plausibility of their particular constructions of reality against the vicissitudes of history. This challenge speaks to an idea at the core of rhetorical theory: the dynamic of permanence and change. As George Cheney (1991) notes, negotiating the tensions between permanence and change—a challenge often understood in terms of defining and maintaining a productive sense of mission in a changing marketplace—is an essential part of the rhetorical practice of all organizations. For religious organizations charged with preserving and embodying a particular tradition, this task is particularly important and challenging. In the postmodern moment, Christians of all traditions are invited to come to grips with a quickly changing world while maintaining the core of their faith identity. The rhetoric of diocesan administration, as a unique and complex manifestation of Christian ecclesiastical rhetoric, finds its roots in neither the comfort of unquestioned permanence nor the flux of constant change. Rather, its life is always a unity of contraries that mediates the tensions and shared concerns of the Christian and rhetorical traditions.

From a rhetorical perspective, Christian denominational organizations can be seen as nexuses of permanence and change, creating structures where emerging concerns can intersect traditional beliefs and where innovations and challenges can be evaluated and possibly incorporated into Christian life. Indeed, David Roozen (2005) sees denominations as guardians of a corporate sense of Christian identity and tradition, and James Nieman (2005) emphasizes the importance of denominational hierarchies in mediating and addressing challenges to the corporate witness of faith. Catholicism,

autocephalous Orthodox Churches, and the various Protestant communions understand these institutional arrangements—called “polities”—and the organizational structures they create in diverse ways. Though it recognizes that the administrative structures of all Christian traditions reflect careful consideration of Scripture, tradition, and prayerful discernment, a rhetorical perspective sees these structures as embodying unique organizational responses to the problem of maintaining a fabric of belief in an ever-changing world. Each institutional arrangement, embodying its own set of strengths and weaknesses, enables certain rhetorical responses while disabling others.

Presbyterian scholars Joan Gray and Joyce Tucker (1990) remark that American Protestant administrative structures fall into three broad categories—congregational, presbyteral, and episcopal—with several variations. In meeting the challenge of permanence and change, Protestant polities and the denominational organizations they create are concerned with preserving the integrity of individual conscience and equality among believers, and they often embrace, to varying degrees, democratic and civic republican principles. These structures enable rhetorical flexibility in meeting the pastoral needs of a changing world. Yet, as the works of Roosen and of Neiman suggest, such flexibility also makes the permanence of denominational identity difficult to maintain in the postmodern context. Henry Borchardt’s (1983) research on waves of congregational disassociation in mainline Presbyterianism—which he sees as recurring in 25-year cycles—and Mary Lou Steed’s (1986) research on schisms in the Episcopalian Church (U.S.A.) suggest that institutional permanence is an abiding rhetorical concern. Organizational structures—regional and national associations, presbyteries and general assemblies, synods and dioceses—are constantly concerned with maintaining corporate

identity and continuity within an American culture that privileges individual freedom of association, conscience, and dissent. Protestant denominations, while better able to embrace change, devote increased rhetorical effort to maintaining their sense of institutional permanence.

Roman Catholicism has an episcopal structure centralized around the diocesan bishop. Unlike many Protestants with episcopacies who use elections or procedural means to limit episcopal power, Catholic bishops are appointed directly by the pope and exercise a much higher degree of power and authority. As *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church adopted by the Second Vatican Council (1999b), states:

Each [bishop], as a member of the episcopal college and legitimate successor of the apostles, is obliged by Christ's institution and command to be solicitous for the whole Church, and this solicitude, though it is not exercised by an act of jurisdiction, contributes greatly to the advantage of the universal Church. For it is the duty of all bishops to promote and to safeguard the unity of faith and the discipline common to the whole Church, to instruct the faithful to love for the whole mystical body of Christ, especially for its poor and sorrowing members and for those who are suffering persecution for justice's sake, and finally to promote every activity that is of interest to the whole Church, especially that the faith may take increase and the light of full truth appear to all men [and women]. (sec. 23)

The picture is one of omni-competence. The bishop is the diocese's head theologian, chief apologist, protector of the oppressed, promoter of justice, ambassador in ecumenical and interreligious affairs, and connector to the universal Church. Every aspect of the Church in his area—from womb to tomb—is under his purview. The diocesan Church is wherever the bishop is and, within theological and canonical norms, whatever the bishop wants it to be.

Yet, as Reese observes several times, the bishop's power is neither capricious nor absolute but constantly bound by the apostolic tradition he represents. According to Catholic tradition, the Church begins with Saint Peter's impulsive exclamation recorded

in the Gospel of Saint Matthew: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Christ responds: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt 16:16, 18-19, Revised Standard Version). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1997) teaches that at this moment, with the gift of the “Keys of the Kingdom,” Peter took on a unique role of prominence among the apostles, and the Church was invested with “the authority to absolve sins, to pronounce doctrinal judgments, and authority to make disciplinary decisions in the Church” (sec. 553). The Church also believes that in singling out Peter, Christ established the episcopacy as well. *Lumen Gentium* (Second Vatican Council, 1999b) speaks of the sense of “divine mission” that the Church believes it acquired through this gift of faith and will continue to possess “until the end of the world” through the apostolic succession of bishops who can trace their lineage to Peter and Christ himself (sec. 20). Within Catholicism, episcopal structure and the tradition of faith are consequently intertwined. To accept one is to accept the other.

Episcopal structure is so important within the Catholic context because the corporate expression of faith is intrinsic to Catholicism, and the episcopacy performs a particularly important role in this expression. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that where Protestants often understand the opening words of *The Apostles’ Creed*—“I believe”—as coming from the mouths of individual believers, Catholicism understands those words as an affirmation of corporate and not individual witness. The “I,” from the Catholic perspective, is always a “We” (sec. 167). Within this framework,



the episcopacy becomes the guardian and interpreter of the faith in a constantly changing world, and diocesan administration, as extensions of the bishop's person, is the organizational embodiment of this theological grounding.

Catholicism's uniquely powerful and omni-competent episcopacy requires a correspondingly complex administrative structure. As Robert Szafran (1976) has found, American Catholic dioceses are highly centralized, making what happens in a diocesan administration important not only to the daily lives of Catholics but also for everyone its ministry touches. Reese details a long list of responsibilities of the typical archbishop or bishop and, consequently, the archdiocesan or diocesan administration that works with him. American dioceses—the average size of which was a little more than 335,000 Catholics in 2000 (Froehle and Gautier, 2000)—not only meet the sacramental and pastoral needs of their people through the appointment of clergy, the establishment of parishes, and the regulation of liturgical and pastoral life, but they also operate school systems that often rival metropolitan school systems in size and achievement; provide for a net of social services that can rival government programs in scope; offer consulting and programmatic expertise to parishes, schools, and Catholic organizations; oversee the mission and identity of Catholic institutions, from hospitals to universities, that are vital regional assets; and provide moral and spiritual leadership in civic life, particularly in areas with large Catholic populations.

As a result, the average Catholic diocese does not fit into Peter Mills and Newton Margulies' (1980) three-tier typology of service organizations. Because it is deeply involved in the long-term spiritual and personal well-being of people through pastoral ministry and educational services, a diocese could be considered what Mills and

Margulies call a “personal-interactive” service organization. But the demands of the postindustrial marketplace have required dioceses to be what Mills and Margulies call “maintenance-interactive”—through providing specific services, such as insurance claims, parish payroll services, and pensions, to thousands of persons—as well as “task-interactive”—through consulting services and resources to meet the needs of parishes, schools, and organizations. A Catholic diocese, then, is actually many non-profit organizations at once, directed to a whole host of different constituencies and responsible for meeting the needs of hundreds of thousands and even millions of people.

Amidst all of the practical considerations of diocesan ministry, however, two concerns are paramount. The diocesan bishop’s deepest interest lies in the parishes where the people of his diocese receive the sacraments, pastoral care, and often social and educational services as well. Under canon law, parishes are understood to be *juridic persons*, separate corporations within the diocesan region with their own rights and obligations, including the right to manage their own finances and own their own property (Gauthier, 1991). Reese notes that parishes are complex organizations in their own right, often serving much larger numbers of parishioners than Protestant congregations, owning multiple buildings, and operating complex and expensive ministries like schools. As a result, parishes can run into difficulties—financial and otherwise—fairly easily. Parishes in financial distress present significant problems, since dioceses often depend on payments from parishes to meet their own financial obligations and parishes facing significant shortfalls can drain diocesan resources, not only in terms of financial bailouts or loans but also in terms of staff support. Because a diocese’s health is intimately related to the health of its parishes, diocesan bishops are also faced with sometimes

difficult and often controversial decisions about whether parishes and parish schools should be closed or merged with others.

Reese also observes that relations between a bishop and his priests are always an important and delicate matter. Unlike priests ordained by religious orders, who make vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience to their religious superior, *diocesan priests*—priests ordained by the diocesan bishop for ministry within the diocesan territory—are obedient to the diocesan bishop himself. This means that diocesan priests are to do what their bishop tells them to do for as long as they are active in his diocese, and they are to ask permission before undertaking tasks that would interfere with their designated responsibilities or would take them outside of the diocesan territory. In return, however, diocesan bishops also make an implicit promise to their clergy not to abuse this authority by treating them with respect and ensuring them of a certain standard of living. If his priests believe that they are being pushed too far or are not being given the respect they deserve, they will scuttle even essential programs through their apathy or inaction. As Eugene Fama and Michael Jensen (1983) have suggested, this complexity has historically made for a delicate and often problematic relationship. As priestly numbers decline and the stress placed on priests in meeting even basic pastoral needs increases (Schoenherr and Young, 1993), the relationship between bishops and their clerical ranks can become more difficult.

The organizational role of a Catholic bishop and his diocesan structure is in many ways as complex as his theological role, and perhaps more so. Theologically, the bishop's pastoral role emphasizes the offices of teaching, sacramental worship, and pastoral governance. He is the diocese's chief priest and therefore a model of doctrine,

liturgy, and pastoral ministry. Scholars of the episcopacy and of Catholic ecclesiology have produced centuries of important and nuanced work on these theological distinctions that create an idealized picture of what diocesan administration should be. This debate forms much of the background of American diocesan administration, and its questions about the proper function of the episcopacy, the role of laity and particularly women in episcopal governance, the role democracy might play in the Church, the formation of doctrine, and the historical development of the diocesan structure are important ones (see, for instance, Fraser, 2002; Hoose, 2002; Lash, 2002; Lawrence, 2002). As it emphasizes the practical dimensions and roles of diocesan ministry, this dissertation acknowledges this theological debate.

Yet, the diocesan bishop fulfills other roles. In recognizing and describing the pragmatic realities of diocesan ministry, this dissertation looks toward Reese's (1989) work to describe the *managerial*, and not merely *theological*, competencies necessary for episcopal and diocesan ministry. A bishop, for instance, should be a skilled *financial manager*, overseeing not only the aggregate finances of the diocese but also monitoring the fiscal health of individual parishes, schools, and organizations under his watch. He should be a skilled *communication manager*, appreciating the dimensions of contemporary communication theory and rhetorical skill in marketing programs, raising money, and furthering the diocese's political and cultural interests in the broader community. He should be a skilled *crisis manager*, meeting the various problems and scandals that can emerge in diocesan life forthrightly, quickly, and effectively. He should be a skilled *personnel manager*, developing the human resources not only of his clergy—who report to him directly—but also of the lay staff who work throughout the diocesan

organization. Finally, he should also be a skilled *manager of mission and identity*, articulating and stewarding a consistent understanding of the diocese's mission in the contexts of the local, national, and international Church. Bishops—if they hope to be successful—fulfill their episcopal responsibilities through a rhetorical competence capable of engaging the changing world around them. Their episcopal ministry is defined by their ability to understand the evidentiary potential of financial data, the practical and integrated discourses of public communication, the swiftly changing realities of crisis communication, the challenges of organizational rhetoric and growth, and the importance of articulating visions and inviting persons to identify with them. *In others words, diocesan bishops are rhetorical figures as well as theological ones.*

As *Lumen Gentium* states, bishops are called first and foremost “to promote and to safeguard the unity of faith” (Second Vatican Council, 1999b, sec. 23). Their rhetoric is constantly biased toward a conservative, substantive, metaphysical posture. As a result, their rhetoric is consequently always biased toward permanence and continuity. But while this posture may avoid the difficulties of Protestant communions that constantly contend with maintaining their sense of permanence in a changing world, such deliberate guardedness may lead bishops and their dioceses to cultivate defensiveness and silence, preferring to pass up the opportunities that a changing world presents. *Such a posture is the essence of logophobia, and in a postmodern moment in which change constantly requires rhetorical engagement and responsiveness, it can be deadly.* As a result, the rhetoric of diocesan administration is always faced with the challenge of discerning and grasping opportunities before they vanish while maintaining a sense of continuity with their traditional ground. The struggle of permanence and change calls

forth rhetorical challenges and opportunities on a daily basis, challenges that are manifested in the distinctive *topoi* that constitute diocesan life.

## 2.4 The *Topoi* of Diocesan Administration

The rhetorical life of diocesan administration is complex and varied. Yet, as in any organization, its complex array of rhetorical activities falls into regular patterns that form the backbone of its communicative labor. The rhetorical tradition, beginning with Aristotle (trans. 1984), understands these *rhetorical commonplaces* through the notion of *topoi*. Though some *topoi* are common to all of human experience, others may be more specific to different groups, arising from shared concerns or common histories. In the *topoi* of diocesan administration lie the agendas of pastoral planning meetings, the subjects of conversations in offices and hallways, and the concerns that keep diocesan workers awake at night. And while individual dioceses with different histories and contexts may treat each of them differently, these stock discourses prompt questions that every diocesan administration answers. This dissertation will emphasize three important *topoi* as paradigmatic of the rhetoric of diocesan administration: the *topos of evangelization*, the *topos of cooperation*, and the *topos of decision*.

*2.4.1 The topos of evangelization.* The last verses of the Gospel of Matthew bring forth a challenge to all Christians to “make disciples of all nations” (28:19 Revised Standard Version), a challenge with profound rhetorical implications for the Church. With these words “preaching is made a fundamental responsibility of the followers of Christ, in all places, and at all times, to the end of time,” James Murphy (1974) notes. “Christ’s command . . . pointed toward an infinite goal that envisioned enormous, continuing rhetorical effort on a world-wide basis” (p. 274). This command, he remarks,

is unprecedented in Western intellectual history. The Roman and Greek intellectual elite felt no inclination to share their knowledge with those of lower social standing, and the Jewish people, while more egalitarian in their approach to learning, restricted their faith to their own nation. But for the Church, spreading the Gospel to all people at all times—evangelizing all nations—is an article of faith. As a result, the defining feature of the rhetoric of diocesan administration lies in the *topos of evangelization*.

To describe the rhetorical project of diocesan administration as essentially “evangelical” is not reductive. Dulles (1988) reminds us of the need “to distinguish the Catholic understanding of evangelization, which includes personal transformation and the regeneration of society, from the narrower concept of evangelization as the mere call to put one’s trust in Christ as Savior” (p. 124). Evangelization from a Catholic perspective is more than increasing membership rolls. It presents opportunities to motivate and challenge Christians to ministry and holiness, defend the faith, promote social justice, welcome people into the Church’s liturgical life, and strengthen the broader understanding of the Church’s purpose and mission. The most widely acknowledged part of the ministry of Christian communication by Catholic communication scholars (see, for instance, Boomershine, 2001; Plude, 2001; Tilley and Zukowski, 2001; White, 2001), it creates, expands, and strengthens the foundational texture of beliefs and practices upon which the rest of Christian ministry depends. How dioceses address the question of evangelization is an essential part of their administrative life.

In an increasingly secular, post-Christian American society, the *topos* of evangelization takes on complex dimensions. As they reach out to those who have never heard the Christian message or Catholics who have fallen away from sacramental

practice, diocesan administrations have also come to find increasing ignorance of, apathy toward, and even antipathy to the Christian faith in places where steadfast adherence could once be assumed. For many dioceses who believed that their work of evangelization was finished decades ago and had adopted a what Robert Rivers (2005) describes as a *maintenance* approach to ministry, the lessons of postmodern, postindustrial American society have been harsh ones. In a historical moment where Catholic orthodoxy and orthopraxy in American culture is under challenge from any number of directions, the late Pope John Paul II's (1990) call in *Redemptoris Missio* for a "new evangelization" to reawaken and strengthen the Catholic faithful in preparation for the third millennium of Christian life takes on a new sense of urgency (sec. 3). Regardless of what evangelical strategy it pursues, the rhetoric of diocesan administration finds that evangelization is a *topos* that it can no longer ignore. In such a moment, Rivers contends, the rhetoric of diocesan administration is invited to move from a posture of *maintenance* to a posture of *mission*.

When understood in its most expansive sense, the rhetoric of evangelization in diocesan administration serves a purpose similar to what Peter Drucker (1990) accords to marketing in *Managing the Nonprofit Organization*. Just as marketing constantly labors to bring an organization's mission to more and more people, evangelizing rhetoric constantly seeks to expand the Church's communicative reach, strengthen its sense of purpose and mission, encourage liturgical and spiritual revitalization, and inspire people to join its cause. And in the moment of postmodern new evangelization, the *topos* of evangelization embraces not only those outside the Church but also those within it.



2.4.2 *The topos of cooperation.* The *topos* of evangelization is extraordinarily important. Yet, the institutional complexity of diocesan administration engenders other *topoi* as well. When considering these opportunities, Gerard Hauser's (1999) definition of rhetoric as "the symbolic inducement of social cooperation" seems particularly helpful (p. 14). Hauser argues that in Athenian Greece, where rhetoric first took root, deliberation alone was a priority because social cooperation could be assumed. However, he continues, as the rise of Christianity broke social life into separate Christian and secular spheres, finding ways to secure social cooperation became vital. As a result, Hauser's work suggests that Christian rhetoric has always had to meet a set of rhetorical concerns altogether different than those posed by evangelization, concerns that could fall under the heading of the *topos of cooperation*.

This dissertation chooses the metaphor *cooperation* because it reflects not only Hauser's language but also the language of the Second Vatican Council (1999b). In *Lumen Gentium*, the Council describes the relationships within a diocesan Church in terms of the mutual cooperation between bishops on the one hand and the clergy, religious, and laity of their dioceses on the other. "Let [the bishop] not refuse to listen to his subjects, whom he cherishes as his true sons [and daughters] and exhorts to *cooperate* readily with him," it says (sec. 27, emphasis added). "Their pastors know how much the laity contribute to the welfare of the entire Church," it says a little later. "They also know that they were not ordained by Christ to take upon themselves alone the entire salvific mission of the Church toward the world. On the contrary they understand that it is their noble duty to shepherd the faithful and to recognize their ministries and charisms, so that all according to their proper roles may *cooperate* in this common undertaking with one

mind” (sec. 30, emphasis added). These are complex and far-reaching passages. Yet, in opening the door to what was at the time an unprecedented level of cooperation in the Catholic Church, *Lumen Gentium* understands the relationship of clergy and laity in the context of carefully framed and complex distinctions between the ordinary priesthood of all believers and the ministerial priesthood of bishops, priests, and deacons. In cooperating with the Church, persons participate in a tradition that predates and survives them and that constantly calls them to account.

The *topos* of cooperation seeks to understand what participation in the Church’s ecclesiastical life entails. George Cheney’s (1991) work on the development and implementation of the United States Catholic Bishops’ controversial 1983 anti-nuclear statement *The Challenge of Peace* demonstrates the complexity of this discourse. Cheney remarks that the Church is not a monolithic, simple organizational structure as many observers often think but “an organization of organizations” that defies simple description (p. 35). Hierarchies intersect with hierarchies and institutions with institutions, engendering complex networks of organizational relationships and meanings. Correspondingly, Cheney is interested in the ways Catholics used rhetoric during the development and implementation of the bishops’ pastoral to negotiate several complex relationships: Catholicism as a whole to the rest of the world, the Church to the United States’ non-Catholic population, the Church in America to the Church universal, the issue of nuclear arms to other issues like abortion that are part of the Church’s political and pastoral agenda, and the various groups within the Church to each other.

In some ways, the complexity of the relationships that Cheney observes within the Church is similar to what Daniel Bell (1973) witnesses in postindustrial society, in which

the *situses* of scientific, technological, governmental, educational, and cultural bureaucracies combine in complex, often conflicting ways. The *topos* of cooperation is a careful project of institutional interpretation and authoritative exegesis, relying on the Church's two millennia of problem solving and a rich reservoir of textual resources. Canon law, which outlines the rights and obligations of persons and entities within the Church, and other official documents, such as papal encyclicals and the documents of the Second Vatican Council, allow for what the Church can assume to be a common language and hermeneutic in approaching situations of ambiguity. Through this common effort, the rhetoric of diocesan administration makes sense of the Church's competing discourses, manages information, and offers interpretations that shape institutional relationships in a complex and changing pastoral context.

Yet, in the moment of postmodernity, this centralized discipline of discovering and preserving common interpretations and hermeneutical references as a basis for identification and organization is increasingly incomplete. Hauser has emphasized the importance of the public discourse of ordinary persons, what he describes through the metaphor of *vernacular voices*, in shaping public opinion and social action. Hauser's vision of public discourse urges diocesan administrations to remember the importance of *ordinary discourse* among parents in the parking lots of parish schools and among parishioners in small faith communities, through which the *official discourses* of the diocese—through public statements or diocesan newspapers, for instance—are interpreted and understood. Such informal discourse cannot be controlled but can only be negotiated. As C. T. Maier (2005) has observed, often the best that organizational decision makers can do is to find ways to negotiate it by being *open, attentive, and*

*responsive* to the vernacular voices in their midst. Here, the *topos* of cooperation recognizes that a diocese's most important priority lies not in delivering "the facts" but in ensuring that it understands the vernacular discourses in which it is situated and can interact productively with them.

2.4.3 *The topos of decision.* The interpretive work of diocesan administration lays the foundation for the work of ministry in parishes, schools, and other Catholic institutions within a diocese's boundaries. Exercising ministerial leadership over a domain of such breadth and complexity, however, also requires difficult choices, exposing the rhetoric of diocesan administration to a third area of common concern: the *topos of decision*.

In a formal sense, decision-making discourse within diocesan structures always focuses on the bishop. As Kenneth Pennington (2002) remarks, the notions of bishop and of diocese arose alongside and in some areas anticipated the rise of the prince during the Middle Ages, and the two forms of governance influenced each other profoundly. Even today, when the princes of Europe have long since ceded their authority to constitutional democracies, the bishop still retains the executive, legislative, and judicial functions found in his medieval role. As ecclesiastical rulers with canonical standing and spiritual authority, individual bishops are largely independent from each other and from the general public. Only the pope, whom they report to once every five years, is their direct superior. Even in issues of grave concern, in which the general public may voice strong disagreement about a bishop's policies or official actions, the opinions of individual laity are, canonically speaking, largely irrelevant.

From the perspective of liberal students of administration in the Catholic Church, such monarchical power is deeply disturbing (see Bane, 2004; Cahill, 2004; Drane, 1969; Nichols, 2004; Pope, 2004). Nevertheless, Reese (1989) notes that while the diocesan bishop possesses significant power, his reach is not unlimited. Thomas Green (1992), one of the foremost authorities on the canonical aspects of diocesan administration, notes that even though the bishop is always the final decision maker, he does not legislate by whim, nor does he rely solely on his own counsel. In meeting the pastoral needs of his diocese, the bishop always creates a team of clergy, religious, and laity to assist him. Canon law also includes various advisory bodies of clergy, religious, laity, some of which are required and some of which are left to the bishop's discretion. These persons working with the bishop form the various offices and deliberative bodies within the diocesan administrative structure, and the quality of their discourse—their ability to gather information, their freedom to share contradictory opinions, and so on—determines the quality of the decisions a bishop makes. The *topos* of decision includes the concerns of administrative discourse and the development and facilitation of deliberative processes embedded in the rhetorical texture of the Church.

In the moment of postmodernity, deliberative processes are undergoing additional scrutiny. In *Transforming Communication, Transforming Business*, Stanley Deetz (1995) contends that the ability of an institution to incorporate stakeholders into decision-making is essential to negotiating and surviving the twenty-first century. Though Deetz's commitment to the modernist ideals of unrestricted democracy and undistorted communication puts him outside of this dissertation's constructive hermeneutic, he reminds us of the challenges faced by diocesan administration in moments of decision.

The decisions a bishop and his staff make as to what discourse will be allowed and the procedures through which information will be received are rhetorical questions that can have important consequences for a diocese's pastoral effectiveness.

Within the context of diocesan administration, the *topos* of decision, alongside the *topoi* of evangelization and cooperation, is a humble work in the vineyard. Often, these rhetorical labors are so embedded in the warp and woof of administrative life that they pass by invisibly in the everyday organizational experience of diocesan newspapers, public relations personnel, media communicators, and leadership. Nevertheless, the rhetoric of diocesan administration, grounded in strong convictions and faith in possibilities of the moment, can find in these humble *topoi* the experience of *kairos*. Regardless of how much a diocese knows about its theology and its publics, these experiences of *kairos* open opportunities not only to act but to grow and to discover. The rhetoric of diocesan administration is thus not only a space of rhetorical action but also potentially a site of considerable learning.

## 2.5 Learning from the Rhetoric of Diocesan Administration

The United States' 177 Roman Catholic dioceses oversee the daily life of America's largest Christian denomination. Yet, as Thomas Reese (1989) noted in his in-depth study of America's 31 Roman Catholic archdioceses, these diocesan structures have largely been neglected in the literature of organizational studies. This absence is even more pronounced in the area of communication and rhetoric.

What accounts for this absence? What does it mean? Secular organizational scholars, of course, did come rather late to the question of religious organizations. When he was writing his dissertation in the early 1980s, for instance, Scott Safranski (1985)

apparently found that he had to take great pains to argue for the importance of religious organizations to political and cultural life before he could begin his resource analysis of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. But in the years since, Mark Chaves (2002) notes, research on congregational dynamics and religious non-profits has become more common, particularly in light of the debate over government funding of religious social service organizations. In addition, scholars interested in the organizational life of the Church have much to draw from. For millennia, theologians and canon lawyers have written brilliantly on the Church and its organizational principles, and since Max Weber (1922/1947), Christianity and the Catholic Church as a branch of Christianity have long been the subjects of social scientific inquiry.

And yet, while they may admit that a significant part of the Church's effectiveness and longevity can be attributed to its organizational structure, many organizational scholars seem to sidestep the issue of diocesan administration as a unique and significant form of organization. As Peter Drucker (2006), for instance, writes in *The Practice of Management*: "There is only one level of authority and responsibility between the Pope and the lowliest parish priest: the Bishop" (p. 204). In a broad sense, Drucker's observation is correct, and it also reflects many aspects of canon law, which places the responsibility for diocesan ministry solely within a bishop's hands. But Drucker's observation neglects the fact that any diocesan organization, in practice, is always more than its bishop. There are too many demands, too many projects, and too many conflicts for a single person to negotiate. By necessity, a bishop creates a structure to help him, and this structure is essential to the success of the Church within the diocesan region.

This dissertation treats the absence of substantial organizational scholarship on Catholic dioceses not as a negative—a place of ignorance or malign neglect—but as an invitation for study. The following quote, which comes from a newspaper profile of Cardinal Edward M. Egan of the Archdiocese of New York, hints at the opportunities this invitation could hold:

He has shuttered half-empty churches, faced down disgruntled parishioners and retired an unsightly \$20 million deficit, all in the name of putting the Archdiocese of New York on sturdy fiscal legs.

So the question for Cardinal Edward M. Egan arises: Will this white-haired prince of the Roman Catholic Church follow the lead of other large dioceses and release the archdiocese's financial reports to the public?

Cardinal Egan considers the idea for a second or two, and offers a smile more suggestive of steel than humor. Wall Street titans sit on his finance council and study his ledgers. The cardinal sees no point in public inspection.

"I am transparent to the best possible people," he said in a rare interview in his 20th floor office on First Avenue in Manhattan. "So when you say, 'We don't know,' well, my 'we' knows." (Powell, 2007, p. A1)

The passage's tone, of course, is far from optimistic. It begins with images of decline and ends with a statement that many could take as arrogant. Nevertheless, as they point to the rhetorical challenges currently surrounding diocesan administration, these four brief paragraphs also open opportunities for research that can benefit scholars of rhetoric and organization, diocesan administrations, and American Catholicism as a whole.

*2.5.1 Lessons for scholars.* The first line of the quote, which mentions Cardinal Egan's parish reorganization plan, reminds us of the controversy that now constantly surrounds Catholicism, particularly in the wake of the sexual abuse scandal. Many scholars, particularly those who operate from a critical-cultural perspective, could view these upheavals through the lens of what Jürgen Habermas (1973/1975) calls "legitimation crisis," in which an institution's publics no longer recognize its claims to authority.



Indeed, the Church does face significant problems of legitimation in an increasingly secular society. The Catholic Church is one of the few institutions in contemporary culture that still relies heavily on what Weber (1922/1947), in his *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, refers to as “charismatic authority.” Though this authority—which the Church understands as the power to teach (*munus docendi*), rule (*munus regendi*), and sanctify (*munus sanctificandi*)—still retains some of its mysterious aura, such appeals to legitimacy are now often suspect. To be legitimate in today’s society, as Habermas’s work suggests, an institution is expected to be open to constant public scrutiny, challenge, and “reform.” To resist calls for public accountability—which the cardinal apparently was attempting to do in the conflict over the archdiocese’s financial data—invites the sort of condemnation that many who have been steeped in the mindset of critical-cultural communication could consider to be justly deserved.

Rhetorical scholars influenced by such presuppositions might feel themselves justified in neglecting diocesan administration as either grossly problematic or simply uninteresting. Why, after all, would one want to study what J. Michael Hogan (1989) disparagingly calls a “traditionally glacial church” (p. 411) so obviously unresponsive to individual needs? The sole purpose of such research would be to find ways to unmask and dethrone the “glacial” bureaucracy. This is precisely Hogan’s attempt in his examination of the drafting of the United States bishops’ controversial 1983 pastoral letter *The Challenge of Peace*, which he describes as a successful effort on the part of the American episcopacy to marginalize and silence Pax Christi, a pacifist group of the Catholic Left. (Interestingly, George Cheney [1991] views the same process in a far

more positive light.) Since the sexual abuse scandal, such scholarship seems even more justified.

Diocesan administration is not, nor will it ever be, a democratic process. Those looking for a Greek *polis* or well established traditions of open deliberation within diocesan structures will most likely be sorely disappointed. However, this does not mean that Catholic dioceses are intrinsically evil. Reese's (1989) work is important in reminding us that despite what the popular perception may be, and that despite the fact that bishops and their dioceses—like secular organizations—vary in style and competence, diocesan administrations always take their charge seriously and attempt to exercise their authority with as much care, prudence, and Christian charity as possible. While it remains a sort of ecclesiastical dictatorship, diocesan administration is intended, at least in principle, to be a benevolent one. This dissertation will not say that diocesan administration is perfect or that it is the only effective mode of ecclesiastical organization. As with any significant institution, diocesan administration does not operate perfectly, and it never will. Nevertheless, this dissertation—as a constructive, invitational effort—chooses to recognize the strengths and opportunities that diocesan administration as an organizational arrangement offers religious life instead of dwelling on its weaknesses.

One can react to the negativity represented by Hogan's scholarship by mounting a vigorous (and perhaps equally negative) apologetic. But this dissertation recognizes that to react in such a way distracts us from wondering about how rhetoric is actually occurring within diocesan administration. The Church's non-democratic tradition does not mean that rhetorical concerns are unimportant to it or non-existent within its

administrative structure. It merely invites us to look harder and ask questions that do not come from the biases of critical democratic theory. If we could be successful, we would have happened upon a tremendous scholarly opportunity, in which we could observe the discursive life of a living institution with ancient roots. In a moment of change, scholars could access the institutional memory of an organization that has stood the test of time.

*2.5.2 Lessons for diocesan administrations.* Scholars are not the only ones who may find vital opportunities in the study of diocesan organization. In the profile quoted above, several key phrases describing Cardinal Egan leap out at the reader: A “white-haired prince” who consorts with “Wall Street titans,” he sits in “his 20th floor office” wearing “a smile more suggestive of steel than humor.” The description emphasizes distance, monarchical privilege, and elitism. Moreover, the reader is reminded that the interview is a rarity, an exclusive glimpse into the life of a prince of the Church who, apparently, looks down upon his domain but never deigns to touch it. This description may not be accurate in the case of Cardinal Egan, but it illustrates a problematic sense of distance and aloofness that often pervades diocesan administration.

Consequently, there is potentially another reason why research on diocesan administration is so rare. Unfortunately, it may be that dioceses themselves resist scholarly attention as intrusive or even theologically problematic. For example, even though they had gained the permission of the diocesan bishop to undertake their research, and even though they argued that their intent was only to assist priests in their ministry, Owen Hargie and Mark Lount’s (2000) communication audit of priests in an Irish diocese—one of the few studies of diocesan administration in the communication literature—encountered resistance among many priests who believed that the study

intruded on the privacy of the Church and threatened to treat the priesthood as if it were just another secular occupation.

The resistance Hargie and Lount discovered is often described as *clericalism*, the belief that the uniqueness of the priesthood and episcopacy entails not only deference and respect but also a separate standard of conduct that necessarily sets clergy above the purview of the laity. While Catholic theology does differentiate between clergy and laity, clericalism represents an extreme interpretation of this distinction, in which the prerogatives and privileges of episcopal and priestly power can become ends unto themselves. In its more productive forms, clericalism represents a stalwart defense of the Church's traditional structure. At its least, clericalism teaches clergy to be constantly wary of lay intrusion, cultivating secrecy instead of openness and hostility instead of conversation.

Catholics of goodwill may disagree as to the role that clericalism plays in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Liberals often see clericalism at every turn, while traditionalists may long for the unquestioned authority that clericalism represents. Sometimes, what is taken to be clericalist impropriety may actually be the result of poor communication, bureaucratic mistakes, or even drawn-out decision-making processes. Even so, while their causes may be unclear, "clericalist-like" responses often emerge from diocesan administrations, particularly in moments of crisis. Timothy Schilling (2003) has noted that bishops' first instinct in conflict situations is often to protect the office of the bishop by maintaining an image of fraternity, collegiality, and placidity, an impulse that sometimes encourages them and their administrations to pull away from Catholics in the pew at the very moments that their people need them the most. Likewise, C. T. Maier

(2005) has noted how even at the height of the clergy sexual abuse scandal, when the world turned to listen to a Vatican press conference with the twelve American cardinals, only two showed. On international television, as the conference proceeded at a table lined by empty chairs, the message conveyed by the cardinals' silence was devastating. One of those chairs was for Cardinal Egan.

Still, clericalism is not the only reason for diocesan resistance to organizational research. Others may object to the premise of pursuing applied organizational research in diocesan organization because it would seem to emphasize the hierarchical, business-like dimensions of the Church to an inappropriate degree. "One of the problems to date seems to be that we have developed a greater complexity of formal structural elements in the post-Vatican II Church without legitimizing the development of informal structures," James Provost (1976) writes. "If the Church is perceived as a pastor, parish council, carefully developed diocesan offices, bishop, national bureaucracy, streamlined curia or pope, it is still being perceived as an organization rather than as a living community" (p. 192-193). Any research that would help dioceses to improve their administrative performance, this argument suggests, would neglect and perhaps even threaten what is understood to be the Church's fundamentally communitarian character.

Finally, many prelates and clergy may reject research on diocesan administration because they doubt that outside scholars have the textured understanding of the Church that would allow them to provide information or insights compatible with the Church's tradition and unique objectives. In the case of Hargie and Lount's study, for instance, the researchers may have encountered resistance because they failed to consider the Church's unique theology of the priesthood. Priests do not fulfill a secular "job" or even a

“vocation” in a Protestant sense. Rather, by virtue of their ordination, they are understood to undergo a unique and irreversible change that indelibly marks them as being able to minister in place of Christ himself. In not taking this unique understanding of priestly ministry into account, Hargie and Lount ran the risk of offering suggestions that would either be rejected outright or largely ignored because they did not meet the distinctive and sometimes counter-cultural needs of diocesan administration.

While many of these points of resistance to scholarly examination may be legitimate, scholarly research on dioceses also holds tremendous opportunities for the American Church in the moment of postmodernity. As Reese (1989) notes, for Catholic laity and perhaps even for many Catholic clergy who work outside the administrative structure, dioceses and archdioceses can often seem distant and imposing. For non-Catholics, the internal workings of a diocese are largely incomprehensible. Scholarly inquiry may not only improve the effectiveness of Catholic dioceses, but it may also dispel the sense of mysteriousness surrounding Catholic administration that leads to misunderstandings and miscommunication. Research thus presents a profound opportunity to exhibit the openness so essential in a postmodern context.

*2.5.3 Lessons for the Catholic Church in the United States.* “I am transparent to the best possible people,” the profile quotes Cardinal Egan as saying. “So when you say, ‘We don’t know,’ well, my ‘we’ knows” (Powell, 2007, p. A1). Though his archdiocese is apparently in deep financial trouble, and its parishes and schools are struggling to survive, Cardinal Egan deflects criticism over the lack of financial transparency in the Archdiocese of New York by referring to his hand-picked group of financial advisors. The cardinal’s cryptic statement is intended to assure the people of his diocese that

everything is being handled properly through internal means and that they should trust that their interests are being served.

The cardinal's financial advisors probably are "the best possible people." But his statement also seems to invite a hermeneutic of suspicion. Unwittingly, perhaps, he has played into an ever-increasing strain of anti-institutionalism in American culture that Robert Bellah and his co-authors chronicle in *The Good Society* (1991) and *Habits of the Heart* (1996). And as Philip Jenkins (2003) notes, anti-Catholic fears of episcopal "conspiracies" have traditionally heightened this sense of suspicion in reference to American Catholicism. This sense of institutional antagonism has become a fact of life in American diocesan administration: Reese (1989) reports that Catholic archbishops and bishops are used to working in an almost uniformly negative environment. Challenges against the Church are most strident among both the Catholic Left (in publications like the *National Catholic Reporter*) and the traditionalist Catholic far-Right (in publications like *The Wanderer*), who have profoundly different ideas as to what the Church should be. Yet, despite their divergent agendas, they are similar in that both the Catholic Left and Catholic far-Right presuppose radical individualism and anti-institutionalism, and these presuppositions have significant consequences for American Catholic life and the diocesan administrations that support it.

Much of the emphasis in modern scholarship and journalism is often on the Catholic Left's conflicts with the Church. Writing a little more than a decade after the close of the Second Vatican Council seemed to promise *aggiornamento* (literally, "bringing up to date") or new openness to modern ideas, Provost (1976) advocates moving away from the hierarchical, patriarchal Church implied in diocesan organization

and a return to what many on the Left deem to be the situation of the early Church: an intimate fellowship of anarchic community. Conflicts between dissident Catholic theologians and Church authorities have also prompted theologians like Piet Fransen (1982) to attack the hierarchy as contrary to Christian faith. In these critiques—especially when Fransen uses the slogan “*semper reformanda*” (p. 49)—one often witnesses a Protestant-style rejection of diocesan administration, in which the conscience and intellect of individual believers are valorized over the corporate witness and unity of the Church.

The Catholic far-Right rebukes diocesan structures with equal scorn and venom, except, as William Dinges’s (1987) work suggests, the concerns of traditionalist Catholics often begin not with ideology but with liturgy. Protesting the innovations to the Mass in the wake of the Second Vatican Council—particularly the movement toward using vernacular languages instead of Latin—many deeply conservative Catholics have joined traditionalist communities that have received special dispensation to celebrate the Tridentine liturgy, what many of them deem the “true Mass” (p. 138). For these traditionalist Catholics, diocesan administration is to be mistrusted, not because it is authoritarian or oppressive but because it is where the “true faith” has been abandoned and betrayed. “Ironically,” Dinges writes, “a liturgical rite that served for nearly 450 years as the central act of Roman Catholic devotional piety and ritual unity was transformed in a relatively short period of time into a ritual idiom of division and disunity” (p. 139). In retreating into fundamentalist enclaves to avoid what they deem to be the baneful influence of post-Vatican II catechesis and the corruption of diocesan



administration, they are asserting through their traditionalism a remarkably modern understanding of individuality.

Between the extremes of the Catholic Left and the Catholic far-Right lies a massive, ambivalent middle. Eugene Kennedy's (1988) "Culture Two Catholics," for instance, are largely oblivious to their diocese or any sense of institutional life outside of their local parish, and their children are perhaps more so. "As Catholics have advanced in America, their bishops have receded in their consciousness," he writes. "Bishops, much like learning therapists, will achieve the beginning of wisdom when they accept the fact that most Catholics aren't thinking about them at all" (p. 23). As a psychologist and a member of the Catholic Left, Kennedy finds this mode of institutional engagement healthy, but for Bellah, such institutional neglect is both naïve and problematic. American Catholics, comfortably sequestered in their parochial understanding of the Church, are never as far away from diocesan administrations as they think. In moments of transition—when a pastor needs to be reassigned to cover needs elsewhere in the diocese, or when a school or church building needs to be closed—the diocese's involvement bursts this comfortable bubble, rudely awakening the parish to its larger institutional reality and prompting confusion, cynicism, anger, and frustration.

In a time characterized by sharp rejections of diocesan administration, scholarship on Catholic dioceses presents the Catholic faithful with opportunities to recognize and attend to a vital but often misunderstood presence in their lives. Throughout *The Good Society* (1991), Bellah and his co-authors remind an increasingly individualistic and cynical American public that "we live through institutions" (p. 3). They contend that far from being a hindrance to human life, institutions provide webs of "socially enacted

metaphors” that both ground persons’ public and private lives within a shared moral vocabulary and invite persons of all walks of life to engage “in a conversation that matters” (pp. 10-12). Consequently, they invite Americans not to flee but to reframe their experience of institutional life in ways that are humanly sustainable and generative. In assisting in this task, research on diocesan structures holds opportunities not only for academic or professional communities but also for American Catholics and American culture as a whole.

## 2.6 The Rhetorical Praxis of Diocesan Administration

Though the two disciplines remain estranged, some scholars of religion are beginning to recognize the importance of rhetoric as a theoretical resource in a moment in which the ground of pastoral ministry is increasingly uncertain. In a recent address to the Religious Communication Association, Martin Marty (2007), perhaps the foremost Protestant observer of American religious life, compared the study of religion in the postmodern moment to the study of hurricanes. Some people, he said, study hurricanes from satellite photos, at such a distance that they seem like beautiful white pinwheels on an azure ocean. Systematic theologians, he observed, and philosophers of religion study religious life in much the same way. Others get in planes and fly through the hurricane, and while they are buffeted by the winds, they can always climb out of trouble. In religious life, these are like the sociologists of religion and the social ethicists, who are more engaged in culture but can retreat to their professorial chairs. But then, he said, there are those—emergency personnel, bridge keepers, journalists, and other “first responders”—who have no choice but to ride out the storm. These, he said, are pastors and lay people who engage the challenges and struggles of postmodern life on the front

lines, and their lives are defined by *ambiguity*, *contingency*, and *transience*—ideas that lie at the core of the rhetorical tradition. While rhetoric can undoubtedly learn much from religion, Marty suggested that perhaps the most profound lesson that rhetoric can teach religion in the moment of postmodernity is how to live in a world that increasingly contradicts its claims to clarity, certainty, and transcendent truth.

Catholic dioceses, of course, are not on the front lines—that role is reserved for Catholic parishes, schools, and other agencies—but they are not removed from the tumult of postmodernity either. To extend Marty’s metaphor, they are like the emergency management organizations that direct relief and serve first responders. Though they do not minister directly to people, they perform an essential role in mediating between those who do minister directly—parishes, schools, and social ministries—and the demands of the wider Church and American society as a whole. While some may place their trust in theological formulas, canonical structures, or organizational techniques in meeting this challenge, this chapter has taken a different route, emphasizing a rhetorical praxis of diocesan administration that negotiates the dynamic of permanence and change and the three *topoi* of evangelization, cooperation, and decision. Through the dynamic of permanence and change, dioceses seek to bridge the chasm between their Catholic mission and identity and the demands of the changing moment, maintaining their connection with the Church Universal while pinpointing and seizing the rhetorical opportunities necessary to further their ministry. These opportunities are described and negotiated through an overlapping texture of rhetorical *topoi*: The *topos* of evangelization includes those concerns that spread the Word and inculcate a diocese’s constituencies with a shared texture of beliefs and practices; the *topos* of cooperation interprets this

shared texture in effective and actionable ways; and the *topos* of decision uses the shared background of commitments created by evangelization and cooperation to make solid and intelligible decisions.

This dissertation will attempt to see how the moment of postmodernity can be a moment of kairoic experience for Catholic dioceses, in which the challenges and even threats that postmodernity presents the American Church can be transformed into opportunities. In this moment of challenge, the tensions between dioceses' understanding of their traditional Catholic mission and identity and the demands for change become more pronounced, and the rhetorical labors of evangelization, cooperation, and decision making become more difficult. Diocesan administrations, concerned by the disorder and chaos in their midst, may feel tempted to evade the challenge and return to the comparative comfort of premature certainty. This dissertation counsels otherwise, urging them instead to find ways to engage the postmodern context constructively and playfully. A diocesan administration defined by *kairos* is not tense and diffident but relaxed and confident in its ability to transform challenge into opportunity. But this rhetorical competence does not come out of thin air, nor is it easily attained. It emerges from what Simone Weil (1949/1952) would call the *roots* that offer dioceses a sense of purpose and strength. A strong diocese, her work suggests, is one that attends to the roots that enable it to engage the world.

# Chapter 3

## The Roots of Diocesan Administration

*What are the roots of the rhetoric of diocesan administration?* The previous chapters described how the postmodern moment finds American Catholic dioceses in the eye of a cultural hurricane, mediating between the demands of parish life and the broader theological challenges of society as a whole. This dissertation frames the Church's rhetorical response to these concerns through the phenomenon of *kairos*, in which diocesan administration is characterized not by a posture of rigid antagonism but by a confident playfulness, engaging the challenge of permanence and change in the postmodern moment in constructive and imaginative ways. But in a moment that emphasizes technological implementation, Simone Weil (1949/1952) reminds us that rhetorical action always begins with the acknowledgement and appreciation of the *roots* that sustain the needs of the human soul and strengthen persons by binding them together in a shared history of obligations. In the midst of a storm, even the most venerable trees depend on their roots to survive the winds and rain. Similarly, the confident play of *kairos* can occur only when dioceses acknowledge their multifaceted rootedness in the intellectual and environmental complexity of their age.

### 3.1 Introduction

Amidst the complexity of the diocesan organizational chart, we can forget that the Catholic diocese is an institution with a human face, created for persons by persons in response to the call of Christ within history. Francis Sullivan (2001) and Kenneth Pennington (2002) remind us that the Catholic diocese is not a monolithic, unchanging technical structure but an institution with its own history, an organic response to God's working in the world. Its development bears the marks not of a streamlined, rationalized skyscraper but of a gothic cathedral whose organic, rambling growth reflects the hands of thousands of anonymous builders.

In a moment in which the human dimensions of organizations are routinely missed, Simone Weil, a Jewish mystical writer with deep Catholic sympathies, becomes essential for students of diocesan administration. Her passionate call to attend to the organic rootedness of human personhood and community prompts a reading of diocesan administration that acknowledges its organic, human rootedness as well. Following Weil, we can understand diocesan administration to be an institution rooted in two tasks: the need to exercise *theological stewardship* over the core beliefs of the faith and the need to *care for persons* through the development of pastoral bureaucracy. In their own ways, these roots provide for an organization capable of recognizing *kairos* in moments of intellectual and environmental complexity. As long as dioceses acknowledge and attend to these roots, they give diocesan administration a human face.

Yet, as Weil's work is quick to remind us, diocesan administration enters the moment of postmodernity alienated from these sustaining roots. Similarly, the work of an admirer of the sociological importance of Catholic institutional life, William

McSweeney (1980), describes how the crisis of modernity tore at these roots, seriously compromising the ability of the Church to respond to the challenges it faced. Just as some may criticize Weil's sometimes hyperbolic account of modernity and superficial understanding of the Church, they likewise may find significant flaws with McSweeney's interpretation of Catholicism before and after the Second Vatican Council. In many ways, these criticisms are well founded. Nevertheless, for American Catholic dioceses listening to the call of postmodernity, Weil's and McSweeney's questions invite a rediscovery of the roots that can allow diocesan rhetoric to engage the moment with kairotic fullness.

### 3.2 Diocesan Administration and Theological Stewardship

In *The Need for Roots*, Simone Weil urges attention to the spiritual roots of human existence, roots that she believes are increasingly being lost in a moment that thinks it can live on instrumental reason alone. To survive, she argues, persons require a community sustained by an underlying spiritual and intellectual texture that establishes the fundamental obligations between persons, provides for the foundation of human dignity and honor, and articulates a coherent understanding of the world and the place of human life in it. Such intellectual rootedness, she contends, is never the possession of any single individual but is always a collective property to be cared for by all. The loss of this texture results in an *uprooted* human society condemned to a spiral of chaos and self-destruction. While Weil is particularly concerned about the moment of modernity, the pressures she describes are a constant human problem. In fact, the stresses of intellectual and spiritual complexity have been present in the Church from the very start,

and the rhetoric of diocesan administration is deeply rooted in the *theological stewardship* of the beliefs that root Christian life.

### *3.2.1 Theological stewardship and the rootedness of diocesan administration.*

Through the teaching authority of the Church known as the *Magisterium*, Catholic bishops have been invested with the apostolic authority to define the intellectual and spiritual boundaries of Christian life. Yet, American Catholics are often divided as to what the relationship between the Magisterium and diocesan administration actually means. What does it mean to say that diocesan administration is rooted in the theological stewardship of the Catholic faith? Richard Neuhaus (1987), the American Catholic writer whose metaphor of the *Catholic Moment* provides the leitmotif of this dissertation, describes how many on the Catholic far-Right view diocesan administration as a conduit through which the Magisterium can rain excommunications down like lightning and provide “infallible decrees with breakfast” (p. 6). But for many on the American Catholic Left like William Rademacher (1991), such an organizational arrangement transforms the Magisterium and diocesan administration into a totalitarian force on a par with Stalinist Russia. Comparing the challenges of Catholicism in the late twentieth century to the fall of the Berlin Wall, Rademacher calls for an “ecclesiastical perestroika” (p. 227) defined by radical openness to the theological diversity of the modern moment and the freedom of individual consciences.

Remarkably, though, the bitter disagreements among the Catholic far-Right and Catholic Left about the theological stewardship of the Catholic faith mask an essential agreement about the theological role of diocesan administration. In both cases, diocesan administration is understood to represent a set of juridic commands that demand



adherence, an iron cage from which dissenters are to be expelled. Weil, of course, warns against such an understanding of doctrine and, by extension, of diocesan administration. For her, any understanding of religious orthodoxy that reduces belief to a set of fundamentalist commands represents the essence of an uprooted faith. Abstracted from human experience, such “faith” speaks not with love but with a shrill fanaticism that forgets the embodied needs of the human soul. Instead of nourishing persons, it terrorizes them into obedience. Instead of caring for persons, it is concerned only with its own absolute clarity. For Weil, a diocesan administration that views the task of theological stewardship in such a way actually betrays the faith that it is called to articulate and defend. Rotten with perfection, it loses its human face. Instead of bread, it gives only stones.

Nevertheless, however much she condemns religious absolutism, Weil does not advocate a liberalization or modernization of the Catholic faith. If anything, she recognizes the profound importance of maintaining the intellectual, spiritual, and religious roots that have sustained Catholicism throughout its history. These roots bring the nutritive power of truth to human life, and for this reason, they cannot be compromised. Instead, her work urges diocesan administrations to understand their theological stewardship in ways that embed the faith within the lives of their people. John Henry Newman’s (1960) understanding of the historical development of doctrine, which reminds us of the public value of Christian belief, provides perhaps the most important alternative to ecclesiastical fundamentalism in the moment of modernity. As a Catholic convert and dedicated churchman, Newman encourages us to see Catholic doctrine not as a movement of individual, private conscience or set of fundamentalist

dicta. Doctrine for Newman is a public hermeneutic that binds Christians together within a shared interpretive texture shaped over time through an ongoing conversation between persons and texts.

Yet, for all its power to shape the lives of Christians, doctrine itself requires constant labor to preserve its integrity and strength. Newman recognizes that each moment constantly calls the interpretations of the past into question and invites the Church to reinterpret its beliefs anew. Such reinterpretation requires extraordinary care to preserve its sense of identity, its fidelity with its founding principles, its constructive relationship with other religious traditions, its logical coherence and fidelity, its openness to the future, its continuity with the past, and its sense of vigor within the moment. This complex effort requires the presence of what Newman calls “Prophets or Doctors” (p. 95)—not only in the sense of their spiritual power and knowledge but also in the sense of their ability to speak dynamically as “physicians” to the Church—who are called to make essential distinctions and render authoritative interpretations. While he considers the authority of these doctors to be infallible, Newman understands this infallibility to be *moral* instead of *juridic*. That is, the authority of the Magisterium exists because the Church requires it to exist as a vibrant *ecclesia* within human history. Such authority rests not in some divine fiat but in a human need for authoritative guidance in matters of grave importance. Obedience to this authority comes not from fear of violence or threat of force but from the invitational appeal of the ideas themselves and the common desire to preserve them as nutritive, even essential, for human existence.

Newman’s understanding of the development of doctrine and of the institutional structure that emerges from it invites us to see diocesan administration’s task of

theological stewardship in a profoundly different way. The Magisterium is not the keeper of an iron fundamentalist cage but the guardian and protector of something similar to Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1960/2004) notion of *sensus communis*: a faculty of judgment that all people share that permits them to come to an agreement about what they experience; a "sense of what is feasible, what is possible, what is correct, here and now" (p. xxxiv); "a sense of what is right and of the common good" gleaned from the traditions and practices of the community (p. 20); a sense of love for humanity and winsomeness; and a form of social knowledge that a people needs to live together. In this broadened, Gadamerian sense, doctrine is not resolved into individual sentiments but the foundation of *Bildung*, a cultivated sense of understanding found in embracing the traditions of a community through learning, growth, and communicative action. In articulating and preserving this public interpretive texture, this intellectual rootedness, dioceses give rise to the Church's life together. Diocesan administration is not an imperial court but an institution consciously oriented toward presenting the Catholic vision of humanity to new generations and using that vision to help human beings to become persons. Their theological stewardship is not a fundamentalist project but an effort with a human face.

*3.2.2 Kairos and theological stewardship.* As new ideas, forms of knowledge, and discourses test the texture of Catholic faith and life, Thomas Reese (1989) finds that cooperation and identity maintenance occupy a considerable amount of a diocese's institutional energy in the moment of postmodernity. In the field of communication, perhaps the most detailed reflection on the theological stewardship of Catholic dioceses comes not from the field of Catholic religious communication but from the organizational communication scholar George Cheney (1991). His research on organizational

identification within the Catholic Church surrounding the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' 1983 pastoral letter *The Challenge of Peace* provides important insights on the rhetorical labor that theological stewardship entails. Cheney's discussion of how American bishops sought to protect the tradition, seek spaces of consensus, and reconcile incommensurable perspectives in a moment of historical importance builds on secular organizational and rhetorical scholarship, particularly that of Kenneth Burke. Even so, the bishops' interpretive task can also be seen as a search for Spirit-led opportunities in which ideological and theological conflict can be transcended and reconciliation made possible. In other words, its search is deeply intertwined with the experience of *kairos*.

Though the subject of his work is American Catholicism, the secular footing of Cheney's research reminds us that participation in *any* complex organization requires participants to choose whether to identify—or not to identify—with the complex and often ambiguous organizational discourses that they experience on a daily basis. In postmodernity, he observes, organizations and individuals increasingly devote significant labor to maintaining the sorts of public identifications vital to community life that were once assumed to be unchanging. To ensure social cooperation, organizations are increasingly invited to engage in a discourse that sustains the autonomy and integrity of their identity, communicating and defending their mission both to organizational “insiders”—individuals and groups within its institutional boundaries—and to organizational “outsiders”—individuals and groups in the broader organizational context. The challenge of this rhetoric, he contends, lies not in *compelling* persons to participate in organizational life but in *inviting* persons to embrace organizational priorities and beliefs.

By making choices to identify with certain organizational positions and engaging in organizational discourse, individuals do more than assent to intellectual positions. Relying on Burke's understanding of *identification*, Cheney describes how rhetoric sustains an ongoing process of the creation and dissolution of organizational identities through speech. Achieving organizational goals requires accommodation and adaptation to a changing environment, but not at the expense of the organization's understandings of its mission and purpose in the world. "Organizations, like individuals, must struggle with the dialectic of permanence and change; the more traditional an organization is, the more difficulty it has in adapting to different times or situations," Cheney writes. "Conversely, to effect substantial change in a traditional organization threatens its constituency, its 'true' and lasting identity" (p. 172-173). Unlike a therapeutic understanding of identity management that valorizes privatized commitments and values and thrusts them into the public sphere, the organizational identity that Cheney describes is a vital form of public value that establishes connections between persons and among social groups and creates a foundation for overall social cooperation. This constructive perspective on coordinating discourse respects and constantly articulates what Robert Bellah and his co-authors (1996) describe as a "community of memory" (p. 152), a shared vision that pulls together where a community has been, where it is, and where it is going.

For Cheney, the Catholic Church in the American context provides a particularly important example of identification management. "Continually," he says, "the Church has sought to balance its universal, or catholic, identity with local and particular concerns while encouraging individuals, the faithful, to derive a sense of self from allegiance to the Church" (p. 15). He notes how American Catholicism has faced important rhetorical

challenges: of being a Catholic institution in a culturally Protestant and increasingly diverse society, of dealing with constantly emerging social concerns without losing its spiritual mission, of balancing American democratic imperatives without sacrificing its hierarchical heritage, of achieving a widespread adherence among a diverse group of Catholic audiences without diluting its message, and of adapting to the American context without severing its ties with an international Church. Identification management, Cheney concludes, is essential for negotiating the various institutional demands of the Catholic faith because it creates meanings and relationships that attach individual Catholics to a broader sense of the Church. In turn, these meanings and relationships are crucial for the development of their identity as Christian persons.

Cheney sees the rhetoric of identification management occurring throughout the drafting and dissemination of *The Challenge of Peace*. The pastoral letter is a public document, written in a moment in which Catholic teachings on just war and political life were being pushed to the breaking point by fears of nuclear annihilation and by the increasingly polarized and incommensurable rhetoric of the Cold War. In many ways, the pastoral letter can be read as a theological and ethical document on the nuclear arms race or an issues statement intended to articulate the Church's position and guide its catechetical planning with respect to a central topic of public debate. But Cheney also sees the pastoral letter as performing an essential organizational task, in which the bishops interweave Church documents, important issues of public policy and religious life, and the concerns of a whole host of constituencies into a common theological and political vocabulary through which Catholics from a variety of points of view can find common ground. He contends that in negotiating the dyne of competing and often

irreconcilable discourses in a contentious debate, the bishops used the tradition of the Church to define a vocabulary of meanings to understand the historical moment and root the Church within a foundation for common action and witness.

As with any public document, a pastoral letter like *The Challenge of Peace* is a managed discourse. Perhaps it is the bishops' efforts to form consensus and broad relationships across a diverse Church, as opposed to emphasizing the radical activism of a few, that encourages J. Michael Hogan (1989) to see the process of identification management within *The Challenge of Peace* as a strategy of control and domination. Yet, Cheney's account suggests that the statement is far more complex and interesting. While the document was the result of an internal process—an internal committee of bishops drafted it, bishops voted on it, and bishops communicated it—the bishops had to contend with and assimilate a variety of different perspectives and points of view, not only in drafting it but also in communicating it to the world. In taking their stand, the bishops had to be conscious of their embeddedness in a web of relations: with American Catholics, American culture, world opinion, the universal Church, interest groups within the Church, and the relationship of the issue of nuclear disarmament to other issues.

The sheer complexity of the rhetorical situation addressed by *The Challenge of Peace* could not have been answered by the monologic, authoritarian deployment of imperial dogma or a pro-forma, boilerplate statement. Rather, it invited the American bishops to negotiate a complex play of issues and human relationships that invited an experience of kairotic opportunity. Its orthodoxy was not shouted from a loudspeaker but was an emergent phenomenon that was invited to grow in the spaces between incommensurable points of view. As they wrote the statement, the bishops sought to find

ways to acknowledge the conflicting arguments and standpoints in their midst and to incorporate them into a statement of tentative agreement and corporate identification.

While Catholics of goodwill may disagree as to the success of *The Challenge of Peace* in meeting the needs of American Catholics during the late Cold War, the bishops' statement, conceived in a moment of ideological tension and crisis, can be seen as an attempt to discern the kairotic potential of the moment to transform conflict into reconciliation and ideological impasse into common action. To borrow the terminology of Michael J. Hyde (2006), this transformative effort can be understood as a type of *rhetorical heroism* attempts to craft a space for common institutional life and action—a sense of *dwelling*—within the Church's intellectual roots. While such a rhetorical act can never be achieved without substance—the bishops are constantly grounded in the depth, complexity, and nuance of Catholic teaching—it is the stylistic power of their language that invites this pastoral space into being. As they craft a new sense of home within the Catholic tradition, the bishops translate abstract doctrine into human terms, allowing American Catholics to engage their Church, their world, and each other in new and substantive ways.

*The Challenge of Peace* reflects the sort of kairotic rhetorical labor that dioceses have traditionally done and that is increasingly necessary within the postmodern context. Mining the legacy of the past, the needs of the present, and a vision for the future, this administrative rhetoric continually establishes a kairotic story of what the Church “is”—and of what Catholics “are”—with respect to the particular and vital necessities of its historical moment. Throughout this process, it looks into the spaces and silences of the chaotic institutional environment, much like a rock climber scaling a sheer face. Where



there is disagreement, it seeks footholds of agreement. Where there are disputes over particular institutional values, it seeks the rugged core of common heritage as providing places to put its hands. In the appearance of these opportunities for common ground—sometimes in unexpected places—diocesan administrations come to experience the *kairos* upon which public relationships depend and the rootedness in truth that souls need to survive. Yet, in the history of the Church, the guardianship of Catholic faith and identity has been only one part of diocesan administration. Diocesan administration has been a structural phenomenon as well.

### 3.3 Diocesan Administration and the Care of Persons

Though their administrative rhetoric may have initially focused on negotiating theological conflicts and engendering ecclesiastical identification, the intellectual and interpretive leadership of diocesan bishops transformed as the centuries progressed. Though they had always administered the sacraments and provided for social concerns, Kenneth Pennington (2002), a scholar of Catholic canon law, describes how the deterioration of civil authority in the Middle Ages encouraged diocesan structures to take a more complex relationship to their society, often to the point of taking on the attributes of secular states. This transition is a tender subject. For many scholars, the bureaucratic tradition of the Church is deeply troubling, an institutional betrayal of the anarchic and egalitarian principles of early Christian community (see, for instance, Provost, 1976). Indeed, Simone Weil blames the situation of corrosive uprootedness within French life in part on what she sees as the Church's excessive integration with secular governance.

Yet, the Church's extensive organizational tradition is an essential outgrowth of a second source of institutional rootedness: *the pastoral care of persons*. Such care, from

the perspective of someone like Weil, is understood not through the language of technical rationality, therapeutic discourse, or theological abstraction but through a humble encounter that enters the lives of the ignorant, the wounded, the disinherited, and the forgotten. Traditionally, diocesan administration has relied extensively on its bureaucratic structure in acknowledging and meeting the educational, spiritual, sacramental, and human needs of persons. Acknowledging the importance of structural elements for pastoral care, however, always invites careful explanation and framing to give diocesan bureaucracy's discursive diet of financial data, clergy assignments, board memberships, and fundraising drives a human face. Though he emerges from a different tradition of organizational inquiry, Max Weber's (1922/1947) metaphor of *charismatic bureaucracy*, as it interacts with Weil's concerns, is particularly helpful in describing a healthy diocesan organizational life.

*3.3.1 The care of persons and the rootedness of diocesan administration.* As a pastoral organization, diocesan administration oversees the care of persons through parish sacramental life and a variety of complex spiritual, educational, and social ministries. A bureaucratic structure remains essential for this oversight. Bureaucracies, Charles Perrow notes (1986), are the most efficient form of human organization and have proved invaluable in marshalling resources to meet complex problems and exploit important opportunities. In dioceses and archdioceses where children need to be educated, the poor served hot meals, and the Eucharist faithfully celebrated, the bureaucratic structure of diocesan administration is essential in ensuring that dioceses can respond to large populations with complex needs. In the American context, historians Will Herberg (1956) and George Marsden (1990) have both emphasized the importance of diocesan

bureaucracies in serving the needs of immigrant Catholics. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, diocesan structures protected every aspect of the Catholic faith and connected Catholicism to every aspect of life, from hospitals where babies would be born, parishes where those babies would be baptized and receive pastoral care, schools where they would learn, and cemeteries where they could be buried. In the process, they ensured that American Catholicism would not only survive but thrive.

For American dioceses, the bureaucratic administration of ecclesial life is an important gift that permits them to engage their environments with flexibility and effectiveness. The work of Weber (1922/1947; 1922/1991) has been essential in describing the Church's bureaucratic tradition. For Weber, the development of ecclesiastical structures like diocesan bureaucracies is an inevitable product of human religious experience, in which the spiritual explanations of natural phenomena produced by spiritual *charisma* are constantly and progressively incorporated and institutionalized into formal religious life. Religious charisma requires institutionalization, he observes, because its powerful energy is as unstable as it is valuable. If a religious movement is to survive—that is, become a basis for a lasting human society instead of careening into anarchic oblivion—it requires institutional structures to control and *routinize* its charismatic giftedness through ever-increasing processes of ethical, intellectual, and structural *rationalization* in order to render it stable and predictable. Over time, the influence of the shamanistic magician or prophetic figure who initiates a religious tradition inevitably gives way to a professionalized priesthood, and with the addition of literacy and standardized training of this priesthood, this religious organization necessarily takes on a bureaucratic structure.

In some ways, the development of *canon law* within Catholic administration during the Middle Ages represents the rationalizing and routinizing impulse that Weber describes. Pennington describes how, beginning with Pope Gregory VII in the eleventh century, the Church began to develop a deep and complex tradition of structuration, policy, procedure, and governance that continues to play a central role in the daily lives of Catholic dioceses. As canon lawyers began to see the bishop and his advisors as the core of an organized structure governed by administrative procedures that established various rights and responsibilities, they gave bishops and their dioceses the organizational ability to engage the political and social concerns of the medieval environment. In the process, Pennington notes, the role of the bishop changed from a primarily *pastoral* relationship with his diocese to a *professional* relationship that owed its authority to the pope himself. The development of this professionalized structure of defined responsibilities and rights noted by Pennington epitomizes Weber's understanding of religious rationalization.

Catholic diocesan administration is particularly interesting for Weber because of its importance as a form of bureaucratic organization. In the *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, Weber (1922/1947) describes bureaucratic structure in terms of imperative control, hierarchy, written documentation, and professionalized administrative staff. As routinization and rationalization create thicker and thicker administrative textures, this structure develops a sense of "given-ness" that renders it self-evident not only to those who work within the structure but everyone whom the structure touches. Nevertheless, not all bureaucracies are the same. Weber recognizes that traditional societies develop bureaucratic structures of offices defined by authority conferred by

custom, lineage, or age—such as the offices of the British monarchy—and he is particularly interested in the emergence of modern bureaucracies defined solely by rational-legal authority. But while Catholic dioceses may indeed possess traditional and rational-legal elements—the apostolic authority of bishops is as traditional as it is spiritual, and canon law is certainly a rationalizing influence—their religious roots create a third and particularly complex bureaucratic form that Weber describes through the metaphor of *charismatic bureaucracy*. Here, the driving organizational force lies not in traditional loyalties or in instrumental reason but in the rationalization of charismatic spirituality and meaning.

Helen Constan (1958) argues that for Weber, who never experienced the rise of the totalitarian movements of the middle twentieth century, the Catholic Church provided what Weber believed to be the best example of charismatic bureaucracy ever known. The bishop, invested with the charismatic authority of the Church and Magisterium, centralizes administrative life around his person, regularizing and rationalizing the Christian faith through bureaucratic means. And as Weber would expect, bureaucratic assumptions have also been written into the Church's theological understanding of its organizational life. Avery Dulles's (2002) *Models of the Church* emphasizes the historical importance of the *institutional* metaphor in Catholic ecclesiology, in which the Church's bureaucracy has been traditionally understood to be a *societas perfectas* or "perfect society." In embodying such a conception, Dulles says, "the Church teaches, sanctifies, and commands, in each case identifying the Church itself with the governing body or hierarchy" (p. 30). Through its careful selection of clergy, its conscientious

paper trails, and its regulation of sacramental ministry, Weber would see the bureaucratic structure of diocesan administration as stabilizing Catholic life.

A dispassionate Weberian analysis sometimes leads many scholars, like Jochen Schulte-Sasse (1986), to see in Catholic administration the seeds of the bureaucratic terrors of modernity, an organization not only without capacity for discerning *kairos* but also without a soul. Their bureaucratic character, such an argument suggests, would make them incompatible with the pastoral care of persons. But diocesan administration, as a form of charismatic bureaucracy, can never be a “pure” bureaucracy in the secular, rational-legal sense. Diocesan administrations are what Mark Chaves (1993) calls “dual structures” that constantly balance the demands of pastoral ministry and the demands of bureaucratic efficiency. Because bureaucracy implies obligations to maintain a certain degree of financial accountability, technological sophistication, professional development, quality oversight of programs and personnel, and communication processes that maintain internal control and discipline, the rhetoric of diocesan administration is obligated to achieve a certain degree of managerial effectiveness. But because they also take upon themselves the burdens and causes that rational-legal bureaucracies find too unprofitable or inefficient to pursue, diocesan administrations will never be as efficient as their for-profit counterparts. Nor will they ever want to be. In fact, they may prove stubbornly resistant to forms of bureaucratic rationalization that rational-legal bureaucracies readily accept. “While charismatic bureaucracy undergoes change and adaptation . . . certain fundamental dogmas can never be given up,” Helen Constan (1958) writes. “Charismatic bureaucracy cannot, by definition, be value neutral” (p. 408-409). Regardless of the efforts of individuals inside or outside of the bureaucracy, diocesan

administration will always be driven—one could say distracted—by the values and commitments that guide it. Negotiation of these values presents the rhetorical challenge of engaging a complex play of efficiency and mission, practicality and idealism, and contingency and confidence.

The complex paradoxes embedded in diocesan organizations contribute to a sense of opaqueness that secular, rational-legal bureaucracy lacks. Diocesan administrations, as charismatic bureaucracies, remain what could be called *gothic structures* rooted in two millennia of providing for the pastoral care of a people and a faith. To the moment of modernity, where clarity and rationality were the tests of legitimacy, the gothic complexity and opaqueness of Catholic administration was often disturbing. In some ways, the nunnery in *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*, full of secret passages and darkened chambers, reflects not only a fear of diabolical Catholic treachery but also a fear of an institutional structure that resists clarity and rational inspection. Philip Jenkins (1996; 2003) describes how the moral panic surrounding the clergy abuse scandal often resurrected these fears. Nevertheless, this strangeness also invites its own rhetorical labor and unique experience of *kairos*.

*3.3.2 Kairos and charismatic bureaucracy.* Pastoral responses are unique in that they need time to be invited into being. They are almost necessarily slow. Within the complex pastoral environment of diocesan ministry, which is designed by broken, sinful people to help broken, sinful people, the challenge of diocesan bureaucracy lies not in quickness and rational implementation but in appropriateness and historicity. In some cases, a diocese may need to stand firm, while in others, it may need to show grace. Here, the gothic unclarity of diocesan bureaucracy—found in arcane “loopholes” in

canon law; extended consultative processes, reflective pauses, and administrative silences; the unfashionable reliance on celibate men in the priesthood and episcopacy; and the willingness to employ deeply dedicated persons whom secular society finds “useless” because of their lack of skills or advanced age—is not necessarily a problem or organizational “evil.” Rather, it gives dioceses the time to negotiate the complex play of organizational priorities, human needs, and the foundations of the Catholic faith. Ironically, the gothic strangeness and slowness of diocesan administration may actually give it the time to be *more* human, not less, because it recognizes that many human problems cannot be “solved” in a functional sense. In their radical inefficiency, diocesan administration allows itself the space to discern moments of organizational grace in which solutions to vexing and perhaps even intractable problems can be invited into being of their own accord. Such spaces allow for experiences of *kairos*, in which crises can be transformed into opportunities and weaknesses into strengths.

Seeing charismatic bureaucracy as a potential site of kairotic rhetoric suggests an associative structure that could actually comport with Weil’s understanding of human rootedness. While undoubtedly concerned with the needs of the individual and with the dignity of the human person, she also recognizes the importance of a broader human association and organization that provides the guidance and structure that persons require to survive. Even as they hunger for equality and freedom, persons also need the “order” (p. 9), “obedience” (p. 13), “responsibility” (p. 14), “hierarchism” (p. 18), “punishment” (p. 20), and “security” (p. 32) that can come only from organized structures. Of course, Weil’s institutional vision is of no ordinary organization, nor is it of any ordinary charismatic bureaucracy. The order it upholds is always intimately connected with the



spiritual roots that sustains human personhood. Its hierarchy and calls for obedience function to uplift instead of demean human life. Its responsibility is always understood to be a responsibility to all instead of a responsibility to a privileged few.

As dual structures, diocesan administrations exist to manifest the Catholic vision of humanity within the texture of human life. Their test lies not in their efficiency, their speed, or their perfection but their faithful humanity. This is the essence of Weil's understanding of rooted organization, and she implores organizations to understand and engage their humanity at every turn. "What is indispensable," she writes,

is a passionate interest in human beings, whoever they may be, and in their minds and souls; the ability to place oneself in their position and to recognize by signs thoughts which go unexpressed; a certain intuitive sense of history in process of being enacted; and the faculty of expressing in writing delicate shades of meaning and complex relationships. (pp. 190-191)

Wherever diocesan administrations lose touch with their charismatic roots, take on rationalized agendas of their own, or respond to their own good instead of the good of those whom they serve, they come to destroy the very charismatic roots that they are charged with protecting. Weil's understanding of rooted organizations consequently balances on the knife's edge of Weberian charismatic bureaucracy. While Weber emphasizes the bureaucratic nature of the Church, Weil reminds us that its diocesan administration is always ultimately charismatic. While Weber is deeply concerned about the anarchic potential of prophetic charisma, Weil reminds us that the prophetic is necessary to hold organizational life to account. A rooted charismatic bureaucracy for Weil constantly embraces the power of *kairos*, seeking in the play between fidelity and humanity constructive responses to organizational challenges.

Yet, throughout *The Need for Roots*, Weil repeats that she believes that Catholicism has abandoned its roots, and that this abandonment has weakened, if not destroyed, the Church's potential for constructive rhetorical and organizational responses to the challenges of French occupation. *Diocesan administration had lost its human face*. In sometimes hyperbolic terms, she writes of a compromised, politicized, shrill, doctrinaire Church that conspires to uproot personhood just as much as its secular counterparts. Weil, however, is not anti-Catholic. In fact, while her beliefs are heterodox, she speaks appreciatively of the embodied understanding of Christianity that the Church represents. She merely opposes a Catholicism whose organizational structure ignores, and thereby destroys, its rootedness. For Weil, these organizational and spiritual problems emerge from the Church's response to modernity. She contends that the Church, beset on all sides by the crisis of modernity, had forgotten itself, and this forgetting led to an administrative life unable to discern and seize the opportunities of *kairos*. What is needed, she urges, is a return to the Church's roots—roots that she believes the crisis of modernity nearly destroyed.

### 3.4 Diocesan Administration and the Crisis of Modernity

Though it always begins with Christ's lofty command to spread the Gospel to all people, the rhetorical labor of Catholic dioceses is rooted both in the need to maintain the texture of the Catholic faith in its fullness and in the need to meet the practical pastoral and social concerns of its people through charismatic bureaucracy. Even at their most difficult moments, the diocesan structures in medieval times could count on the charismatic authority of their faith and sacraments and the fear of excommunication to ensure their legitimacy. But the arrival of modernity and the ideal of individualism it

created set in motion the complete desacrilization of the religious world that sharply questioned this legitimacy. As Hannah Arendt (1998) observes, the advent of Cartesian philosophy reversed what had been a taken-for-granted relationship between theology and science. Where theology had once provided the texture and framework in which science was necessarily embedded, science and instrumental reason assumed control over culture. By the nineteenth century, Owen Chadwick (1998) notes, the intellectual climate began to demand radical changes to the Latin Mass and Catholic doctrine, the Church's hold on the Papal States began to crumble, and rising European bourgeois and proletarian classes began to challenge the Church's authority over secular life. As Jürgen Habermas (1962/1989) has noted, the growth of printing created a vibrant mass communication culture sustained by the bourgeois conventions of rationality, free thought, and open communication—a secular climate in which the Church, which had once dominated the dissemination of ideas, was to be systematically excluded.

Had they risen independently of each other, William McSweeney (1980) observes, such challenges would not have posed the serious challenge that they did. But taken together, they amounted to an existential threat. “The Roman Curia could set rigid limits to the production of knowledge on the basis of a particular Catholic understanding of the world and of its threat to the integrity of the Church,” he writes. “It could cope with a stable world, however hostile. It could not cope with a world which changed at confusing speed or with the new ideas generated by such a world” (p. 96). McSweeney's book attempts to come to grips with the existential crisis that modernity presented to the Church, a response that he describes through the metaphors of a hostile and jealous *ghetto*, institutional *control*, and heedless *relevance* to the world. This section will

describe each of these responses and their rhetorical consequences in turn. McSweeney's story is in many ways a difficult one to relate, since it describes a Church slowly losing not only its sense of self but also its human face.

While McSweeney is most concerned with the history of the Catholic Church in Western Europe, and while some may question his conclusions, his argument is important for American diocesan administration because it resonates with their own experiences and responses to American culture, which have been noted so perceptively by historians Philip Gleason (1970) and George Marsden (1990). American Catholicism was forged in the crucibles of modernity and anti-Catholicism, and its diocesan structures still reflect these challenges. Meeting the challenges of massive immigration and industrialization spawned the creation of a similar Americanized Catholic *ghetto* and similar disciplines of institutional *control*, while the Second Vatican Council has prompted similar demands for organizational *relevance*. Consequently, each of the movements that McSweeney relates, to one extent or another, provides important insights to the organizational and communicative styles that still often define the rhetoric of diocesan administration. They also suggest important and far-reaching changes in the relationship that emerged in the modern period between diocesan administration and the roots that once gave it sustenance and strength.

*3.4.1 The rhetoric of the ghetto.* The dominant mode of the Church's response to modernity during most of the nineteenth century, McSweeney argues, was to wall itself up in a Catholic *ghetto* dominated by a "spirit of militant orthodoxy" and "spirituality of simple piety and common-sense mysticism" (p. 18-19). In the rhetoric of the Catholic ghetto, the intellectual currents of the age were to be rejected out of hand, doctrinal errors

were to be swiftly confronted with haughty, even arrogant disdain, and the Church was to develop its own parallel structures lest its faithful be tempted to wander from its bosom.

In the ghetto, the dominant tone of the Church's organizational rhetoric became one of *coldness, arrogance, and distance*, a tone reflected in Pope Gregory XVI's (1832) *Mirari Vos*. "You know what storms of evil and toil, at the beginning of Our pontificate, drove Us suddenly into the depths of the sea," the pope begins, referring to the revolutions that had swept the Papal States just days after he had been elected. "If the right hand of God had not given Us strength, We would have drowned as the result of the terrible conspiracy of impious men [and women]" (sec. 1). The use of the royal "We"—a holdover from medieval times in which the papacy was clothed in imperial trappings—is unmistakable, but so is the sense of fear and frustration. Nothing—neither the temporal power of the papacy nor the threat of excommunication—seemed to deter the modernist barbarianism at the Church's gate, and the rhetoric of the ghetto reflected this sense of antagonism and anxiety.

Against the impertinence of modernity, *Mirari Vos* goes on to condemn a laundry list of errors, from the questioning of clerical celibacy and the Church's stance on divorce to the demand that Church submit to the powers that were angling to curb the Church's authority in the secular world. But some of Pope Gregory's harshest words are reserved for the media. "We are horrified to see what monstrous doctrines and prodigious errors are disseminated far and wide in countless books, pamphlets, and other writings which, though small in weight, are very great in malice," he exclaims. "We are in tears at the abuse which proceeds from them over the face of the earth" (sec. 15). As a result, the press, he declares, must always be considered both "harmful" and "never sufficiently

denounced” (sec. 15). In these pronouncements, the Church began a fighting retreat from the modern culture of the nineteenth century into a separate, tightly controlled ghetto in which the Church could preserve its theological distinctiveness unmaligned by the currents of change.

Early during the crisis of modernity, then, the Church’s rhetoric of self-protection communicated by not communicating, perhaps in the hope that the crisis would pass or out of disdainful anger at the impudence of its interlocutors. Organizationally, one sees in the ghetto Church a defense of both the intellectual and structural roots of diocesan administrations. Through its strict adherence to Catholic dogma, its emphasis on popular piety, its zealous articulation and prosecution of theological error, and its willingness to excommunicate at will, one sees a closing of ranks around a Catholic faith that was under threat by the encroachment of modern rationalism. Likewise, its development of a shadow set of institutions like schools and hospitals to protect the Catholic faithful from contact with the broader culture not only provided a new justification for its bureaucratic structure but also broadened its scope and complexity in a moment when it otherwise would have receded. Diocesan administration jealously protected its roots by what the Church believed was an impregnable barrier and weeded its domain regularly by vigorous and harsh policy of anathema and excommunication.

For Simone Weil, the trend toward the ghetto Church begins in the person of Cardinal Richelieu, whom she sees as intertwining the language of the Church with the language of the modern nation-state, perhaps as an effort to adapt to the currents of modernity. “Richelieu wanted to enslave people’s very minds,” she writes. “Not for his own benefit, for in his self-abnegation he was probably sincere, but for that of the State

he represented” (p. 111). By identifying its traditional faith with political power, she continues, the Church “cut itself off from the general life of the nation” and transformed into a set of ideological formulas and jingoistic identifications (p. 113). Later in the moment of modernity, when it became clear that the modern state no longer had any use for the Church, the ghetto Church turned these ideologizing tendencies inward, transforming a faith that was once rooted in the lives of regular people into an ideology of organizational structure. But for Weil, the Church is not a hothouse flower to be jealously protected in a metaphysical greenhouse but is a human assembly rooted in the world, and a posture preoccupied with rigid ideological discipline is for her a sign not of strength but of religious sickness and decay. Associations, she writes, that sever their roots in human community are forever “changed into the semblance of a corpse” (p. 29). Weil’s work suggests that the impregnable barrier of the ghetto, instead of protecting the Church, actually deprived it of the sustenance it needed—and forbade it from giving sustenance to others.

The ghetto Church, however, would have important implications for the institutional rhetoric of American Catholicism. In the American context, where Catholicism was to contend with a high level of anti-Catholicism from both secularists and Protestants, the ghetto mentality would be deeply ingrained, urging the development of a large network of schools, hospitals, and social institutions to support its beleaguered immigrant population (Gleason, 1970; Marsden, 1990). And as the work of Philip Jenkins (2003) reminds us, just as the impressive texture of institutions remains, the bunker mentality of the ghetto is still never far away in the rhetorical life of diocesan administration. Even as he counsels dioceses to emerge from seclusion—reminding

them, for instance, that becoming petulant with reporters is rarely an effective media relations strategy and that secretive evasiveness is never a productive approach to communication—Francis Maier (2001), the chancellor of the Archdiocese of Denver, reminds them that they are always at war with the world. “There is no neutral ground in the universe,” he quotes C. S. Lewis as saying. “Every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counter-claimed by Satan” (p. 69). While the age of the ghetto is past, the pull of its rhetoric—characterized by constant wariness and disdainful, angry silence—remains strong.

*3.4.2 The rhetoric of control.* As the nineteenth century wore on, McSweeney notes, the Catholic ghetto became increasingly weak and ineffective in holding modernity at bay. The power of the Catholic faith and sacramental devotion, despite desperate efforts, was weakening, and the potency and legitimacy of the Church’s charismatic bureaucracy was eroding. In 1848, the waves of revolutions that swept through Europe forced Pope Gregory’s successor, Pope Pius IX, from the Vatican, and by 1860, the Papal States had eroded to an area along Italy’s Western coast. Ten years later, the year the First Vatican Council declared the dogma of papal infallibility, the Papal States were suddenly gone. During this time, McSweeney observes, the Church remained in its ghetto, but friction with the secular world had created a sort of organizational “schizophrenia” within the Church (p. 52). Modernity had become too massive and too powerful to ignore.

Owen Chadwick (1998) contends that Pope Pius began to offer an answer to this problem. Slowly reversing the ghetto-impulses of his predecessor, he began to use the railways and the newspapers to his advantage, becoming, for all intents and purposes, the



first pope to be a truly modern celebrity. “The railway made an enormous difference to the international influence of the papacy,” Chadwick observes.

The Catholic world knew this pope as no pope was known before. Then, in the 1860s, came the national newspapers with their foreign correspondents. This pope was news. He might be damaging news to the Church, in the eyes of Protestants, and even in the eyes of some Catholics. But the proverb “All publicity is good publicity,” was applicable to Pius IX. He was the first pope in the history of papacy to be, in the modern sense of the world, news. And it so happened that this was a warm personality who in the end rose to the opportunities which modern media provided. (p. 113)

The pope’s revolutionary media relations strategies did not mean a complete reversal of his predecessor’s orientation toward modernity. Chadwick views Pope Pius as standing on the foundation that Pope Gregory created, and McSweeney views many of the pope’s responses to modernity—the Syllabus of Errors, the dogma of papal infallibility, and the Marian devotions of the Miraculous Medal—as paradigmatic of the ghetto Church. Yet, there is a subtle change in tone. The Church was reaching outside of the ghetto into the modern world, but it would do so from a standpoint of *control*.

Instead of resisting change completely, the rhetoric of control attempted to protect the Church by controlling the presentation of ideas and refining its organizational structure to be more effective and disciplined in executing its agenda. McSweeney sees this strategy as coming to fruition in Pope Leo XIII’s turn toward neo-Thomistic orthodoxy, in which he hoped to find solid intellectual ground against the encroachment of science, and his creation of the Catholic Action movement, through which he hoped to create a network of tightly controlled Catholic lay organizations to attempt to influence secular institutions. In contrast to the ghetto’s bitter and vituperative rejection of modernity, the Church would engage its environment, but only insofar as it could choose

the venue and the terms. It would use the media, though only as long as it believed that the media were playing its game.

The rhetoric of control emphasizes *hierarchy*, *centralization*, and *discipline* in the presentation of ideas and argument. “This new strategy of religious communication was closely linked with nineteenth century conceptions of church and parish organization, with models of ministry and spirituality and with the neo-scholastic theological language of the period,” Robert White (2001) writes. “The divine knowledge is made known by means of words and intelligible concepts—not, for example, in imaginative, emotional experience—and this knowledge is summarized in clear, concise written formulas in the Bible or in the teaching of the Church. . . . Evangelization and conversion were simplified because people knew exactly what to believe” (pp. 18, 21). Just as the railroads and telegraph systems that conveyed Pope Pius around the world made it seem as if communication and meaning could be delivered and disseminated in orderly, controlled ways, the Church adopted the sort of hierarchical, sender-receiver understanding of communication that James Carey (1992) describes in metaphors of *transportation* or *transmission*. White contends that this approach to communication would persist, largely because it was so similar to the rhetorical strategies of the burgeoning public relations industry and developments in rational-legal bureaucracy that Max Weber so painstakingly noted.

With the promulgation of Pope Pius XII’s (1957) *Miranda Prorsus* in the middle of the twentieth century, the posture of control was embraced as paradigmatic of the Church’s communicative posture. The media could be used, but only to advance the Gospel, report truthful news, and provide the entertainment that the Church believed to

be appropriate. Otherwise, it was to be controlled, even censored where possible. To assist in these efforts, Pope Pius encouraged the development of national communication offices to ensure the proper control of the media and the Church's message, and he also urged lay Catholics involved in the media to follow the direction of the Church's teaching in producing news, entertainment, and media messages. Yet, White observes that instead of helping to bring the Church's message to the modern world, the rhetorical posture of control, censorship, and spin actually perpetuated the stereotype of a Church unable to adapt to the conditions of modernity even as it created an organizational structure that was remarkably modern in appearance. "The attempts of the Church to control the mass media or forbid the faithful to use the media was ultimately a self-defeating social dramaturgy," he writes, "because it justified the accusations of liberal intellectuals and politicians that the Church was an obscurantist, inquisitorial foe of human freedom and creativity" (p. 20). Even so, corporate public relations and advertising functions—defined by what Stewart Ewen (1996) describes as "spin"—would become an essential part of the rhetoric of diocesan administration.

Of course, ecclesiastical communicators would not be alone in their desire to control media relations, nor would cardinals and bishops be unique when they would express frustrations over unflattering headlines and media coverage. But these trends created a new understanding of the rhetoric of diocesan administration. Dioceses would steward the Catholic faith through the strict control and discipline of the growing communications ministry. Likewise, they would be increasingly drawn toward taking upon themselves the increasing bureaucratic specialization and rationalization of their secular peers, transforming the charismatic bureaucracy of diocesan administration into a

more rational-legal one. For instance, though Thomas Reese (1989) catalogues many types of diocesan structures in his study of Catholic archbishops, from “secretariat” structures that collect activities into departmental “silos” to chief executive structures that emphasize more meticulous micromanagement of diocesan affairs, all of the structures that he outlines are essentially variations of rational-legal bureaucracies. In these structures, diocesan leadership takes on the character of the classical management theory advocated by Henri Fayol (1917/1949), in which the bishop-executive acts as if he were the subjectivity of a vast machine, smoothly and efficiently controlling the functions of the corporate body by means of decisive, imperative commands. At least in theory, such administrative control was understood to create a rational and efficient means of distributing pastoral resources and improving the ministry of the Church in a moment when rationality was seen as the currency of organizational legitimacy.

In implementing rational organizational strategies and media techniques, the Church also became part of what sociologist Leon Mayhew (1997) calls the *new public* of public relations and media managers that would dominate public discourse, and for Simone Weil, such an embrace of propagandistic technique as a means of religious persuasion furthers the distance of diocesan administrations from the people they serve. “Speaking quite generally, in any sort of sphere, it is inevitable that evil should dominate wherever the technical side of things is either completely or almost completely sovereign,” she notes. “Technicians always tend to make themselves sovereign because they feel they alone know what they are about. . . . When they are allowed to have full rein, it is always solely for want of keeping continually in mind a clear and absolutely precise conception of the particular ends to which this, that or the other technique should

be subordinated” (p. 198). While these well-intentioned *technicians of goodness* (Arnett, 1996) undoubtedly achieve results, Weil believes that their lack of respect for human rootedness means that they are also all too effective in creating a new and unanticipated form of religious experience. Severed from human life, propaganda motivates by encouraging fanaticism, generating not religious belief but totalizing ideology. Uprooted from any humanly intelligible context, propaganda can speak only humiliated words, trivializing even the deepest spiritual expression into a media event or photo opportunity. Speaking forcefully and loudly, propaganda makes it almost impossible to listen, accentuating and not decreasing the aloof posture of the ghetto Church. Instead of creating a new and more persuasive form of religious rhetoric, bureaucratized propaganda for Weil merely accelerates human rootlessness.

The Church’s strategy of control through bureaucratic and propagandistic technique, while in keeping with the movements in other sectors of society, created significant organizational problems. As McSweeney notes, the Church’s controlled and limited engagement with modernity during the early twentieth century opened Catholicism to the very ideas and technologies that the ghetto Church had abhorred without regard to the costs that those ideas and technologies involved. Indeed, the work of the Catholic media scholar Marshall McLuhan (1994)—whose input, incidentally, was solicited but largely ignored by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications (Gordon, 1997)—reminds us that no media technology is ever adopted without a cost, and his reflections on the use of the microphone (1999b) and the adoption of new musical styles (1999a) in the liturgy suggest that these costs can be felt just as easily by Catholic organizations as by secular ones. Ironically, instead of formulating an effective response

to the crisis of modernity, the posture of control actually deepened the Church's organizational schizophrenia. By the 1960s, it was clear that something was about to change, but what would change—and how it would change the Church—would be debated for decades to come.

*3.4.3 The rhetoric of relevance.* Only a few years after *Miranda Prorsus*, McSweeney notes, a new communicative strategy emerged characterized by a radical and often haphazard attempt to become *relevant* to modern life. McSweeney places the Second Vatican Council at the center of this strategy. No more, the Council seemed to say, would the Church be confined to the ghetto of obscurantism and decay. No more would it attempt to control what it could not control. The rhetoric of relevance would instead be defined by metaphors of *optimism, dialogue, and reform*.

That a new day had dawned is evident in the Pontifical Council for Social Communications' 1971 pastoral instruction on communication ministry. Even the title, *Communio et Progressio*, is a decisive break from the past because it foregrounds precisely the issue that the Church had once sought to avoid at all costs: progress. Following the spirit of openness to the world that emerged from the Second Vatican Council, *Communio et Progressio* welcomes communication as a means for both human progress and the development of human community and offers an optimistic vision of peace and hope mediated by an idealized understanding of communication:

The modern media of social communication offer men [and women] of today a great round table. . . . The torrent of information and opinion pouring through these channels makes every man [and woman] a partner in the business of the human race. This interchange creates the proper conditions for that mutual and sympathetic understanding which leads to universal progress. (sec. 19)

To further this spirit of communication, *Communio et Progressio* urges Catholic clergy, religious, and laity to enter the communication profession and encourages the academic study of the media. In what would have been anathema in the days of Pope Gregory XVI, the statement advocates the necessity of free speech and democratic life and is open to the possibilities of advertising and a diversity of communicative expression both within and outside of the Church's control. Moreover, throughout the discussion, an appreciation of *dialogue* replaces the drive for *control*:

This free dialogue within the Church does no injury to her unity and solidarity. It nurtures concord and the meeting of minds by permitting the free play of the variations of public opinion. But in order that this dialogue may go in the right direction it is essential that charity is in command even when there are differing views. Everyone in this dialogue should be animated by the desire to serve and to consolidate unity and cooperation. (sec. 117)

In the process, the Church established communication as a form of intellectual reflection and engagement with the modern world. From now on, the Church would be *relevant*, adopting the media and style of modernity to communicate its message.

The rhetoric of relevance represents a complete reversal in rhetorical approach in diocesan administration, but it also reflects the orientation of many current writers of Catholic communication theory. For instance, Terrence Tilley and Angela Zukowski (2001) urge the Church to embrace electronic media wholeheartedly to develop its evangelical message that is relevant to the age. Thomas Boomershine (2001) advocates a similar approach to information technology. "In earlier media ages, the Church reformed itself to communicate the Gospel in the dominant communication system of that age," he writes. "In our time, the Church needs to reform its systems of communication for ministry and mission in digital culture" (p. 30). In these writers, relevance, not the outdated formulas of orthodoxy, seizes the day in Catholic rhetoric. Following the

postindustrial tendency described by John Meyer and Brian Rowan (1977), in which organizational change became more often an issue of ceremonial rhetoric than actual effectiveness, the Church's bureaucratic structure would also strive to be constantly updated and "modern," not necessarily because these adaptations represented actual advances but because they were necessary to maintain the Church's sense of legitimacy and "relevance" to the broader society. In these cases, the assumptions are consistent: The modern world is essentially good, the Church is called to adapt completely to modernity, the Church—barring some unfortunate conservative critics—wants to adapt to modernity, and once those conservative critics are rejected, the Church will be as God intends it to be.

In a way, perhaps, the rhetoric of relevance's repudiation of the earlier approaches of ghetto and control and its embrace of the apparently more humanly intelligible ideal of dialogue would seem to answer Weil's critiques of an uprooted, modern Church. Yet, for Weil, the approach of relevance corresponds to the modern "habits of mind," in which religion becomes merely "a matter of choice, opinion, taste, almost of caprice, something like the choice of a political party, or even that of a tie. . . . Having become a private concern, [religion] has lost the obligatory character associated with public manifestations, and consequently can no longer lay claim to loyalty unchallenged" (p. 120-121). The relativization and privatization of religious sentiment so important to modernist humanism is not a return to roots but a sign that they have been almost completely lost.

Other scholars have echoed Weil's concerns. Avery Dulles (2001) has questioned the posture of "dialogue" and "participation" that so many Catholic communication scholars since the Council have embraced as an untrammelled blessing. "Dialogue, as the



Church understands it, makes heavy demands that are not always respected,” he writes. “The term is often used carelessly, deceptively, and abusively to mean something else than what the Church understands by dialogue” (p. 37). In attempting to establish their relevance, he argues, many proponents of “dialogue” regard truth claims as either unimportant or impediments to authentic conversation and proceed with the unreflective revision of the sacramental, theological, liturgical, and institutional texture of the Church. The rhetoric of relevance, Dulles suggests, may create a *popular* Church but not a *strong* one in the sense of having a vibrant and integrated sense of Catholicity or an organizational structure capable of engaging the world constructively. McSweeney, too, rues the confusion that the rhetoric of relevance creates: liberal Catholics who demand complete adaptation to the secular world, traditional Catholics who resist it tooth and nail, charismatic Catholics who retreat from the world into their devotional lives, and a muddled middle of individually selective “cafeteria Catholics” who pick and choose their religious life. The sense of confusion noted by McSweeney reflects the very rootlessness that Weil believes lies at the heart of the crisis of modernity. The rhetoric of relevance does not meet the challenge of rootlessness but in reality proclaims its victory. Its triumph engenders a diocesan administration that offers banal friendliness at the expense of human companionship.

Certainly, McSweeney’s trenchant analysis of modern Catholicism—and especially his critique of the Second Vatican Council—may prompt questions and even objections. Yet, when taken thematically, his work opens essential questions for diocesan administrations. If Catholicism’s encounter with modernity has left it shattered and wounded, what is next for the Church? Is organizational decline inevitable?

McSweeney is pessimistic. “Like lapsed Jews who are still inhibited from eating certain foods,” he writes, “it is force of habit rather than religious conviction or social pressure which will continue to provide a semblance of unity and community among Catholics” (239). Yet, for the rhetoric of diocesan administration, an organizational approach that merely manages decline is just as problematic as the approaches of ghetto, control, and relevance that McSweeney rejects. As diocesan administrations enter postmodernity, then, they are called to face an uncertain future with creativity, confidence, and competence. To do so, however, they are also called to rediscover their human face by looking once again to their roots.

### 3.5 The Roots of Diocesan Administration in the Postmodern Moment

McSweeney’s bleak assessment of the Church’s experience of modernity, when walked into the experiences and context of American diocesan life, suggests that the rhetoric of diocesan administration enters postmodern American society in a problematic position. In the moment of modernity, the Church attempted to hide; and when it could not hide, it attempted to control; and when it could not control, it shattered in its bid to become relevant to an age that desired so earnestly to consign religious faith to oblivion. Communicatively, this confusion led diocesan administrations to carom among the extremes of a disdainful rejection of communication, a demanding posture that refused to admit others into Ptolemaic rhetorical worlds, and a desire to communicate with everyone, everywhere without much understanding of what they were doing or why they were doing it.

All three of these rhetorical postures are now untenable. In a moment of postmodernity, where there are many acceptable religious traditions to choose from, the

ghetto penalty of excommunication seems rather quaint, and decreasing numbers of clergy and religious make the complex organizational network of the Catholic ghetto stressed with burdens and expectations that it cannot hope to meet. The sheer institutional complexity of postmodern, postindustrial society makes any expectation of controlling one's rhetorical engagement unrealistically optimistic, to say the least. In a moment of such extraordinary complexity as postmodernity, where there is no "perfect" message or way of transmitting "the facts" that will magically make people respond, calm fears, or erase perceptions of guilt or culpability, public discourse is necessarily a messy business. Finally, the posture of relevance, while perhaps more palatable to postmodern society, risks abandoning the very roots that make diocesan administration distinctive.

Moreover, McSweeney's work encourages American dioceses to recognize the persistence and coexistence of these attitudes within the Church, further complicating the rhetoric of diocesan administration. Some may long for the old world of unquestioned ecclesiastical authority and consequently adopt a rhetorical approach that is bitter, rejectionist, and silent. At the same time, others, perhaps classified as "reluctant moderns," believe that the Church can accept the good parts of the modern world, so long as it controls the terms. While more open to communicative engagement, they act only when they believe they can control the rules of the game, and they revert to responses of anger and silence when the game does not go their way. Finally, still others believe that modernity and postmodernity pose no threat to the Church whatsoever, and they dive into postmodernity without concern for the implications of those changes for Catholic Christian identity and become frustrated when they experience opposition from the "reactionaries" that express concerns over their agenda. In a rootless postmodern society

defined by religious confusion, the communication culture within diocesan administration is often just as complex and rootless as the culture outside of it.

This dissertation contends that these challenges invite a mode of rhetorical and organizational response that neither retreats from rhetorical engagement nor loses its sense of identity and purpose. Such a response requires creativity, in which dioceses are invited to learn from the past and reclaim an identity shaped not by fear or distrust but by the confident embrace of their roots. *As Simone Weil recognized in the middle of the Second World War, the challenge of meaningful institutional life in a rootless moment lies in rediscovering, rearticulating, and recovering the roots that give that institutional life meaning.* Yet, she also is realistic about this project. Our discovery of our need for roots, she notes, too often comes only after they have withered after centuries of neglect. Breathing life into the roots that sustain human life cannot be achieved through propagandistic slogans or skillful strategic planning because these are the very modern tools and technologies that dug up and destroyed human rootedness in the first place. What is needed instead is the willingness to put aside the trappings of modernity that abstracted ideas from human life and alienated persons from each other and to engage in the hard, brutal, self-sacrificing labor that gives public life a human face. It requires a willingness to become dirty, like a common laborer in the fields.

McSweeney's profound concerns over the lack of purpose and confusion within contemporary Catholicism suggest that the roots of diocesan administration may have suffered a similar fate and may require a similar intervention. In a moment in which a diversity of faith claims come into contact and an intellectual climate in which conflicting faith traditions and intellectual perspectives are taken to be equally valid, diocesan

administrations are indeed finding it difficult to exercise the theological stewardship that articulates, defines, and protects the communicative life of the diocesan Church.

Likewise, in a postindustrial moment of increasing institutional complexity and in the wake of a sexual abuse scandal in which their authority and competence has been significantly questioned, diocesan administrations are finding it difficult to operate the pastoral bureaucracy necessary to meet the needs of persons. These problems are indeed significant, but they are never significant enough for us to declare that the roots of diocesan administration have been lost. The Church has weathered intellectual and pastoral challenges that were just as dire as the challenges of postmodernity, and it is this story of survival that Newman believes establishes the nutritive truth of the Catholic faith. The roots of diocesan administration are planted in this very soil.

Weil's work encourages diocesan administration to move against the tide of a moment that often makes it seem as if the Church could—or should—do without its traditional grounding to remain relevant and vital. She invites dioceses not to evade their rootedness but to engage their roots wholeheartedly, maintaining a vibrant sense of Catholic identity in a moment of clashing narratives and virtues and managing a diocesan organization that balances the effective with the prophetic and the professional with the pastoral. *A Catholic diocesan administration seeking to grow its roots seeks ways to be more self-consciously Catholic, not less.* At the same time, Weil also reminds diocesan administrations that the truths that they present to the world cannot be severed from human life and that their bureaucratic pastoral structure should always seek to enrich the lives of persons. *A Catholic diocesan administration seeking to grow its roots seeks not*

*to retreat into bureaucratic cleanliness but to engage human life in its messiness.*

Embracing its humanity with honesty and humility, it takes the posture of a servant.

A diocesan administration that embraces the roots that give its organizational life a human face seeks to overcome the mistakes of modernity. Embracing the roots of diocesan administration does not signal a return to the antagonism of the rhetoric of the Catholic ghetto because a rooted diocesan administration does not understand its Catholicity as a set of imperial commands but as a set of truths nutritive for human existence. It does not signal a redoubling of the technological sophistication found in the rhetoric of control because a rooted diocesan administration recognizes that technological advancement, while undoubtedly important, always comes at a cost. Finally, it does not signal the weakening of Catholic identity seen in the rhetoric of relevance because a rooted diocesan administration recognizes that the tensions that Catholicism experiences in the world are constantly productive ones. A diocese connected to its roots possesses the confidence to seek out and seize unexpected opportunities, spaces of consensus, and grace-full glimmers of hope. Such moments of awakening of possibility are moments of fruitfulness and new potential for rhetorical engagement. When rooted in the traditions that give it birth, the rhetoric of diocesan administration is not a deployment of instrumental technique but an experience of Spirit-bringing *kairos*.

As the fullness of the moment of postmodernity becomes increasingly evident, the Church increasingly realizes that its approach to modernity has had several problematic consequences. But the failure of the Church to meet modernity does not mean that its failure is equally certain in postmodernity. The postmodern moment, for all its concerns, is qualitatively different from the moment that gave it birth. Unlike the moment of

modernity, whose atheistic impulses rejected religion in all its forms, whose demand for calculation and control attempted to permeate all forms of human life, and whose understanding of authority rejected the legitimacy of the charisma that sustained diocesan life, postmodernity offers a possibility that modernity often masked: Postmodernity, in admitting a plurality of voices, can hold the possibility of allowing religious belief to reenter the cultural conversation, as long as dioceses can listen to and seize the opportunities postmodernity brings. This moment of awakening of possibility is a moment of *kairos*, a time of fruitfulness and new potential for rhetorical engagement. Such engagement invites dioceses to a new posture of responsiveness that balances the demands of permanence and change in the confidence that the moment of postmodernity is the *Catholic Moment*.

## Part II: The Response of Diocesan Administration

“Part II: The Response of Diocesan Administration” begins to respond to the challenges and opportunities present in the moment of postmodernity. Michael J. Hyde (2006) has observed that the call of the moment—the “Where art thou?” that brings communicative life into being—is always incomplete without a rhetorical response, in which persons are invited to meet those challenges and opportunities with a “Here I am!” Such a response, however, requires both discernment and courage. Chapter 4, “Permanence, Change, and Administrative Play,” draws on constructive hermeneutics to describe an administrative style through which dioceses can engage the traumatic and seemingly irreconcilable conflicts between permanence and change in the postmodern moment. Throughout, it recognizes postmodernity not as a time of despair but as a time of potential, potential that Richard Neuhaus (1987) has described through the metaphor of *The Catholic Moment*. Chapter 5, “The *Kairos* of *The Catholic Moment*,” uses his work to understand the potential that exists in postmodernity for American dioceses, while Chapter 6, “The Catholic Moment as the Postmodern Turn,” invites dioceses to engage postmodernity as a time of pastoral richness and even joy.



# Chapter 4

## Permanence, Change, and Administrative Play

*How can the rhetoric of diocesan administration in the United States respond to a postmodern world of radical change?* “Today,” Pope Benedict XVI (1991/1996) has written, “the question of the Church has to a large extent become the question of how the Church can be changed” (p. 9). Perhaps the greatest administrative challenge facing American dioceses today lies in answering the question of *change* in light of the Church’s claims to ecclesiastical *permanence*. How can the Church’s traditional faith speak to a postmodern world that rejects tradition in any form? How can it participate in a postindustrial marketplace that sharply critiques its centuries of canonical procedures and habits of governance? How can it meet essential pastoral and sacramental needs without the clergy and religious it has traditionally depended upon? The last chapter described how the Church’s reactions to the radical changes of modernity led to a rigid—even fearful—administrative style that sacrificed the roots that give diocesan administration a human face. In a moment of even greater change, this chapter suggests a constructive, flexible, and confident approach to diocesan administration that allows those roots to grow: an approach of *administrative play*.

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to understand and frame a response to the challenge faced by the rhetoric of diocesan administration in a postmodern moment. Phrased more bluntly, it wonders: *How do you “run” a Catholic diocese in the Catholic Moment? Is it a problem of bureaucratic planning, managerial technique, or something else? By what standards can we say that diocesan administration succeeds or fails? What is it, exactly, that diocesan administrative rhetoric can be said to achieve?* These questions are not idle ones. Not only do they speak to the overall performance of diocesan administration, but as the works of Simone Weil (1949/1952) and James McSweeney (1980) so urgently suggested in the last chapter, the unreflective engagement of these questions also has the potential to lead to a style of diocesan administration that sacrifices a diocese’s connection with the roots that give it a sense of mission and stability.

Where should dioceses turn in answering these questions? Nearly four decades ago, James Emerson (1969), a Protestant writer, urged Christian organizations of all kinds to update and expand their administrative capacities to adapt to secular standards of performance, and the burgeoning literature on Protestant congregational development and administration reflects that these demands are still felt (see, for instance, Powers, 1997). Postindustrial management techniques exploit the communicative foreground, and in a short term sense, they have been effective. John Coleman (2002), a sociologist and Jesuit priest, argues that much of the success of Protestant megachurch evangelicalism in the postmodern moment emerges from its wholehearted embrace of contemporary management principles and techniques, particularly advertising and media technology, to meet parishioners’ evolving expectations of what congregational life and legitimate

religious institutions should be. In fact, Coleman contends that the expansion and growth of suburban megachurches often has less to do with their powerful Christian witness than with their ability to use secular marketing practices and product positioning techniques to exploit suburban rootlessness. But while these techniques are effective, Colman is deeply concerned about the subtle but fundamental ways in which postindustrial management practices change religious experience. The megachurch, he says, for all its movie theater aesthetics and espresso bars, reflects a cookie-cutter, supermarket Christianity that looks surprisingly like the consumerist suburban sprawl that surrounds it. The result of the embrace of managerial technique may feel good and be politically powerful, but it is also surprisingly shallow. In Weil's terms, these techniques and the religious experience they create speak to the fundamental sense of *rootlessness* that characterizes so much of contemporary life.

The administrative challenge of American diocesan administration lies deeper than the foreground of postindustrial management techniques. In different ways, one can see both Weil and McSweeney as being concerned with the problematic administrative responses of Catholicism to the problem of *permanence* and *change* in the moment of modernity, and this seems a more promising place to start. Organizational communication scholar George Cheney (1991) reminds us of the important role that administrative rhetoric always plays in mediating the dynamic of permanence and change, in which the ideas and understandings that give an organization a sense of stability and rootedness are constantly brought to bear in a changing world that calls those fundamental ideas and understandings into question. Given the complexity, richness, and length of the Church's two thousand years of tradition, its claims to

permanence are considerable, and the trauma of change is equally so. Weil's and McSweeney's works suggest that Catholicism's mistake in the moment of modernity lay in the inability of its administrative rhetoric to negotiate this fundamental problem.

The rhetoric of American diocesan administration begins in the tensions between the pastoral demands of a Church in a changing society and the universal claims of a global faith. "As a human practice with religious reference each action has dense and multiple levels of significance," observes a Catholic scholar—who, in a way that illustrates the sensitivity of the Church to the question of change, elects to remain anonymous (2003). "[The Church] is a single embodied practice where multiple interests intersect" (p. 475). The Church's complex texture of histories, missions, and interests—which today has risen to become a chorus of over a billion voices—creates an almost unimaginable level of institutional inertia. Though the anonymous scholar recognizes that change always occurs within the Church, this change is always relative and evolutionary. Administrative change in the Church is never a decisive act of a single person, no matter how heroic or inspired. One can recognize within the graceful, often imperceptible movements of diocesan life a sense of strength in the Church's unparalleled capacity to wait and endure. The Church's constant devotion to the faith gives Catholicism, as an institution, the capacity to transcend the failures of individual persons and survive crises that would have destroyed less complex and storied institutions, from the bubonic plague to the rise and fall of communism.

For a Church that measures "swiftness" in terms of centuries, the constant calls for acceleration and dramatic action that are the common currency of the contemporary managerial environment—and, indeed, the vernacular of Protestant church

administration—seem strangely inadequate. After two thousand years, diocesan administrations have become constantly, sometimes painfully, aware that even the best-laid plans and well-considered strategies can never move faster than a local Church can go or be implemented before the time is ripe, and this epic slowness almost necessarily stymies and frustrates the expectations of postindustrial management practices. But while dioceses may not be able to be *managed* in a secular, postindustrial sense, but they can always be constructively *engaged*. The movement from the metaphor of *organizational management* to *organizational engagement* reframes the expectations of the rhetoric of diocesan administration in important ways. Instead of seeing diocesan administrative rhetoric through the positivistic expectations of explanation, quantification, and manipulation, this new metaphor frames a diocese's success in the constant discernment and understanding of its potential. *The rhetoric of diocesan administration, when seen as the organizational engagement of diocesan life, becomes a fundamentally constructive task, its constant concern lying in inviting an encounter that enables the diocesan Church to become what it might be, instead of being preoccupied with what it is not.*

The philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1960/2004) *Truth and Method* are particularly important in understanding what the constructive organizational engagement of diocesan administration entails. Though Gadamer was not Catholic, his understanding of the interpretative act as the presentation and re-presentation of being in time possesses overtones that resonate with the sacramental context of Catholic life. Moreover, the importance of *communicative bias* in Gadamerian hermeneutics offers religious organizations like Catholic dioceses the crucial ability to

acknowledge their faith as an essential part of their administrative rhetoric. In contrast to modern managerialism's reliance on disinterested, instrumental reason, an administrative rhetoric based in constructive hermeneutics seeks a decidedly interested, organic engagement with human organization that recognizes its fundamental rootedness. Just as persons "are" the biases that they carry into the flux of historicity, organizational engagement emphasizes that dioceses "are" the roots that give them a human face—the pastoral stewardship of the Catholic faith and of human persons.

The notions of *play* and *playfulness* are vital parts of Gadamerian hermeneutics. Though he recognizes that emphasizing something as "childish" as play in the sober business of philosophical hermeneutics would seem at first to trivialize the interpretive act, he contends that play, while certainly essential to the experience of childhood, is not something that persons outgrow. In the game-like give and take of children, he recognizes a mode of encountering and experiencing being with "its own, even sacred, seriousness" (p. 102) that offers persons a new way of relating to the world beyond the "methods" of instrumental reason or the proposals of those who would "deconstruct" the world into anarchic shards. In emphasizing play, his constructive hermeneutics aims to recover a way of relating to the world that avoids the "primordial falsity" (p. 546) of the mediated cultural landscape of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and offers a practical mode of engagement that complements Weil's more mystical and philosophical analysis of modernity in *The Need for Roots*. Walked into organizational life, Gadamerian hermeneutics encourages us to see the organizational engagement of diocesan administration not as a matter of quantitative implementation, rationalized

strategic planning, or radical critique but as a matter of a constantly unfolding hermeneutic interpretation that this chapter describes *administrative play*.

This chapter contends that *administrative play*—as opposed to *communication management*—is the defining metaphor of the rhetoric of diocesan administration. After describing the phenomenon of administrative play as a form of constructive organizational engagement, it will use the work of organizational communication theorist Karl Weick (1979) to describe how administrative play can engage the essential interpretive site of permanence and change that so vexes contemporary American Catholicism. While it proposes no “method” or “strategic plan” to “solve” the problems gripping the American Church, administrative play does not trivialize the task of diocesan administration. Administrative play does not neglect the traditional tasks of diocesan administration—the assignment of clergy, the maintenance and celebration of the sacraments, the preaching and teaching of Christian doctrine, the financial oversight of Catholic life, the raising of money for diocesan projects, or the management of parish property, and so on—but rather helps dioceses to understand and engage those activities and responsibilities in deeper and more constructive ways. In addition, administrative play does not neglect the expectations of the marketplace, the organizational “rules” crafted by canonical, theological, liturgical norms, or the harsh realities of success and failure in diocesan life, but instead seeks to understand what those challenges mean and to look for new paths toward success. Finally, administrative play does not ignore the existential organizational challenges that dioceses face—secularism, anti-Catholicism, the clergy abuse scandal—but seeks to help them to discern and develop constructive rhetorical responses to those challenges.

But while it is profoundly serious in its engagement of diocesan administration, administrative play moves counter-intuitively, seeking not tense implementation but a relaxed, confident encounter with the texture of meanings that grows organically from the roots of diocesan life, and it is in this task that the essential importance of administrative play for the Catholic Moment becomes evident. In a moment in which diocesan life seems torn between the irreconcilable demands of permanence and change and flummoxed by conflicting understandings of its core values, understanding and creative engaging the fundamental roots of the diocesan Church is more essential than ever. In this organic engagement, the test of administrative play manifests itself not in metrics of efficiency or productivity or in the application of “industry standards” but in the invitation of public meanings that transform diocesan administration into a communicative home.

#### 4.2 Administrative Play as Constructive Organizational Engagement

The Church—the Body of Christ and the pilgrim People of God—is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. Unlike secular organizations, it cannot be broken apart, rationalized, or made more efficient. Thus, what is most important in diocesan life is not “efficiency” or “results” but fidelity to its theological identity, to its pastoral commitment to its people, to its willingness to minister to persons that other organizations have deemed incorrigible, and to its calling to take upon itself concerns and causes that society wishes to forget. Diocesan administration is consequently not a matter of *organizational management* but a matter of *constructive organizational engagement*. Its challenge lies in interpreting and inviting an experience of meaning that calls persons to become part of a public life of faith.



In embracing the fullness of these commitments and challenges, dioceses can take heart in the words of the prophet Isaiah, who sought to encourage an exhausted, broken nation of Israel to return from Babylonian exile to their homeland—and to seize the moment of unexpected opportunity and blessing created by the Persian liberation. “Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the Lord,” he writes. “Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug” (51:1 New Revised Standard Version). During a moment of confusion and change, Isaiah’s rhetorical response calls Israel back to its religious and cultural identity as God’s chosen people. In relying on the Lord, abstaining from idolatry, and returning to their traditions, they can reengage a cultural memory that they had believed was lost forever. This shared memory of faith and life, this *communicative home* in a land of homelessness (Arnett, 2005), provides rhetorical ground upon which the people of Israel can tread. The sense of communicative home that Isaiah articulates is not a privatized experience of “comfort” or “escape” from the challenges of Babylonian captivity but a public story that provides meaning and guidance. In calling Israel to acknowledge its tradition of faith, Isaiah reminds them that their life together transcends a simple geographic relationship but is based in a faith and a cultural memory that is not so easily destroyed.

The moment of postmodernity is a similar moment of spiritual exhaustion and homelessness (Barnes, 2003), and religious organizations are called to take this sense of spiritual alienation and abandonment seriously as part of their administrative engagement. *Diocesan administration is invited the creation of a communicative home within the local Church that sustains a vital and significant public religious life.* Where modern management theory often sees organizations as merely extensions of rational

technique or strategic planning, this chapter seeks to invite communicative home in diocesan life defined not by the metaphor of bureaucratic implementation but by the metaphor of *administrative play*. Driven not by technique but by listening to the historical moment, administrative play possesses a jazz-like quality, allowing the old and the new, the official and the unofficial, the proper and the improper, the stronger and the weaker, and the actual and the ideal to play off of each other in revelatory fashion. As a mode of constructive organizational engagement, administrative play is no idle exercise. If it fails, the rhetoric of diocesan administration has the pointless, tinny ring of incompetent irrelevance. If it succeeds, its rhetoric immerses a diocese and its stakeholders in an experience of common meaning and significance that allows for a public religious life to occur.

Administrative play represents a departure from the professional rhetoric that is often practiced in the administration of American religious institutions. A recent handbook of the Religious Communicators Council (Peck, 2004), for instance, emphasizes a purely tactical orientation to the rhetoric of religious organizations, in which the Gospel “message”—which is always assumed to be essentially static and predetermined—is merely deployed through various media “channels” like diocesan newspapers and newsletters, websites, media relations, or advertising. Indeed, this is the rhetorical assumption of the Second Vatican Council’s (1999a) statement on the media, *Inter Mirifica*, as well as several other documents developed by the Church in the course of the twentieth century. Communication in this sense is often understood as merely a conduit through which messages are disseminated, and its working rhetorical theory is defined by what George Kennedy (1999) would call *technical rhetoric*, in which

professional religious communicators are preoccupied with the technical aspects of “messaging” while deferring the development of the substance of rhetorical appeals to others engaged in more theologically and intellectually intensive modes of ministry. Such centralization and channeling of messages is defined by a modernist communicative model of *transmission* (Carey, 1992). The effectiveness of communication is measured quantifiably through metrics of clarity, speed, and precision.

A professional perspective based in communicative technique is formidable because it relies on a social scientific methodology that gives its assumptions a sense of self-evident validity. Yet, while this model remains powerful and important, it is also in many ways communicatively unsophisticated and, more important, perhaps detrimental to diocesan administration. James Carey (1992) believes that the modern emphasis on transmission and clarity sacrifices meaning and human context, and Catholic scholars are even more concerned about how communication technique sacrifices the rhetorical richness of the Catholic faith. Even as he recognizes that media technology’s capacity to broadcast the Church’s message to the world seems to comport with the Church’s kerygmatic mission, Avery Dulles (1988) notes that an overemphasis on media neglects the sacramental, communal, and dialogic dimensions of Catholic rhetoric. And even as he admits that the centralized nature of the mass media of television, print, and radio during the twentieth century made it easier for the Church to control its engagement with modernity, Robert White (2001) contends that the results of the Church’s strategy created an image of American Catholicism as distant, propagandistic, and authoritarian.

Administrative play represents a departure from this emphasis on communicative technique. A diocesan administration’s capacity for administrative play rests not on its

technical skills or technological capabilities but on its ability to interpret and engage the diocese's corporate life through a posture of constant invitation, learning, and interpretation. Like jazz musicians improvising in a concert hall, who adapt to the moment by listening to each other and by interpreting the rhythm and melody of the musical score, their administrative rhetoric is open but not chaotic, flexible but not ungrounded in substance.<sup>4</sup> Administrative play involves three movements: acknowledging the *charism* that enables diocesan ministry, engaging and interpreting the various *organizational texts* of diocesan administration, and, finally, inviting an experience of *public meaning* that engages the diocese and its stakeholders in a communicative home of significance and action.

*4.2.1 Acknowledging the charism of diocesan ministry.* The notion of *charism* speaks to the notions of gift and giftedness. In constructive hermeneutics, gift and play are intertwined. A gift, according to the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (1996), is "something that is bestowed voluntarily and without compensation; the act, right, or power of giving; a talent, an endowment, an aptitude, or a bent" (p. 765). This definition is expansive, covering not only physical possessions but also abilities or proclivities that enable persons to act in the world. For a contemporary American society defined by materialism and consumerism, the notion of gift and giftedness is often understood in narrow, individualistic terms, as an individual possession for individual use. However, the work of Gadamer, who is particularly interested in the value of *tradition* in the interpretive life of a people, invites us to expand our understanding of gift and giftedness to include *social* and *communal* gifts as well. In this expanded sense, the

---

<sup>4</sup> Virtuoso jazz guitarist Pat Metheny (2001) describes his understanding of ensemble performance in terms remarkably similar to those of constructive hermeneutics.

traditional beliefs, values, and practices bestowed upon the present by the past can be recognized as gifts with uniquely powerful resonance not only in the lives of individual persons but also in the life of a community as a whole. By recognizing and accepting these communal gifts, communities come to be equipped to engage the world in a moral or spiritual sense. In acknowledging their giftedness, communities come to understand what Charles Taylor (1989) describes as “moral sources”—strong and binding sentiments that guide their relations with each other, their sense of self and dignity, and their sense of purpose or destiny in the world.

Because they spread across generations, providing communities a source of purpose and confidence, one can discern within common gifts a sense of *being-in-the-world*. A group’s acknowledgement of its gifts, however, is not an experience of absolute certainty but is always historically situated in their corporate experience, an experience that the Greeks placed under the category of *nomos*. Yet, to describe a diocese’s giftedness as rooted in *nomos*—as opposed to *physis* or nature—does not diminish it. Gifts are given for a reason, and this reason creates a tie between the giver and the receiver and calls the receiver to a sense of gratitude and indebtedness toward the giver. In the case of communal gifts and giftedness, this sense of gratitude and indebtedness is a legacy spans generations and defines the moral “home” of community life, what Aristotle (trans. 1984) calls *ethos*. A community that recognizes its gifts does so not with arrogance but with humility. As Hannah Arendt (1998) urges, the giftedness that defines a people’s sense of home should be cared for as one would a child.

The broadly social understanding of gifts and giftedness suggested by Gadamer’s embrace of historicity and tradition reflects the understanding of mission and identity

found in Catholic contexts, particularly in the communities of consecrated life—women and men religious—who understand their lives together as guided by *charism*, a sense of spiritual purpose and the spiritual ability to meet that purpose. “Whether extraordinary or simple and humble,” the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, “charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men [and women], and the needs of the world” (sec. 799). Because it is understood as coming from God through the Holy Spirit, charism is recognized as engendering a special relationship between God and the community who receives it. In receiving God’s gift, communities of consecrated life not only recognize the benefits and freedoms of the gift but also accept the responsibilities and constraints found in responding to it. The communal sense of giftedness implied in the Catholic sense of charism is a common understanding of legacy, a common feeling of gratitude, and a corporate sense of blessing that invites corporate response. The fragility of a community’s charism is not a cause for despair but a call to use that corporate giftedness in the constant presentation and re-presentation of a meaningful life together.

The importance of charism in communities of consecrated life prompts reflection on the unique charism of diocesan administration. In part, diocesan administration finds its charism in the roots that give it a human face. As the previous chapter suggested, this giftedness manifests itself in the call of diocesan administration to exercise theological stewardship over the faith and to care for persons, tasks that Church understands through the pastoral offices of *munus regendi* (ruling), *munis docendi* (teaching), and *munis sanctificandi* (sanctifying). Recognizing that diocesan administration is a form of giftedness adds an additional dimension to the metaphor of *munus*, away from the

traditional Latin understandings of “task,” “function,” and “responsibility”—metaphors that have a distinctly modern, linear, and bureaucratic cast—toward another understanding, that of “gift”—which moves diocesan administration away from modernist organizational demands of implementation and deployment. In acknowledging their pastoral role as a form of charism, Catholic dioceses understand their canonical responsibility and authority not as a simple administrative function but as a spiritual calling that invites constant stewardship and constructive response.

In addition to this institutionally delegated charism, Catholic dioceses experience other, more localized gifts that depend on their specific experiences and historical moments. Regardless of the challenges and adversities that they face, every Catholic diocese has been given much by God and always has much to give. Their weaknesses and threats are always complemented by opportunities and strengths. Some dioceses may have wealth, while others have youth. Some dioceses may have an abundance of academic and health care institutions that provide important services to the region and the world, while others may be experiencing a remarkable and unexpected growth in vocations. Administrative play constantly owns and exercises stewardship over the *organizational gifts* that give diocesan administration the capacity to address its world. In embracing this organizational giftedness as part of their charism, dioceses discover that they are not another bureaucratic organization but are always blessed to be a blessing (Cf., Gen 12:1-2). This sense of blessing invites a way of being-in-the-world that rests not in stress-filled strategic planning to force solutions on the Church but in responding to God’s own timing and purposes. Embracing the charism of diocesan administration reminds it that every person engaged in its ministry, every cent given to it to achieve its

objectives, and every second in which it can act in the world is a gift breathed upon it by God. This giftedness makes diocesan administration an occasion of extraordinary gratitude and responsibility.

In the presentation and re-presentation of the charism of diocesan ministry, dioceses acknowledge the gifts that they have been given and that call the diocesan Church to the responsibility of creating a communicative home. The metaphor of charism constantly reminds diocesan administrations of the need to embrace their unique giftedness: *How has God blessed diocesan administration within this historical moment?* But more important, charism also reminds dioceses that their giftedness is not an end unto itself, nor is it the property of a few: *What are the implications of this unique giftedness? How does it call the diocesan Church to responsibility? How can it be shared with others?* In answering these questions, diocesan administrations can discover the foundation of a meaningful encounter with the diocesan Church and with God. Yet, charism of diocesan administration is only one part of its organizational engagement. In responding to these gifts through celebrating the sacraments, preaching the Gospel, helping others, building institutions, defining rules, and forging relationships, dioceses create and experience the artifacts that constitute their public discourse. These *organizational texts* are a vital part of diocesan life and therefore essential to its administrative play.

*4.2.2 Engaging the organizational texts of diocesan administration.* The charism of diocesan ministry endows the diocesan Church with the sense of identity and the rhetorical resources to enter the public conversation. As it does, it provides the foundation for the interpretation of *organizational texts* in the invitational creation of a



communicative home within the diocesan Church. The notion of organizational “text” or “textuality,” however, does not limit diocesan administration to the printed word. For Gadamer, the metaphor of *text* includes all forms of human artistic and social activity wherever understanding is in question. His hermeneutics begins with the presupposition that life is shot-through with ambiguous encounters that call for interpretive engagement. This is no less true for organizational life, whose pie charts and statements of cash flows, managerial orders and anecdotes, water cooler chatter and board room deliberations, and office spaces and lunch rooms provide a diverse ecology of texts and counter-texts calling for understanding. As the question of meaning is occurs constantly throughout organizations—as stakeholders attempt to come to grips with their organizational situation through the various sources of information at their disposal, figure out what financial data “really means,” understand the agendas behind managerial discourses, interpret the importance of the organization’s mission and identity, and so on—constructive hermeneutics finds constant opportunities for interpretive engagement.

Though all organizations are rich in textual resources, diocesan administration’s two thousand years of history makes it particularly blessed, and its administrative play seeks out, prioritizes, and engages the extraordinary textual thickness of its organizational life. As an institution characterized by a complex texture of ideas, structural elements, and human complexity, diocesan administration is defined by the *intellectual texts* of theology, spirituality, and ethics; the *structural texts* of canon law, bureaucratic structure, and the activities of the marketplace; and the *human texts* of deeply rooted cultural patterns, professional relationships, and institutional linkages sustained over time. Some of these texts are of recent development, while others may be thousands of years old.

Some may be official in nature, while others emerge spontaneously from the grass roots of parish life. Administrative play seeks to interpret these texts in relation to each other—the ways that they enlighten each other, contradict each other, and even negate each other—to rearticulate and renew the Church within each historical moment.

Gadamer’s constructive understanding of textual interpretation rejects the modernist understanding of textual analysis that purports to apply a hermeneutical “methodology” to texts that can yield a single, “correct” meaning. But while its interpretive efforts are never an exact science, administrative play maintains its grounding by owning the *interpretive bias* that emerges from its communicative standpoint. As the work of John Henry Newman (1960) suggests, the communicative standpoint of diocesan administration is always characterized by a deep commitment toward the conservation of the institutional charism that gives rise to its rhetoric. The *sensus fidei*—the tradition that has sustained the Church for two thousand years—represents the spiritual heart of diocesan life, and the canonical norms and procedures that have sustained diocesan administration for twenty centuries similarly represent the administrative heart of diocesan life. A faith that refuses to acknowledge the irreplaceable significance of these gifts, from Newman’s perspective at least, is not much of a faith at all. Likewise, the Church believes that the financial, human, and social goods a diocesan Church has received cannot be sacrificed or treated lightly, and this belief undergirds the communicative standpoint of diocesan administration. *Thus, the interpretive bias of diocesan administration is always one of institutional conservatism that seeks to preserve its connections with its charism.*

In the conservative interpretive bias of diocesan administration, the charism that defines diocesan life informs its textual engagement. In the spirit of Walter Fisher's (1987) narrative paradigm, the administrative play of diocesan administration is defined not by scientific clarity and quantitative analysis but by readings characterized by *coherence*—the ability to “hang together” within experience—and *fidelity*—the ability to “ring true” to the values and “good reasons” embedded within its sense of tradition and giftedness (p. 47) . While it recognizes the impossibility of a “perfect” interpretation or a “precise” answer, administrative play acknowledges that depending on the historical moment, some interpretations will always represent a better stewardship of its charism—that is, be more reflective of pastoral realities, be more faithful to a diocese's Catholic identity, or be more useful in meeting pastoral needs—than others. As it blends interpretation and practical judgment based in this rhetoric of good reasons, administrative play seeks a seamless blend of interpretation and action within the historical moment.

Abandoning the modernist ideals of clarity, instrumental reason, and individualistic, heroic leadership, administrative play sees decision makers as seeking to do their best to understand and engage an ambiguous institutional legacy that both constrains and enables organizational life. Its questions turn not on “hard data” or “the facts” but on the playful engagement of human action. Engaging the textual data of the historical moment in terms of the sometimes contradictory texts of Catholic teaching, the structural concerns and needs of the diocesan Church, and the human complexity of the relationships that sustain diocesan life, it asks: *What are the organizational texts that define diocesan administration? What are the conflicts and resonances between these*

*organizational texts? What are the points of agreement and disagreement? How can a center of agreement be invited into being within this textual complexity?* Through this textual engagement, administrative play seeks to create an interpretive home that works as a juncture between the global Church and the local Church. These questions are difficult ones, and they may take considerable time for a diocesan administration to answer them, not because it is ineffective but because it recognizes that communicative homes can only emerge through constructive engagement. Administrative play invites solutions to present themselves through care, attentiveness, and patience sustained by faith and realistic hope. If it is successful, it invites a communicative home characterized not by privatized religious sentiment but by an experience of *public meaning*.

*4.2.3 Inviting an experience of public meaning.* Gadamer contends that while play is often associated with childhood, playfulness is no idle thing but an experience of serious importance for human life. Through play, he observes, persons are invited to embed themselves something greater, their actions merging into a public conversation of lasting value. “The attraction of a game, the fascination it exerts,” he writes, “consists precisely in the fact that the game masters the players” (p. 106). For those immersed in such *deep play* (Geertz, 1973), experience takes on an uncanny resonance, as fleeting moments attached to the unique “now” are suddenly recognized as exemplars of universality. In the process, agents enter a hermeneutic circle in which part and whole come into tension: individual versus ensemble, present versus eternal, particular versus universal. They encounter meaning and situate themselves within a common endeavor that they know began long before they came and will continue long after they are gone.

Play thus crafts a texture of *public meaning* that engages a community's entire membership and invites them to common action.

Administrative play recognizes that public meanings cannot be forced but only invited into being. Difficult to create but easily destroyed, they require constant care. The patience and attentiveness required by administrative play moves against the grain of a postindustrial managerial culture that demands speed and snap managerial decisions. Intriguingly, though, Herbert Simon (1997) has observed that organizations not only create spaces for improvisation and administrative play but also seem to require them. Organizational agents for Simon are embedded in a broader social drama that is shot-through with common meaning and significance, and play is an essential in negotiating this meaning. "Administration is not unlike play-acting," Simon observes.

The task of the good actor is to know and play his role, although different roles may differ greatly in content. The effectiveness of the performance will depend on the effectiveness of the play and the effectiveness with which it is played. The effectiveness of the administrative process will vary with the effectiveness of the organization and the effectiveness with which the members play their parts. (p. 360)

Simon's work encourages us to recognize the playfulness inherent any organization.

Administrative play renders organizational actions intelligible by sustaining and articulating institutional values in recognizable ways, and Simon contends that such intelligibility is surprisingly essential: Where organizational decisions are not meaningful to the participants—where they seem to deny or ignore organizational histories, betray expectations built up over time, or contradict foundational values—they invite the cynicism and suspicion that corrode organizations from within. *Strong organizations, he contends, are playful organizations, and the performance of administrative play is vital in transforming organizational life into an absorbing, participatory phenomenon.*

In inviting organizations to acknowledge their giftedness and explore their textual complexity in order to breathe life into the ideas and values that call it into being within the historical moment, administrative play emphasizes the importance of *epideictic rhetoric*—rhetoric that articulates, advocates, and strengthens organizational values—as a form of organizational discourse. The moment of modernity, constantly concerned with foreground administrative action, brought decision-based discourses—*judicial rhetoric* to assign blame or causation in the past and *legislative rhetoric* to make decisions about the near or long-term future—to the forefront of organizational life. While this move has allowed for organizational discourses to focus on foreground concerns of efficiency and effectiveness, it unreflectively assumed a consensus about public values that no longer exists in a moment of postmodern diversity. An organization that lives solely on a diet of judicial and legislative rhetoric may find itself talking about efficiency and effectiveness without knowing exactly what those organizational values mean.

Certainly, the epideictic focus of administrative play does not mean that it abandons judicial and legislative rhetoric. Diocesan administrations will always have to understand the causes of problems and consider possible solutions. But as confusion over public values continues to divide the public sphere, and as that confusion penetrates the administrative life of the Church, epideictic rhetoric becomes increasingly essential in creating and sustaining its organizational effectiveness because it invites the common vocabulary of values by which organizational decisions can be made intelligible. In a postmodern moment fractured by contentious and incommensurable ideological claims, Michael J. Hyde (2006) has emphasized epideictic rhetoric's power to acknowledge differences in values and invite spaces of agreement where common action can occur.

“Rhetoric, functioning as a tool of acknowledgement, transforms time and space in order to provide a dwelling place (a home) for people to gain some understanding of truth and to cultivate moral thought and action,” he notes. “It may be possible to employ rhetoric simply as a means of manipulation and deceit, but it also offers itself as a tool for collaborative deliberation whereby people are encouraged to take an active role in discovering and remaining open to all that needs to be observed in a given situation if disputable matters are to be resolved in a reasonable and truthful matter” (p. 101). Hyde further contends that while epideictic rhetoric indeed foregrounds the importance of style, epideictic cannot exist without the acknowledgement of the substance found in the language of human values. The public meanings it invites do not deny or trivialize the substance found in the charisms and organizational texts that define diocesan administrative life. Rather, they work within and through that substance—framing it, giving it shape, and putting it in perspective—to enable a diocese’s administrative life to be understood and engaged by all of its stakeholders.

In taking seriously the organizational concerns of a pluralistic moment in which persons cannot be assumed to agree on public values, the epideictic rhetoric of administrative play seeks to equip participants with the knowledge and ability to perform the roles they are called upon to perform in intelligible, generative, and sustainable ways. In declaring its choice and bias, administrative play does not compel participation but rather encourages discussion, clarification, and public acknowledgement of its value-laden choices. While an organization based in imperative control *demands* assent, an organization that has constructively publicized and owned its values *invites* assent. In place of the neurotic guilt of *unobtrusive control* (Tompkins and Cheney, 1985)—in

which persons accept organizational premises and experience obligations without understanding why—constructive administrative play seeks a more nuanced understanding of responsibility and accountability based in public choices of how to give one's life. Administrative play thus implies not freedom *from* organizational life, but freedom *for* a particular way of organizational life within a public texture of meaning and participation. When it is effective—that is, when it produces results while owning and confirming the organization's core values—the organization experiences a deepening of understanding and participation among management and stakeholders alike.

The free and flowing motion of play often masks its seriousness and the concerted effort it entails: making explicit choices concerning values, roles, and responsibilities; publicizing fundamental beliefs and organizational values; allowing organizational actors the freedom to recognize and accept those beliefs and values; and inviting them to embody those values in conscious and public ways. The scope and implications of these activities can encompass a large group of people or even all of a given organization's members and stakeholders. The need for public meaning prompts diocesan administrations to ask questions as to how it can engage its stakeholders to invite them into its life: *How can a diocesan administration engage its people? How can it invite them not only to understand and share its values but also to engage with those values and carry them forward into the world? How can diocesan administration invite others to join in its interpretive dance?* In asking these questions, diocesan administrations invite the creation of a communicative home within the diocesan Church.

*4.2.4 Administrative play in practice.* How can administrative play engage organizational life? Janie Harden Fritz's (1997) essay on developing communication



curricula in a Catholic university suggests the complexity of this communicative labor in the governance of a Catholic organization. Describing the organizational challenges involved, she recognizes the importance of “the field, the specific university, and society” (p. 25) in negotiating her department’s complex institutional and managerial environment. Fritz’s work describes how the department’s commitment to the discipline, the calling of Catholic higher education, and the specific mission of the university in which the department is embedded can be acknowledged not as obstacles or hindrances but as sustaining *charisms* that ground the department’s administrative life. Her work also suggests how the competing claims emerging from the varying understandings of the field, from the structural interests of the university, and from the ongoing interests and values of the wider society can be acknowledged not as incommensurable interests but as *organizational texts* that call for interpretive engagement. As it playfully interweaves these complex intellectual, structural, and human texts, the core curriculum she describes can be seen as a statement of what the department “is” within the historical moment, inviting departmental stakeholders—students, faculty, administrators, and marketplace peers—to participate in an ongoing conversation embedded in *public meaning*.

As an organizational event, the process that Fritz describes is not the deployment of an organizational technique but a form of administrative play through which the department’s gifts are acknowledged and its competing intellectual, structural, and human texts are engaged to invite a meaningful corporate life. If the result of the administrative play is positive—that is, if the curriculum is judged not only to be a quality product but also to reflect the core values of the discipline, university, and society—the curriculum not only resonates meaningfully with the students and departmental faculty directly

participating in the courses but can also be understood as significant by the university community and the marketplace. In turn, stakeholders are invited to participate more deeply: students may be attracted to the program, departmental faculty may be inspired to develop better and more sophisticated courses based on the choices the curriculum embodies, university administrators may understand the department as contributing to the university's overall mission, and marketplace peers may not only be more interested in hiring graduates but may also be more interested in engaging the department in other ways. This experience of public meaning invites a communicative home.

During a time of theological confusion and lack of consensus concerning the aims and purposes of diocesan administration, administrative play's emphasis on articulating, clarifying, and inviting participation in organizational values is becoming increasingly essential in transforming dioceses into communicative homes capable of sustaining human life. *But more important, in thriving on the intersections between the organizational and the epideictic, and in making the cultivation and articulation of core values the centerpiece of administrative discourse, administrative play engages diocesan life at its strongest point.* As a charismatic bureaucracy that draws from the sacramental presentation and re-presentation of the Catholic faith, dioceses embody a public language of values that precedes any other form of rhetoric. Administrative play's constant engagement of the *charism* and *organizational texts* of diocesan life invite the *public meanings* that transform diocesan administration from a rationalistic bureaucracy into a sacramental home. In a postmodern moment, this administrative play is increasingly crucial. For a Church exhausted by the radical juxtapositions of *permanence* and *change*, it offers the possibility of articulating a communicative home in the postmodern moment.

### 4.3 Engaging Permanence and Change

As a form of epideictic administrative discourse, administrative play recognizes that the organizational challenge of diocesan life is often less about making rational and efficient decisions than it is about inviting the public meanings that give those managerial decisions context, significance, and texture. In the moment of postmodernity, as rapid social *change* gives rise to new values that increasingly challenge the beliefs that many Catholic Christians once took to be *permanent*, the value-articulating and meaning-inviting qualities of administrative play are increasingly essential to the rhetoric of diocesan administration.

The work of William McSweeney (1980) reminds us that the constructive engagement of permanence and change has been the predominant problem of Catholic administration since the beginning of modernity. Its challenge lies neither in neglecting one for the other—adopting neither a posture of militant defensiveness of the traditions of the Church nor a posture of heedless change in the name of “relevance”—or in declaring premature “solutions” that ignore the depth of the problems that the Church faces. Instead, its rhetorical and organizational challenge lies in finding ways to view the tensions of permanence and change in a productive fashion that acknowledges that both the tradition of the Church and the changes of the moment as significant. Administrative play encourages diocesan administration to look toward seeing the tension between permanence and change not as a *threat* but as an *interpretive site* that constantly invites constructive engagement and communicative response.

The work of Karl Weick (1979) offers a helpful guide in the constructive engagement of permanence and change. While he, like Gadamer, is a secular scholar,

Weick's work is important for Catholic diocesan administration two reasons. First, Weick defines organizational life not in terms of structure or behavior but in terms of *sense-making*. For Weick, organizations exist not to exploit their environment but to endow it with meaning through an evolutionary process of *enactment*, *selection*, and *retention*, through which organizational members respond their environment, remember the effectiveness of particular responses, and then apply the most successful responses whenever those circumstances repeat themselves. Technology, statistical data, and instrumental reason—the buzzwords of postindustrial management theory—are not the ends of organizational life for Weick but are always at the service of the intimately human, constantly organic process of *organizing*. Second, and perhaps more important, Weick recognizes that organizing, as an ongoing interpretive encounter, is always linguistically situated in the *grammars*, *puns*, and *vernaculars* that organization members use to understand their experience. Organizing is therefore inherently *textual*, and the task of management is not to *control* organizations but to *appreciate* them by interpreting and engaging the texts that emerge from the organization's cycles of enactment and retention. Taken together, Weick's embrace of the organic, intuitive, and emergent dimensions of human organization moves his theory of organizing—and of administration—to a decidedly constructive and playful posture.

In the administrative play of organizing, Weick emphasizes how an organization's memory both helps and hinders its ongoing environmental sense-making. In fact, in many ways, an organization for Weick "is" its memory: An organization that chooses to remember nothing risks becoming merely a group of individuals acting randomly in the dark. Yet, he warns that organizations often remember too well. Whenever the

environment changes and the organizational memory that served so well in the past proves unable to meet the needs of the present, organizations often struggle to understand their new world and adapt to it. Consequently, echoing Nietzsche (1874/1997), whose “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life” contends that those who fail to forget “can perish from a single experience, from a single painful event . . . like a man [or woman] bleeding to death from a single scratch” (p. 62), Weick counsels organizations to be as disciplined in *forgetting* as they are conscientious in *remembering* to allow for new interpretive engagement to take place and new organizational solutions to emerge.

But organizational forgetting can come at a price. An organization, Weick observes, can become so preoccupied with changing to meet the moment—or to become relevant to its marketplace—that it can lose itself in its attempts at flexibility. “The trouble with total flexibility is that the organization can’t over time retain a sense of identity and continuity,” he writes. “Any social unit is defined in part by its history, by what it has done and by what it has chosen repeatedly. Chronic flexibility destroys identity” (p. 215). Any short-term gains in the marketplace created by such wanton forgetting—in popularity or profitability, for instance—will be off-set by losses in identity over the long term. For Weick, an organization can indeed gain the whole world at the price of its very soul, and his work reminds us that the dioceses that ignore their institutional memory in the name of “flexibility” or “relevance” do so at the price of their identity. To some extent, Weick’s realization confirms the conservative bias of diocesan administration. *Organizationally and theologically, there are some things that diocesan administrations simply cannot forget, no matter how much their culture or the marketplace wants them to.*

As a result, the interpretive site of permanence and change, the tension between remembering and forgetting, is always a delicate balance that takes a critical—but not too critical—perspective on organizational memory. For Weick, an organization’s claims to permanence—statements of mission and identity, longstanding operating procedures, habitual ways of thinking or approaching the world, and so on—can never be summarily rejected because they are essential for helping organizations to engage their environment. Just as sounds can only be discerned in the presence of silence, or movement can only be discerned against a background of stillness, moments of change only become clear when they are placed against a background of permanence. But neither can organizational permanence be accepted without question. Rather, his work invites diocesan administrations to submit their claims to permanence to a constant process of interpretive questioning that seeks to come to new understandings of old ideas. Through this process of playful interpretive engagement, the organizational permanence that emerges from the past is not rejected but reframed in light of new experiences, becoming neither a meaningless constraint nor a necessary evil but an organizational texture that is constantly renewed and rendered supple to meet the needs of the moment.

*4.3.1 Engaging permanence through administrative play.* Weick’s recognition of the importance of permanence in organizing encourages dioceses to engage their organizational texts in ways that open constructive possibilities for diocesan life. For diocesan administrations, this can be a difficult task. Even the youngest Catholic diocese in the United States participates in an institutional memory that is over two thousand years old, and the complexity of this memory, embodied in a complex textual body of canonical procedures, complex ecclesiologies, liturgical books, and deep-seated ways of

thinking and acting, contributes to the unique sensibility of diocesan administration. Dioceses know that they draw from a global Church in which they are never alone, and their thick body of organizational texts constantly assures them of their institutional tradition's ability to survive in even the most hostile of environments, as long as they maintain their connection with the global Church and the past it represents.

Yet, Weick's work also leads us to expect that after two thousand years of enactment, selection, and retention, the breadth and complexity of this institutional would be extensive and potentially overwhelming. Indeed, as he writes about diocesan administration shortly after the Second Vatican Council, James Drane (1969) observes how the depth and detail of Catholic memory often creates a culture of fearful implementation. In place of the playful engagement of organizational texts often is a pervasive fear of interpretive failure that overloads diocesan administration in even the simplest of tasks:

In an age when the Church must struggle with new needs, new tasks, new challenges and develop new structures to correspond to its liturgical and ecumenical ideals every move cannot be covered by a rule. The rule book mentality of Church officials explains the Church's arrival at every crisis too late to make a contribution. By the time rules are developed for a situation the crisis is past. The extent to which this mentality permeates many Church authorities is almost beyond belief. I once watched chancery bureaucrats struggle to get set rules to cover every case in an ongoing ecumenical process. The idea of meeting a new situation with a responsible act which may be against an outdated rule was looked upon as pure idiocy. Even the rules which the bishop himself was forced to make for an interim period became absolutes. (p. 60)

While he recognizes the importance of diocesan administration, Drane is deeply concerned about its tendency toward anxiety and rule-fixation in its communicative engagement, in which administrative trivialities become distracting organizational obsessions. Decades later, Paul Wilkes (2001) account of successful Catholic parishes

describes a Catholic administrative culture that is often preoccupied by serpentine, even Kafkaesque internal processes. He warns that such sclerotic management often drives people away from the Church and inhibits the flexible, entrepreneurial approach to ministry that is increasingly necessary in a complex, postindustrial context. While Drane and Wilkes often seem potentially careless in their willingness to disregard the charisms and texts of Catholic institutional life, the trend these Catholic writers note underscores Weick's argument concerning the problems posed by an overly long, overly complicated, and overly codified organizational memory that leads to interpretive confusion and paralysis. Instead of inviting public meanings that give shape and purpose to diocesan life, the interpretive site of permanence and change can be characterized by anxious, hermetically sealed textual interpretations that ultimately hinder the diocesan Church.

Administrative play of diocesan administration engages interpretive site of permanence and change from a relaxed, constantly constructive posture. Even as it takes an unapologetically conservative approach toward the past, it seeks ways in which the institutional memory that sustains diocesan life can be opened and used in new ways. Such a posture is not unprecedented in Catholic administration. Though it expects its dioceses all draw from the same institutional memory, for instance, the Church also expects that dioceses in different areas of the world will adapt to the experiences and cultural understandings of the environments they serve. A Midwestern diocese where populations are based on the cultural heritage of northern European immigrants will not be the same as a Southwestern one based in a culture deeply influenced by Latino immigrants. A diocese in a predominantly Catholic area will possess a different sense of identity and purpose than one where Catholicism is a threatened minority. These



dioceses possess the same gift of faith, and because they all follow canon law, they will have the similar structural elements. But they will be experienced differently, live differently, and communicate differently as they make formal and informal promises to their people, come to enjoy different types of ecumenical or interfaith relationships, and suffer successes and setbacks. In each of these cases, diocesan administrations engage in an interpretive encounter through which they interweave the Church's organizational texts and the pastoral needs of the moment to tell a unique administrative story.

The Church understands this process of interpretive growth through the theological metaphor of *enculturation*. Describing the ways that the Church establishes itself within the life of a group of people, enculturation speaks to the ways in which the faith *lives*, not as a theological abstraction or as a structural apparatus but as an incarnation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ within a particular cultural and historical moment. Enculturation should not be misunderstood to mean that the Church surrenders itself to the values of the culture it serves. If anything, the conservative bias of diocesan administration means that dioceses will always choose to hold tenaciously to the tradition that gives them strength. But instead of repeating Catholic ecclesiology by rote technique or replicating the same organizational structure regardless of the social needs, enculturation recognizes that dioceses constantly present and re-present the Church anew wherever it is through the creative engagement of the organizational texts that define diocesan life. Enculturation, as a constructive approach to organizational life, reveals diocesan administration's expertise in *additive change*: its unprecedented ability to accept gradually and deliberately only those developments and adaptations that grow and strengthen its pursuit of its fundamental mission (Arnett and Arneson, 1999).

While it recognizes the importance of its institutional memory, enculturation provides a metaphorical point of entry for a diocese's constructive engagement with its institutional memory. Yet, as Weick's work leads us to expect, enculturation requires constant effort and interpretive activity. It urges diocesan administrations to ask: *How can dioceses become places of pastoral joy and flexibility? What is essential in diocesan life, what is important, and what is merely preferable? How can diocesan administration not be overwhelmed by unnecessary administrative detail? How can dioceses use their traditional grounding to open new possibilities for the Church?* In asking these questions, administrative play neither obsesses about the Church's administrative tradition nor rejects its grounding but seeks to use it consciously, explicitly, and constructively in a world of constant change. The past is not a set of iron laws or administrative procedures that demands anxious adherence but a sustaining source of discursive life that becomes new in every generation as dioceses become confident and relaxed in their administrative identity.

*3.4.2 Engaging change through administrative play.* Weick's recognition of the importance of change in organizing encourages diocesan administration to recognize the growing proliferation and cultural importance of alternative organizational texts in the moment of postmodernity. Within the American Catholic context, diocesan administrations in the moment of postmodernity hear the call for change from every direction. Carol Jablonski's articles on the post-conciliar rhetoric of Catholic bishops (1980) and the rhetoric of American Catholic women (1988) reflect the sense of uncertainty that still confronts the Church over the question of *theological change*, while Thomas Reese (1989) writes of the struggles that dioceses often have in embracing

*organizational change* in a moment of increasing complexity in the marketplace and decreasing numbers of priests and religious. While many of current calls for change within the Church reflect perspectives and ideologies that call into question the Church's claims to institutional permanence, administrative play recognizes that these calls, as organizational texts, bring their own interpretive potential. They remind diocesan administrations about the importance of *organizational learning*.

In a constantly changing postindustrial economy, organizational scholars are increasingly aware of the importance of developing the potential of organizations to learn. Learning organizations are not only able to exploit opportunities but are also able to explore and define opportunities in complex environments (March, 1994; Weick and Westley, 1999). Organizational scholars recognize that in addition to speaking well, learning organizations understand how to listen well, and their work provides several metaphors that provide diocesan administrations with entry points for hermeneutic engagement with a changing environment. Mary Ann Hazen's (1993) metaphor of *polyphonic organization* holds particularly important lessons for diocesan administration. Instead of understanding organizations in *visual* terms—as flow charts, lines of commands, statistics, and graphs—she uses the work of Mikhail Bakhtin to argue that organizations are *sonic* entities, in which the various discourses—professional and lay, elite and vernacular, managerial and worker—compete for discursive space. “If any of us listens with a postmodern ear, she or he can hear such voices in any organization” she writes. “They may be suppressed, muffled, inarticulate, halting, but they are there” (p. 21). In another essay (1994), she urges organizational communicators to become conscious of the unique discourses and distinctive ways of speaking that come from

social and organizational roles, cultures and genders, and experiences and values, and the ways that these myriad discourses find homes in the rhetorical life of an organization.

Other scholars have made similar observations, and their metaphors offer diocesan administrations additional points of hermeneutic entry to the changing discourses of their environments. James Taylor (1993) reminds diocesan leaders—so used to having their pronouncements being accepted as authoritative as a matter of course—that for every *official text* promulgated by institutional authorities, there is an *anti-text* developed through ordinary communication that participates in, rejects, parodies, or ignores outright those solemn pronouncements. Official texts cannot refute their anti-texts, Taylor contends, but can only engage them in interpretive conversation. Likewise, Gerard Hauser (1999) has noted the importance of *vernacular voices*—the quiet conversations in bingo halls and parish parking lots, school meetings and small Catholic communities—within institutional life, whether they are recognized as existing or not. In emphasizing the powerful resources that vernacular publics possess, Hauser reminds diocesan communicators to be aware of, listen to, and engage these vernacular voices alongside their commitments to elite discourses. Extending Hauser’s work into diocesan administration, C. T. Maier (2005) has emphasized the necessity of cultivating a posture of *openness*, *attentiveness*, and *responsiveness* to these vernacular discourses, especially in moments of crisis and contention.

For a diocese—and, indeed, any organization—that has forgotten how to listen, awakening to the realization that there are other points of view than its own can be understood as a fall into chaos and a moment of frustration and despair. Yet, the works of Hazen, Taylor, and Hauser remind us that once a diocese finds that it is not the only

one speaking, that other discourses matter, and that its existence depends on a texture of public discourses that it can only partially control, it recognizes the contingent complexity of its rhetorical life. In moving from what Bakhtin (1963/1982) would call a *Ptolemaic universe*—in which they are placed at the center—toward a *Galilean universe*—in which they are but one discourse among many—diocesan administrations do not find weakness but opportunities to learn and chances to improve. This realization, Hazen (1994) observes, is the beginning of organizational wisdom.

Similarly, Kevin Barge and Martin Little (2002) have emphasized the importance of *dialogical wisdom*, which recognizes that organizational discourse is a constant play between contradictory forces that create and diminish unity. Dialogical wisdom is not a managerial technique or method but a cultivation of three rhetorical sensibilities: the *sensibility for wholeness*, which grasps the potential for unity among the various discourses in its midst; the *sensibility for uniqueness*, which understands the unique needs of the historical moment and respond to them; and the *sensibility for emergence*, which acknowledges the heteroglossia of the organizational reality and attends to emergent voices. Framing such sensibilities in terms of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, Barge and Little invite diocesan administrations to find ways to attend to the heteroglossia of their environments. Dialogic wisdom invites dioceses to see their structure not as a set of boxes but as a nexus of discourses: priestly discourses, lay discourses, administrative discourses, canonical discourses, professional discourses, discourses of consecrated life, racial and cultural discourses, gendered discourses, and ethical and theological discourses. It recognizes the irreducible complexity of diocesan administration, but it

does not despair. Rather, it listens to it, unable to turn away, excited by the richness of the potential that conversation brings.

Avery Dulles (2002) rightly reminds diocesan administrations of the dangers of unreflective communicative engagement in a moment of postmodern confusion. Yet, acknowledging postmodern polyphony is not the same as being mesmerized by it. Realizing the existence, significance—or even legitimacy—of anti-texts and vernacular voices is not the same as agreeing with them or surrendering the Church's tradition to their whims. As the principle of enculturation reminds us, the administrative strength of Catholicism lies in its capacity for *additive*, not *substitutional change*. Additive change in diocesan administration seeks to learn how to understand and adapt to its environment while maintaining its core values and charism. It may bend, but it never breaks.

As they remind dioceses that they are never isolated but are always deeply embedded in and indebted to the discourses of others, the metaphors of *organizational polyphony*, *official text/anti-text*, *vernacular voices*, and *dialogic wisdom* provide helpful ways for diocesan administrations to extend their engagement of the interpretive site of permanence and change. Their important and often challenging questions invite dioceses to grow through additive change: *What are the various discourses and communicative standpoints in the diocesan environment? What are the anti-texts that call its official discourses into question? What are ordinary people—Catholics and non-Catholics—talking about in parish groups and school bus stops? How can dioceses welcome and engage these discourses—even those that they disagree with, that are rooted in emotivism or irrational fears, or that come from standpoints that would seriously alter Catholic faith and life—in light of their pastoral mission?* Not all of this engagement will bear

fruit. In moments of change where there is confusion and contention over social values, often the best a diocese can hope for is to be understood. But while engagement may not succeed, the only true failure in administrative play is the failure to engage at all.

Administrative play engages the interpretive site of permanence and change as an opportunity for constant learning in diocesan administration—even from those discourses, persons, or organizations that the Church cannot support. Seeking a diocesan life that capable of engaging postmodernity by bending without breaking, dioceses recognize that their rootedness in the faith still offers essential lessons to the world, yet they also recognize that the world has the potential to teach them how to serve better. From the perspective of Weick, this double recognition transforms diocesan administration from a bureaucratic *organization* under siege into an experience of dynamic *organizing* that can recognize the constant possibility of possibility amidst postmodern diversity and change. In this recognition, diocesan administration becomes open to the opportunities of *kairos*.

#### 4.4 Administrative Play and *Kairos*

Administrative play invites diocesan administrations to adopt a posture toward postmodernity that challenges and changes the ways in which they have typically engaged the world. Administrative play does not resist the roots that give diocesan administration its purpose and pastoral mission but seeks to grow and strengthen those roots to meet emerging opportunities within the diocesan Church. Instead of perceiving the world from a posture of fear and control—or from a posture of instrumental reason and strategic calculation—administrative play acknowledges the unique *charism* that gives diocesan life its being and grounding and the theological, structural, and human

*organizational texts* that define diocesan ministry to invite the emergence of *public meaning* that holds out the possibility of a communicative home with the diocesan Church. Through listening to the moment, diocesan administration is defined by constant interpretation and learning through which diocesan rhetors match the sensitivity to the concerns of the moment with the labor necessary to turn that moment to the advantage of the Gospel. In learning these lessons and developing the capacity to transform the problems of the age into opportunities for ministry and institutional life, dioceses can come to recognize *kairos* within the postmodern moment.

The approach of administrative play is not unprecedented. In his *Interpretation of History*, Paul Tillich (1936) urges a similar return to playfulness in the Christian theological tradition. Following Heidegger, Tillich is concerned that the calculation and bureaucratic rationalization of modernity have engendered a form of theoretical asceticism that resolves human life into the bland predictability of chronological time. In this world of closed ontic horizons, he privileges the agonistic experience of *boundaries*, in which claims of strength and permanence are matched by realizations of fragility and change. As these tensions are acknowledged, he argues, kairotic moments of challenge and decision appear, calling for the answers of theological discourse. Yet, Tillich does not diminish the importance of permanence or render the *ordeal of change* (Hoffer, 1976) irrelevant. Rather, his work invites Christians to avoid the extremes of denying change for the contrived clarity of metaphysical certitude and of unreflectively embracing change in a posture of specious relevance but to receive the call of change as an invitation to an ordeal from which new life can come.



Tillich reminds us that the process of organizational learning is never easy. The answering experience of *kairos* comes not of its own accord but is called forth in the pain of belief torn asunder. Thus, while it may be easy to chastise the Church for its difficult path through the moments of modernity and postmodernity, its ordeals and failures are not only understandable but also in some sense absolutely necessary. Had the Church *not* struggled against modernity—had it not engaged in the ordeal of change—it would have meant that it had found it easy to dispense with the identity that had guided it for so long. In other words, the Church would have found it easy to stop being the Church, which would have thrown its entire history—and the very foundation of its faith—into question.

Yet, even as the ordeal of change is inescapable and painful, it is not a cause for despair. In fact, administrative play is always a communicative engagement rooted in confidence and realistic hope. When it is grounded in the eternal focus of its faith, its institutionality, and its mission, diocesan administration can find that it is not *hindered* but actually *freed* to meet the practical realities of a changing world. Administrative play invites dioceses to recognize, simultaneously, that change is neither a threat because it is always rooted in a broader texture of permanence and meaning, nor is it so urgent a necessity as to warrant the sorts of desperate changes in belief or administrative structure that the Church's critics often demand. In fact, administrative play recognizes that it is precisely the Church's willingness to embrace the ordeal of change that allows a sense of *kairotic ripening* to occur, through which diocesan administration feels called to speak not of its own accord but through the mystery and power of the tradition that it carries into the historical moment. In stepping into the new, it carries with it the understandings

of the old that give it not only a sense of confidence but also the resources for understanding and responding to the concerns of the future.

The challenge facing diocesan administration in the moment of postmodernity lies neither in retreating into the contrived comforts of a militant stronghold nor in diluting its beliefs or message to become more palatable to secular society, but in finding new and invitational ways to speak and listen in a world that is changing every day. Such an orientation recognizes that even as the roots that give diocesan administration its human face—exercising stewardship over the faith and providing for the pastoral care of persons—remain essential to diocesan life, the customary ways of tending toward those roots may not longer be historically appropriate. Richard Neuhaus' (1987) *The Catholic Moment* conveys a similar message. In postmodernity, the gift of faith does not change, nor does the call to preserve the dignity of persons. At the same time, however, diocesan administrations are constantly invited to learn how to become better dioceses—more confident, more competent, more caring, and more self-consciously Catholic—than ever before. Neuhaus contends that the *Catholic Moment*, the leitmotif of this dissertation, is a moment in which American Catholicism has regained the confidence to engage and learn from the world, and with this confidence comes the realization of possibilities that only *kairos* can bring. The text chapter will expand upon the transformative implications of Neuhaus's metaphor for the rhetoric of diocesan administration.

# Chapter 5

## *The Kairos of The Catholic Moment*

*How can Richard Neuhaus's (1987) metaphor of the Catholic Moment inform and transform diocesan administration in the moment of postmodernity?* Previous chapters have sought to understand both the challenges facing Catholic dioceses in postmodern American society and the resources that they have at their disposal in meeting those challenges. They have contended that in a moment of postmodern change, diocesan administration finds its confidence and strength not in the deployment of sophisticated managerial techniques but in the growing and tending of its roots—the stewardship of the Catholic faith and the pastoral care of persons—through the playful engagement of the historical moment. This chapter contends that Neuhaus's metaphor of the *Catholic Moment*—a guiding metaphor of this dissertation—proves essential in allowing Catholic dioceses to see the historical moment of postmodernity in ways conducive to this administrative play. The metaphor of the Catholic Moment invites dioceses to engage postmodernity not as a moment of anxiety or frustration but as a moment of fruition and opportunity. The Catholic Moment, in short, transforms postmodernity into an occasion of *kairos*—as long as dioceses are open and willing to seize it.

## 5.1 Introduction

Richard John Neuhaus—Catholic priest, editor of the influential journal *First Things*, and one of the most influential Christian intellectuals today—offers an important perspective on the relationship between religion and American public life. Alongside his work with *First Things*, he is perhaps best known for *The Naked Public Square* (1984), whose title continues to be echoed in his monthly column for his journal. Echoing Emile Durkheim and Robert Bellah, *The Naked Public Square* contends that the rise of an increasingly secular, post-Christian American society has threatened to leave the American public sphere barren of meaning and incapable of sustaining a viable public life. While he recognizes the dangers and excesses of religion, Neuhaus argues that without a civil religion, “politics becomes civil war carried on by other means” (p. 99). And, he concludes, American society has little time before secular totalitarianism and fundamentalist patriotism—which he understands to be demonic distortions of the ever-present religious impulse—carry the day.

But while Neuhaus is deeply committed to sustaining a public religious conversation in American life, he is also painfully aware that religion’s track record in American public life has not been an entirely positive one. Throughout American history, he remarks, American Christians have often shown themselves to be incapable of compromise, their passionate rhetoric displaying an unreflective triumphalism that often ignores their own sinfulness. He urges American Christians to resist this tendency. “Democratic discourse,” Neuhaus notes, “as Reinhold Niebuhr tirelessly insisted, depends not so much upon our agreement about righteousness as upon our agreement about sin—our own sin, and thus our own fallibility, as well as the sin and fallibility of

others” (p. 53). He urges American Christians to replace their triumphalist posture with one of humble engagement. But how can American Christianity learn this new way of being in the world? What does this engagement look like in practice?

In a way, one can read *The Catholic Moment* (1987), published just three years later, as answering the questions of *The Naked Public Square*. For Neuhaus, the metaphor of the *Catholic Moment* marks the emergence of a response to the Naked Public Square from what would seem to be an unlikely place: the Roman Catholic Church. Contrary to William McSweeney’s (1980) dismal picture of Roman Catholicism in the decades after the Second Vatican Council, Neuhaus hears the call of the Catholic Moment in the very paradoxes and conflicts that the Council exposed: between conservative and liberal, new and old, and traditional and innovative. While he recognizes the challenges that these tensions pose for the Church, Neuhaus views them as indicative not of a crisis but of a moment of *maturation*—of kairoitic *fruition*—in which the Church can rediscover a sense of energy and purpose in the *paradox* that has always existed between the promise of faith that it proclaims and a promise-less, faith-less world. For Neuhaus, the challenge of American Catholicism in postmodernity—and, indeed, the true spirit of the Second Vatican Council—is not to “resolve” the paradox or “riddle” of American Catholicism (Pelikan, 1959) in ways that would make it more “relevant” to American society but to find ways to define and deepen that sense of paradox between the Church and the world and to bring that sense of paradoxical difference invitationally into the public life. Administratively, the Catholic Moment invites dioceses to move away from a posture of ghettoized disdain, anxious control, or specious relevance to

transform the conversation in the Naked Public Square through a posture of grounded engagement.

*The Catholic Moment is here, Neuhaus writes, waiting for the Church to grasp its kairotic possibility.* Different dioceses will answer the Catholic Moment differently, as their administrative engagement plays forth in the world. However, Neuhaus's work points to three common threads of the Catholic Moment that have important implications throughout diocesan administration. This chapter will discuss these threads in turn. First, the Catholic Moment is a *Postliberal Moment*, in which the Church seeks not to resolve the paradox of American Catholicism but instead labors in the opposite direction, defining the paradoxes and tensions that alert American culture to its religious crisis. Second, the Catholic Moment is situated within a *Gnostic Moment* in which the Church is called to ground the chaotic intellectual culture of American public discourse and re-orient humanity's desire for freedom, meaning, and community. Third, the Catholic Moment is a *Moment of Dialogic Demand* in which the Church is called to a more nuanced and engaged understanding of its use of ecclesiastical authority.

Each of the three threads of the Catholic Moment has the potential to transform the rhetorical *topoi* that define the rhetoric of diocesan administration: the *topos* of evangelization, the *topos* of cooperation, and the *topos* of decision. In a Postliberal Moment in which religious devotion has been weakened, the *topos* of evangelization awakens diocesan administration to the opportunity to spread and defend the Gospel through the unapologetic, invitational ownership of the Catholic faith. In a Gnostic Moment in which the novelty and pleasure of knowledge is often more important than its veracity, the *topos* of cooperation becomes an opportunity to develop the interpretive

grounding of diocesan life. In a Moment of Dialogic Demand, the *topos* of decision becomes an opportunity for the Church to wield its authority in vigorous, yet invitational ways. Neuhaus believes that the American Church, in receiving these opportunities, has the potential to make the world a better place for freedom and justice. He does not consider the possibility of failure, not because it is too painful to contemplate, but because he has faith that the Catholic Moment is a moment of unique opportunity, challenge, and realistic hope.

## 5.2 A Postliberal Moment

From the very beginning, American Catholicism has faced the challenge of competing against alternative religious viewpoints. But in the Naked Public Square of postmodernity, the Church encounters an increasingly difficult religious environment in which variety of religious and non-religious perspectives mix together in complex and unexpected ways. This rise of such contending religious standpoints creates significant problems for theological reflection, as well as a drive for meaning and theological consistency that David Tracy (1975) describes as a *blessed rage for order*. Amidst such uncertainty, Tracy contends, Christian scholars often develop the theological equivalent of multiple personality disorder, as they find themselves torn between the needs of their religious tradition, the academy, and whatever parts of society they happen to call home. To meet this problem, Tracy advocates a move toward *revisionist theology*, in which Christian theologians seek to use Christian metaphors and narratives to define and refine postmodernity's public religious engagement of the *limit experiences* of science, morality, and everyday life. Standing above the theological fray, Tracy's revisionist

theologians attempt to weave a new public religious order out of the threads of the past and the present.

Unlike the theological perspectives of sectarian orthodoxy, theological liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, and theological radicalism, which Tracy understands as operating through prescribed rubrics or methodologies, revisionist theology wholeheartedly embraces theological hermeneutics. Protestant theologian Stephen Placher (1989), a critic of Tracy's, grants that this hermeneutic sophistication is essential in maintaining the public value of Christian theology in an increasingly secular age. It reminds Christian theology that it cannot be a theology of the ghetto, interested in stroking its own ego and claims to truth as a burning world finds those claims increasingly irrelevant. Yet, in a particularly important turn, Placher also believes that revisionist theology's hermeneutic engagement with postmodernity, while indeed significant, lacks the disciplined grounding and acknowledgement of theological bias that a fully constructive theological hermeneutics demands.

To maintain their public viability, Placher argues, revisionist theologians necessarily operate at a constant distance from their religious tradition. He is concerned that while revisionist theologians retain a religious vocabulary that is in some sense Christological, their discourse is so embedded in the motifs of the postmodern moment that it risks losing its grounding. For Placher, revisionist theologians risk becoming *homeless* theologians, who pay for their public mouthpiece by shedding any claim to a sustaining tradition. "Christian apologists can adopt the language and assumptions of their audience so thoroughly that they no longer speak with a distinctively Christian voice," he writes. "As a result, they not only cease to give a faithful account of the



Christian tradition, they cease to be interesting to their non-Christian listener because they do not seem to have anything new or different to say” (p. 11). Ironically, he believes, such *apologetic Christianity*—a Christian theology that apologizes for its interpretive biases and grounding—offers actually offers *less* to human life than the theologies it intends to replace. Espousing a groundless religious vocabulary, it neither challenges nor comforts the Naked Public Square it desires to help.

But perhaps more important for the purpose of this dissertation, revisionist theology also represents significant pastoral problems for diocesan administration. Tracy’s approach seems most appropriate for Christian theologians seeking a fundamental theology capable of engaging the multiple demands of a secular academy. The needs of diocesan administration, however, are decidedly different. Diocesan administration, as an institution designed and pledged to preserve the tradition of the Catholic Christian faith, is far more concerned with maintaining its people’s links with the past than revisionist theology would ever permit. Its pastoral mission, informed by its strong bias toward institutional conservatism, cannot be served by calls to abandon its tradition-bound metaphorical vocabulary in favor of dramatically new formulations, no matter how popular those new formulations are. Rooted in the preservation of Catholic orthodoxy and orthopraxy, dioceses quickly find that revisionist theology takes them beyond where they can comfortably go.

Yet, the conservationist commitments of diocesan administration do not necessarily trap it in a theological ghetto. Placher believes that the reality of postmodern diversity demands a pastoral theology that negotiates difference without succumbing to it. In contrast to Tracy’s work, he welcomes the advent of George Lindbeck’s (1984) *The*

*Nature of Doctrine*. Lindbeck sees contemporary religious discourse as emerging from two fundamentally opposed understandings of theological and religious life: a “cognitive” approach to religion that emphasizes the objective and absolute truth of religious claims and an “experiential-expressive” approach that emphasizes the relativistic, emotional dimension of religion (p. 16). He argues that contemporary religion’s reliance upon such incommensurable foundations—which loosely correspond to the conservative and liberal wings of Christianity—has led to the impasse that characterizes the postmodern religious situation. Echoing the work of Thomas Kuhn (1996), who argues that dysfunctionality in “normal science” leads to the development of new scientific theory, Lindbeck contends that normal theology’s way of adjudicating disputes has failed. In its place, he proposes a new paradigm that is neither conservative theology nor liberal theology but *postliberal theology*.

Instead of basing postliberal theology on either claims to absolute truth or the privatized and relativistic witness of religious sentiments, Lindbeck founds his theory in language and discourse. Religions, he contends, are “comprehensive interpretive schemes, usually embodied in myths or narratives and heavily ritualized, which structure human experience and understanding of self and world” (p. 32). Unlike emotive approaches to theology, postliberal theology recognizes that faith claims have a cognitive dimension. As statements about what a community believes to be true, they can be assessed, both in terms of their value as truth claims as well as in terms of the sorts of communities, practices, sentiments, and institutional forms that they engender. For postliberal theology, minimizing differences between religious standpoints, while preserving a semblance of cultural concord, actually disrespects the religious life that it

claims to “tolerate.” Yet, instead of seeing faith claims as absolute, transcendental statements that hold true for all times and places, postliberal theology recognizes the fact that other religious perspectives exist and have value for human life.

For Lindbeck, there is no Archimedean point from which to assess the veracity of religious traditions. Yet, while postliberal theology recognizes that religious differences exist and have consequences for human life, it also firmly believes that religious differences—even deep differences—need not be insuperable obstacles to cooperation between persons of different faiths or even different traditions within the same faith. Grounded within its sustaining tradition, postliberal theology constantly invites differing communicative and theological standpoints into conversation in order to refine perspectives, mitigate conflicts, or even create spaces of agreement through mutual learning. In such discourse, believers of various faith traditions aim not to *convert* but to *assist* each other.

Christianity may have a responsibility to help other movements and other religions make their own particular contributions, which may be quite distinct from the Christian one, to the preparation for the Consummation. The missionary task of Christians may at times be to encourage Marxists to become better Marxists, Jews and Muslims to become better Jews and Muslims, and Buddhists to become better Buddhists (although admittedly their notion of what a “better Marxist,” etc., is will be influenced by Christian norms). (p. 54)

Even when agreement or reconciliation cannot be reached, the overriding concern of postliberalism lies not in the forced clarity of triumphalist absolutism but in articulating one’s own religious rootedness amidst a vibrant public religious conversation. Its posture is simultaneously both resolutely grounded in its tradition and constantly invitational in its encounters with the world.

Postliberal theology's engagement with ecumenical and interreligious difference begins not with an impulse to unreflective relativism but with a robust sense of identity. It represents what Placher calls *unapologetic theology*, in that it believes that a fervent embrace one's own religious standpoint is always a prerequisite for public religious conversation. While a postliberal perspective recommends that Catholics engaging in ecumenical or interreligious discourse always do so with a conscious and foregrounded sense of their Catholicity, Placher contends that postliberalism is not, as revisionist theologians may contend, a return to a ghetto mentality. A ghetto mentality is defined in terms of *containment*, in which lines are constantly and defensively drawn between "inside" and "outside," "correct" and "incorrect," "believer" and "unbeliever," and "orthodox" and "heretic." In contrast, postliberal theology, especially when understood through the lens of constructive hermeneutics, rejects the insularity of containment for an emphasis on *grounding*. Its hermeneutic engagement with diversity bases interfaith dialogue not in the abandonment of one's own convictions and differences but in the ownership, understanding, and articulation of the ideological commitments, theological backgrounds, and historical narratives that guide one's life. Instead of demanding that persons agree when they cannot agree, it acknowledges the importance of difference in a spirit of winsomeness and charity that keeps the conversation going. By embodying such invitational grounding, diocesan administrations can see within the Catholic Moment a glimpse of what can be called a *Postliberal Moment*.

#### *5.2.1 The significance of the Postliberal Moment for diocesan administration.*

Neuhaus finds Lindbeck's postliberal perspective to be essential for the Catholic Moment, not only for its theological merits but also for its ability to explain the

pontificates of both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. While he finds no direct correlation between the last two papacies and postliberalism, since neither pope publicly announced his indebtedness to Lindbeck, Neuhaus's close observations of the Extraordinary Synod of 1985 and *The Ratzinger Report* suggest considerable resonances that he believes cannot be coincidental. The resonances that Neuhaus notes hold particular importance for this dissertation's discussion of diocesan administration because they invite a flexible understanding of institutional conservatism. Postliberalism is indeed conservative in the sense that it possesses a bias toward "conserving" its tradition by understanding, articulating, and, at times, defending it. Yet, while a postliberal theological perspective owns and constantly commends the religious tradition that gives its pronouncements meaning, it also recognizes the limitations of its standpoint, and this humility gives it the ability and willingness to encounter difference with a winsomeness and charity that religious absolutism cannot.

Clearly, neither the pontificates of Pope John Paul II nor Pope Benedict XVI can be understood to reflect the standpoint of theological liberalism. In fact, as Neuhaus reports, Pope John Paul II was so popular among Catholic conservatives because he brought "a feeling of relief that at least somebody, John Paul, [was] calling the church to order, [was] seizing a few unruly adolescents by the scuffs of their necks and knocking some sense into their heads" (p. 99). Yet, this acrimonious—indeed, violent—reading of the two most recent pontificates is, at least from a postliberal perspective, highly inaccurate. Neuhaus contends that the strong statements of Popes John Paul and Benedict emphasizing traditional Catholic teaching do not indicate a call to "law and order," a return to ecclesiastical fundamentalism, a manifestation of Tridentine triumphalism, or a

demand to overturn the Second Vatican Council. Instead, postliberal theology represents an attempt to restore the grounding of the Catholic faith in order to regain a sense of missionary urgency and distinctive Catholic identity in a moment of postmodern secularization and polarization. “To the extent that Roman Catholics are unapologetically Roman Catholic,” Neuhaus writes, “both the distinctiveness and the attractiveness of the faith will be enhanced” (p. 105). By enhancing the distinctiveness of traditional Catholic identity, an unapologetically postliberal Catholic position attempts to find a position where it can engage a changing, diverse world from a solid grounding. It seeks to be more, not less, self-consciously Catholic than ever before. In grasping the possibilities inherent in this unapologetic declaration of the faith, the Catholic Moment becomes a Postliberal Moment.

In a secularized, postmodern American society, the Postliberal Moment recognizes that the faith that sustains diocesan life—sacramental ministry, a celibate clergy, the rhythms of liturgical life, the complexity of Catholic theology and social teaching—can sometimes seem burdensome, out-of-date, or something to be hidden. Nevertheless, it emphasizes that attempting to make the grounding of the Catholic faith “relevant” or “more interesting” to the Naked Public Square is precisely the wrong direction for diocesan administrations to pursue because it sacrifices the very ground that gives their administrative life significance. As a result, the Catholic Moment asks: *How can diocesan administrations own and foreground their identity as Catholic institutions? What does it mean to be a Catholic institution in this historical moment? How can diocesan administrations celebrate the excitement of their faith? What does their unapologetic statement of faith say to the culture in their diocesan region, the nation, and*

*the world?* Instead of fleeing their identity, the Catholic Moment, as a Postliberal Moment, constantly invites diocesan administrations to seek opportunities to clarify and declare who they are and what they stand for. It recognizes that the unapologetically Catholic standpoint of diocesan life does not bar it from public discourse but rather provides a point of entry, as long as dioceses are able to recognize the value of this standpoint and the irreplaceable possibilities that standing in an unapologetically paradoxical relationship to the world brings.

At the same time, however, the confusion and opposition that often greets the Church's engagement with postmodernity prompts additional questions of diocesan administration in the Catholic Moment. David Kinnaman and Dave Lyons (2007) remind Christians of all traditions that their unreflective and often hostile rhetorical practices—a “shadow side” of Christianity that they call *unChristian* faith—not only drive people from the Church but also seriously compromise the position of Christianity in an increasingly pluralistic society. Kinnaman and Lyons's concerns make Neuhaus's treatment of Lindbeck's postliberal theology even more compelling. While the Postliberal Moment emphasizes the importance of the declarative strength found in the traditional grounding of diocesan life, it recognizes that the reality of religious pluralism in the moment of postmodernity is best addressed with charity. The Catholic Moment consequently asks: *How can diocesan administrations engage a secular society that does not understand and often misinterprets the message of the Catholic faith? How can they encounter anti-Catholic and anti-Christian hostility with grace? How can they communicate differences—even the deepest differences—with charity and respect?* As they declare themselves and their Catholic identity, diocesan administrations in the

Catholic Moment are invited to emphasize the life-bringing character of their institutional commitments, discover how to operate in a world in which the Christian worldview is neither central nor ascendant, and find ways to communicate paradoxical difference with strength and love. Dioceses exist to offer a constant invitation to faith in a hostile, changing world. This sense of grounded, invitational engagement reinvigorates one of the core *topoi* of the rhetoric of diocesan administration: the *topos* of evangelization.

*5.2.2 The Postliberal Moment and the topos of evangelization.* As it reminds diocesan Churches how the power of the Catholic faith can reinvigorate everything that they do, the Postliberal Moment constantly invites diocesan administrations to evangelize their people, their region, and their world. In this capacity, it transforms a rhetorical task that the Church has found increasingly necessary for the last half century. A decade after the end of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI's (1975) apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* begins with alarm, as if the Church had been unceremoniously roused from a dream. "In our day, what has happened to that hidden energy of the Good News, which is able to have a powerful effect on man's conscience?" he asks. "To what extent and in what way is that evangelical force capable of really transforming the people of this century?" (sec. 4) Not only were there greater threats outside of the Church—secularism had transformed into what Pope Paul calls "a man centered atheism, no longer abstract and metaphysical but pragmatic, systematic and militant" (sec. 55)—but there was an emerging inner threat. Growing numbers of laity in all levels of society, while not formally separated from the Church, were no longer practicing the faith. For Pope Paul, it was an evangelical crisis of global proportions.



Yet, instead of seeing the evangelical challenges of postmodernity as moments of frustration and despair, the Postliberal Moment reads the intellectual and cultural challenges to the faith in the Naked Public Square as teachable opportunities. Ronald Rolheiser (2004), Catholic priest and president of the Oblate School of Theology, writes:

The intellectual disaffection with Christianity today is not bad. It's just unfinished. It needs to grow up more and become cognizant that the heritage of which Catholics are so critical is the very same thing that has given them the freedom, insight, and self-confidence to speak all those words of criticism. (p. 126)

In many ways, Rolheiser's advice can turn diocesan administrations toward what postliberal theologian William Werpehowski (1986) describes as an *ad hoc* approach to evangelization and apologetics, an approach that is not haphazard or reactive but rather so consciously grounded within the texture of the faith that it can be deployed at a moment's notice. In such an approach, the rhetorical task is not to "defeat" opposing arguments, "denounce" challenges to the faith, or "argue" others into submission to the Gospel but to articulate and present the Catholic faith as reasonably and winsomely as possible. Its response to challenge is not angry indignation but a constant invitation to a way of life defined by the Catholic faith.

Such an approach is consonant with the evangelical rhetoric of Pope John Paul II's (1990) *Redemptoris Missio*, which declares postmodernity to be a "new springtime" of faith (sec. 2). The metaphor of *springtime* is important for several reasons. It does not diminish the sense of challenge and urgency found in many parts of the Church in Europe and the United States, where Catholicism currently weathers chilly cultural storms. But in proclaiming the approach of spring, he reminds the Church that the crises of postmodernity mark but a season in its life. New life is possible, and is indeed as

inevitable as the passing of time. In changing the defining metaphor of postmodernity from *crisis* to *springtime*, he frames the current historical moment not as a time of death but as a time of hope. In recognizing this season and the fullness it holds, diocesan administrations can come to dwell in a new moment of opportunity, in which the *topos* of evangelization is understood not through the language of existential crisis but through the language of dynamic opportunity. This language is sensitive and searching, attentive to the possibilities for faith in the world. It is a language of *kairos*.

*Redemptoris Missio* articulates a new reason for evangelization in the moment of postmodernity. The *topos* of evangelization not only defends and preserves the Church, but it also strengthens it. “Faith,” Pope John Paul exclaims, “is strengthened when it is given to others!” (sec. 2) Fifteen years after *Evangelii Nuntandi*, which decried the loss of faith in so many parts of the Church, *Redemptoris Missio* sees new possibilities for evangelization everywhere:

On the other hand, our own times offer the Church new opportunities in this field: we have witnessed the collapse of oppressive ideologies and political systems; the opening of frontiers and the formation of a more united world due to an increase in communications; the affirmation among peoples of the gospel values which Jesus made incarnate in his own life (peace, justice, brotherhood, concern for the needy); and a kind of soulless economic and technical development which only stimulates the search for the truth about God, about man and about the meaning of life itself. (sec. 3)

This new situation of evangelical opportunity, he observes, is radically changing, with different audiences and groups requiring radically different rhetorical approaches. There are those who have never been evangelized, he says, and cultures that have never been reached by the Gospel. For this reason, the traditional missionary efforts of the Church remain necessary. There are others who have been thoroughly evangelized and are living in solid Christian communities. For these people, evangelization is necessary for them to

maintain and deepen their faith and commitment to the Gospel. And finally, there are those who have fallen away from the faith, who need not evangelization but what he calls the “new evangelization” (sec. 3) to invite them to return to the Church.

During the new springtime of the faith, evangelization in the post-Christian cultures of Western Europe and North America invites engagement in what John Paul calls “the modern equivalents of the Areopagus” (sec. 37). This includes not only the media and social communications but also any area where Christian perspective may be welcome: cultural life, the pursuit of peace and justice on the international stage, racism and economic dislocation, the advancement and development of human dignity, scientific research, health care, and the environment. The purpose of the *topos* of evangelization is not merely to invite new converts to the faith but to invite “a new human society based on a ‘civilization of love’” (sec. 51). Its rhetoric of evangelization seeks to heal and renew human culture, not merely to save individual souls. The Postliberal Moment pursues the *topos* of evangelization not through self-interested technique designed to increase membership roles or through rhetorical coercion that forces persons of other faiths to reject their religious grounding. Its posture is one of constant invitation. “The Church proposes,” he writes. “She imposes nothing” (sec. 39).

The evangelical rhetoric of diocesan administrations accepts the task and risk of developing and articulating an integrated, classically Catholic evangelizing message appropriate for a historical moment defined by meaninglessness, confusion, cynicism, and despair. The Postliberal Moment experiences *kairos* not by divesting the Church of its heritage in favor of a minimalist Catholicism driven by opinion polls but instead by moving toward a stronger ownership of traditional Catholic beliefs. This communicative

posture invites Catholics, lapsed Catholics, and non-Catholics to a deeper appreciation of the personal and social implications of the Catholic understanding of the Christian message. The new evangelization consequently moves counter-intuitively, seeking not to create a *palatable faith* but a *paradoxical faith* that creates tension, asks uncomfortable questions, and invites persons to a different way of life. In recognizing the tension and discomfort that such stances create within public discourse, it invites rhetorical opportunities of kairotic energy and power that open possibilities for the diocesan Church in a time of profound confusion—confusion that Neuhaus understands through the metaphor of *postmodern Gnosticism*. The Catholic Moment is situated within a *Gnostic Moment* that demands that dioceses manage the increasing proliferation of information in their environments to coordinate and sustain a meaningful public religious life.

### 5.3 A Gnostic Moment

Drawing on the insights of French Catholic theologian Henri du Lubac, Neuhaus uses the metaphor of *Gnosticism* to describe the intellectual environment of the postmodern American Church. The notion of Gnosticism, of course, has complex connotations, referring not only to a diverse set of ancient texts suppressed by the Church as heretical—the so-called “Gnostic gospels” that preached the saving power of *gnosis*, or knowledge, and often denied the importance of Christ’s physical body in the economy of salvation (Pagels, 1979)—but also to a strain of popular spirituality, epitomized in novels like *The Da Vinci Code* (Brown, 2003), that eschews the constraints of Christian life for New Age, post-Christian theosophy. Neuhaus, however, uses the terms *Gnostic* and *Gnosticism* differently, to refer not to a particular set of proscribed texts or heretical doctrines but to the idolatrous worship of knowledge for its own sake.

Christian Gnostics in Neuhaus's sense may be liberal or conservative, and they espouse ideologies and causes that, in a narrow sense, may actually be quite laudable. *For Neuhaus, the problem with Gnosticism is that, in whatever form, it always worships knowledge at the expense of the Body of Christ.* Gnostics are problematic, in other words, not necessarily because of their ideas but because of their demand that the Church follow their particular ideology, cause, or point of view *ad extremis* without considering the consequences. Religious intellectual discourse is reduced to an exercise of phatic theatricality, through which speakers, writers, and self-styled pundits attempt to transform the Church's complex intellectual heritage into competing sets of bullet points or issues statements and the Church's historical unity into a network of politicized interest groups. As they place their own ideology above the needs of the Body of Christ, they attempt to force the Church to become what it can never be or to recreate a Church that never was. In the process, they harm that which they purport to love.

The emergence of what can be called a *Gnostic Moment* in the Church reflects a broader sense of confusion throughout postmodern society. French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard (1979/1984) has notably described the moment of postmodernity as a *crisis of knowledge*, a crisis that has a number of unexpected and challenging consequences for economic and organizational life. Sociologist Daniel Bell (1973) has described the *postindustrial economy* of postmodernity—called such because of its reliance on technology, information, and service corporations instead of the industrial behemoths of the modern world—as a *knowledge economy* served by a *knowledge class* of intellectuals and researchers tasked with providing and interpreting the data necessary to create value and manage economic life. Yet, even as the production of knowledge

takes on extraordinary importance in the economic and social integration of humanity, the postmodern crisis of knowledge means that this vital pursuit is always haunted by the specter of the unreliability of its epistemological foundations. Like the poor little rich girl, who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing, postindustrial society has the power of knowing everything without understanding what anything means.

The unsettled postmodern knowledge economy has decisive organizational consequences for diocesan administration. Like Bell, Neuhaus describes the rise within the Church of a *Catholic knowledge class* of academics, journalists, attorneys, and other intellectuals competing for ideological space. This group, he urges, is “a class in the classic sense of the term, with its own interests, habits of mind, occupational guilds, and struggles with other classes” (p. 79). For Neuhaus, the tension between furthering one’s career through membership in a particular part of the Catholic knowledge class and furthering the Church through constructive scholarship cannot help but create an intellectual and spiritual identity crisis. Of course, the problem Neuhaus describes is not new. In the late Renaissance, for instance, Desiderius Erasmus (trans. 1993) observed that the scholarly classes—lawyers, poets, teachers, scholars, theologians, and others—were increasingly dominated by the lure of reputation and stipends created by the invention of the printing press and the emergence of the cult of authorship. Pet theories, warring schools, intellectual doublespeak, and inane trifles made intellectual discourse less a pursuit of truth than a form of performance art, in which the sole task of intellectual life was to prove to one’s peers that one was, in fact, peerless.

A scholar himself, Neuhaus recognizes the importance of intellectual activity in meeting the Catholic Moment. He is neither obscurantist nor anti-intellectual.

*Nevertheless, he contends that Gnostic scholarship—scholarship that does not attend to the Body of Christ—always diminishes the Church that it intends to serve.* Neuhaus contends that in presenting self-interested arguments under the auspices of disinterested scholarship, the Catholic knowledge class contributes to the confusion of the age. As the professionalized knowledge class of Catholic academics and journalists continually produces articles and books on everything from alternative feminist spiritualities and activist causes to conspiracy theories and angry apologetics, individual Catholics—understood increasingly not as believers but as “consumers of religious information”—are compelled to choose among a dizzying array of ideologies and can be swept away in intellectual excess. The Gnostic Moment of intellectual and spiritual identity crisis within the Church consequently calls diocesan administrations to meet this problem, not by rejecting intellectual activity but by finding ways to ground a vibrant intellectual life within the Body of Christ.

### *5.3.1 The significance of the Gnostic Moment for diocesan administration.*

Neuhaus notes that the defining attribute of a Gnostic Moment lies in the self-righteous, arrogant, and individualistic character of its intellectual discourse. Regardless of the particular cause, Gnosticism always functions as an elite ideology, in which those who participate in the Church’s intellectual life come to worship their own subjectivity and demand that others who are less intellectually endowed follow their dicta without question. “On the Right, there are those who ‘know’ that the real purpose of the church is to firm up ‘traditional values’ and secure the existing social order,” he observes, while on the Left, there are those who “know” equally well that the Church should be doing just the opposite (p. 79). Such discourse, as Alasdair MacIntyre (1981) notes, is profoundly

*emotivistic* in nature. Grounded solely in personal feelings about what is “right” or “wrong,” Gnostic intellectual life attacks people and positions with often extraordinary vehemence. But because this discourse emerges from such divergent and incommensurable perspectives, such Gnostic “debates”—which often sound like shouting matches—cannot be resolved.

In its relativism, confusion, and rabid individualism, the Gnostic Moment poses a serious threat to the unity and cohesiveness of the diocesan Church. On the left, organizations as various as Call To Action, Catholics for a Free Choice, Roman Catholic WomenPriests, Voice of the Faithful, and Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) advocate a liberal social agenda that would radically restructure the Church toward their own ends. On the right, groups like Catholics United for the Faith, the Catholic television network EWTN, Priests for Life, and others offer equally vitriolic rhetoric in the opposite direction. In the wake of the sexual abuse scandal, the stakes have been raised. All of these groups claim to speak for the “true Church” and couch their arguments altruistically, but their varied and often incompatible agendas generate a challenging and often confusing communication climate for diocesan administration. From the Left and the Right, they create their own journals, publishing houses, and speaker’s bureaus; generate massive mailing lists and publics; post to an ever-expanding network of weblogs; provide “experts” that give their own particular spin on American Catholic life; and agitate the Church at all levels. Within the context of postmodern Gnosticism, in which knowledge is purveyed but can never be verified, such discourse, when added to the vernacular rumors of parish life and the secular ideologies of the marketplace, can become a toxic mix.



Postmodernity constantly urges diocesan administrations to find ways to ground the heights of Gnostic egoism with intellectual humility. For Neuhaus, such humility is not forced or passive-aggressive, nor does it lie in obscurantism or censorship. The Church fails to receive the Catholic Moment if it declares intellectual questions off of the table or forces persons into silence. Such is the posture of a ghetto Church that is afraid of the world. Instead, the Catholic Moment seeks, with Simone Weil (1949/1952), to acknowledge the rootedness of ideas in what Neuhaus would call *first things*—the fundamental beliefs and commitments that guide the Church’s public religious life. With this search for grounding in mind, the Catholic Moment asks: *How can diocesan administrations find their intellectual footing in an increasingly complex and confusing intellectual environment? How can they steer constructively between the pressure groups that hope to refashion Catholic life in vastly different directions? How can they give their people the formative depth to make mature, grounded intellectual choices within a chaotic world?* In providing this ground, diocesan administrations provide the intellectual context that can invite the forums and relationships of trust and mutuality necessary to craft communities of truth, reconciliation, and hope. Through ideas, they craft the foundation of their life together in a world of phatic intellectual chatter. Interpretive organizational discourse constantly seeks to discover areas of agreement, build bridges between widely divergent interests, and encourage practices that establish common ground among Catholics of different ideological perspectives.

As they seek to ground and root the intellectual lives of their people, Catholic dioceses themselves can face charges of authoritarianism and anti-intellectualism. Consequently, the Catholic Moment asks: *How can diocesan administrations urge*

*constructive intellectual engagement among the Catholic knowledge classes? How can they demand that the Catholic knowledge classes to return to their grounding without silencing intellectual life within their borders?* Contrary to critics on the Catholic Left, the Catholic Moment does not ground intellectual life by shooting it down. In fact, the Catholic Moment is always interested in learning and discovery and believes that the Church can never be afraid of intellectual engagement. Rather, the Catholic Moment seeks to ground Catholic intellectual life by demanding that persons who work with ideas acknowledge the importance of the ties that bind the Church together. “In our individual lives,” Neuhaus argues, “the trajectory of growth is from authoritarianism, through autonomy, to an acknowledgement of what is authoritative” (p. 126).

The intellectual acknowledgement demanded by a Gnostic Moment is always *additive* instead of *substitutional* (Arnett and Arneson, 1999), seeking not to erase valuable ideas or intellectual inquiry but to situate those ideas and that inquiry within the life of the Church. In some cases, the consequences of the Gnostic Moment for the Church may indeed be grave enough to compel dioceses to remove their approval from particular scholars or groups who refuse to acknowledge Catholic beliefs and the needs of the Church. Such a move is not an acrimonious “silencing” but an admission that a person or group has abandoned their Catholic grounding, and it always comes with an invitation to return. But in the majority of cases, the challenge lies not in *contracting* but in *expanding* the scholarly imagination to recognize the potential of intellectual life that attends to the Body of Christ.

The Church offers countless opportunities for constructive, additive intellectual labor, and diocesan administrations—long used to relying on clergy and religious to

perform these tasks—are increasingly challenged to find ways to invite, form, and equip Catholic lay intellectuals for scholarship that meets the needs of the Body of Christ. In a moment in which public discourse is being emptied of intellectual content and sophistication, and in which academic theologians are increasingly detached from the realities of pastoral life, Catholicism remains one of the only places in which serious theological reflection connects in vital and important ways to the pastoral and administrative life of the Body of Christ. Neuhaus points to Karl Rahner as an example both of the constructive intellectual work that is increasingly necessary to answer a Gnostic Moment and of the risks of such work. “Those who have only a passing acquaintance with his work most commonly associate him with the ideas of ‘anonymous Christians’ and ‘anonymous Christianity,’” he writes. “These terms, which he acknowledged to be easily susceptible to misunderstanding, intended to underscore the saving grace of God in the whole of his creating and redeeming work” (p. 131). But such winsomeness and anonymity comes at a cost. The Church’s tradition, Neuhaus says, is pregnant with paradoxes and contradictions that tax the soul, and by rejecting the lure of the academy and publishing for the anonymity of the Church, constructive scholars face charges of intellectual weakness and lack of scholarly credibility. In the face of such concerns, diocesan administration, as part of its administrative rhetoric, is called to invite the Catholic knowledge class—its theologians, teachers, lawyers, activists, and journalists—to take up this burden and transform their intellectual lives from a pursuit of fame and fortune into a vibrant ministry. As it does, it transforms the *topos* of cooperation that is so essential to diocesan life.

*5.3.2 The Gnostic Moment and the topos of cooperation.* Researchers are increasingly realizing that ideological confusion within the secular marketplace presents important challenges for religious organizations of all types as they attempt to maintain their sense of mission and identity. Susan Chambre (2001) and Fred Kniss and David Todd Campbell (1997) note that in a complex and integrated postindustrial society, religious organizations face constant pressure from secular funding sources; governmental standards; the “best practices” of the secular medical, social service, and educational sectors; and non-religious organizational peers to dilute their religious identity. In addition, as diocesan administrations incorporate increasing numbers of lay professional staff from secular disciplines of education, financial services, communication, and law who have not been as well formed theologically and spiritually as priests and religious, Catholic organizations are routinely exposed to the unchallenged prejudices that the Naked Public Square naïvely believes to be true. The Gnostic Moment, in which the public sphere resounds with emotivistic discourse, consequently challenges the ability of diocesan administrations to preserve the Catholicity of the Catholic institutions in their regions.

The disunity and confusion of the Gnostic Moment are not merely theological concerns. As the financial costs of health care ministries place increasing pressures on Catholic health care institutions to ally themselves with secular institutions, Catholic hospitals may find themselves drawn into research agendas or forced to provide procedures that could cause scandal within the broader Church. Catholic institutions of higher learning, influenced by secular academic discourses, may face requests to invite speakers or sponsor programs that contradict Church teaching in the name of academic

freedom. And in a moment in which pressure groups dominate the discussion of social problems from homosexuality to homelessness, Catholic social service agencies may find themselves working alongside activist groups on either the Left or the Right with agendas that openly defy the Church's teaching authority. In each of these cases, what is at stake is not the expression of individual opinion or conscience but a potential rift in the cooperative institutional relationships that are essential to the diocesan Church.

In the ever-contentious, sound-bite culture of postmodernity, the *topos* of cooperation increasingly emphasizes the organizational importance of forging public meanings that provide spaces for coordinated social action. The work of George Cheney (1991) reminds diocesan administrations of the importance of forming public discursive spaces that transform individuals into coherent groups—that move from “‘I’s’ to ‘we’” (p. x)—and he emphasizes the importance of interpretive activity in creating and crafting organizational relationships. They are called to acknowledge and embed their institutional life within the “community of memory” that (Bellah, et al, 1996, p. 152) that is the Catholic Church. In the Gnostic Moment, Catholic identity becomes essential to institutional cohesion, and dioceses are challenged to foster among the organizations within their borders a sense of mission and an administrative style that are compatible with the needs of Catholic ministry.

In the web of meanings accumulated in its millennia of theological reflections, spiritual practices, liturgical actions, moral obligations, expressions of popular piety, and institutional canons and norms, the Church possesses a fertile ground for growing and defining significant institutional relationships. As dioceses negotiate this textual thickness, they experience an opportunity for playful engagement, in which they can

attend to the unity of the community of memory that gives rise to their institutional life. In the process, they have the opportunity to declare public interpretations and invite public identifications regarding contentious issues in the Church and society that invite spaces in which publicly significant relationships can emerge and be sustained. In these glimpses of common ground, a Gnostic moment of discursive confusion becomes home to experiences of kairotic possibility.

The cacophony of ideologies and discourses within the Gnostic Moment makes the *topos* of cooperation a delicate, but essential, organizational issue within diocesan administration. Yet, Neuhaus's emphasis on postliberal theology reminds us that the *topos* of cooperation in the Catholic Moment is not a discourse of authoritarianism but an *acknowledgement of the authoritative* characterized by constant civility and winsomeness that seeks to broaden intellectual discussion by establishing its grounding in the Body of Christ. Its proposals are framed not as fiat or punitive measures to "silence" dissident voices but as a constant, additive invitation to a way of constructive intellectual and institutional life. In learning how to invite persons to act together within the diocesan Church, dioceses also come to experience another aspect of the Catholic Moment: growth in their understanding and constructive use of institutional authority. In developing a more mature understanding of their use of authority, diocesan Churches have the opportunity to experience the Catholic Moment as a *Moment of Dialogic Demand*.

#### 5.4 A Moment of Dialogic Demand

The Church is not a democracy. Centralized authority is essential to the exercise of diocesan ministry and will remain so for the foreseeable future. But does this mean that diocesan administration is doomed to failure or, worse yet, intrinsically oppressive?

Indeed, in the Catholic Moment, any discussion of authority within the Church seems bound to elicit controversy. “One person’s recovery [of authority] is another’s repression,” Neuhaus observes. “To understand Roman Catholicism today, it is necessary to understand why people of intelligence, good will, and undoubted devotion to the church are worried that talk about recovery is little more than code language for a new repression” (p. 126). Many Catholic writers, particularly on the Left, see the use of ecclesiastical authority as the quintessential dehumanizing act, a fundamental contradiction of what they take to be Christ’s vision of the Church as an anarchic, egalitarian—that is, authority-less—*communio* (Provost, 1976). In the wake of the clergy abuse scandal, in which the competence of diocesan authority has been significantly questioned, the theological critique is complemented by more pointed, urgent appeals for radical change (Bane, 2004; Cahill, 2004; Nichols, 2004; Pope, 2004). It is repeatedly argued that the centralization of the authority in the Church demands radical revision—or should perhaps be abandoned altogether.

The often heated debates within Church over authority reflect wider concerns in the Naked Public Square, where critical communication scholars like Stanley Deetz (1995) nearly universally condemn the exercise of organizational authority as indicative of outdated, inefficient *mirror-tower thinking*. Other scholars, however, suggest an alternative perspective. While he recognizes that relationships of authority can be abused, sociologist Richard Sennett (1980) reminds diocesan administrations of the essential role that they play, not only in the Church but also in human life. Authority is crucial, he contends, because it provides an “emotional expression of power” (p. 4) that binds persons who are unequal into relations of reciprocal obligations. As they embody

publicly significant symbols and metaphors, relationships of authority permit persons to engage fundamental questions about human identity and purpose, the highest human good, and the nature of human dignity. Yet, the answers that these relationships provide are almost always uncomfortable ones. We fear authority, Sennett says, even as we need it, and this conflicted feeling makes it even more threatening. Authority—insistent, driving, demanding, and containing—seems depersonalizing, inhuman, and fundamentally opposed to authentic relations with others. The challenge, he contends, is not to dispense with authority but to find new ways to embody it within human life.

Communication scholar Ronald C. Arnett (2006), like Sennett, reminds us that the current haste to dispense with the demands of authority—what Martin Buber understands as the monologic relation of the *I-It*—neglects the ways in which authority makes the *I-Thou* relation of dialogue possible. “Buber was wise to remind us of the on-going interplay of ‘I-Thou’ and ‘I-It,’ stating that dialogue and monologue together enrich our world,” he notes. “One without the other, the ‘saying,’ without the ‘said,’ totalizes the ‘I-It,’ making dialogue with God’s world impossible” (p. 5). Even as the *I-It* relation may seem to lack the intrinsic “meaningfulness” and “humanity” of the *I-Thou* relation, the mundane reality of monologue provides the communicative background upon which moments of kairotic opportunity—what Arnett describes through the metaphor of *holy sparks*—become intelligible. As it brings the *I-It* relation into the texture of human life, authority does not hamper the experience of *kairos* but in fact enables it. For Arnett, kairotic opportunity lies not in freedom from constraint—what is commonly referred to as thinking or acting “outside the box”—but in the recognizing the unexpected productivity within the constraints that link persons to each other, the past, and the future.



Taken together, the works of Sennett and Arnett remind us that what constantly matters is not the *existence* of relationships of authority in diocesan administration—since authority will exist whether we want it to exist or not—but the ways in which those relationships are *understood* and *exercised*. Sennett’s work emphasizes a progression toward *maturity* on the part of both authorities and persons. In an arrangement of mature authority, he suggests, persons make the conscious, public decision to acknowledge and comply with the demands that the authority makes upon them. In return for the trust of persons, those in authority accept the responsibility of making their use of power *visible* and *legible*: *visible* in the sense that they are always “clear about what they can and cannot do; explicit about their promises” and *legible* in the sense that their agenda is always clearly understood by all stakeholders (p. 168). “No person in power can be trusted to serve as his own judge and jury,” Sennett observes. “It is the subjects who have to decide what power means; the servants have to read the masters’ actions as though trying to make sense of a difficult text” (p. 168). As persons are invited to make a conscious decision to embrace a particular way of life as authoritative, those whom they decide to follow are invited to be clear about what this relation entails. Authority is based not in divine right, claims to institutional perfection, or rationalized legitimacy but through the capacity to engage in a public discourse that creates conditions in which decisions can be understood, accepted, and trusted as authoritative in public life.

A mature understanding authority in diocesan administration is always a two-way street. Arnett’s work reminds us of the ways in which this mature communication style is a form of public conversation that balances the necessity of *demands* with the necessity of *dialogue*. In such a relationship, the authoritative discourse of diocesan

administration—discourse that approves or disapproves, prohibits or permits, opens or closes—is understood not as an exercise of imperial caprice or brute force but as an experience of spiritual, historical, and organizational connections that bind a diocesan Church together. Constantly rooted in the community of memory that gives diocesan administration its life as well as the needs of the moment, these *dialogic demands* communicate the needs of the Church in ways that are understood and acknowledged by all of a diocese’s stakeholders. In this sense, the Catholic Moment can be seen as a *Moment of Dialogic Demand* in diocesan administration.

*5.4.1 The significance of the Moment of Dialogic Demand for diocesan administration.* Patrick Carey (1987) suggests that the use of authority in American diocesan administration today has its roots in the struggles of the nineteenth century, in which the Church contended with the problem of *trusteeism*, in which American laity sought to exert power over the operations of diocesan life against the wishes of the American episcopacy. Yet, in a haggard, immigrant Church, this proposal did not, and perhaps could not, succeed. By the end of the nineteenth century, the bishops had created an organizational structure based on what Sennett describes as *paternalism*, in which the patriarchal symbol of the protective father promises to meet our needs and care completely for persons, as long as they accept it without question. James Drane (1969) describes how American dioceses in the nineteenth century attempted to offer their haggard flock of Catholic immigrants a perfect hierarchical world based on unassailable truth, a world that would care for believers perfectly as long as they obeyed. As if it were a scene from a Bing Crosby movie, the sacraments would always be given, their children would be taken care of, and they could receive a life that was essentially trouble-free.

In the United States, of course, paternalistic approaches to authority were not unique to the Catholic Church, and Sennett remarks on the proliferation of paternalistic frameworks during the nineteenth century as immigrants sought to replicate the feudal societies that they had left behind. Yet, paternalism for Sennett has two significant flaws. First, paternalistic authority bases its legitimacy on its promise to care completely and indefinitely for those under its oversight. This promise, while perhaps comforting, creates extraordinarily high and unachievable expectations, laying the groundwork for significant levels of *institutional cynicism* when inevitable failures occur. Second, because paternalism demands the passivity of those underneath it, it robs people of power to participate in constructive ways. As a result, *passive aggression* becomes the only available means of resistance. Thus, paternalistic authority is thus profoundly unstable, giving rise both to extraordinary cynicism and to moments of intransigent, even irrational resistance wherever the explicit or implicit social contract seems to break.

Within diocesan administration, the utopian vision of paternalism promised much more than any institutional arrangement could ever deliver, especially as American Catholicism encountered the uncertainty of modernity. Philip Gleason (1970) and George Marsden (1990) have noted how American dioceses sought to protect their paternalistic authority through a steady diet of rigid neo-scholastic theology, a highly centralized administrative structure, and vigorous patriotism. But as Drane notes, these strategies were failing by the Second Vatican Council. He describes how priests, sequestered in seminaries and educated in a worldview they were told was completely unassailable, found themselves unable to adapt to a real world that seemed to contradict everything that their seminary training told them, and how laity, educated in secular

universities and living in suburban communities, came to reject Church teaching, beginning with issues of birth control and moving to other areas of social ethics and morality. “Out of this community which has characterized itself for sensitivity to the value of authority and an almost fanatic loyalty to duly constituted Church authority,” he says, “come the severest critics of Church authority” (p. 1). The period of unquestioned acceptance of paternalistic diocesan authority and the utopian image that it projected onto diocesan life were replaced by an unreflective rejection of authority that Sennett describes as *autonomy*. The pendulum had swung from one problematic alternative to another. In the Church, Catholics would come to engage the world from the standpoint of the individual person or local parish without understanding the relationship of the individual and the local to the Church as a whole, and they would also come to underestimate their dependence on authority and overestimate their capacity to exist on their own.

If paternalism was an unrealistic basis for diocesan life in the 1960s, it lost any shred of legitimacy as the clergy abuse scandal at the turn of the millennium significantly tarnished—and in some cases shattered—the image of the bishop as a doting father. In the Catholic Moment, American dioceses are challenged to seek out new relationships of authority in their administrative lives. Yet, they are not alone. Neuhaus sees a transformation in the understanding and use of authority throughout the Universal Church, a move as symbolized in Pope John Paul I’s refusal of the papal tiara. “The tiara signified, among other things, terrestrial or temporal power,” he writes. “It was no little thing to set aside the tiara. And when John Paul II was installed, that too was an installation and not a coronation” (p. 161). Since Neuhaus’s book appeared, Pope

Benedict XVI has taken this process one step further by removing the papal tiara from his coat of arms as well. In terms of papal imagery, Neuhaus notes, this subtle move completed the Church's loss of the Papal States and unquestioned temporal and spiritual authority that came with them. But where some may see this transition as a retreat to a place of weakness, Neuhaus sees *setting aside the tiara* as a metaphor for the movement toward a more humble and realistic assessment of the Church's place in a pluralistic world. In the context of American diocesan administration, the metaphor suggests a new posture with respect to authority that moves away from unreflective paternalism or anarchic autonomy toward a Moment of Dialogic Demand, in which the rules and norms that guide diocesan life are recognized as embodying a complex network of social and spiritual goods essential for human life.

As it proposes a more intentional and engaged relationship of authority, the Moment of Dialogic Demand depends on the ability of diocesan administrations to embed their exercise of authority in relationships that are visible and legible to their people. To meet such burdens, dioceses are invited to be candid about what they can and cannot accomplish, what is clear and what is ambiguous in their environments, where they have succeeded and where they have failed, how stakeholders can participate constructively in their processes, and what these stakeholders should properly expect from their participation. Engaging in this discourse presents concerns and risks. In moments of considerable ambiguity—for instance, when a region experiences unexpected population shifts among parishioners or clergy that are rapidly changing its pastoral environment—parishioners and priests may demand clarity when there is none. In moments where a diocese has made mistakes—by becoming distracted by its internal

processes and second-guessing itself, by not trusting the competencies of its people, by holding on too long to the past—it may be difficult to admit error. And in moments where painful truths need to be admitted—a parish’s long-held desire to for a new building contradicts its actual pastoral needs, a beloved school or parish needs to be closed, a scandal has occurred—it may be tempting to hide in equivocations or obfuscations that seem more “pastoral.” Yet, a posture of dialogic demand recognizes that to avoid the risks of engagement is always a risk unto itself. Dialogic authority is neither aggressive—forcing its will on others—nor passive-aggressive—getting its way through guilt or avoidance—but constructively assertive and articulate in the possibilities for public action.

The Catholic Moment, as Moment of Dialogic Demand, recognizes that diocesan administrations have the opportunity to wield their pastoral authority assertively, openly, and invitationally. The Catholic Moment consequently asks: *What can diocesan administrations accomplish? What are their limitations? What do they know? What do they not know? What do they need to learn?* These questions may be difficult to answer, not only because they point to things that dioceses may not know but also because they chip away at the idealized, paternalistic image of ecclesiastical life that dioceses have often jealously cultivated. Yet, the Moment of Dialogic Demand urges a greater sense of openness and candor, both from the Church and from its parishioners, about the Church’s possibilities and limitations. It invites the Church to be explicit about what it can and cannot do and invites parishioners to embrace a new realism with respect to parish life.

Yet, this openness can be difficult to attain. Diocesan bureaucracies, as Thomas Reese (1989) notes, remain mysterious creatures. While the mysteriousness of diocesan

administration may have been cultivated as a source of power in the past, today it is often unintentional, arising in equal measures from poor communication, internal wrangling, and poorly executed consultative processes. As a result, the Catholic Moment asks: *How can diocesan administrations invite stakeholders to engage the historical moment with them? How can they dispel rumors and false understandings about how they operate? How can they communicate their procedures and encourage realistic participation in the life of the Church?* A dialogic perspective on authority recognizes that processes that are neither visible nor legible to persons, no matter how well intentioned, can unwittingly invite a hermeneutic of suspicion. What is more, because paternalistic conduct disenfranchises parishioners from decision-making processes, parishioners may feel they have little recourse other than the extremes of resistance or passive aggression, and their suspicion can quickly transform into bitter, divisive, and even irrational obstinacy. Recognizing these risks, dialogic authority begins in the ability of dioceses to be open and transparent about their decisions and their consequences, and this wisdom transforms the third *topos* of the rhetoric of diocesan administration: the *topos* of decision.

*5.4.2 The Moment of Dialogic Demand and the topos of decision.* The harsh reality of diocesan life is that pastoral decisions—hard pastoral decisions—have to be made constantly. Programs need to be evaluated. Parishes and schools need to be established, while others closed. Funding needs to be applied efficiently. Organizational structures may need to be trimmed. Each decision will have lasting consequences for individuals, communities, and the region. These consequences are often controversial, and they may bring protest, invite bad media coverage, and generate pernicious rumors that attack the credibility of the bishop and the diocesan administration as a whole. There

may be moments in which the sheer difficulty of a decision may tempt a diocese's leadership to pass the hard decision on to the next generation, but temptations to evasion often perpetuate problems by allowing them to fester until they are irreversible. In the Moment of Dialogic Demand, the *topos* of decision seeks to enable not only to make difficult decisions but also to find ways to make those decisions intelligible and understandable to a diocese's people.

The communicative task engaged by the *topos* of decision is considerable. Reese's study of archdioceses emphasizes that the complex types of decisions faced by diocesan administrations often require the sort of slow, deliberate process that Kevin Kearns (2000) describes as *incremental*: In many decisions, large and small, curial officials and the various departments and offices of the diocesan structure enter into a complex dance of negotiation and information gathering that often circles back on itself until consensus is achieved. Yet, consensus-building comes at the cost of increasing the length and complexity of the decision-making process. While inclusive processes encourage the bonds of reciprocity and dialogic interaction that proponents of massive structural change in the Church demand, Kearns warns that the incremental approach always runs the risk of having the dialogic and participatory process becoming an end in itself. The inclusion of all voices to ensure the consensus of all stakeholders complicates the Church's consultative model and strategy formation, and in challenging and controversial matters, consensus may be difficult or even impossible to achieve.

Without authority—and, in diocesan administration, this means the authority of the diocesan bishop—decision processes can become rudderless and intractable. Yet, while recognizing that episcopal authority remains an essential fact of diocesan life, the



*topos* of decision acknowledges that the bishop's discretion is not absolute but is always embedded within numerous discourses and relationships. As Thomas Green (1992) observes, bishops seek counsel from many types of bodies. For more routine matters, these bodies may include executive councils of senior staff or clergy, as well as diocesan finance and pastoral councils, which also include religious and laity. For broader input on the direction of a diocese, diocesan synods of clergy and laity convoked to make recommendations on diocesan life. Under canon law, some of these are optional (such as executive councils and the diocesan pastoral council), some are periodic (synods, once required every ten years, are currently convoked at the bishop's discretion), and some are required under canon law. In each, a unique forum allows for discourse and the sharing of information that enriches the *topos* of decision and guides the diocesan bishop.

The overlapping, interpenetrating forums of diocesan life make the *topos* of decision extraordinarily complex. In such situations, the Moment of Dialogic Demand invites dioceses to find ways to communicate clearly their intentions and their processes—as best they can, as regularly as they can—to bring stakeholders into the process and make their decisions visible and intelligible. This invitation reinvigorates what Catholic social teaching describes as *subsidiarity*, a principle that encourages dioceses to allow decisions to be made at the lowest and most effective level of responsibility (Bellah, et al, 1991). Subsidiarity is constantly constructive. It seeks not to diminish or dethrone the exercise of authority but to create organizational flexibility, increase participation, and develop new channels of information gathering. These channels—some informal, others more structured—include a variety of standpoints, though the type and number of viewpoints solicited depend on the issue, the canonical or

civil concerns involved, and the preferences of the diocesan bishop. In the Moment of Dialogic Demand, engaging and understanding the complex play of diocesan life through relations of subsidiarity becomes an essential part of diocesan administration.

Willing to embed itself in the discourses of diocesan life, the *topos* of decision lacks the theological flash of the *topos* of evangelization or the interpretive sophistication and nuance of the *topos* of cooperation. It speaks to the mundane realities of diocesan administration: the pragmatic realities of parish finances and organizational structures, the necessity of discipline and responsibility, and the annoyances of paperwork and routine observation. *Yet, the topos of decision is, as it always has been, a form of pastoral rhetoric.* The monologic realities that define diocesan administrative engagement—and draw complaints about its repetitive tediousness or lack of pastoral benevolence—are also what allow the diocesan Church to experience the moments of *kairos* that permit it to thrive. “The realm of the ‘I-It’ must be event more hallowed than dialogue,” Arnett notes. “It is the lurking darkness, the mundane, the routine, the repetitive commonality, and the everyday that nourishes the embers of ‘holy sparks’” that illuminate kairotic opportunities (p. 6). Contrary to the perceptions of many outside of diocesan administration—or perhaps even the perceptions of some within it—Catholic dioceses do not stop being “pastoral” when they start to think about finances or organizational structures. And contrary to the current trend to demand that organizations think and act “outside the box,” diocesan administrations in the Moment of Dialogic Demand publicly declare that there are some things that they cannot be because they recognize the beauty of what they are.

The Moment of Dialogic Demand reflects the essence of the Catholic Moment. The Catholic Moment is not a moment of hunkering down in a new Catholic ghetto, in which a faithful remnant seeks to escape the terrors of the Naked Public Square, nor is it a moment of heedless surrender to secular society. The changes that Neuhaus proposes—if, indeed, they can be understood to be changes at all—are changes in the attitude that the Church takes toward itself in relation to the world. Where the Naked Public Square demands a liberalized doctrine that would make Catholicism more mainstream and “normal” to a secularized society, the Postliberal Moment challenges the natural consciousness of contemporary society by reasserting the Church’s paradoxical strangeness. Where the ideological confusion of the Gnostic Moment desires to pull the unity of a diocesan Church apart into emotivistic shards, diocesan administrations seek to ground intellectual life by demanding that persons acknowledge the Body of Christ. And where the Naked Public Square rejects the exercise of authority, the Moment of Dialogic Demand embraces the use of authority by making its exercise more visible and understandable within the diocesan Church.

Ultimately, the Catholic Moment is a celebration of the Church’s paradoxical relationship with American society—a contentious relationship that American Catholicism has often sought to overcome and that, in the wake of the sexual abuse scandal, the changes in the priesthood, and secularization, has sent the American Church reeling. Phenomenologically, it is as if the Church has been forced back onto its heels. In such a position, it is impossible to move forward without teetering. The metaphor of the Catholic Moment reminds the Church of its grounding and assures it that its Catholic identity can bear its weight. In owning its grounding, a reeling Church learns that its true

strength is constantly found by leaning into the moment, as a person walking along in a stiff breeze. Leaning into the Naked Public Square, diocesan administrations can recognize the emergence of solutions as miraculous glimpses of transformative opportunity, moments of *kairos* that bridge the past and the future.

### 5.5 *The Naked Public Square, The Catholic Moment, and Kairos*

This chapter has used Richard Neuhaus's metaphor of the *Catholic Moment* to understand the opportunities for diocesan administration in the postmodern moment, a time in which American Christianity increasingly contends with a secular society and the *Naked Public Square* that this society seems intent on creating. Over twenty years ago, Neuhaus predicted that many conservative American Christians would rise to meet the Naked Public Square with aggressive social and political action, initiating a culture war for the heart of American society that would have disastrous conclusions.

As the crisis of legitimacy deepens, it will lead—not next year, maybe not in twenty years, but all too soon—to totalitarianism or to insurrection. The insurrection may be on the way to totalitarianism or on the way to what is described as authoritarianism, but after a period of either it is difficult to envision the resumption of the democratic experiment. Already figures such as Francis Schaeffer call for a reconsideration of justifiable revolution, and a good many less sober than he are in full-throated support of rebellion. (1984, p. 259)

For Neuhaus, the metaphor of the Catholic Moment offers diocesan administrations a constructive entry point into this crisis. Instead of veering once again into the angry rhetoric of a now-widened Christian ghetto—a discourse that aims to force American culture back into an idealized past that may have never existed—they are invited to engage postmodern American society on its own terms. They will be outsiders, to be sure, but American Catholics have always been outsiders in the American religious landscape. Their doctrine and liturgy will be considered antiquated and strange, yet

American dioceses know what it means to maintain an identity in a moment of change. Neuhaus, like John Henry Newman before him, recognizes in Catholicism the power and the willingness to stand in paradox with contemporary society. For him, the challenge of American Catholicism today is to run toward this sense of paradox, to embrace this sense of strangeness, and to invite the doubters, the critics, and the naysayers to join in a renewal of American religious life.

In a way, the story told by *The Catholic Moment* bears the hallmarks of an ironic fairy tale. It is as if American Catholicism, the strange stepchild of American Christianity, after two centuries of being denigrated by its Protestant peers, has emerged as the savior of the family that once shunned it. Though he recognizes the challenges ahead, Neuhaus believes that the future of the American Church is not a bleak reality but a moment of possibility—a moment, he believes, that only the Catholic Church can properly grasp. In the Catholic Moment, American dioceses come to experience a *Postliberal Moment* that responds to postmodernity through the conscious, winsome ownership and development of the Catholic theological and communicative standpoint; find themselves situated within a *Gnostic Moment* that invites them to forge public interpretations and meanings necessary to cultivate publicly significant relationships; and come to engage an *Moment of Dialogic Demand* that calls them and the Catholics they serve to develop a more sophisticated understanding of what authority is and how it can be engaged. When walked into the administrative life of the Church, the Catholic Moment crystallizes into opportunities for diocesan administration to evangelize its people, create new spaces for cooperation, and make better decisions. Each of these dimensions, taken together, creates a picture of new understanding of the rhetoric of

diocesan administration that is rooted in its tradition yet flexible enough to engage a changing postmodern society.

Like Saint Paul on the Areopagus, diocesan administrations enter a postmodern media and intellectual culture that is often predisposed against them. Yet, as they move forward to engage this Naked Public Square, they have the opportunity to find—as Saint Paul did when he saw the niche of the statue of the Unknown God and realized the openness to the Gospel among people who “spent their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new” (Acts 17:21, New Revised Standard Version)—that their particular historical moment is invested with a unique sense of purpose and potential, an experience of *kairos* that calls forth discourse. Such moments do not happen by chance, but are recognized as the gifts of God. “[Humanity] is never left alone,” Paul Tillich (1963) writes. “The Spiritual Presence acts upon it in every moment and breaks into it in some great moments, which are the historical *kairoi*” (p. 140). While the experience of opportunity never guarantees success, the *kairos* of the Catholic Moment offers diocesan administrations a space for discourse, and where there is discourse, there is always the possibility of renewal. Standing their ground but opening to the world, they may yet find possibilities for faith and life that they never knew existed. In this way, they can learn to see in the darkness and confusion of the Naked Public Square the glimmer of *kairos*.  
*Postmodernity may yet be the Catholic Moment.*

# Chapter 6

## The Catholic Moment as the Postmodern Turn

This dissertation has contended that in the moment of postmodernity, the preeminent question of the rhetoric of diocesan administration is not, *How can the Church stop postmodernity from happening?* or, *How can the Church change to become “relevant” to postmodernity?* but rather, *How can the Church encounter postmodernity as the Catholic Moment of kairotic opportunity?* The previous chapters have sought to examine diocesan administration as a rhetorical problem in an effort to understand how American dioceses can meet the challenges of this decisive time in the history of the Church. A product of tension—between permanence and change, conflict and resolution, despair and hope—*kairos* invites dioceses to discern the opportune, the appropriate, and the possible within the historical moment. Richard Neuhaus’s metaphor of the *Catholic Moment* suggests that postmodernity is one such moment of kairotic opportunity, in which American Catholicism is poised for an important role within American society, a role it can seize not by rejecting its roots but by engaging and nourishing them through playful rhetorical action. *Following Neuhaus, this dissertation invites diocesan administrations to engage postmodernity as the Catholic Moment.*

## 6.1 Introduction

Postmodernity—a moment characterized by a clash of narrative confusion and virtue contention (Lyotard, 1979/1984), rampant and often uncontrollable technological advancement (Ellul, 1954/1964), profound economic dislocations (Bell, 1973), hyper-individualism (Sennett, 1977), and mediated hyper-reality (McLuhan, 1994)—is a moment of profound rhetorical challenge for American Catholicism. Many American Christians, Catholic and Protestant alike, continue to view postmodernity’s confusions and questions—particularly its relativism and decadent hedonism—as signaling a moment of disaster for humanity, in which the very core of Western civilization is in danger of being lost. Yet, this dissertation, while recognizing the importance of these concerns, has urged the American Catholic Church to recognize within postmodernity a constant call for rhetorical engagement as well.

Michael J. Hyde’s (2006) observation of the patterns of Old Testament rhetoric reminds us that communication always occurs in the space between the call of the historical moment and the response of the rhetor to that call, the often profound tension between “Where art thou?” and “Here I am!” In acknowledging the space between call and response, he observes, rhetorical opportunities can emerge where there was no space previously: between persons in conflict, between religion and science, between hope and despair. In recognizing the essential humanness of the other person within the exigencies of the moment—an event that he describes in terms of the Levinasian encounter with the face of the Other—communicative acknowledgement invites a new sense of meaningful dwelling in the world. This dissertation has contended that the metaphor of the *Catholic Moment* represents the sort of acknowledgement of postmodernity that Hyde describes.



Moreover, it has argued that the dwelling invited by this acknowledgement represents an occasion of *kairos* within a moment of confusion and uncertainty in the American Catholic Church. *The Catholic Moment thus offers American diocesan administrations the rhetorical means to take the postmodern turn.*

But how can we realistically say that postmodernity is the Catholic Moment—or that American diocesan administration even has a constructive role to play in the American Church? After all, given the almost constant sense of crisis and adversity currently surrounding American Catholicism and the significant challenges that American dioceses currently face, Neuhaus’s declaration of the Catholic Moment seems audacious and outlandish. As noted in the first chapter, American dioceses face a complex rhetorical situation that combines three challenging elements: an environment of post-Christian secularization and cultural confusion that are corroding the Church’s identity and unity; massive changes in the priesthood and religious life that are eroding the labor force that the Church has traditionally relied upon; and, in the wake of the clergy sexual abuse scandal, a crisis of institutional confidence unprecedented in American religious history. Do not these dire conditions suggest that even if the Catholic Moment did exist, it has long since passed as a real possibility for diocesan administration? Instead of being a harbinger of hope, Neuhaus’s metaphor would seem to be a sign of despair.

Indeed, *The Catholic Moment* appeared before these challenges emerged in the life of diocesan administration, but Neuhaus’s work ends with a faithful awareness that the Holy Spirit constantly offers rhetorical opportunities to the Church. “Each moment in time is equally close to God’s purpose, and God’s purpose equally close to each

moment,” he writes. “But we are to read the signs of the times to discern the obligations, limits, and opportunities of our moment” (p. 283). With Neuhaus’s words of encouragement in mind, this dissertation contends: *Postmodernity is the Catholic Moment because every moment is the Catholic Moment—as long as diocesan administrations are open to the experience of kairos*. Dale Sullivan’s (1992) account of the practice of Pauline rhetoric emphasizes the power of *kairos* in opening Christian rhetoric to possibilities in moments of adversity. Reading the signs of the times—such as in the case of a chance encounter with an empty altar on the Areopagus—*kairos* produces a powerful discourse that seizes a moment of indecision through a dynamic response. “When successful,” Sullivan notes, “such rhetoric produces what may be called a kairotic experience, which presents a single alternative, filling the entire consciousness of the auditor, producing belief when the auditor says ‘yes’ instead of ‘no’” (p. 317). Kairotic rhetoric recognizes that inspiration and discernment of the moment are essential prerequisites to any discourse. Grasping and taking advantage of opportunities, it creates belief in the minds of others, opens opportunities, breaks down barriers, and offers hope within hopelessness. For a Christian like Paul, such “moments of truth” bear the handiwork and likeness of God. In embracing *kairos*, the rhetoric of diocesan administration participates in and with these moments, using speech to transform adversity into opportunity and doubt into belief.

The transformative power of *kairos* draws scholars of Sophistic rhetoric like John Poulakos (1983; 1984; 1995) and Susan Jarratt (1991) because they recognize within its creativity, its playful embrace of the imaginative, and its constant belief in possibility the potential to resist the tyrannizing calculations of modernity. This resistance is essential

for Catholic rhetoric as well. The work of William McSweeney (1980) reminds diocesan administrations immersed in the fury of the postmodern culture wars that the moment of modernity was not a time of idyllic tranquility but a moment of dire conflict for the Church—and, as Edmund Husserl (1954/1970) notes in his *Crisis of the European Sciences*, for any philosophical standpoint that lay outside the interests of scientific positivism. “The total world-view of modern man, in the second half of the nineteenth century,” Husserl writes, “let itself be determined by the positive sciences and be blinded by the ‘prosperity’ they produced, [and] meant an indifferent turning-away from the questions for a genuine humanity” (p. 6). The naïve blindness of what Husserl calls modernity’s *natural attitude* established a horizon that unreflectively excluded the very questions that drove religious life and placed upon the Church demands of rationality that contradicted its very sense of being-in-the-world.

Postmodernity, of course, is a profoundly confusing time, and its relativistic confusion, emotivistic discourse, and rampant secularization continue to present problems for American dioceses. But Husserl’s work suggests that the confusion of postmodernity may also be an extraordinary opportunity because postmodernity’s unrelenting confusion breaks through modernity’s swaggering confidence in its thematic horizon and reopens humanity’s pursuit of ultimate questions. Where modernity’s rational calculations reduced human life to a question of *knowledge*, postmodernity reawakens the possibility of *belief*. Where modernity constantly bracketed the question of God as epistemologically unprovable, postmodernity’s embrace of the dynamism of *kairos* allows humanity to focus phenomenologically on a world that is constantly God-filled. The sensitivity of postmodernity to *kairos* thus means an ironic opportunity for

American diocesan administration: For an admittedly secular age, postmodernity is far more open to the workings of faith, questions of ultimate meaning, and the spiritual dimensions of existence than modernity was! In recognizing this momentous transition, this dissertation contends: *Postmodernity is the Catholic Moment because postmodernity is open to a religious rhetoric steeped in kairos—as long as diocesan administrations are willing to learn how to speak to this moment.* The foremost challenge for the rhetoric of diocesan administration lies not in resisting postmodernity but in finding ways to speak to this moment, alert it to its crisis, and invite it to a new way of life.

Moreover, postmodernity's preoccupation with the radical sense of difference and paradox found in the radical juxtapositions of permanence and change, being and non-being, clarity and opaqueness, knowledge and ignorance, and hope and despair makes it ripe for a faith that has become the epitome of difference and paradox. Neuhaus (1987) observes:

The Church's view of reality is premised upon a promise and is therefore in tension with all views of reality the premised upon the present alone. The Church too lives in the present, but it lives by a promise that is also the ultimate truth about the present. Thus the Church's relationship to the world is essentially paradoxical. It is a relationship of yes and no, now and not yet. The Church will endure until the End Time, but along the way it is ever being tested as to whether it has the courage to live in paradoxical fidelity. Nowhere is that testing so severe, nowhere is the outcome of that testing so ominous, as in the Roman Catholic Church. (p. 288)

In a moment in which “difference” and “Otherness” are the buzzwords of contemporary intellectual and cultural life, Neuhaus finds strength in the Church's understanding of what it means to be different in American society. The metaphor of the Catholic Moment realizes that in postmodernity, there is more rhetorical power in *not* belonging than in being within the mainstream. Diocesan administrations in the United States receive

*kairos* not by resolving the paradoxes created by their Catholic identity but by running toward them. In embracing and valuing this sense of difference, the power of the Catholic Moment lies in its call to acknowledge the grace and joy found in the traditional expression of the Catholic faith that swims against the stream of contemporary life.

A Catholic rhetoric based in *kairos* never abandons the Catholic faith but always seeks to understand and use the gift of faith to transform adversity to the advantage of the Gospel. As Sullivan reminds us, Saint Paul, while opportunistic, unstructured, and pragmatic in his rhetorical approach on the Areopagus, does not divest himself of the Gospel as he enters his contentious rhetorical environment. Rather, he is so grounded in his faith and aware of the substance of his arguments that he is free to experiment and engage his historical moment. His argument plays in the space that God has provided through the Holy Spirit. With Saint Paul, this dissertation contends: *Postmodernity is the Catholic Moment because it recognizes that the Church has always possessed what it needs to receive and seize the rhetorical opportunities its midst—as long as diocesan administrations are able to play within paradox.* For many Catholics, the challenges of postmodernity seem to demand dramatic action if the Church is to stem the tide of history. But Neuhaus's metaphor of the Catholic Moment does not seek to *stem* the tide or *avoid* the tide but to *enter* the tide through a constructive engagement that recognizes the irreplaceable importance of what the Church has always been, what it has always done, and what it has always brought to human life. The experience of *kairos* challenges diocesan administrations not to change the faith or remain behind the walls of a ghetto but to seek new ways of understanding and bringing the faith to the world. The Catholic

Moment, constantly grounded in the confidence of the Gospel, joins the dance of postmodernity.

As an invitational essay, this dissertation concludes not with a call to action or manifesto demanding radical change but with a humble invitation to a form of Catholic administrative life that is generative and dynamic, an administrative life that seeks a return to the roots that give diocesan administration its human face. In telling this story, this dissertation has sought to invite a new understanding of the rhetoric of diocesan administration, in which an organizational structure that often seems to be characterized by closure and adversity is revealed as the hope-full, response-able, Spirit-led opportunity it is. These moments of opportunity remind us that, in addition to considering the challenges and the conflicts, the pettiness and the power, we should always ask: *How is diocesan administration a form of pastoral ministry? How can its moments of communicative challenge be experienced not only as functional tasks but also as sources of joy?* In recognizing the joys of diocesan administration, administration in the Church moves from being the exercise of bureaucratic functionality toward becoming an occasion of *kairos*. This chapter will recall the story of the rhetoric of diocesan administration that this dissertation has sought to weave by examining how the Catholic Moment of postmodernity can be experienced as a moment of kairotic joy. Then, it will seek to describe the implications of this dissertation's study of the background of the rhetoric of diocesan administration to its foreground practice in the service of what it has called a *communicative home*. Finally, much as this dissertation began, it will close by reflecting upon the invitation that diocesan administration offers to American life in the Catholic Moment.

## 6.2 The Joy of Diocesan Administration

The communicative life of diocesan administration—like the communicative life of any significant organization—is defined not by majestic rhetorical fireworks but by a myriad of humble activities. Press releases and talking points need to be written. Brochures need to be designed. Web sites need to be updated. Correspondence needs to be answered. Events and liturgies need to be planned and promoted. Photocopies need to be made. The rhetoric of diocesan administration summarizes this humble labor into three general areas of discourse, or rhetorical *topoi*: the *topos of evangelization*, which emphasizes the spreading and strengthening of the Gospel; the *topos of cooperation*, which emphasizes the creation of significant public relationships and institutional meanings that further the goals and purposes of the diocesan Church; and the *topos of decision*, which emphasizes the successful development and negotiation of decision-making processes. Individually, the effects of the daily preaching and communication of the Gospel, the careful development of the diocesan Church’s institutional life, and the careful stewardship of consultative processes are often imperceptible. Cumulatively, however, these activities can begin to transform a diocese from a web of structures and canonical regulations into a *communicative home* that mediates between parish life and the Universal Church.

A communicative home is not a geographic location, a set of family-like relationships, or a therapeutic sense of cozy “belonging.” Rather, a communicative home seeks to situate human life within a *community of memory* (Bellah, et al, 1996) and attend to the *rootedness* (Weil, 1949/1952) that establishes the fundamental obligations between persons, provides for human dignity, and places human life within a coherent

understanding of the world. Amidst the winds of change, it offers a *dwelling* (Hyde, 2006) created not by bricks and mortar but by the essential beliefs, practices of faith, and significant metaphors that provide touchstones for human life. Yet, despite their importance, communicative homes are always delicately constructed and easily lost. For this reason, they demand constant rhetorical labor. Diocesan administrations are consequently called to evangelize in the name of Christ, invite publicly significant relationships, and make important decisions for the Church that invite and sustain this sense of communicative home.

In many ways, the rhetoric of diocesan administration shares the difficulties of all corporate communication, which is constantly reminded of the fallibility and limitations of organizational life. Herbert Simon (1997), noting that organizational agents do not rationally *maximize* but pragmatically *satisfice*, reminds us that organizational rhetoric rarely achieves the ideal solution, and Arlie Russell Hochschild (1983) has written perceptively on the interpersonal and emotional difficulties that are present throughout postindustrial organizational life. We should not expect the demands of diocesan administration to be any different—neither better nor worse—than those of other organizations. Thomas Reese (1989) observes that diocesan administrations exist in a climate of constant, often unremitting negativity and crisis-driven firefighting. Mostly, Catholics contact their diocese only when they are angry with it. In some cases, their anger may be justified, but in many more, they call merely to vent their spleen on the nearest available ear. And in a Catholic diocese where virtually anything can happen on any particular day and regularly does—a school has a gas leak, a priest accidentally excommunicates himself by mistakenly tossing blessed hosts into the dustbin, a parish



with only \$500 in its savings account mounts an irate letter-writing campaign when it is told it cannot build a new multi-million dollar building, and so on—even the best-laid plans may be shelved indefinitely. In such an organizational climate, developing even the simplest of documents easily becomes difficult, demanding, and draining.

But unlike secular corporate communication theory, the rhetoric of diocesan administration subscribes to a higher purpose that gives meaning to these difficulties, and this difference is a decisive. *For the rhetoric of diocesan administration, pastoral joy emerges from an experience of meaning, not from financial remuneration, physical pleasures, emotional “strokes,” or short-term “successes.”* Here, the words of Pope Benedict XVI (1991/1996) quoted in this dissertation’s second chapter offer important, if cryptic, guidance: “If priests today so often feel overworked, tired and frustrated, the blame lies with a strained pursuit of results” (p. 129). Certainly, Pope Benedict does not mean his remark to encourage communicative incompetence in ecclesiastical life, as if an eternal perspective alone were sufficient to sustain the Church’s organizational needs. Humanity may not live on bread alone, but that does not mean that it should starve. Instead, his paradoxical remark can be read as an invitation for those involved in the ministry of the Church—and, perhaps, particularly those who are involved in its institutional and administrative ministries—to move away from a modernist managerial perspective that demands the attainment of quantifiable “results” that indicate “growth” and “progress” toward an alternative understanding of ecclesiastical administration whose constantly eternal perspective transvalues such modernist priorities.

Pope Benedict’s remark reframes the assessment of success of the rhetoric of diocesan administration, which exists in the acknowledgment of both the exigencies of

the particular moment and the call of an eternal God. It invites diocesan administrations not to flee the inherent tensions of this rhetorical situation—into either the exclusively eternal or the exclusively temporal—but to embrace those tensions as potentially productive. Diocesan administration lies not in the rationalized implementation of short-term solutions or in the rigid deployment of theological dogmas or canonical rules but in the experience of the opportunities that emerge from the paradoxes inherent in diocesan ministry. The rhetoric of diocesan administration, at its most effective, dwells within experiences of *kairos*, and these experiences of kairotic dwelling cannot be forced into existence through rhetorical technique but can only be invited into being. From the perspective of kairotic rhetoric, the best “results” of diocesan administration are the blessings that it never intended to achieve. Without understanding the importance of kairotic experiences and the blessings that can be found in the organizationally unexpected, scholars may miss important and intellectually interesting dimensions of diocesan life, and practitioners may become frustrated by what, from a secular perspective, may seem to be a strange and even unworkable institutional arrangement.

Though he writes in a different forum, communication scholar Ronald C. Arnett (2006) similarly urges us to see within the difficulties of diocesan life the potential the experience of *kairos*, an experience that he describes through the metaphor of *holy sparks*. “Instead of lamenting darkness, we must look for the ‘holy sparks’ in the darkness of busy-ness,” he notes. “There is a time to knock and a time to respond to the knocking; both happen against a backdrop of darkness—one saying, ‘Here I am, Lord,’ and the other calling us to open the door and welcome genuine light into the darkest of places” (p. 11). Within this experience of *kairos*, Arnett suggests, diocesan

administrations can find moments of pastoral joy, where closed doors swing open, impossible possibilities present themselves, weaknesses are rediscovered as strengths, and the old becomes new. In the dim glow of the holy sparks of *kairos*, the institutional complexity of diocesan life—its thick texture of theological beliefs, its intractably difficult organizational structure, and its delicate and varied institutional relationships—that seems such a terrible burden from the standpoint of modernity becomes an occasion of unexpected joy. In witnessing institutional constraints transform from prisons into spaces for growth, the rhetoric of diocesan administration can stand in wonder at a diocesan Church that flourishes of its own accord.

If it is to refrain from cynicism and apathy, the rhetoric of diocesan administration needs to seek out these unexpected glimpses of hopefulness and pastoral joy amidst the quotidian banality of organizational life and the hostility of the Naked Public Square. In the moment of postmodernity, the kairotic joys of diocesan administration are three-fold: the *joy of rootedness*, in which the recovery of the roots that give diocesan administration a human face yield the possibility of new life; the *joy of administrative play*, in which intractable organizational problems are interpreted and engaged in constructive fashion; and the *joy of the Catholic Moment*, in which the challenges of postmodernity can be seen as opportunities for new life and growth.

*6.2.1 The joy of rootedness.* Simone Weil (1949/1952) reminds us of the importance of nourishing the roots that give rise to an intelligible human life, and the challenge she gave to the French Catholic Church during the Second World War has resonance for American diocesan administrations today. As McSweeney details, the ordeal of modernity prompted a number of problematic responses within the Catholic

Church, causing it to separate itself from the world into the contrived safety of a Catholic *ghetto*, attempt to *control* its engagement with the world, and then collapse into a posture of unreflective *relevance* when its attempts at avoidance and control could work no longer. Philip Gleason (1970) and George Marsden (1990) note that the American Church, challenged by virulent anti-Catholic rhetoric, the struggles of massive immigration and industrialization, and its own encounters with modern ideologies, mirrored these trends, creating its own Americanized ghetto, its own strict discipline of institutional control, and, finally, its own experience of organizational confusion in the years following the Second Vatican Council. Each of these movements encouraged the evasive and often confused communication styles that continue to plague ecclesiastical communication. Diocesan administration became, as Weil would say, *uprooted* from the very sources that gave it being: the pastoral stewardship of the faith and the pastoral care of persons. In losing its roots, it lost its human face.

Postmodernity offers diocesan administration the opportunity to reclaim its rootedness. As Kenneth Pennington (2002) reminds us, the bishop in the early Church was understood to be personally tied—literally *wedded*—to his diocesan Church in an obligation of care and sacrifice. This dissertation has invited dioceses to rediscover the joy found in this relationship. Instead of chaining the Church to the tyranny of a modernist bureaucracy, in which rational solutions and technical responses are demanded on a set schedule regardless of whether they are appropriate or not, the experience of *kairos* gives the rhetoric of diocesan administration the freedom to allow discourses to emerge and grow of their own accord. Discourses are not *controlled* or *contained* in a modernist sense, but rather *tended* and *grounded* in an intelligible public religious life.

The joy of rootedness lies in the constant rediscovery of the importance of religious discourse in the lives of persons and the importance of religious institutions in the understanding and engagement of this discourse, not only in private life, but also in public forums. Neuhaus (1984) challenges American diocesan administrations to discover new ways to engage a Naked Public Square that does not understand the perils of its nakedness. Catholic dioceses of the triumphalist past engaged public discourse through rigorous discipline and the centralized deployment of doctrine. In contrast, a rooted diocese seeks to allow the local Church to emerge in ways that are spontaneous, perhaps unpredictable, but always grounded in an invitation to embrace a vibrant experience of the faith. The growth and development of a diocesan Church, however, is never an object of pride. The farmer, as Weil (1997) rightly remarks, cannot make the harvest grow, but can only wait for it to come: “The weeds are pulled up by the muscular effort of the peasant, but only sun and water can make the corn grow” (p. 193). The rhetoric of diocesan administration invites the communicative home of diocesan life, but it cannot create one by its efforts alone. The joy of rootedness lies in tending and watching a diocesan Church bloom in its own time. The kairotic, Spirit-led experience of waiting and blooming leads to another joy of diocesan administration, the joy found in *administrative play*.

6.2.2 *The joy of administrative play*. A persistent challenge throughout postindustrial American society lies in the rise of complex, confusing, and seemingly intractable organizational problems: educational systems that no longer seem able to provide young people with the knowledge and skills to live productive lives, bloated governmental systems that seem increasingly ineffective in meeting basic social needs,

medical systems that seem incapable of providing a basic level of health care that ordinary persons can afford, and energy systems that seem inescapably addicted to fossil fuels that, as many scientists believe, degrade the environment in irreparable ways. The emergence of these challenges prompts radical calls from both the left and the right to “fix” the problem or “force” a solution with a single, decisive stroke. Yet, one also recognizes that the proposed solutions to these intractable problems have consequences of their own that may be just as bad—or perhaps even worse—than the problematic systems that they replace.

In a way, perhaps, the postindustrial world could be becoming aware of something that diocesan administrations more intuitively recognize: Complex organizations cannot be *managed*, but only *engaged*. Guided by constructive hermeneutics, this dissertation has proposed an understanding of constructive organizational engagement that enters organizational life through the metaphor of *administrative play*. In contrast to the techniques of *communication management*—an approach steeped in the natural attitude of modernity—administrative play does not seek to force solutions upon intractable problems—as if they dropped, like a *deus ex machina*, from the sky—but rather to allow solutions to emerge from an interpretive engagement that draws from an organization’s *charisms* and *organizational texts* and invite an experience of *public meanings* capable of sustaining a common public life. Instead of seeking new ways to control diocesan rhetoric, it asks diocesan administrations to consider: *Who are we as a diocesan Church? What is our mission and identity as a part of the Body of Christ here, now, in this time? How does our unapologetic ownership of the Catholic faith allow us to ask new, constructive questions of our organizational texts?*

*How can we frame and engage our theological, structural, and relational texts in constructive ways? How can we allow the organizational meanings that guide our life together to present themselves? How can we keep from getting in the way of these emerging organizational meanings as they appear to us?* Managerial technique operates *exogenously* upon organizations from above, whether the organization wants it or not; administrative play emerges *endogenously*, inviting the emergence of organizational meanings from within (March, 1994).

While it does not denigrate the importance of routine management, administrative play contends that the most important question of diocesan life does not involve efficiency and effectiveness but rather involves the acknowledgement and articulation of the values that establish what efficiency and effectiveness are. As an intrinsically value-centric rhetoric, administrative play imports the epideictic genre into diocesan administrative life beside the judicial and legislative rhetoric so important in modern organizational discourse. Though it cannot exist without the substance of organizational life or the substance of organizational values, administrative play uses the stylistic and the imaginative power of language to define public spaces within the life of the Church—what Hyde describes as a sense of *dwelling*—where organizational life can occur. Instead of the *prosaic* emphasis of diocesan mission statements, liturgical and canonical rubrics, and theological doctrines, administrative play works *poetically*, using metaphors not as a way to control organizational life but as a way to frame and engage it.

In many ways, this dissertation has attempted to model the playful approach that it commends to diocesan administrations. Instead of striving for strict *impartiality*, it has constantly emphasized and owned a *communicative bias* that seeks to place the needs of

the Church, the Catholic faith, and diocesan administrations at the center of its study. Instead of seeking premature *answers* to the problems of diocesan administration in the moment of postmodernity, it has recognized the importance of asking the proper *constructive questions* that engage and invite new understanding of diocesan life in a moment in which it is both maligned and misunderstood. And instead of emphasizing the explicitness of *data*, it has sought a *web of metaphors* that can allow it to enter, frame, and engage the rich complexity of diocesan administration in constructive ways. Just as administrative play offers no “solution” to diocesan life, this dissertation does not pretend to have a single answer to “fix” diocesan administration—as if the rhetorical challenges of postmodern American society could be resolved in an instant, or the 2,000-year tradition of the Church could be turned on a dime. Rather, its posture has been one of constant invitation to rediscover the values of diocesan administrative life, nurture them, and commend them to others.

The joy of administrative play lies in recognizing the appearance of significant metaphors in the experience of diocesan administration and then using those metaphors to invite new and creative opportunities within administrative life. The invitational use of metaphor becomes the key to *kairos* in the postmodern moment. The metaphor of the *Catholic Moment* offers a particularly important example of such kairotic organizational poetry. While the Catholic Moment remains steadfastly Catholic, Neuhaus’s metaphor invites constructive questions that transform the moment of postmodernity from a moment of failure and crisis into a moment of maturation and kairotic fruitfulness. It provides a creative point of metaphorical entry into diocesan life, allowing diocesan administrations to recognize the potential for dynamic growth in a moment of transition



and change. In recognizing this growth, the *Catholic Moment* of postmodernity becomes an occasion of kairotic joy as well.

6.2.3 *The joy of the Catholic Moment.* Diocesan administrations, Neuhaus contends, dwell within the *Catholic Moment*, whether they recognize it or not. For Neuhaus, the Second Vatican Council—seen by McSweeney as potentially marking the death-knell of the Catholic Church—becomes a defining moment, in which the Church became transformed to meet the needs of the world precisely when the world needs it most. The Catholic Moment is a *Postliberal Moment*, in which the Church moved from unreflective dogmatism to a postliberal theological perspective that admits the existence and importance of other faith traditions while unapologetically owning its own theological standpoint. In strengthening and publicly proclaiming the Church's theological center, the Catholic Moment also provides a basis for understanding and contending with a *Gnostic Moment* that bases knowledge on the vagaries of intellectual pleasure instead of conviction. Finally, the Catholic Moment is a *Moment of Dialogic Demand*, in which diocesan administration is called to embed its use of authority within discourses that allow its stakeholders to understand its actions not as an exercise of imperial caprice or brute force but as an experience of spiritual, historical, and organizational connections that bind the diocesan Church together.

In each of these dimensions—the rise of an unapologetically orthodox, yet open and engaging Christian theology, the emergence of a solid foundation in a world of Gnostic confusion, and an embrace of dialogic demands that render diocesan authority visible, legible, and understandable to ordinary persons—Neuhaus sees the awakening of a unique and vital message to the world that only the Church can utter. The essence of

the Catholic Moment is the experience of *kairos*, a ripening of rhetorical opportunity that transforms the rhetorical *topoi* that define the communicative life of diocesan administration. The *topos* of evangelization becomes an opportunity to invite the unapologetic revival of the Church in a pluralistic moment. The *topos* of cooperation gives diocesan administrations the chance to articulate and invite others to participate in a particular institutional identity that forms the basis of institutionally significant relationships in a moment of Gnostic confusion. The *topos* of decision gives dioceses the opportunity to exercise their traditional authority more visible and intelligible ways. Taken together, the *topoi* of diocesan rhetoric suggest a rhetorical praxis that transforms the humble tasks of evangelization, cooperation, and decision from bureaucratic functions into rhetorical performances that invite dynamic engagement within the local Church. Existing in the tension between permanence and change, faith and doubt, hope and despair, the Catholic Moment calls forth a rhetoric of diocesan administration that is both true to the Catholic faith and appropriate to the postmodern world, calling new persons to belief, discerning new meanings, and seeking new opportunities for institutional action. In the challenging time of postmodernity, diocesan administration experiences many such opportunities for pastoral joy.

The Catholic Moment frames the challenges of postmodernity not as moments of anxiety or failure but as occasions of opportunity. There is no fear in a diocesan administration's embrace of the Catholic Moment, but rather a willingness to move forward as a pilgrim people into uncharted territory. Speaking from the permanence of the Church's tradition and owning the faith, institutional constraints, and historical witness that make dioceses what they are, the Catholic Moment allows diocesan

administrations to rediscover themselves within the historical moment. Though it offers no clear answers—and, indeed, has no illusions that clarity will come immediately—it has faith that answers will come, as long as the Church is willing to wait for them to appear and engage the moment in a constructive fashion. Grounded in the faith, yet willing to enter the ambiguity of the present in new and dynamic ways, its response to postmodernity comes as an invitation to a new way of life, a new way of understanding, and a new sense of home in a moment of transition and challenge. Playing between permanence and change, the Catholic Moment represents the essence of the joy of diocesan administration.

### 6.3 Diocesan Rhetoric in the Catholic Moment

This dissertation has contended that a Catholic diocese is more than a theological abstraction, a spot on the map, or a bureaucratic structure. It is also a communicative home that lives and breathes through discourse. The joy of the Catholic Moment—the joy of watching the communicative home of the diocesan Church awaken into being—illuminates the communicative foreground of diocesan administration and allows dioceses to see their rhetorical praxis in different ways. *What does the foreground of diocesan rhetoric in the Catholic Moment look like in practice?* This question, of course, opens the door to dozens of others: How does the Catholic Moment affect the nation’s diocesan newspapers, not to mention the rest of the Catholic press? Are websites and podcasts more conducive to the Catholic Moment than other media? How does the Catholic Moment influence fundraising activities? What about television ministries? How does the Catholic Moment affect communication in moments of crisis or during transition processes like parish mergers or school closings? How does the Catholic

Moment influence how dioceses promote vocations—not only to the priesthood and religious life, but also to the married life and single life?

All of these are excellent questions in their own right, and each, in fact, is worthy of its own book-length treatment. What is more, these questions only scratch the surface of the types of complex rhetorical problems that diocesan administration encounters. Because of the breadth and complexity of the foreground issues facing diocesan administration, this dissertation has sought to examine and articulate the communicative background that gives these foreground issues context and meaning. Yet, this discussion of the background of diocesan administration still offers important coordinates for the foreground application of diocesan rhetoric. In the spirit of this dissertation, these coordinates do not declare solutions but rather seek to reframe and transform the practice of diocesan rhetoric in constructive ways. Taken together, they offer the rhetoric of diocesan administration the opportunity to build and sustain the capacities necessary to seize *kairos* of the Catholic Moment and invite communicative homes capable of sustaining human life.

*In the Catholic Moment, the rhetoric of diocesan administration is not a bureaucratic “function.”* Nearly every American diocese has an office or department that performs the functions that are typically associated with secular corporate communication, and these organizational units allow dioceses engage the mass media through diocesan newspapers, the internet, and television and radio ministries. But while the technological capabilities of these diocesan communication offices may be considerable, framing the discursive life of Catholic dioceses in purely functional terms can encourage diocesan administration to see communicative action as something that

can be deployed at will, without appreciating the deeper theoretical issues involved or the ways in which rhetorical concerns bleed into areas that may initially seem to be straightforward and naïvely clear. Simone Weil (1949/1952) has reminded us in urgent ways of the damage that unreflective bureaucratic functionalism can do to the rootedness of human life. For this reason, this dissertation has urged dioceses to view their communicative labor not in terms of functionality but in terms of a deeper rhetorical engagement. In the *Catholic Moment*, the rhetoric of diocesan administration—as a *discipline*, not a *function*—recognizes that discernment and understanding necessarily precede communicative action. It consequently demands a significant level of theoretical and philosophical sophistication that complements the deep theological, spiritual, pastoral, and canonical knowledge that dioceses already possess.

In preparing for communicative engagement, the rhetoric of diocesan administration constantly invites and challenges dioceses to discover new ways of understanding and interacting with publics, instead of merely searching for new, more effective ways of “getting the message out.” Using the work of Gerard Hauser (1999) as a guide, C. T. Maier (2005) describes this orientation toward public discourse not in terms of *listening*—a metaphor that restricts attention only to those discourses that can be “heard” in a traditional sense—but in terms of *attentiveness*, which broadens the gaze of diocesan rhetoric to include a whole host of conventional and unconventional organizational texts. For Hauser, the number of texts that are potentially significant to organizational life is considerable: “consumer behavior of purchase and boycott, public letters, letters to public officials, speeches, symbolic acts, demonstrations, votes, strikes, essays, uses of public places, attendance at public meetings, graffiti, and an assortment of

other forms of approval or disapproval” (p. 107). Discerning the signs of the times consequently requires effort and openness, a willingness to ask unconventional questions and discover new ways of learning about the diocesan Church. “True attentiveness to publics requires a thickness of description Hauser believes cannot be found in the opinion polls and other quantitative metrics that are often the stock and trade of traditional public relations,” Maier observes. “Attentiveness owes more to ethnography and hermeneutics than statistical analysis. It makes public relations a *human*, as well as a *social*, science” (p. 225). Such an effort, undertaken constructively, is undertaken with a constant fascination in the lived faith and experience of a diocese’s people. *The Catholic Moment* demands this constant engagement with a diocese’s publics, even when such interaction is difficult.

*In the Catholic Moment, the rhetoric of diocesan administration understands that bureaucratic controls are no substitute for rhetorical engagement.* Neuhaus’s (1987) description of *postmodern Gnosticism* reminds diocesan administrations of the complexity of creating a communicative home in a time when clashing discourses threaten to pull diocesan life apart. Catholic colleges and universities may invite speakers that contradict Catholic teaching, Catholic hospitals and social service agencies may flirt with practices that would cause scandal in the local Church, and pastors may tacitly or openly resist the bishop’s programs and plans. William McSweeney reminds us that in the not-too-distant past, dioceses sought to hold the Church together through strategies of bureaucratic *control*. Where problems occurred, they would develop offices and structures for oversight, create serpentine networks of interlocking committees, catalogue and publish binders of complex policies, and seek to regulate diocesan life as if

it were one vast machine. While some sort of bureaucratic control is certainly required, McSweeney and Weil remind us that dioceses that seek to engage the world with a tight fist often discover that they can never grasp tightly enough.

Of course, policies, procedures, and strategic plans remain important tools in any organization's life. They create public benchmarks for organizational action, articulate core values, establish credibility and trust, and connect the past with the future. At the same time, however, the rhetoric of diocesan administration recognizes that a diocese cannot create cooperation by policy alone. *Effective and constructive cooperative relationships the diocesan Church—relationships grounded in an intelligible Catholic identity—cannot be legislated but can only be invited through careful and studious rhetorical engagement.* The best policies are ones that are never used because they are so woven into institutional life that they are second nature, and the best strategic plans are written not in binders but in the hearts of people. Catholic colleges and universities should already know how to integrate the pursuit of higher learning with their Catholic identity, Catholic hospitals and non-profits should already know how to avoid scandal, and pastors should already be enlisted in the bishop's vision. Rhetorical engagement is vital to engender this involvement in the diocesan Church in a moment of ideological and institutional incoherence, and it includes a variety of publicly significant relationships both inside and outside the Church. Of these relationships, one of the most important—and challenging—is the relationship that diocese has with its local news media.

*In the Catholic Moment, the rhetoric of diocesan administration realizes that while the news media may not be a friend, it is not the enemy.* One of the most important and challenging tasks American dioceses face involves inviting a complex and often

critical news culture into its communicative home. In many areas, particularly in moments of scandal and crisis, the relations between a diocese and the local media can be tense, and this relationship is further complicated by the cultures of newsrooms themselves. Gaye Tuchman's (1978) book on the sociology of reporting reveals the importance of newsroom dynamics in determining not only how news is covered but also what counts as news, and her work reminds us of the importance of newsroom dynamics, particularly in the area of religion. Because fewer newspapers have the resources to have a dedicated religion reporter on staff, newsrooms can be a mixed bag when it comes to religion: While some reporters are quite knowledgeable about religious issues, many may be largely ignorant of about the Catholic Church and Christianity, others may be skeptical of the theological and moral claims of organized religion, and a few harbor more problematic agendas. This diversity means that daily news coverage can bring unexpected surprises: Reporters may completely misunderstand Catholic teaching, an unfair op-ed piece or letter to the editor may be published, or an unflattering editorial cartoon may be featured. Obviously, the rhetoric of diocesan administration responds to these concerns as they arise, but it also constantly recognizes that journalists are persons with children, pets, and mortgages, and that they deserve to be treated with civility, particularly by representatives of the Catholic Church.

Still, media relations are often difficult for the Church. Philip Jenkins's (1996) discussion of the development of the clergy sexual abuse scandal in the 1980s reveals that the reluctance of dioceses to engage the news media created a vacuum that was quickly filled by liberal Catholic activists who were all too willing to frame the issue as a "Catholic problem" to further their own agendas, and he urges dioceses not to repeat this



mistake. Yet, these tendencies remain: Maier observes that during the height of the sexual abuse scandal, the majority of American cardinals chose to avoid an important Vatican press conference, a move that suggests that uneasiness with—or even contempt for—the news media remains strong among the American episcopacy. It is all too easy for diocesan administrations to condemn the American news culture as “the liberal media,” reject it wholesale—refusing interviews, acting disdainfully to probing questions, or writing nasty responses to unflattering coverage—and then complain with righteous indignation when the media fails to understand what they have to say. Such an orientation to the media, an attitude that smacks of the Catholic ghetto, has become historically inappropriate. Poor media relations is as foolish as it is profoundly unproductive, not only because it is never wise to start a war of words with people who buy ink by the barrel, but also because the news media represents an essential way of reaching a diocese’s publics in moments of crisis and change. The rhetoric of diocesan administration recognizes that if a diocese does not define itself in the media, it will be defined by others, but it also recognizes that media relations—indeed, any rhetorical engagement—begins with the confidence in the rhetorical ground under one’s feet.

*In the Catholic Moment, the rhetoric of diocesan administration chooses speaking well over speaking perfectly.* Diocesan administration is a deeply textured institution, and this theological, spiritual, liturgical, and canonical complexity offers Catholic rhetoric a wealth of substantive grounding. But in this strength also lies a tendency toward what John Poulakos (1995) calls “logophobia” (p. xii), in which the desire to be correct transforms the goal of rhetorical engagement from *speaking well* to *speaking perfectly*. Over time, Poulakos warns, the demand for rhetorical perfection can stymie

rhetorical action altogether. In many ways, the complexity of the substance behind diocesan rhetoric—the details of canonical procedures, the centuries of liturgical variations, the richness of theological reflections—can engender the sense of stress and anxiety that Poulakos describes. There is simply too much to know and consider in any given situation, too many interests that need to be mollified, and too many committees and chains of command. In moments of crisis and challenge, the fear of error— theological, canonical, tactical, or otherwise—can paralyze diocesan rhetoric within endless bureaucratic processes of review and revision. While these processes result in messages that may be “perfect” in the sense that they contain no overt mistakes, they often make it difficult, if not impossible, to generate timely messages that are not encased in bland, incomprehensible “Catholic-ese.”

Poulakos emphasizes the ways in which kairotic rhetoric embraces the *opportune*, the *appropriate*, and the *possible*. Based in belief instead of certainty, it chooses meeting the *kairos* of the moment over delivering absolute clarity, and this pragmatic posture frees it to relax and experiment. In seeking and engaging *kairos*, the rhetoric of diocesan administration chooses to speak well, not to speak perfectly, and this choice offers a constructive response to the complexity of the Church’s rich resources in rhetorical substance. The embrace of *kairos* in diocesan rhetoric does not discount the importance of rhetorical substance or of the careful distinctions and nuances of meaning that can be essential in ecclesiastical life, but rather seeks to complement and balance them. It seeks not to *replace* the rich texture of rhetorical substance that defines diocesan life but to *reframe* it, differentiating between what is essential and what is merely preferable, what is better and what is merely good, and what is the crux of the issue and what is an

interesting, but ultimately distracting theological or canonical detail. Relaxed and flexible but also grounded in the faith, the rhetoric of diocesan administration constantly seeks to become classically Catholic, yet ever new in its response to the ever-changing call of the historical moment.

*In the Catholic Moment, the rhetoric of diocesan administration lets the historical moment speak when it does not know what to say.* In moments of crisis or change, stakeholders justifiably turn to institutional leaders for words of comfort, and these rhetorical responses are essential in interpreting the challenges the group faces, creating publicly significant meanings, and creating opportunities for common action. But what about moments of such profound crisis—the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Indonesian tsunamis, and Hurricane Katrina come to mind—that seem to defy speech, or periods of profound or complex change—a radical decline in clergy and religious that threatens the delivery of pastoral ministry in a particular region, for instance—that are so ambiguous and uncertain that no one knows exactly what to say? In such situations, dioceses may be tempted to respond too quickly, say something they do not entirely mean, or issue statements so vague and unintelligible that they create more ambiguity than they clear. Amidst the resounding thud of such rhetorical failure, diocesan administrations learn a hard, but important lesson: *Kairos* cannot be forced. Dioceses often have to wait for their time to come. In such times of discernment, dioceses have the opportunity to discover that the most powerful rhetor is the moment itself. When it does not know what to say, the rhetoric of diocesan administration listens to the moment.

Listening to the moment does not demand that dioceses be silent where discourse is required but merely changes the form of communicative action. A diocese listening to

the moment is candid about what it knows and what it does not know, remains open to conversation, seeks spaces of potential growth, and communicates what it learns. In such moments, too, the quotidian activities of diocesan life—the celebration of the sacraments, the seasons of the liturgical year, the care of persons in need—take on special significance because the friction between these timeless activities and the changes of the moment—what Emmanuel Levinas (1974/2006) describes in terms of the tension between the *Said* and the *Saying*—can yield *holy sparks* that illuminate new places in the dark. As Arnett (2006) observes:

The revelatory value of rhetorical interruption of “saying” offers light, meaningful engagement and insight in God’s world. It is the “stuff” from which resurrection happens in everyday life with the “said” providing ground for a temporal courage to walk within the shadowy overcast confusion of darkness, guided by a confidence that glimpses of light that at the right time and in the right proportion illuminate the way of a people. (p. 9)

When the room is dark, and the wick is almost broken, only a gentle hand can bring it to flame (Cf., Isa 42:3). When the rhetoric of diocesan administration does not know what to do, it returns, humbly, to the roots that give it a human face: the stewardship of the faith and the pastoral care of persons. Such humility recognizes that the timing of the Holy Spirit—God’s timing—is defined not by predictable schedules but by the fullness of *kairos*. Waiting may seem a risky choice, but the rhetoric of diocesan administration realizes the importance of rhetorical risks in the life of a diocesan Church.

*In the Catholic Moment, the rhetoric of diocesan administration knows that while engagement is risky, the greatest risk is not engaging at all.* Communicative homes are conceived in risk. Faith does not exist without the risk of doubt. Trusting relationships cannot be developed without the risk of betrayal. Plans for the future cannot be developed without the risk of failure. The rhetoric of diocesan administration exists to

negotiate such risks. Still, in the face of the challenges of postmodernity, in which the Church seems beset by confusion on all sides—and even within—it may often seem prudent, even admirable, for a diocese to hold back, to keep its cards close to its vest. In the turbulent world of the 1930s, the Protestant ethicist Reinhold Niebuhr (1932) witnessed his peers raise similar objections to engaging with what they took to be a fundamentally immoral society. Any involvement in public life, it was assumed, would necessarily tarnish the standing of the Christian faith. Niebuhr shared their concerns but reached a far different conclusion: *The challenges of secular society are such that Christians are actually compelled to engage those challenges.* Certainly, engagement with secular society can take Christians beyond where they can go in good conscience. Niebuhr recognized that Christians cannot embrace rhetorical risks heedlessly, nor can they ever sacrifice their grounding in the faith in engaging the public sphere. But he also believed that the risks of engagement are far outweighed by the risk of abandoning the world altogether. Christians, he urged, cannot be a faithful remnant as the world burns.

In similar fashion, the Catholic Moment calls upon the Church to lean into the Naked Public Square. Certainly, the rhetoric of diocesan administration does not take these risks lightly, but it also recognizes in rhetorical risks the constant presence of opportunity. The Catholic Moment constantly seeks opportunities to place the Gospel in places where the Gospel is not expected to be: a brochure on Catholic teaching at a controversial museum exhibit, a Catholic radio commentary in the middle of a shock jock's drive time show, or simple card sent to someone who has drifted away from the faith. These opportunities bring risks—the diocese may be seen as condoning the exhibit, the radio commentary may prompt sacrilegious mocking, and the card may elicit a nasty

phone call to a parish or the diocesan offices—but they also engender a sense of paradoxical tension that calls the Naked Public Square to account. The rhetoric of diocesan administration recognizes the *kairos* that is awakened in these experiences of paradox. The Church has placed itself somewhere new, asked a question that has not been asked, elicited a response that it can answer in faith, and been allowed to teach people who have not allowed themselves to be taught. In a way, too, the controversy that the Church elicits in the Naked Public Square is not a denigration of its faith but a constant reminder of its significance. If diocesan administration does not risk, if it does not engage in public life, if it allows itself to be so offended with non-Christians that it gives up on the Naked Public Square altogether, it rejects discourse, the possibility of *kairos*, and the Holy Spirit whose breath constantly makes the world new.

Ephemeral yet substantive, the rhetoric of diocesan administration bears witness to the breath and life of the local Church, and in this way, it reminds and awakens diocesan administration to the presence and movements of the Holy Spirit in its midst. In doing so, it invites a new—and yet old—understanding of diocesan life that embraces Saint Augustine’s (trans. 1960) understanding of the Church as a *pilgrim people* on a journey of faith. The rhetoric of diocesan administration, as a foreground practice that serves this pilgrim people, is not a bureaucratic function but a ministry rooted in rigorous intellectual engagement, disciplined discernment, and faithful communicative action. It lives at the heart of the Church and serves its people by participating in the discourses that define its life. Bringing salt and light into the world, it is called to go where the Church is not expected to go, ask questions that the Church is not expected to ask, and risk engagement with a world that no longer speaks a language of faith. Grounded in the

power of the Gospel, it walks confidently into the Naked Public Square, creates public relationships where there were none before, articulates the common values that bind persons together, and casts old meanings in new lights.

The rhetoric of diocesan administration transforms diocesan administration in the Catholic Moment in fundamental ways. It reminds dioceses that they cannot think of themselves—their sense of geographic place, their bureaucracies, their networks of parishes and schools, their programs and ministries, their accustomed ways of doing things—as a destination unto itself. This realization is essential because in the moment of postmodernity, Catholic dioceses are quickly discovering that the things that they relied upon—their prominent places in the community, stability in parish life, an effective bureaucratic structure—are suddenly in question. *In the Catholic Moment, the rhetoric of diocesan administration is constantly aware that the diocesan structure can never confuse itself with the communicative home it seeks to invite.* It understands that the communicative home of the diocesan Church always begins in the lives of its people, the faith that they share, and the sacraments that they celebrate. The rhetoric of diocesan administration, engaging the Church's administrative and pastoral life in myriad ways, seeks within the diversity of postmodernity a sense of vision and purpose that extends beyond the boundaries of individual parishes or dioceses—a sense of significance that can offer a pilgrim people, if even for a moment, a communicative home in a changing, homeless world.

#### 6.4 The Invitation of Diocesan Administration

In the winter of 2008, the Pew Forum on Religion in Public Life (2008) published the first broad-based demographic study of religious affiliation in the United States.

Relying on a representative sample of 35,000 Americans, the study suggests four significant trends in American religious life. First, the study found that 28 percent of Americans—and 44 percent of Americans if the denominational switching among the members of the various Protestant communions is included—now belong to a different religious tradition than the one of their youth. Second, the number of American Protestants, in a general sense, has declined to 51.3 of the United States population, suggesting that the United States, for the first time, could be a minority Protestant nation within a few years. Third, while Catholicism has experienced the largest single decline in affiliation—10.1 percent—its numbers have been stabilized by an influx of Catholic Latino immigrants, making American Catholicism an immigrant Church once again. And fourth, the greatest single gain in religious affiliation is among those who have no religious affiliation at all.

As a demographic study, the Pew report on religious affiliation makes no claim to offer any causes for these changes. It merely reports that they are occurring. Nevertheless, the report demonstrates statistically what Robert Wuthnow's (2005) qualitative study of American religion suggests and what many in American diocesan administration have suspected for some time: That the religious landscape of the United States is becoming increasingly fluid and diverse, populated not only by traditionalist *exclusive Christians* but also by denominationally vague *inclusive Christians* and an increasing number of *spiritual shoppers* who no longer have any distinct religious identity at all. In other words, American religious life is now imbued with a sense of *spiritual homelessness* that corrodes human life from within. They have become, as Marshall McLuhan (1994) observes, *nomads* picking their way across a cultural desert.



The authors of the Pew study describe the complexity of the American religious landscape through the metaphor of *religious marketplace*, a metaphor that is both apt and problematic. Even as it seems to explain much of the complexity of American religious life, the metaphor of religious marketplace transforms American religious believers into “consumers” who choose faiths merely out of convenience and personal preference, and it also pressures religious organizations to alter their beliefs and ways of life to remain “competitive.” In such a view, the Catholic Church’s inherently conservative approach to its tradition is understood to place the rhetoric of diocesan administration at a distinct disadvantage, and the struggles of the American Catholic Church in the moment of postmodern religious diversity are read as moments of institutional atrophy, abject incompetence, or malign stubbornness. Diocesan administration, the “institutional Church,” becomes a focus of this criticism and frustration, something that requires elimination for the Church to survive in the twenty-first century. Yet, as John Coleman (2002) warns us, the postmodern religious “marketplace,” while undoubtedly exciting and diverse, is also a place of remarkable restlessness and shallowness that does not diminish but rather accentuates the homelessness of postmodern life.

The rhetoric of diocesan administration, as a form of ministry, flows out of the pastoral acknowledgement of the call of homeless world. But it also recognizes that in a postmodern age of radical mobility, the ever-restless, ever-wandering pilgrim Church requires a new sort of home rooted not in a particular community, a particular parish, or particular set of institutional relationships but in the Catholic faith itself. Its defining metaphor is not one of a *religious marketplace* but of a *communicative home* that allows an increasingly fluid and mobile American Catholic culture to a deeper awareness and

appreciation of what it means to be Catholic Christians in a moment of radical change. The beliefs, practices of faith, cultural history, and intellectual heritage of American Catholicism provide a grounding that is constantly portable. A communicative home resides in the invitation to exchange the life of a *nomad* for the life of a *pilgrim* and in the labor to provide the bread that makes the pilgrim's journey possible.

American diocesan administrations cannot sit on the sidelines in such a moment of diversity, change, and challenge, but their engagement with postmodernity does not come from a sense of fear or a frantic survival instinct. *To a restless, homeless world, the rhetoric of diocesan administration issues a constant invitation to a communicative home that grounds human life.* This invitation brings the faith to people in new ways, develops the institutions that meet the pastoral and social needs of a changing society, and regains the Church's stature as trusted presence in public discourse. Neuhaus's metaphor of the *Catholic Moment* invites this home into being, as the paradoxical tensions between individual and whole, past and future, and permanence and change constantly create new opportunities for faithful action. These moments of *kairos* awaken diocesan administration to new moments of fruitfulness and faith in a postmodern culture consumed by confusion, greed, and offenses to human dignity. In the Catholic Moment, the rhetoric of diocesan administration does not exist to make triumphalist declarations that force people to come home to the faith. It proposes, but never imposes. Moving with humility and grace, it exists to extend the invitation, prepare the Table, and serve the People of God.

## REFERENCES

- American Heritage dictionary of the English language (3rd ed.). (1996). New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Anonymous. (2003). An anatomy of the “pastoral” as received in the United States. *Theological Studies*, 64, 472-494.
- Arendt, H. (1998). *The human condition* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Aristotle. (1984). *The rhetoric and poetics of Aristotle* (W. R. Roberts & I. Bywater, Trans.). New York: McGraw.
- Arnett, R. C. (1996). Technicians of goodness: Ignoring the narrative life of dialogue. In J. A. Jaksa & M. Pritchard (Eds.), *Responsible communication: Ethical issues in business, industry, and the professions* (pp. 339-356). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Arnett, R. C. (1998). Interpersonal praxis: The interplay of religious narrative, historicality, and metaphor. *Journal of Communication and Religion*, 21, 141-163.
- Arnett, R. C. (2005). *Dialogic confession: Bonhoeffer's rhetoric of responsibility*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Arnett, R. C. (2006). Through a glass, darkly. *Journal of Communication and Religion*, 29, 1-17.
- Arnett, R. C., & Arneson, P. (1999). *Dialogic civility in a cynical age*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Augustine. (1960). *The confessions of Saint Augustine*. (J. K. Ryan, Trans.). New York: Doubleday.
- Bakhtin, M. (1982). *The dialogic imagination* (M. Holquist & V. Liapunov, Eds. V. Liapunov & K Brostrom, Trans). Austin: University of Texas Press. (Original work published 1963)
- Bane, M. J. (2004). Voice and loyalty in the Church: The people of God, politics, and management. In S. J. Pope (Ed.), *Common calling: The laity and governance of the Catholic Church* (pp. 181-193). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Barge, J. K., & Little, M. (2002). Dialogical wisdom, communicative practice, and organizational life. *Communication Theory*, 12, 375-397.

- Barnes, M. C. (2003). *Searching for home: Spirituality for restless souls*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.
- Bell, D. (1973). *The coming of postindustrial society: A venture in social forecasting*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bellah, R. N., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W. M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S. M. (1996). *Habits of the heart: Individualism and commitment in American life*. Berkeley, CA: University of Berkeley Press.
- Bellah, R. N., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W. M., Swidler, A. & Tipton, S. (1991). *The good society*. New York: Vintage.
- Benedict XVI (J. Ratzinger). (1996). *Called to communion: Understanding the church today* (A. Walker, Trans.). San Francisco: Ignatius. (Original work published 1991)
- Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. New York: Doubleday.
- Bitzer, L. F. (1999). The rhetorical situation. In J. L. Lucaites, C. M. Condit, & S. Caudill (Eds.), *Contemporary rhetorical theory: A reader* (pp. 217-225). New York: Guilford.
- Boomershine, T. (2001). Toward a biblical communication theology. *Catholic International*, 12 (4), 27-31
- Borchardt, H. C. (1983). Before we lose them: causes, warning signals and intervention strategies for church disassociation. *Review of Religious Research*, 25, 63-75.
- Boston Globe*. (2002). Betrayal: The crisis of the Catholic church. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Brown, D. (2003). *The Da Vinci Code*. New York: Doubleday.
- Cahill, L. S. (2004). Feminist theology and a participatory Church. In S. J. Pope (Ed.), *Common calling: The laity and governance of the Catholic Church* (pp. 127-150). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Carey, J. W. (1992). *Communication as culture: Essays on media and society*. New York: Routledge.
- Carey, P. W. (1987). *People, priests, and prelates: Ecclesiastical democracy and the tensions of trusteeism*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Carroll, C. (2002). *The new faithful: Why young adults are embracing Christian orthodoxy*. Chicago: Loyola Press.

- Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2nd ed.). (1997). Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- Chadwick, O. (1998). *A history of the popes: 1830-1914*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chambre, S. M. (2001). The changing nature of “faith” in faith-based organizations: Secularization and ecumenism in four AIDS organizations in New York City. *Social Service Review*, 75, 435-455.
- Chaves, M. (2002). Religious organizations: Data resources and research opportunities. *The American Behavioral Scientist*, 45, 1523-1549.
- Chaves, M. (1993). Denominations as dual structures: An organizational analysis. *Sociology of Religion*, 54 (Summer), 147-169.
- Cheney, G. (1991). *Rhetoric in an organizational society: Managing multiple identities*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.
- Coleman, J. A. (2002). Selling God in America: American commercial culture as a climate of hospitality to religion. In R. Madsen, W. M. Sullivan, A. Swidler, & S. M. Tipton (Eds.), *Meaning and modernity: Religion, polity, and self* (pp. 136-149). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Constas, H. (1958). Max Weber’s two conceptions of bureaucracy. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 63, 400-409.
- Data shed light on Protestant sex-abuse cases; 260-plus reports received annually by insurance companies. (2007, June 15). *Richmond Times Dispatch Final Edition*, A9.
- D’Antonio, W. V., Davidson, J. D, Hoge, D. R., & Wallace, R. A. (1996). *Laity: American and Catholic*. Kansas City: Sheed and Ward.
- Deetz, S. (1982). Critical interpretive research in organizational communication. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 46, 131-149.
- Deetz, S. (1995). *Transforming communication, transforming business: Building responsive and responsible workplaces*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.
- Dinges, W. D. (1987). Ritual conflict as social conflict: Liturgical reform in the Roman Catholic Church. *Sociological Analysis*, 48, 138-157.
- Drane, J. (1969). *Authority and institution: A study in church crisis*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing.
- Drucker, P. (1990). *Managing the nonprofit organization*. New York: HarperCollins.

- Drucker, P. (2006). *The practice of management*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Dulles, A. (1988). The church and communications: Vatican II and beyond. In *The reshaping of Catholicism: Current challenges in the theology of church* (pp. 110-131). San Francisco: Harper and Row.
- Dulles, A. (2001). The travails of dialogue. *Catholic International*, 12 (4), 36-40.
- Dulles, A. (2002). *Models of the church*. New York: Image.
- Ebaugh, H. R. (1993). The growth and decline of Catholic religious orders of women worldwide: The impact of women's opportunity structures. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 32, 68-75.
- Ellul, J. (1964). *The technological society* (J. Wilkinson, Trans.). New York: Vintage. (Original work published 1954)
- Emerson, J. G. (1969). What church administration can learn from the secular world. *Pastoral Psychology*, 20 (September), 51-56.
- Erasmus, D. (1993). *In praise of folly* (B. Radice, Trans.). New York: Penguin.
- Eskin, C. R. (2002). Hippocrates, *kairos*, and writing in the sciences. In P. Sipiora & J. S. Baumlin (Eds.), *Rhetoric and kairos: Essays in history, theory, and praxis* (pp. 97-113). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Ewen, S. (1996). *PR! A social history of spin*. New York: Basic.
- Farrell, J. M. (2004). Rhetoric and the Catholic imagination. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 7, 499-512.
- Fayol, H. (1949). *General and industrial management* (C. Storrs, Trans.). London: Pitman. (Original work published 1917)
- Fisher, W. R. (1987). *Human communication as narration: Toward a philosophy of reason, value, and action*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.
- Fransen, P. F. (1982). Criticism of some basic theological notions in matters of church authority. *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 19 (2), 48-74.
- Fraser, M. (2002). Language for God, gender and authority. In B. Hoose (Ed.), *Authority in the Roman Catholic Church: Theory and practice* (pp. 193-215). Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Fritz, J. M. H. (1997). Curricular fidelity, diversity with connection: The Duquesne Experiment. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 1, 24-31.
- Froehle, B. T., & Gautier M. L. (2000). *Catholicism USA: A portrait of the Catholic Church in the United States*. New York: Maryknoll.

- Gadamer, H.-G. (2004). *Truth and method* (2nd rev. ed. J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall, Trans.) New York: Continuum. (Original work published 1960)
- Gauthier, A. (1991). Juridical persons in the *Code of Canon Law*. *Studia canonica*, 25, 77-92.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gleason, P. (1970). Introduction. In P. Gleason (ed.), *Catholicism in America* (pp. 1-9). New York: Harper and Row.
- Glendon, M. A. (2002, November). The hour of the laity. *First Things*, 23+.
- Gordon, W. T. (1997). *Marshall McLuhan: Escape into understanding*. Toronto: Stoddart.
- Gray, J. S., & Tucker, J. C. (1990). *Presbyterian polity for church officers* (2nd ed.). Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox.
- Green, T. J. (1992). *A manual for bishops: Rights and responsibilities of diocesan bishops in the Revised Code of Canon Law* (Rev. ed.). Washington, DC: National Conference of Catholic Bishops/United States Catholic Conference.
- Gregory XVI (B. A. Cappellari). (1832, August 15). *Mirari vos*. Retrieved July 6, 2007 from <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Greg16/g16mirar.htm>.
- Habermas, J. (1973). *Legitimation crisis* (T. McCarthy, Trans). Boston: Beacon, 1975. (Original work published 1973)
- Habermas, J. (1989). *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. (T. Burger & F. Lawrence, Trans.) Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (Original work published 1962).
- Hadaway, C. K., & Marler, P. L. (2005). How many Americans attend worship each week? An alternative approach to measurement. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 44, 307–322.
- Hargie, O., & Lount, M. (2000). Auditing communication practices in the church: A study of a Catholic diocese. In O. Hargie and D. Tourish (eds.), *Handbook of Communication Audits for Organisations* (pp. 239-254). New York: Routledge.
- Hauser, G. A. (1999). *Vernacular voices: The rhetoric of publics and public spheres*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.
- Hazen, M. A. (1993). Towards polyphonic organization. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 6 (5), 15-26.

- Hazen, M. A. (1994). Multiplicity and change in persons and organizations. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 7 (6), 72-81.
- Herberg, W. (1956). *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An essay in American religious sociology*. New York: Doubleday.
- Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Hoffer, E. (1976). *The ordeal of change*. Cutchogue, NY: Buccaneer.
- Hogan, J. M. (1989). Managing dissent in the Catholic Church: A reinterpretation of the pastoral letter on war and peace. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 75, 400-415.
- Hoose, B. (2002). Introducing the main issues. In B. Hoose (Ed.), *Authority in the Roman Catholic Church: Theory and practice* (pp. 1-16). Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Hunter-Hall, R., & Wagner, S. (2007, February/March). The state of the Catholic Church in America: Diocese by diocese. *Crisis*, p. 12+.
- Husserl, E. (1970). *The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology: An introduction to phenomenological philosophy* (D. Carr, Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. (Original work published 1954)
- Hyde, M. J. (2006). *The life-giving gift of acknowledgement*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press.
- Jablonski, C. J. (1980). Promoting radical change in the Roman Catholic Church: Rhetorical requirements, problems and strategies of the American bishops. *Central States Speech Journal*, 31, 282-289.
- Jablonski, C. J. (1988). Rhetoric, paradox, and the movement for women's ordination in the Roman Catholic Church. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 74, 164-183.
- Jarratt, S. C. (1991). *Rereading the sophists: Classical rhetoric refigured*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Jenkins, P. (1996). *Pedophiles and priests*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Jenkins, P. (2003). *The new anti-Catholicism: The last acceptable prejudice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- John Paul II (K. Wojtyla). (1990). *Redemptoris missio*. Retrieved September 5, 2007 from [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_07121990\\_redemptoris-missio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio_en.html)



- Kasper, W. (2006, October 9). The Holy Spirit and ecumenical dialogue: Theological and practical dimensions. Retrieved October 8, 2007 from <http://www.kardinal-kasper-stiftung.de/VortragPittsburgh09102006.html>
- Kearns, K. P. (2000). *Private sector strategies for social sector success*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kennedy, E. (1988). *Tomorrow's Catholics, yesterday's church: The two cultures of American Catholicism*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Kennedy, G. A. (1999). *Classical rhetoric and its Christian and secular tradition from ancient to modern times*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Kierkegaard, S. (1985). *Fear and trembling* (A. Hannay, Trans.). New York: Penguin. (Original published 1843)
- Kinnaman, D., & Lyons, G. (2007). *unChristian*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Kniss, F., & Campbell, D. T. (1997). The effect of religious orientation on international relief and development organizations. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 36, 93–104.
- Kuhn, T. S. (1996). *The structure of scientific revolutions* (3rd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lash, N. (2002). Authors, authority and authorization. In B. Hoose (Ed.), *Authority in the Roman Catholic Church: Theory and practice* (pp. 59-71). Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Lawrence, H. (2002). Ordination and governance. In B. Hoose (Ed.), *Authority in the Roman Catholic Church: Theory and practice* (pp. 73-82). Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Levinas, E. (2006). *Otherwise than being* (A. Lingis, Trans.). Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press. (Original work published 1974)
- Lindbeck, G. A. (1984). *The nature of doctrine: Religion and theology in a postliberal age*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
- Lockwood, R. P. (n.d.). *The lie of Maria Monk lives on*. Retrieved December 3, 2007, from <http://www.catholicleague.org/research/mariam Monk.htm>
- Luckmann, T. (1967). *The invisible religion: The problem of religion in modern society*. New York: Macmillan.
- Lyotard, J. F. (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*. (G. Bennington & B. Massumi, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1979)

- Maier, C. T. (2005). Weathering the storm: Hauser's *Vernacular Voices*, public relations and the Roman Catholic Church's sexual abuse scandal. *Public Relations Review*, 31, 219–227.
- Maier, F. (2001). Communicating openly with the media. *Catholic International*, 12 (4), 65-69.
- MacIntyre, A. (1981). *After virtue*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Mayhew, L. H. (1997). *The new public: Professional communication and the means of social influence*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- March, J. G. (1994). *A primer on decision making: How decisions happen*. New York: Free Press.
- Marsden, G. M. (1990). *Religion and American culture*. New York: Harcourt Brace.
- Marty, M. (2007, November). "Sightings" of religion in public communication. Paper presented at the meeting of the National Communication Association, Chicago, IL.
- McLuhan, M. (1994). *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- McLuhan, M. (1999a). Liturgy and media: Do Americans go to church to be alone? In E. McLuhan & J. Szklarek (Eds.), *The medium and the light: Reflections on religion* (pp. 117-135). Toronto: Stoddard.
- McLuhan, M. (1999b). Liturgy and the microphone. In E. McLuhan & J. Szklarek (Eds.), *The medium and the light: Reflections on religion* (pp. 107-116). Toronto: Stoddard.
- McSweeney, W. (1980). *Roman Catholicism: The search for relevance*. New York: St. Martin's.
- Metheny, P. (Leader, Pat Metheny Group). (2001). *Pat Metheny Group: We Live Here* [concert and interviews]. Chatsworth, CA: Image Entertainment.
- Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 83, 340-363.
- Mills, P. K., & Margulies, N. (1980). Toward a core typology of service organizations. *The Academy of Management Review*, 5, 255-265.
- Mumby, D., & Stohl, C. (1996). Disciplining organizational communication studies. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 10, 50-72.

- Murphy, J. J. (1974). *Rhetoric in the middle ages*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Neuhaus, R. J. (1984). *The naked public square: Religion and democracy in America*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Neuhaus, R. J. (1987). *The Catholic moment: The paradox of the church in the modern world*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.
- Newman, John Henry. (1960). *An essay on the development of Christian doctrine*. New York: Doubleday.
- Nichols, T. L. (2004). Participatory hierarchy. In S. J. Pope (Ed.), *Common calling: The laity and governance of the Catholic Church* (pp. 111-126). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Niebuhr, R. (1932). *Moral man and immoral society*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Nieman, J. R. (2005). National denominational structures' engagement with postmodernity: An integrative summary from an organizational perspective. In D. A. Roozen & J. R. Nieman (Eds.), *Church, identity, and change: Theology and denominational structures in unsettled times* (pp. 625-653) Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Nietzsche, F. On the uses and disadvantages of history for life. In D. Breazeale (Ed), *Untimely meditations* (pp. 57-123) (R. J. Hollingdale, Trans.). New York: Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1874)
- Pagels, E. (1979). *The Gnostic gospels*. New York: Vintage.
- Paul VI (G. Montini). (1975, December 8). *Evangelii nuntiandi*. Retrieved September 5, 2007 from [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19751208\\_evangelii-nuntiandi\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi_en.html).
- Peck, J. R. (Ed.). (2004). *Speaking faith: The essential handbook for religion communicators* (7th ed.). New York: Religious Communicators Council.
- Pelikan, J. (1959). *The riddle of Roman Catholicism*. New York: Abingdon Press.
- Pennington, K. (2002). Bishops and their dioceses. *Folia Canonica*, 5, 7-17.
- Perrow, C. (1986). *Complex organizations: A critical essay* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.
- Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. (2008). *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*. Washington, DC: Author.

- Pius XII (E. Pacelli). (1957, September 8). *Miranda prorsus*. Retrieved July 9, 2007 from [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_enc\\_08091957\\_miranda-prorsus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_08091957_miranda-prorsus_en.html).
- Placher, W. C. (1989). *Unapologetic theology: A Christian voice in a pluralistic conversation*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press.
- Plude, F. F. (2001). Interactive communication in the church. *Catholic International*, 12 (4), 44-50.
- Pontifical Council for Social Communications. (1971, May 23). *Communio et progressio*. Retrieved July 9, 2007 from [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/pccs/documents/rc\\_pc\\_pccs\\_doc\\_23051971\\_communio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_23051971_communio_en.html).
- Pope, S. J. (2004). Introduction: The laity and the governance of the Church today. In S. J. Pope (Ed.), *Common calling: The laity and governance of the Catholic Church* (pp. 1-22). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Poulakos, J. (1983). Toward a sophistic definition of rhetoric. *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 16, 35-48.
- Poulakos, J. (1984). Rhetoric, the sophists, and the possible. *Communication Monographs*, 51, 215-226.
- Poulakos, J. (1995). *Sophistical rhetoric in classical Greece*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.
- Poulakos, J. (2002). *Kairos* in Gorgias' rhetorical compositions. In P. Sipiora & J. S. Baumlin (Eds.), *Rhetoric and kairos: Essays in history, theory, and praxis* (pp. 89-96). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Powell, M. (2007, April 23). Tender of the flock: The archbishop looks back; At 75, a battle-tested but unwavering cardinal. *New York Times National Edition*, p. A1.
- Powers, B. P. (Ed.). (1997). *Church Administration Handbook* (Rev. ed.). Nashville: Broadman and Holman.
- Provost, J. H. (1976). Structuring the church as a *communio*. *The Jurist*, 36, 191-245.
- Rademacher, W. (1991). *Lay ministry: A theological, spiritual, and pastoral handbook*. New York: Crossroad.
- Reese, T. J. (1989). *Archbishop: Inside the power structure of the American Catholic Church*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Rivers, R. S. (2005). *From maintenance to mission: Evangelization and the revitalization of the parish*. New York: Paulist.

- Rolheiser, R. (2004). Creating an evangelizing spirituality. In North American Institute for Catholic Evangelization: Ministry through the lens of evangelization (pp. 123-135). Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
- Roozen, D. A. (2005). National denominational structures' engagement with postmodernity: An integrative summary from an organizational perspective. In D. A. Roozen & J. R. Nieman (Eds.), *Church, identity, and change: Theology and denominational structures in unsettled times* (pp. 588-624) Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Rostagni, A. (2002). A new chapter in the history of rhetoric and sophistry. In P. Sipiora & J. S. Baumlin (Eds.), *Rhetoric and kairos: Essays in history, theory, and praxis* (P. Sipiora, trans.) (pp. 23-45). Albany, NY: SUNY Press. (Original work published 1922)
- Safranski, S. R. (1985). *Managing God's organization: The Catholic Church in society*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press.
- Schilling, T. P. (2003, September 12). When bishops disagree: Rome, Hunthausen and the current church crisis. *Commonweal*, pp. 15+.
- Schoenherr, R. A., & Young, L. A. (1993). *Full pews and empty altars: Demographics of the priest shortage in United States Catholic dioceses*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Schoenherr, R. A., Young, L. A., & Vilarino, J. P. (1988). Demographic transitions in religious organizations: A comparative study of priest decline in Roman Catholic dioceses. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 27, 499-523.
- Schulte-Sasse, J. (1986). Imagination and modernity: Or the taming of the human mind. *Cultural Critique*, 5 (Winter), 23-48.
- Second Vatican Council. (1999a). *Inter Mirifica*. In M. L. Trouvé (ed.), *The sixteen documents of Vatican II* (pp. 87-107). Boston: Pauline.
- Second Vatican Council. (1999b). *Lumen Gentium*. In M. L. Trouvé (Ed.), *The sixteen documents of Vatican II* (pp. 111-199). Boston: Pauline.
- Sennett, R. (1977). *The fall of public man*. New York, Knopf.
- Sennett, R. (1980). *Authority*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Shakeshaft, C., & Cohen, A. (1994). *In loco parentis: Sexual abuse of students in schools*. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Education.
- Shaw, C. K. Y. (1992). Hegel's theory of modern bureaucracy. *The American Political Science Review*, 86, 381-389.

- Shorto, R. (2007, April 8) Keeping the faith. *New York Times Magazine*, 38+.
- Simon, H. A. (1997). *Administrative behavior* (4th ed.). New York: Free Press.
- Sipiora, P. (2002a). Introduction: The ancient concept of *kairos*. In P. Sipiora & J. S. Baumlin (Eds.), *Rhetoric and kairos: Essays in history, theory, and praxis* (pp. 1-22). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Sipiora, P. (2002b). *Kairos*: The rhetoric of time and timing in the New Testament. In P. Sipiora & J. S. Baumlin (Eds.), *Rhetoric and kairos: Essays in history, theory, and praxis* (pp. 114-127). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Smith, J. E. (2002). Time and qualitative time. In P. Sipiora & J. S. Baumlin (Eds.), *Rhetoric and kairos: Essays in history, theory, and praxis* (pp. 46-57). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Steed, M. L. (1986). Church schism and secession: A necessary sequence. *Review of Religious Research*, 27, 344-355.
- Sullivan, D. L. (1992). *Kairos* and the rhetoric of belief. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 78, 317-332.
- Sullivan, F. A. (2001). *From apostles to bishops: The development of the episcopacy in the early church*. New York: Newman.
- Szafran, R. F. (1976). The distribution of influence in religious organizations. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 15, 339-349.
- Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the self: The making of the modern identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Taylor, J. R. (1993). *Rethinking the theory of organizational communication: How to read an organization*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Thompson, R. (2002). Ralph Waldo Emerson and the American *kairos*. In P. Sipiora & J. S. Baumlin (Eds.), *Rhetoric and kairos: Essays in history, theory, and praxis* (pp. 187-198). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Tilley, T., & Zukowski, A. (2001). Narrative and communication theology in a post-literate culture. *Catholic International*, 12 (4), 5-11.
- Tillich, P. (1936). *The interpretation of history* (N. A. Rasetzki & E. L. Talmey, Trans.). New York: C. Scribner's Sons.
- Tillich, P. (1963). *Systematic theology* (Vol. 3). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tompkins, P. K. (1987). Translating organizational theory: Symbolism over substance. In F. M. Jablin, L. L. Putnam, K. H. Roberts, & Lyman W. Porter (Eds.),

*Handbook of organizational communication: An interdisciplinary perspective* (pp. 70-96). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

- Tompkins, P. K., & Cheney, G. (1985). Communication and unobtrusive control in contemporary organizations. In R. D. McPhee & Phillip K. Tompkins (Eds.), *Organizational communication: Traditional themes and new directions* (pp. 175-210). Communication yearbook. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Tracy, David. (1975). *Blessed rage for order: The new pluralism in theology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tuchman, G. (1978). *Making news: A study in the construction of reality*. New York: Free Press.
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (2006). *Promise to protect, pledge to heal: Charter for the protection of children and young people*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
- Weber, M. (1947). *The theory of social and economic organization*. (T. Parsons, ed. & trans.). New York: Free Press. (Original work published 1922)
- Weber, M. (1991). *The sociology of religion*. (E. Fischoff, Trans.). Boston: Beacon. (Original work published 1922)
- Weick, K. E. (1979). *The social psychology of organizing* (2nd ed.). New York: Random House.
- Weick, K., & Westley, F. (1999). In S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy, & W. R. Nord (Eds.), *Managing Organizations: Current Issues* (pp. 190-208). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Weil, S. (1952). *The Need for Roots* (A. F. Wills, Trans.). New York: Routledge. (Original work published 1949)
- Weil, S. (1997). *Gravity and grace* (A. Wills, Trans.). Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Werpehowski, W. (1986). Ad hoc apologetics. *Journal of Religion*, 66, 282-301.
- White, R. (2001). The new communication emerging in the church. *Catholic International*, 12 (4), 18-25.
- Wilkes, P. (1996). *The good enough Catholic*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Wilkes, P. (2001). *Excellent Catholic parishes: The guide to best places and practices*. New York: Paulist.

Wuthnow, R. (2005). *America and the challenges of religious diversity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Zucker, L. G. (1991). The role of institutionalization in cultural persistence.” In W. W. Powell & P. J. DiMaggio (Eds.), *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis* (83-107). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.