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"We come to tell our story, we come to break the bread" : the organizational stories of a parish staff

Katherine Burnett Meidlinger
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organizational stories of a parish staff**

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"WE COME TO TELL OUR STORY; WE COME TO BREAK THE BREAD"
THE ORGANIZATIONAL STORIES OF A PARISH STAFF

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Communication Studies Department

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

By

Katherine Burnett Meidlinger

August, 1994

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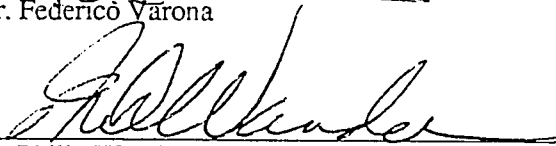
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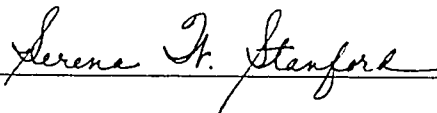


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ABSTRACT

"WE COME TO TELL OUR STORY; WE COME TO BREAK THE BREAD" THE ORGANIZATIONAL STORIES OF A PARISH STAFF

by Katherine Burnett Meidlinger

The study of folklore is a new approach in the field of organizational communication. Organizational stories provide insight into the culture of an organization and show how members impart information, cue behavior, engender commitment, and deal with crisis or change. Stories also can reinforce, or undermine, the organizational power structure.

Most studies of organizational stories have been conducted in business and industry, through a process of interview and survey techniques. This study has been done in a non-profit, religious organization, collecting the stories of a Roman Catholic parish staff through participant observation. It partially replicates a study by J. H. Seibert (1989) which asks both storytellers and story hearers why the story was told in those particular circumstances.

This thesis also examines recent cultural changes in the Roman Catholic Church, how these changes have impacted the parish, and how the parish staff deals with the ambiguities of a culture in transition.

To my husband:
Charles John "Fritz" Meidlinger
the Prince Charming of my own story

And in loving memory of my parents:
Wayne Charles and Marie O'Connor Burnett
in whose laps I heard my first stories

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I would love to be able to name each staff member from the parish where I did my research. They cooperated with my project willingly and enthusiastically, and their friendship is a lasting treasure. Thank you all!

And, most importantly, there is my family. My husband, Fritz, rates a special dedication page, because without his support and faith this would never have come to fruition. Our children, Molly and Paul Ratliff, John, Joey, and Libby Meidlinger, have been there for me over the years, and have encouraged me. Other family members, Bud and Billie Burnett, Bob and Charlotte Burnett, Dean and Margie Collin, Bob and Betty Anne Waldron, and all the nieces and nephews, have given me their best wishes. You are all a part of *my* story, and knowing that you are there is a joy in my life. I love you all!

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Once upon a time (as many good stories begin), an organization to which I belonged was divided into two adversarial camps -- those who had official power, and those who perceived themselves to have none. The former group had voted themselves a sizable salary raise, and to offset the financial burden, they decided that some lower level employees would be let go. Several versions of a hit list were circulating, and the level of openness and trust had reached an all time low. During this crisis it seemed obvious to the "underlings" (the group I identified with) what the problems and solutions were. It seemed so obvious, in fact, that the general consensus was that the others must have known their decision was unjust. We thought they just didn't give a damn about truth, justice, and the American Way.

As noted by Johnson (1975), it is common for intergroup conflict to result in intragroup cohesion. She also says, "The most graphic examples of the enemy are found in the discourse of... people who define their enemies as conspiracies. Conflict with enemy, for these people, is conflict between absolute good and absolute evil" (p. 87). The "underlings" saw the conflict situation in stark black and white. We, of course, wore the white hats.

Now I had always considered "reality" as a given -- what was "out there." I was usually puzzled when others, especially those I perceived to be intelligent well-meaning others, did not see things my way. ¹ In an early class in the graduate program I came across the concept that we create our own reality through selective perception, and that others have valid realities that differ from ours. I was especially intrigued with Ernest

Bormann's (1983) description of symbolic convergence in which he described how "the sharing of group fantasies provides the key communication episodes that create a common social reality and accomplish sense making for the participants" (p. 100).

Bormann's article tells how groups become cohesive by sharing "fantasy themes," and come to create a common interpretation of their experiences. Outsiders, who have not been a part of this sharing, do not participate in the vision of the in-group. Thus:

...two cohesive task-oriented units can explain the very same events in very different fashion. Group X's story is that the failure of their joint project with Group Z stems from Group Z's failure to do their job on time. Whereas Group Z shares an interpretive fantasy in which Group X's contrariness in not communicating their deadlines clearly to Group Z brought about the failure. Usually one or two key persons from each unit will play interchangeable roles of hero and villain in the two units' shared fantasies (p. 105).

According to Weick (1979), participants act together to construct reality. He notes "exhibits of enactment in the activities of saying, doing, spinning webs of significance, [and] adapting... In each case enactment served to bracket and construct portions of the flow of experience" (Weick, 1979, p. 147). He believes that action precedes sense making, and a lot of sense-making in an organization comes through writing histories of what has already happened. With the mutually created history completed, organization members tend to interpret current events to fit into the history they have agreed upon. "Much sense-making in the selection process can be viewed as writing plausible accounts, histories, and sequences for enactments. Equivocality is removed when an enactment is supplied with a history that could have generated it" (Weick, 1979, p. 201).

Pearce (1989) says that the meaning of objects and events in our social world is dependent on their continual reconstruction by members of that world through communication. Morgan (1986) agrees, stating, "Although we often see ourselves as living in a reality with objective characteristics, life demands much more of us than this. It

requires that we take an active role in bringing our realities into being through various interpretive schemes" (p. 130).

I began to see that my two organizational factions inhabited different social realities. Each history of the crisis situation was different from the other, and one interpretation was probably as legitimate as the other.

The concept of people constructing reality through enactment and interpretation was, for me, a major paradigm shift. It was the foundation of my interest in organizational culture, especially the use of stories as a means of making sense out of what goes on in the organization.

My interest in organizational stories was further focused by the experience of interviewing local corporation workers and collecting some of their organizational folklore. This took place during one of my early graduate classes with Dr. Jan W. Kelly, whose interest in organizational folklore was contagious. Kelly (1985) states: "The recent conceptualization of organizations as cultures adds the analysis of stories to the methodological toolbox of organizational communication researchers" (p. 45).

Most studies of organizational stories, to date, have been done in a business-for-profit setting, through interviews and survey instruments. In this project I collected the stories told in a parish church office through participant observation, also using interview and survey techniques to gain insight into the storytelling process. I chose to partially replicate Joy Hart Seibert's (1989) study, asking both the tellers and the hearers of organizational stories what they thought was the reason for the story being told in that setting and at that time. It offered me an opportunity to talk to members of the staff about the stories, and get further insight into their reasons for telling them. I believe that this study will add to the growing body of data on organizational stories, and provide a different view of the field.

In Chapter 2 of this thesis I will review the literature on organizational culture and stories. In Chapter 3 I will discuss the methods of my study. In Chapter 4 I will describe the organization of the Roman Catholic Church, along with some recent cultural changes which have impacted the parish of my study. In Chapter 5 I will give, and discuss, the results of my study, and in Chapter 6 I will discuss the implications and limitations of my study, along with my suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Organizational Culture

Even though anthropologists have long studied the cultures of civilizations and ethnic groups, it is only recently that the concept of "culture" came to be applied to organizations (Daniels & Spiker, 1991). "The essence of culture can be conceptualized as the collective construction of social reality" (Sackmann, 1991, p. 33). As with nations and peoples, organizations have their own histories, language, symbols, beliefs, values, and mores. They also have their own stories, myths, and legends (Daniels & Spiker, 1991; Goldhaber, 1990). "In talking about culture we are really talking about a process of reality construction that allows people to see and understand particular events, actions, objects, utterances, or situations, in distinctive ways" (Morgan, 1986, p. 121). Each organization, and separate divisions within the same organization, have differing cultures -- created by shared meaning, understanding, and sense-making.

According to Pearce (1989), culture is a set of social control mechanisms that guide the membership behavior. By observing the interaction patterns between organization members, the language they use, and their daily rituals, we will gradually be able to see the characteristics of their culture (Morgan, 1986).

Organizational culture "provides for social system continuity, control, identity and integration of members. The stability (through time) of shared ideals...provides continuity and serves a homeostatic function. The stability (through space) of the standards or goals conveyed...serves the control function of deviance detection and reduction... Culture

embodies the identity of the social group" (Louis, 1983, p. 44). Mohan (1993) states that a "fitting metaphor for an organization's culture may be that of a 'prism' that reflects, simultaneously, elements of the systemic, cognitive, and symbolic aspects of organizational reality" (p. 43).

The Functionalist and Interpretivist Approaches. There have been two different approaches to the study of organizational culture. One, that of the functionalists, considers cultural phenomena to be facts existing outside the members of an organization, an organizational variable. Much of the popular literature, such as Peters and Waterman's (1982) *In Search of Excellence*, and Deal and Kennedy's (1982) *Corporate Cultures*, are of this school (Kreps, 1990). Both seem to have been written with more of an eye to the best seller lists than toward academic approbation. *Corporate Cultures* might even be subtitled: "A Strong Culture and How to Get One" -- it is a pragmatic handbook for managers, and tells how to identify, diagnose, and manipulate corporate culture to improve employee morale, productivity, sales, etc. Morgan (1986) sees a danger in this approach:

There is a certain ideological blindness in much of the writing about corporate culture, especially by those who advocate that managers attempt to become folk heroes shaping and reshaping the culture of their organizations. The fact that such manipulation may well be accompanied by resistance, resentment, and mistrust, and that employees may react against being manipulated in this way, receives scant attention. To the extent that the insights of the culture metaphor are used to create an Orwellian world of corporate newspeak, where the culture controls rather than expresses human character, the metaphor may thus prove quite manipulative and totalitarian in its influence (pp. 138-139).

The interpretivist school of thought views culture as not something that an organization *has*, but as something an organization *is*. Interpretivists believe that cultural phenomena are symbolic processes that are constantly evolving and changing (Putnam &

Pacanowsky, 1983; Morgan, 1986). "[I]nterpretation centers on the study of meanings, that is, the way individuals make sense of their world through their communicative behaviors" (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983, p. 31). The interpretivist understands organizational culture as a "network of shared meanings" (Daniels & Spiker, 1991, p. 133). The interpretivist perspective is broader and less pragmatic than the functionalist, culture-as-variable, perspective. Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1982) emphasize this when they state:

...more things are going on in the organization than getting the job done. People do get the job done, true (through probably not with the singleminded task-orientation that organizational communication texts would have us believe); but people in organizations also gossip, joke, knife one another, initiate romantic involvements, cue new employees to ways of doing the least amount of work that still avoids hassles from a supervisor, talk sports, arrange picnics (pp. 116-117).

Interpretivism is not without its critics, however. For example, Pilotta, Widman, and Jasko (1988) ask, "Can interpretive methods focused upon the cultural aspects of organizational life be employed to examine the practical factors with which organizational members must continually cope?... In too many cases...interpretive methodologies appear more intent upon exorcising the ghosts of positivism and functionalism than upon articulating principled methodologically and theoretically accountable tools of their own" (p. 310).

In spite of Pilotta et al.'s (1988) reservations, I lean toward the interpretivists. Over the years I have found that life experiences do *not* fit into neat little packages. Besides, I find the broader scope of research far more interesting. In a rebuttal to the Pilotta et al. (1988) article, DeWine (1988) states:

Interpretive methods often appear to provide more insights for the researchers than for the practitioners. An additional question that might be asked is, 'Are we writing for ourselves because we are intrigued with our

own thoughts, or are we writing for the benefit of those working in the cultures we are attempting to study?' I am a researcher because I want to understand my life better and function in my environment more effectively. If I can help others function better within their environments, then I suspect that we are fulfilling the mission of research (p. 352).

I couldn't agree more. In writing editorials for an organizational newsletter, I have found the columns which seem to strike a universal chord and generate the most reader response are produced when, intrigued with my own thoughts, I start writing for myself. New discoveries are often the result of creativity and inspiration: *Thar's gold in them thar hills...*

Organizational Stories

The concept of organizational folklore is also a recent one. Jones (1990) says that the word "folklore" seldom appeared in articles on work, or on labor and management, until the new emphasis on organizational culture. Now stories in the workplace are attracting attention.

Conrad (1990) observes that "Human beings are story-telling animals" (p. 58). Stories provide a vivid and meaningful way of passing on information and values and are used throughout life, from childhood fairy tales to corporate orientation sessions. Stories play a major role in forming organizational culture, and enable members to construct shared meaning out of organizational experience.

Stories seem to be a natural way of learning. Information given in story form is retained longer than just a collection of facts. "Several research studies suggest that information is more quickly and accurately remembered when it is first presented in the form of an example or story" (Wilkins, 1984, pp. 48-49). And Seibert (1989) found that,

of all methods of imparting information, including statistical information, stories engendered the most commitment from the hearers.

Although I do not subscribe to Deal and Kennedy's (1982) general approach to organizational culture, they have a fascinating chapter on storytellers that provides insight into the various ways stories work in the organization: *Storytellers* are those who preserve institutions by carrying the legends, clue in newcomers about how to get along in the company, and maintain cultural cohesion. *Priests* have a similar function, but are usually more mature, are seen as helpers in distress, and are human encyclopedias of organizational history. They use allegory to relate the present to the past. *Whisperers* are the little-known powers behind the throne. They have both the ear of, and a symbiotic relationship with, the boss. They know the skeletons in the closet, and this gives them a certain security. *Gossips* keep the grapevine current with news of the present. They have an entertainment value, but a practical one as well. Storytellers and priests operate one-on-one, but gossips get to groups, such as coffee-break gatherings, and their news is quickly and widely spread. They can reinforce the storytellers. Secretaries, especially those who have ascended the corporate ladder with their bosses, are granted a special section in the chapter. They keep the boss in tune with what is going on throughout the organization. They have well-tuned judgment, and can aid the boss by getting positive stories onto the grapevine. *Spies* are usually apparently unthreatening people who have wide access -- they know the stories and what's behind them.

Story Classifications. Mary Helen Brown (1990) has certain criteria for defining an organizational story. First, there is a sense of temporality -- the past is brought into the present. Second, there is a definite story grammar including a preface, the story lead-in, the recounting of the events, and a closing sequence, which may include the point or moral

of the story. Finally, a successful organizational story both rings true and has relevance to the hearer. Holt (1989) notes a common structure to organizational stories. They contain two kinds of markers. *Action markers* show the individual acting independently of organizational rules. *Constraint markers* show how the organization prevents freedom of action. These are juxtaposed throughout the narrative, often telling how people were prevented from acting freely or how they managed to get past organizational red tape to accomplish their goals. For an example, Holt (1989) recounted a story heard on a college campus, of a student circumventing registration restrictions (the constraint) by a combination of avoiding his advisor and some clever forgery (the action).

Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983) divide organizational stories into three categories. *Personal stories* feature the narrator, usually in a positive role. Holt (1989) also noted how stories invariably communicate something about the teller's role and status in the organization, even when not explicit. Boasting comes under the heading of personal stories. *Collegial stories* star other organization members. This is the usual type of story when the narrator is sharing how things really are in the organization. *Corporate stories* tend to glorify the organization and reinforce values. Zimmermann and Seibert (1987) found that, "The heuristic value of Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo's story typology was demonstrated [in their study of two church organizations by] providing a finer distinction than what is usually found in analyses of organizational stories" (p. 20).

Story Functions. Brown (1990) discusses three functions of the organizational story. It *reduces uncertainty* by giving important information about organizational activities; it *manages meaning* by connecting events to organizational values, and has a role in *bonding* members together.

Conrad (1990) mentions two functions of the story: "telling people how things are to be done in a particular group and providing a 'social map' that points out potentially dangerous topics, events, or persons" (p. 58). Stories are used to tell employees what behavior is really rewarded by the company, and where the power really lies. An important part of story interpretation involves looking for these meanings.

Another function of storytelling is mentioned by Santino (1990). Regarding "job generated feelings of hostility and aggression, borne of the conflict between superordinate and subordinate, that cannot be expressed.... My thesis was that these emotions find indirect expression in many of the anecdotes and narratives that working colleagues share" (Santino, 1990, p. 328). In a stressful organizational situation, the mechanism for defusing anger and letting off steam is an important function.

Storytelling also has the function of bonding people in an organization. In my introduction I mentioned the two conflicting factions in an organization. The faction that constructed a supportive history and circled their wagons became an extremely cohesive group, and remained so even after the threat dissipated. Group bondings often result in a sense of "them and us." However, it doesn't always take a common enemy to create or to maintain exclusivity. In many organizations the very structure of the organization leads to some groups sharing and bonding. Bormann (1983) said that that formal structures provide:

...restrictions by closing off some members to communication about important fantasy themes. Thus they never got to share fantasies that were important to other parts of the organization. The marginal members, the uncommitted, apathetic people, were often unaware of the fantasy themes that the more involved members found exciting (p. 120).

When, Where, and To Whom? In an article about personal experience narrating, Robert Georges (1987) notes that there has not been much research into how individuals

decide when a story is both timely and appropriate. He thinks that, "More attention to these matters...would provide us with important insights into the nature, functions, and significance of narrative and narrating for members of our species" (Georges, 1987, p. 120). From examining stories which were only told in well defined circumstances, Georges concludes that "the principal sources and subjects for narratives...are real rather than imaginary events and experiences; and people obviously narrate more often to influence, inform, teach, reinforce, empathize, comfort and reassure, than they do to entertain, amuse, or pass the time" (p. 120).

As mentioned above, stories play a vital part in socializing new members into the organization. Kreps (1990b) notes that often new members are not fully accepted into an organization until they master its folklore. He refers to stories as "repositories of organizational intelligence":

New members are socialized through dramatic "war" stories and "success" stories about how organizational activities have failed or succeeded in the past... providing them with key vignettes about cultural history, values, and expectations...Stories about organizational triumphs and failures give members insight into how problems have been dealt with in the past, providing information about how they can effectively respond to present and future situations (pp. 193-194).

The socialization of new members is crucial. Entering into a new organization "is characterized by disorientation, foreignness, and a kind of sensory overload...until...the newcomer is able to construct maps of time and space specific to the new setting" (Louis 1980, p. 230). Oldtimers are able to assist the newcomer in interpreting the many new things they encounter during their probationary period. Louis (1980) sees an importance in studying organizational stories, myths, and symbols to learn how culture is transmitted to the newcomer.

Kreps (1990a) says, "Organizational folklore is taught to new members of an organization as a means of explaining the historical background of important themes, values, and expectations that are part of the organization's culture... (often in terms of: 'This is the way things are done around here and have been done in the past.')" (p. 134).

People tell organizational stories most often when there is a need to find meaning in what is going on, such as while helping a newcomer learn the ropes or trying to make sense of the organizational situation during major changes. To act as a social map the story must not only teach and inspire, it needs to provide a clue as to appropriate behavior. Wilkins (1984) says that stories have a degree of flexibility which allows for reinterpretation. Unlike rules, they can bend to fit a situation.

Brown (1990) studied a link between length of time in the organization and the use of stories. During the early stages, members would tell specific stories, without adding a moral or a prescription for behavior. It was only after reaching a higher level of organizational socialization that the use of stories began to reflect organizational values, and to apply these values to organizational activity.

Companies who have a good record of retaining employees reap this added benefit. Wilkins (1984), speaking of Hewlett-Packard, states:

over their career in the company most managers become experts in how the pieces of the company fit together and, though this is not the explicit intent, they become story tellers ("greybeards" as they are called at Hewlett Packard). They are able to tell stories to newcomers that help them see the big picture and give them perspective about how the company works (p. 57).

Story Themes. Even though each organization has its own unique culture(s), there are common themes that emerge. Some stories have almost identical forms. For example, a classic story at IBM tells how Thomas Watson, Jr., the Chairman of the Board, was

refused entrance to a security area for not wearing an appropriate badge. The badge was sent for and presented before he passed through (Mumby, 1987).

Wilkins (1984) recounts the story of a high-tech corporation president who would don an ordinary lab coat and spend time in Research and Development. A secretary closing the lab asked him if he had left a machine running the night before. He admitted that he had. The secretary delivered a lecture about an energy saving program, and the boss apologized. Days later the secretary saw him in a suit and badge and realized whom she had bawled out. Bormann (1983) recounts a similar story of a corporation president's tour of a high tech plant. When told by an assembly line worker that he could not be in the area without safety glasses, he apologized, got the glasses, and commended the worker.

Martin, Feldman, Hatch and Sitkin (1983) examine this "uniqueness paradox." Even though these stories are unique to the organization, (there's only one IBM and one Thomas Watson), they appear in an almost identical form in many different organizations. The stories have both positive and negative versions. The Thomas Watson, IBM story can be contrasted with the Charles Revson, Revlon story in which Revson is prevented from taking a list by a receptionist who has been told to guard it. His rejoinder: "Do you know who I am?" And she says, 'No sir, I don't.' 'Well when you pick up your final paycheck this afternoon, ask 'em to tell ya'" (Martin et al., 1983, p. 441).

The positive versions of these stories all have the common theme of the Big Boss being corrected by a low level employee and accepting the correction. These stories (or myths) are valuable to the organization. They promote a feeling of equality -- the boss never pulls rank -- and carry the message that everyone needs to obey the rules. Bormann (1989) refers to this theme as "The Great Man is Human," and mentions other themes as "No Mass Layoffs" (the company doesn't fire people in slow times), and "Horatio Alger" (the corporate hero who started at the bottom and pulled himself up by his own bootstraps).

In an attempt to codify a common organizational mythology, Martin et al. (1983) began with seven themes, each having a definite script, and each relating to fundamental employee concerns -- equality, security, and control. The themes are: 1) *The Rule-Breaking Story* (described above) which is closely related to: 2) *Is the Big Boss Human?* Stories in this theme often show how the CEO isn't afraid to get his hands dirty or perform menial work when needed, or on the other hand, the autocrat who flaunts his power. 3) *Can The Little Person Rise To The Top?* which, in its positive mode, is the "Horatio Alger" story -- telling how the the Vice-President, once a flunky, rose through the ranks through talent and ingenuity. There are, of course, the reverse stories of how deserving people go unrewarded. 4) *Will I Get Fired?* A noted story in this category is "The Nine-Day Fortnight," in which everyone in the company, executives included, took a 10% pay cut during a slow time to avoid layoffs. On the other side is the story of people finding out -- at the end of their shift -- that they are history. 5) *Will The Organization Help Me When I Have To Move?* Stories with this theme, popular in organizations that require much relocation, show how the company does/does not allieviate the personal problems caused by the move. 6) *How Will The Big Boss React To Mistakes?* These stories have two main characters -- the mistake maker, and the boss. In the positive version the mistake maker is forgiven, and in the negative version, he or she is not. 7) *How Will The Organization Deal With Obstacles?* This is the most common of all the story themes, and feature employees on all levels. The obstacle faced can be external to the organization, such as bad weather, or internal, such as a technical glitch. The story tells how the obstacle was, or was impossible to, overcome.

Martin et al. (1983) acknowledge that not all stories fit neatly into these categories; different themes were prominent in different types of organizations, and:

...not all stories were common stories. For example, a story about the heads of two rival agencies sleeping together did not fit any of the common story types... In addition, there undoubtedly exist common story types that are not yet in our typology. The seven common story types described above are only a beginning (p. 447).²

Mumby (1987) provides another way of analyzing the organizational story. For example, he points out that the rule-breaking stories do contain contradictions. If the head of the company were subject to the same rules as the employees, the story would be insignificant. The rules are made by the power elite and most security rules benefit the hierarchy and not the employee. Mumby (1987) concludes that one effect of these stories is the production and reproduction of the organizational power structure. He then argues that, "Further research must therefore take up the possibilities that a political reading of narrative provides for the analysis of organizational cultures" (p. 126).

Many story themes are blessed and encouraged (if not generated) by management, but there is always the other side of the coin. Subordinates create their own sources of power, and stories about how they use it, with impunity, also become part of the mythology. Browning (1992), in a case study, describes how one company's development department, suspecting quality shortcuts, tried to find out how the manufacturing division never missed a short deadline. When questioned, the head of the division pointed to four foot high letters on the wall, "F" and "M," and told them that they stood for his secret: "Fucking Magic." The "powers that be" were left in the dark, and in a footnote Browning says, "The concern of the organization was that the 'FM' incident had, over the past few years, been recirculated until it had become a cultural theme" (p. 299).³

Storytelling, Drama, and Passion

Most jobs, even those associated with glamour and/or danger, consist mainly of repetitive, if not tedious, tasks. Defining the job in this fashion, however, might lead to a loss of face, or of self-esteem. Stories play a major role in presenting the job as dramatic and desirable, identifying the job holder as important to the firm, and in reinforcing commitment (Trujillo & Dionisoupoulos, 1987). In a study of a Utah police department, Trujillo and Dionisoupoulos (1987) found that even though most of the police officers' activities were fairly mundane, such as making security checks, filling out forms and answering false alarms, the officers found their jobs "'exciting,' 'addicting,' and 'dangerous'" (p. 197).

Police officers possess an incredible wealth of stories about police work and they regularly exchange such stories among themselves and with others.... an observer exposed only to police stories at the station might very well believe that police work involves unrelentless drama -- that something dramatic happens on each and every shift.... As the officers develop their repertoires of such personal stories, they embellish their particular identities as fittingly valorous members of the force (p. 205).

Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983) think that dramatization goes on in every occupation:

From the managers who consider themselves "jungle fighters" or "coaches" or "nerve centers" to the secretaries who consider themselves "caged animals" or "team players" or "the real bosses," members of most organizational cultures frequently talk about their work in a way that transmutes the commonplace into passion (p. 48).

They conclude by saying that storytelling is the main vehicle for glorifying important and memorable events in the organization.

Bormann (1983) describes such a scene in talking about sharing fantasy themes. A meeting may start out in a rational, humdrum manner, but when someone begins to tell a story, the others will begin to take part in the "...dramatic action. They may laugh, several may speak at once; they may become emotional and forget their self-consciousness. The mood of the meeting becomes charged and the participants become committed and involved in the conversation" (Bormann, 1983, p. 103).

There are no stories more dramatic than tales of the supernatural. Jack Santino (1988) notes a tradition of ghostlore in the fields of mining, fishing, sailing, and quite recently in air travel. There is a common script -- the ghost was a former member of the occupation who lost his or her life on duty and returns to either assist a living member, or to warn of danger. Familiarity with, and belief in, the tale is a bonding force with members of a hazardous occupation, and helps them to cope with the uncontrollable elements of their job.

Myths, Legends, Sagas, and Fantasies

The very terms *myth*, *legend*, and *saga* connote nebulous origins -- megastories from the distant past, to which contributions have been made over many generations. The terms also have the connotation of "stretched truth" if not downright "untruth," although a myth is usually an allegorical story that expresses some very profound philosophical or religious belief. Given the vague concept of the term, *myth*, it is no surprise that different writers in the field have varying definitions.

According to Seibert (1989) "stories are...conceptually different from myths, sagas, and folklore. A story is presented as a 'true' rendition of a single occurrence (i.e., believed to be true by organizational members). In contrast, myths contain episodes which

are unlikely to have actually occurred...myths are seen as acting to legitimate the social status quo, reify values and build cohesiveness, and support the power hierarchy" (p. 6). Brown (1985) describes the difference as follows: "Stories are narratives which recount sequences of events... As stories begin to accumulate within the organization, related themes emerge in the body of narrative. Myths evolve as composites of these stories. A myth...can be considered a collection of stories about a common theme" (p. 28).

Schein (1985) sees myths as expressing the ideology of the organization, "a set of overarching values that can serve as a prescription for action...especially in areas that are difficult to explain or manage... Organizations are capable of developing the equivalent of religion and/or ideology based on the manner in which ...critical events were managed. Myths and stories develop around the founding of the company, times when the company had a particularly hard time surviving or an unusual growth spurt, times when a challenge to core assumptions and values brought about a rearticulation of those assumptions and values, and times of transformation and change" (p. 80).

Conrad (1990) has a further insight. In interpreting the myths people find stories that "justify their efforts and resolve the tensions and problems in their lives" (p. 60). Myths contain the basic assumptions that organization members need to believe in in order to be comfortable in the culture. Bormann (1983) says that myths are "fantasy themes" which are used by communities to "make sense out of their experience and create their social reality" (pp. 107-108).

Bormann (1983) defines a saga as "a detailed narrative of the achievement and events in the life of a person, a group, or a community" (p. 115). The official, public version can often be found in brochures and advertising.

The front parlor narratives are those that the members include when they want to put the best face on their organization either for public consumption or for their own needs -- their self-images. Organizational

sagas also include material relating to the back kitchen, the storage closet, and the bathroom, but insiders often keep them from the public. They usually talk about such matters in informal settings and under circumstances of interpersonal trust and disclosure. Here is where the members of the college who see themselves as a Christian community discuss some of the un-Christian things that characterize the operation of the school... Often the less savory fantasy themes are shared in terms of, "Yeah, yeah, I know that's what we say, but really this is what is going on around here" (p. 117).

Summary

The concept of "culture," along with the study of stories, has only recently been applied to an organizational setting. There have been two approaches to the study of organizational culture, the functionalist, which sees cultural phenomena as an organizational variable, and the interpretivist, which sees cultural phenomena as symbolic processes which are constantly evolving.

Organizational stories are studied to provide insight into the culture of organizations. Researchers have delineated story structure, categories, functions, and themes. They have studied how stories are used to impart information, cue behavior, engender commitment, bond members, socialize new members, and deal with crisis or change in the organization. Stories can also be used to reinforce the organizational power structure, or to undermine it.

Although each organization has its own individual stories, and also myths, legends, sagas, and fantasies, many of them follow themes, and often almost identical scripts, that are present in other organizations. Since the study of organizational stories has been recent, and limited, much more research is needed to both corroborate and add to the literature.

Research Questions

One of the limitations of the current organizational story research is that most of the organizations studied have been in business and industry. There has been little data collected from non-profit and religious organizations. Also, most of the story-collecting to date has been conducted through a process of interviews and survey instruments. Very little research has been conducted through a process of participant observation.

For my thesis I collected stories told by the staff in a Catholic parish church. I was a participant observer, and the stories collected were naturally occurring, in the course of daily activity. I think this research will be valuable because so little has been done in this area.

In this thesis I continued the research into the purpose and meaning of stories started by Joy Hart Seibert (1989). Seibert states: "Stories, as forms of talk, are also seen as purposive; they are told because the teller anticipated (either explicitly or implicitly) achieving a goal through them" (p. 2). She explains that her purpose is to examine the reasons people give for telling stories in the organizational setting, since little research has explored the meaning of these stories from the viewpoint of both the teller and of the hearer.

My research questions (RQ3 and RQ4 will be the same as Seibert's [1989]) are as follows:

RQ1: What types of stories do parish staff members tell?

RQ2: Do the stories collected fit into Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo's (1983) categories (Personal, Collegial, and Corporate)?

RQ3: What communicative functions do individuals say they are trying to accomplish by telling stories?

RQ4: What functions do hearers of stories see tellers as trying to accomplish?

RQ5: Do stories collected in a natural setting show evidence of fantasy chaining, themes, types, and possible myths?

In the following chapter I will discuss my methods of collecting stories and related information.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Qualitative Methodology

It is only in recent years that qualitative methodology, long the mainstay of anthropology, has achieved some respectability in communication research. Like most new immigrants from foreign shores, it is still striving for full recognition and acceptance. Like most immigrants, it must show a quantitative "old guard" that its presence does not threaten or devalue their existence. Indeed, qualitative methodology promises to add insight, color, and depth to communication research and show that, by working together with quantitative methodology, a whole can be created which is more than the sum of its parts. Finally, like most immigrants, qualitative methodologists envision a day of full acceptance, when there need be no humble *apologia* prefaced to their work.

A research method should be chosen with the research results in mind. Marshall and Rossman (1989) state:

Researchers should design the study according to the research questions they seek to answer... [if] there is a need to explore interactions among ambiguous or unclear variables, that there is a reason to suspect that the context contains important domains that must be explored... she may find that a descriptive study will yield the most important results for theory development. If any of these conditions obtains, then a qualitative study is most appropriate (p. 42).

In this thesis I describe the organizational stories of a parish church, looking for the meaning and function of the stories as perceived by both tellers and listeners. To accomplish this I was a participant observer, collecting stories as they occurred naturally,

and through interviews with the staff, asking about the meaning and motivation behind the stories.

There are always certain drawbacks to participant observation in one's own habitat. For a start, there is the temptation to censor research for one's own protection. Also, one can be too close to the forest to see the trees. In my case I have been a part of the church culture since birth, and aspects of this culture that would be visible and noted by an outsider, can easily be taken for granted and ignored by a participant.

There are, however, advantages to being a participant observer of long standing. I am known to the subjects of the study, and they have both known for some time that I am conducting this research, and have given me permission to do so, with an assurance of anonymity. They behave openly and naturally in my presence.

The phenomenologist views human behavior -- what people say and do -- as a product of how people interpret their world. The task of the phenomenologist, and for us, the qualitative methodologists, is to capture this process of interpretation. To do this requires what Weber called *verstehen*, empathic understanding or an ability to reproduce in one's own mind the feelings, motives, and thoughts behind the actions of others (Harré & Secord, 1973, p. 13).

Since I am part of the culture, and know the history and language, I am able to bring to this research an empathy and understanding that could not be brought by an outsider. Also, I think that an outsider planning this research would find, if not a closed door, certainly a cautious, self-conscious response.

Subjects of the Study

The Parish Church. The parish of this study is in a large city in the western United States. It is twenty-five years old, and was built in an economically affluent area. The

liturgical and organizational changes mandated by the Second Vatican Council have been a part of parish life almost since its beginning.

[The parish clergy] believed that the documents of the Second Vatican Council proclaiming a new self-understanding of the Church, and calling for a renewal of the Church in light of those documents, would remain dead and lifeless documents with renewal a mere fiction unless brought to life on the grassroots parish level (Grosskopf, 1976, p. 3).

Grosskopf continues:

From the beginning the team rejected the concept of parish as a "service station" where sacraments were dispensed as though automatically from a vending machine, and where Eucharistic liturgies were performed without spirit and life for an uninvolved passive gathering of spectators. The team knew that sacraments and liturgy take on meaning only in a community of believers in the Lord Jesus, and so the thrust was not to be so much a rejection of institution, but a conscious fostering and development of a loving, sharing, caring community (pp. 4-5).

In the beginning the parish was on the outskirts of the city, and the weekly mass attendance was 800 people. In the past twenty-five years the area has grown rapidly, and in 1994 there are over 1,500 families registered in the parish.

The parishioners are mostly well-educated, and many take an active part in church activities. There are over fifty different groups and ministries in the parish, and any evening will find the parking lot filled with cars waiting for their owners to return from such activities as choir practice, religious education classes, parish council meetings, ministry meetings, prayer meetings, scouts, or socials.

The Organizational Staff. The church office staff consists of seventeen people. There are four priests: one is in his thirties, one is in his early fifties, and the other two are in their late sixties. One arrived at the parish during my study; the others have been there about six years. There has been a high turnover in clergy in this parish. One

knowledgeable old-timer believes that there have been over 50 priests (many stationed for only a summer or a year) here during the last 25 years. In fact, some of my story-collecting took place during a turnover in clerical staff.⁴

The lay office staff consists of fourteen people. Three are male (two part-time), including one maintenance person who is an integral part of the office community. One is about forty, and has been with the parish for over fifteen years, the other two are retired and have been working part-time for about five years. Eleven are female. With one exception the women are in their fifties and sixties. Two have been with the parish staff for over twenty years, the rest have been there between twelve and nineteen years. The remaining woman is thirty, and has been on the staff for six years. All members of the office staff are of Euro-American background. All but two have been members of the Roman Catholic Church since infancy. The two who have converted to Catholicism did so in their twenties at the time they married a Catholic. The age of most staff members places them in the group of Catholics who grew up in the pre-conciliar Church, which provided laws to cover most situations and answers to every question. It has been a struggle for many people in this age group to adjust to the ambiguity of an organization in transition.

The educational level of the staff is about average. Aside from the priests, three staff members have a bachelor's degree, and one has a master's degree. The others have all completed high school, and many have attended college. Several have certificates from the diocese for completing training in their area of ministry.

Of the fourteen staff members, I would describe three as somewhat conservative, five as liberal, and the rest somewhere between. (Only two are registered Republican.)

There is a close relationship among the staff -- particularly with the women who have been together for many years.

The Research

Before beginning my research I asked the pastor of the parish if he would approve my collecting staff stories for this thesis. He said that he had no objection, but asked me to check with all of the staff members who would be involved to see if they would be willing to participate. I met with each staff member separately and told them I wanted to collect organizational stories for my paper. I assured them that if they were not comfortable with the project I would respect that and there would be no hard feelings. All staff members were enthusiastic about my project and were willing to participate and give me whatever help they could.

When the new pastor arrived, during my data collection, I asked for his approval, and he also gave it enthusiastically. I promised that the parish and the participants would be anonymous, and that story names and, if necessary identifying details, would be altered. All staff names used in the stories retold in Chapter 5 are pseudonyms.

When I met with my thesis committee to discuss my research, I told them that I would probably collect most of the stories at lunch, since the staff gathered for lunch during the day. It was suggested that I had a very good opportunity to collect naturally occurring stories, and the conversation that surrounded them, and I was encouraged to collect the stories over several months. Over a period of five and a half months I collected 88 stories, along with contextual conversation, during staff lunches.

The parish staff meets for lunch, which is provided, twice a week in the rectory dining room; the priests and a large number of the staff are usually present. On the other three days many staff members gather with their bag lunch around a long table in the staff conference room. During the time I collected stories, the priests did not eat lunch with the

staff on these days. Invariably, lunches in the conference room are accompanied by a card game, and the staff members who gather regularly are those who like to play.

Although staff members were aware of my study, and knew that I was collecting stories, they were not aware that I was collecting naturally occurring stories and conversation during our lunch hours. As soon as possible, usually immediately after the lunch hour, I wrote down the stories and surrounding conversation. From these field notes I extracted 88 stories and put them on index cards for classification. I used Mary Helen Brown's (1985) formula in defining stories: a sense of temporality - the past being brought into the present; a definite story grammar including a preface, the story "lead-in; the recounting of the events; and a closing sequence, which may include the point or moral of the story; and the criteria of a successful organizational story ringing true and having relevance to the hearer. I also categorized them by theme as personal, collegial, and corporate (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983).

Since I wanted the conversation and stories to be spontaneous, I did not ask any questions or interview staff members until I had finished collecting data. In many cases this left a hiatus of several months between the staff member telling (or hearing) the story and being asked about it. To trigger their memory, I used the pages of field notes which told the date, circumstances, and surrounding stories and conversation. Out of the 88 stories collected, 80 were remembered and the staff member was able to discuss his or her motivation for telling the story.

The interview with each storyteller took place in a private office. I asked them if they would agree to let me audiotape our conversations so that I would not have to take notes, and assured them that the tapes would be confidential. All agreed. I began the interview by explaining my research, and telling them that I was replicating a study which asked people why they had told organizational stories. Taking the stories one at a time, I

asked them, "Why did you tell that story at that particular time? What communication function did it have for you? What were you trying to achieve by the use of that story?" All discussed and elaborated on each story at length and the use of the audiotape was most valuable.

Interviews with those who had heard the stories followed. By that time all participants had been interviewed regarding their own stories, and were familiar with the research and the process. Again, all interviews took place in a private office. I told each story hearer that I realized that they couldn't get into someone else's mind, and would have to give an opinion or guess. Then I asked them the same questions: "Why do you think she or he told that story at that particular time?" "What communication function do you think it had for them?" "What do you think she or he was trying to achieve by the use of that story?" Participants responded readily, but since there was not much discussion I made notes on the story cards, and did not use the audiotape.

It was also suggested by my committee that it would provide further insight to ask staff members about their perceptions of the lunch gatherings at which the stories were told. During the time I was collecting story data, I also asked each participant (all who came to staff lunches even on an irregular basis) to fill out a questionnaire regarding the lunch gatherings. The questions were developed to show how staff members viewed the function of the lunch gathering, the possible positive and negative aspects of the gatherings, how they would advise a new staff member about fitting into the group, and their own reasons for attending. Since this is an interpretive study, I wanted to be sure I had an understanding of the staff members views of the lunch gatherings, as well as the role of the storytelling which took place in that setting.

With the observations and interviews this provided a triangulation of methods. Twelve of fifteen questionnaires were returned. (See Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire.)

In the following section of my paper I discuss the history and organization of the Catholic Church along with recent cultural changes which have impacted the parish under study.

Chapter 4

The Organization of the Roman Catholic Church

The earliest written account of the beginnings of the Christian Church is contained in the New Testament. Throughout the *Acts of the Apostles*, the church is shown evolving into a separate religious body from Judaism. Central to the authority of the new community were the apostles chosen by Jesus (Luke 6: 12-16). In *Acts* they are shown as coming together to make important decisions (Acts: 11 1-18), and this collegiality of the apostles, and the bishops who are considered their successors, has formed the basis of church organization to this day.

At the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) it was proclaimed that the pope has juridical power over the universal Church, and that papal teachings are "infallible" under certain conditions. The Second Vatican Council, in the 1960s, reaffirmed both these dogmas, but also suggested that the concept of the pope's position, as Bishop of Rome, only makes sense in relationship with the assembly of bishops. As McKenzie (1969) comments:

As the primate, he symbolizes and incorporates the consensus of the college. There is no doubt that the consensus is more apparent and more meaningful when the Pope is actually in close communication with his colleagues, but the history of the Roman administration does not show an unbroken effort to sustain close communication. The nature of power is one thing, its use is another (p. 61).

In the beginning the church was headquartered in Jerusalem, but at some time, at least by the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., Rome became an important center.

I understand Roman Catholicism to begin with the conversion of Constantine... the conversion of Constantine was the first decisive factor

in the series of events which was to give the Western church its Roman character. In the centuries following Constantine, the Greek church continued to move in a direction which resulted in its final secession from Rome. Between Constantine and Charlemagne the Roman Church achieved its peculiar identity with Western Europe (McKenzie, 1969, p. xii).

Most of the structures of European Society and the Roman Church grew apace. From 754, when the pope received the papal states from Pepin III, to 1870 when they were annexed by Italy, the pope was a temporal monarch, as well as a spiritual leader, and, as such, had position and territory. During this period, the popes had been chosen from Italian nobility, with few exceptions. (Before the election of the present pope, John Paul II of Poland, the previous non-Italian was Adrian VI of Utrecht, 1522-1523.) The reason was primarily political. Before the unification of Italy, the election of Italian noblemen to the papacy kept rival nations from seizing crucial and valuable territory.

Since the pope was a temporal monarch, as well as a spiritual leader, the trappings of the papacy were based on the royal governments of Western Europe. The honorary ranks of Cardinal and Monsignor were created during this time to bestow prestige on clerics (and non-clerics of influence, wealth, and status) the pope wished to honor -- much as aristocratic titles were bestowed by secular governments. The papacy no longer plays a direct part in international politics, but one can see the influence of the royal and aristocratic structure in the church today:

A full pontifical ceremony is an impressive pageant; the color scheme -- the white of the pope, the scarlet of the cardinals, the purple of the bishops, the black of the lower clergy -- glitters like few displays in the world. The papal court still maintains the splendor which was once attached to the royal courts of France, England, Spain, Austria... (McKenzie, 1969, p. 29).

Not surprisingly, the organizational structure of the church has much in common with a medieval kingdom. The pope, like a king, rules for life, and has almost absolute

authority. "There is no area of the Roman Church and no person who is not subject to a direct command from the Pope" (McKenzie. 1964, p. 19). Although, to give an accurate picture, the pope can tell Catholics what they must believe only when he is speaking *ex cathedra*, which is considered an infallible pronouncement. Also, he cannot command anyone to do anything unless the person has taken a solemn vow of obedience to the pope, and even then the person would be bound to disobey if the request were unethical. At the death of the pope (or if he resigns or becomes permanently mentally incapacitated) his successor is chosen, in secret consistory, by the College of Cardinals. The canonical prerequisites for becoming pope are only that a person be male, adult, and a fully initiated (i.e. baptized and confirmed) Catholic. He would not have to be in holy orders, or present at the consistory. In practice, however, the cardinals choose one of their own, and since only the pope can choose cardinals, and only cardinals can choose the pope, this is a classic example of a self-perpetuating power group. ⁵

As mentioned previously, the rank of cardinal is not a priestly one. It carries no spiritual power but the political clout is heavy. Cardinals fall into two groups. First are those named bishop of major archdioceses (in the United States these are New York, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles). The second group, the pope's personal advisors, staff the Vatican. They head the offices of the Curia, which is the pope's cabinet.

At the head of each diocese (a territorial designation), is a bishop. In large metropolitan areas there is a central diocese called an archdiocese and its bishop has the title of archbishop, but he does not have jurisdiction in the other dioceses of that area. The diocese is a "division of the Church, well defined in extension and confines, and governed by a bishop with ordinary power, i.e. ruling in his own name and not as a vicar or delegate of another" (New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967, vol. 4, p. 891). This gives the bishop immense power. "No one does anything as a Catholic [in ecclesiastical matters] in the

diocese which is not ultimately, if not immediately and directly, authorized by the [bishop]" (McKenzie, 1969, p. 51). The rank of bishop is the highest clerical order in the church (even the pope's position as head of the church is due to the fact that he is the Bishop of Rome, the mother diocese of the church). The bishop has the power to preach, administer all of the sacraments, and the jurisdiction to govern in his diocese. The bishop also has a cabinet, called the chancery, to administer the diocese.

Since the office of bishop carries such power, the selection of bishops is made most carefully. According to Deedy (1987), "American bishops, chosen with special care, have always been predictable -- and loyal to Rome" (p. 90). McKenzie's (1969) general profile of a bishop includes the facts that bishops are usually very intelligent, healthy, charming, and have good management abilities. However, the most important quality of a bishop in the eyes of Rome -- where the appointments are made -- is that he be safe. He must be a company man, one that can be trusted to preserve the status quo. This often precludes the selection of anyone who is highly creative, controversial, or whose theological stance is considered left of center. Bishops are, as a rule, conservative and slow to act. Of course, men who were safe when elected sometimes become unsafe. However, this is rare, and such a bishop's chances for career advancement would be nil. "It is surely not without interest that Max Weber included the Roman Catholic Church since the thirteenth century in his list of 'distinctly developed and quantitatively large bureaucracies'" (McKenzie, 1966, p. 145).

The diocese is subdivided into parishes, which is the usual point of contact with the rank and file lay members of the church. The parish is headed by a pastor, who is a priest, and thereby empowered to preach and administer the sacraments, with the exception of Confirmation and Holy Orders which are reserved to the bishop. (In the case of Confirmation, the bishop occasionally will delegate a pastor to administer the sacrament

when it is practically impossible for the bishop to be present.) Although a priest has these powers, conferred at ordination, juridically he needs permission (or *faculties*) given by the bishop of his own diocese, or any diocese in which he is visiting. Priests cannot be free agents, doing their own thing within the church, apart from the diocesan structure. Some priests have the title Monsignor, which, as noted above, is strictly an honorary one. It carries the title and a difference in clerical dress, and is usually a recognition given a pastor or administrator after long service to the diocese.

Additional priests attached to a parish are known as parochial vicars, commonly termed *associate pastors*. They assist the pastor in the work of the parish, and are under the pastor's jurisdiction. Some parishes have a deacon, who can be either a transitional deacon, a seminary student soon to be ordained to the priesthood, or (recently) a layman who has studied and been ordained to the permanent diaconate. The office of deacon is the same for both, and both are clerics, but the permanent deacon is likely to be married, have a family, and be engaged in employment outside of the parish.

A look at the organization of the Roman Catholic Church would be incomplete without a mention of religious orders and congregations, although, as such, they are not in the direct chain of command. In the middle ages several monastic groups of men and of women were founded, and since then many other religious groups have come into existence. The unordained members of such groups are usually addressed as "Brother" or "Sister." They take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and have a separate canonical status within the church. Priests also can belong to religious orders and congregations. These groups, such as the Franciscans, Benedictines, Dominicans, Jesuits, Christian Brothers, Sisters of Charity, and Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, are usually involved in special ministries, such as the administration and staffing of Catholic hospitals

and educational institutions. Many are involved in ministering to the poor and missionary work.

The term "laity" includes all baptized Catholics who are not priests and/or are not members of a religious order or congregation. Until the Second Vatican Council the laity had the official definition as "those not in holy orders." Their function, often cynically expressed, was to "pray, pay, and obey." Vatican II has upgraded the category considerably. The laity are now called "the people of God" and their call to ministry within the church has been acknowledged and encouraged.

The Second Vatican Council opened thirty years ago, during the fall of 1963. This is, by church standards, still a recent event. Dioceses and parishes have varied considerably in the rate of their response in implementing the changes directed by the Council. It is possible to find a parish, like the one in my study, where the laity have a major voice in the running of the parish and determining its future; it is also possible to find a parish where the pastor is still the sole decision maker. Given the shortage of vocations to the priesthood, thus the necessity of lay involvement, and the advancing age of most pastors of a dictatorial persuasion, the prognosis is that the changes of Vatican II will eventually prevail.

The Second Vatican Council... introduced changes some see as revolutionary, others as threats to the very identity of the Church. Furthermore, the celebrated monolithic structure of Roman Catholicism is now recognized as an illusion. Divisions within the church have caused some apprehension of schism... a knowledge of the past seems to indicate almost nothing of the future of Roman Catholicism (McKenzie, 1969, p. xi).

In the thirty years since Vatican II, there has also been a major change in the American Catholic people. The church no longer has the unquestioning obedience that was common before Vatican II. According to Greeley (1985) a number of factors have contributed to this change. First was the Council itself, which induced a "euphoria"

regarding possible change in the church, especially regarding the prohibition of artificial contraception. After the Council, the Pope appointed a commission to study the "birth control" issue, which remained unsettled until the 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. During the interim people, often with advice from a priest, felt free to follow their own conscience in the matter. Even though the encyclical upheld all the former prohibitions, including a ban on "the pill," the laity continued, also often with advice from a priest, to follow their own conscience in the matter. This option has been supported by the church teaching that "one should always act according to [conscience] and one should not do violence to the conscience of others" (New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967, vol. 4, p. 204). Further, Greeley (1985) observes:

Any serious discussion of the condition of American Catholics after the Vatican council must consider the extraordinary situation in which the papacy and the hierarchy on the one hand and the clergy and the laity on the other are in diametric disagreement about what constitutes sexual sin (p. 90).

Between 1968, when *Humanae Vitae* was promulgated, and 1975, when the issue had run its course, there was a major drop in church attendance and financial support. Greeley (1985) notes that many of those who stopped attending and supporting the church continued to consider themselves Catholic even though they no longer accepted many of the church's teachings.

. . . only about a tenth of American Catholics accept some of the more controversial components of the church's sexual ethic. . . [The rejection] by American Catholics represents not only a problem of sexual ethic but also a problem of authority. . . the overwhelming majority of American Catholics give the church's Teaching Authority credibility and consent under circumstances which they determine, not circumstances which authority determines (pp. 81-82).

At the same time the church was in tumult, so was American society. The sixties were years of activism, with the "free speech" movement, women's rights, civil rights, and the Vietnam War protest. A popular bumper-sticker of the times read: *Question Authority*. All Americans, Catholics among them, emerged from that decade in a changing society. Sexual mores had changed, and with that came a wider tolerance of former taboos such as premarital sex, divorce, abortion, etc.

The conclusion of Greeley (1985), Deedy (1987), and Kennedy (1988), is that the change will not be reversed. Catholics of the 1950s were subservient; typical Catholics of the 1990s are not. Vast numbers of priests and members of religious orders and congregations who staffed the pre-conciliar church are gone. Today, the number of young men and women choosing a religious or clerical vocation is very small compared to the '50s and '60s. Most families no longer have the regard they once had for a "vocation," and many priests no longer actively recruit replacements. The priesthood, once a calling endowed with pride and prestige, has -- and had even before the recent scandals regarding sexual abuse -- a serious image problem. Greeley (1985) states:

In truth it must be said that we do not fully understand the origins of the crisis... The changes of the Second Vatican Council did something to the priesthood from which it has yet to recover. Until we understand better than we do now why the council was such a savage blow to the morale, the self-esteem, the self-confidence and the self-respect of priests, we will have to accept as almost inevitable the continued decline in the number of priests (p. 128).

People who have been brought up in a democracy and have learned to value independent thinking and making their own decisions have difficulty with the remaining medieval, monarchical structures of the Catholic Church. The Vatican has difficulty understanding and accepting the American mind. The bishops are often caught in the middle. This is a time of crisis within a church that used to pride itself as being

unchangable, and the church that will emerge from this struggle will be different. It is within this organizational framework, and push for change, that life goes on within the parish under study.

Chapter 5

Results and Discussion

We Come To Tell Our Story

A modern communion hymn, often used in parish liturgies, begins with the words: "We come to tell our story, we come to break the bread; we come to know our rising from the dead." The communion of the lunchtime gatherings has a similar purpose: that of sharing self, sharing food, and seeking spiritual and emotional renewal. All of the questionnaire respondents mentioned that bonding and socialization were important to staff functioning, and as reasons for attending staff lunches. Most of the negative comments on the questionnaire mentioned that the ongoing card game three days a week interfered with socializing and getting to know one another better -- as well as excluding those who choose not to play. One respondent stated, "Those who do not play tend to be on the 'outside.' I have noted that they seem to leave early, not come in, or are truly observers looking on to action. There is *little personal* sharing at these times." Another commented on "the overwhelming need we seem to have to just play cards. It can be an excuse for me to *be with* and for others in other ways during that hour." And another: "Card playing seems to be the focus rather than people." In the positive comments regarding lunch gatherings, two respondents specifically mentioned "storytelling."

Story Types

After gathering the lunchtime stories a colleague and I separately placed them into Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo's (1983) classifications: They divide organizational stories into three categories: *personal stories*, which feature the narrator, *collegial stories*, which star other organization members, and *corporate stories*, which tend to glorify the organization and reinforce values.

Many stories combined elements of more than one category and a few did not fit neatly into any of the categories. My colleague and I had different opinions on many of the stories. The differences in classification were negotiated, with the following results: Of the 88 stories collected, 33 (37%) were personal, 37 (40%) were collegial, 14 (16%) were organizational (corporate), and 4 (5%) did not seem to fall into any of the categories. In the following pages I provide examples of stories in these classifications.

Personal Stories. Many of the personal stories told at the lunch gatherings were not related directly to the organization, but were sharings of the storyteller's history, life, and faith. The following are some examples of personal stories extracted from the staff lunchtime conversations:

Mike: And they have this barber chair called "Margaritaville." There is this waitress built like Dolly Parton, and they shove the chair back, and for three bucks she mixes the margarita in your mouth. One bottle has the tequila and the other has the mix and she pours them both together. Does pretty good, too. Then they tip the chair back up and you get out and there's a line of guys waiting to get in...

Tom: I heard they are getting away from those mechanical bulls, though. They used to have them all over, but then people got hurt being thrown off them, and were suing the bars.

Mike: Bar X has one. Some of those cowboys from down south come in, and there's this one who weighs about 140 pounds and has a forearm like

[measures in air to show large size]. He gets a grip and he'll stay on forever. The bigger ones, even if they're strong, get thrown. The bull goes one way, they go another, and the weight shifts and down they go. I was there once with Jim Ferguson, and he hadn't been there before. They have this thing you put a quarter in and hit a bag, and the machine registers how hard you've hit it. They had some of these guys from down south there and they were making a lot of noise. I told Jim, "Why don't you go over there and tell them to be quiet. I can't hear myself think." And he said, "No, Mike -- I think they're doing pretty much what they *should* be doing!"

Sally: While you're all here I'll give you what I got for you in Virginia. They're those Smucker's Walnuts in Syrup. You remember my story? When we first came out here I went into a drug store and ordered a sundae, and the guy was sprinkling these chopped peanuts on it, and I asked him, "Do you have wet nuts?" Well, I almost died when I realized what I had said. And the guy says, "What?" And I said, "nuts in syrup." And he looked at me like I *was* nuts. Now you all have wet nuts.

Gloria: One year Rich and I got in the thing [dunk tank at parish festival] as a couple. Every time someone hit, we'd both go down. I was on the edge with the handle, and every time we went down, I hit my arm on it, and my hip on something else. I was black and blue. And Rich was taller, so his feet would hit the bottom of the tank before his head went in. I just went [pantomimed falling under water].

Lucy: Well, Jan has worked at the steakhouse for two years, and you know how bubbly she always is -- well, she has been waiting on a lot of the same people for a long time, and she always talks to them and asks them how they're doing. Some of them even bring her presents. I told you about those people who gave her that bracelet when she graduated from City College? Well, they were in there a couple of weeks ago, and of course they asked Jan how she was doing, and she said that she was waiting to see if she had passed her boards, and she was nervous about it and since her last name was down in the alphabet she would probably not hear until the following week. Well, they asked her what her last name was, -- they never knew her last name, she was just "Jan" --and she said, "Tyler," and they said, "We knew some Tylers back in Madison." Jan asked, "Who did you know?" and they said, "Dave," and Jan said, "That's my dad!" And they said, "No kidding? He married Lucy Donnelly." and Jan said, "That's my mom!" And one thing led to another, and the gal said that Dave and her brother used to be best friends in grade school and high school, and she names off all Dave's brothers and sisters, and it turns out that Dave's mother and that family were really close. Frank doubled with us at our senior prom.

Well, Jan *had* to call home, and she said, "Mom, do you know a Frank Hanlon?" And I say, "Jan, the Frank Hanlon we know died four years ago." And she said, "Well, his sister is right here in the steakhouse." And do you know, they've been living less than three miles from us for fifteen years. And Nora's mother, the one who used to know Dave's mom, has been living about 10 miles from us all these years. Just think of it -- Mary could have been in touch with her all this time, and we find out six months after she died. Well, Dave got Mildred's (that's the mother's) phone number and he called her. Well, they were on the phone for about an hour and a half. They talked about Frank and about what all has happened in our families. And Mildred said she would love to see us, and Dave said, "Yes, we'll have to get together."

So, we get this call from Mildred last week, and she said she was going to be at Nora's this weekend and could we come over? I said, "yes." So after the evening mass on Saturday we went over. Nora met us at the door and let us know her mom was suffering from emphysema (the same thing Mary had!) and I figured, well, we'll only be here a few minutes. Mildred was sitting in the kitchen, all hooked up to her breathing apparatus, and when she saw us, she stood up and embraced Dave, and hugged him for almost a minute. We were there four hours!

I had gone through our album, and there were two identical pictures of our senior prom. Basically the same picture, sitting on a couch in our front room -- Dave and me and Frank and his girl friend. I brought both of them over. Frank was a policeman, and he was helping someone fix a car, and the car dropped on him and he was killed four years ago. Right before he died, he'd gotten a camcorder, and Nora had a tape that Frank had sent of himself and his family. The day they got the tape they got the call that Frank had died. Well, they watched the tape, but Mildred had never seen it. They didn't think it would be good to show her then. Mildred never went back for Frank's funeral, because she can't fly -- and she had never met Frank's second wife. All the pictures Frank had of his growing up -- well the second wife didn't know any of those people, and she pitched the lot of them. So Mildred didn't have any pictures. We brought out the prom pictures and gave her one. She cried. Well, she started talking about Frank, and I realized that she had never processed her grief, and dealt with it. And Dave talked about his mother's death, and you know, he has never talked much about it. He tends to keep everything inside. I was feeling bad that Mary didn't have a chance to visit with Mildred when she was alive, and then I realized God was putting Mildred and Dave together to help them heal one another. And you know what happened then? Mildred turns to Nora and says, "I'd like to see that tape Frank sent." And Nora said, "Mom, I really don't think that's a good idea. You've been crying." And Mildred said, "Nora, I want to watch that tape." So we did.

We didn't get home until midnight. I feel kind of awed. You know, how God put us all together just when both Dave and Mildred needed to deal with a death.

Ann: That's probably what He had in mind all along.

Lucy: I believe that. It gives me goosebumps to think of it. They hadn't seen each other in about thirty years, and now this.

Almost half the stories collected fell into the "personal" classification. Most of the staff have worked together for some time, and consider one another friends as well as co-workers. Some of the questionnaire comments on the staff lunches were: "They provide the opportunity to become acquainted with one another outside our normal business/work relationships. They help on a basic human level (friendship)." "We know what goes on in each others' personal lives and therefore we become closer." When asked what advice they would give a new staff member about lunch, some comments were, "Come, have lunch and get to know other staff members, their stories, open sharing," "I would like to be able to say to them, 'Come anytime, just to be with us. Get to know us and let us get to know you.'"

Collegial Stories. The following examples of collegial stories range from funny stories about a former pastor, and those who pitched in to clean a mess at the festival, to expressions of concern about an elderly parishioner and a staff member whose husband has been ill:

Norma: I'll never forget the year that the helium tanks [for parish festival balloons] were delivered and just dumped on the ivy outside the church. Burt had to drag them inside so we could get started. He said, "A pastor's job includes *everything!*"

Carol: Some kids got in the back hallway and opened a jar of punch concentrate and turned it upside down in the top cupboard across from Gayle's office. It was awful. That stuff won't mop up -- it went down and under the cupboard, and no matter how many towels we put down, it kept coming up through the carpet. That sticky red stuff. They got in through

the video games area. The door was closed, but not secured. It took about two hours to mop up the mess. Dave Milano was sponging up the carpet, and saying, "The little bastards. The little bastards."

Lucy: Speaking of mass, Hortense was there. I thought she was ill -- they prayed for her at mass last Sunday. I'm afraid that she'll keel over here one day, and she'll be gone. This morning she caught up with me, and she had an envelope. She handed it to me, but she didn't let go. I kept holding it, and she kept shoving it toward me, but not letting go. Finally she said, "It's for you." Well, it was earrings. She had brought a lot of earrings in for Gloria and I thought these were for her too, and I said, "Oh, thank you; I'll give them to Gloria." And she said, "No, these are for you!"

Ann: Paul's still in the hospital. He had I don't know how many liters of fluid drained from his lungs, and then they gave him medication so the lungs don't fill up again. He wanted to go home today, but Lynn said, "I'm not feeling very good, and then the people are coming about the carpet tomorrow morning." He was disappointed. Their toilet overflowed. It was clean water, but the carpets were ruined.

Thirty-seven stories concerned former and current staff members, and parishioners. This is consistent with comments on the questionnaire. For example, staff members stated: "[Lunch gatherings are important to] share news of common interest, especially about health and well-being of friends," and "Many times I don't know about individuals (staff and parish members) or parish functions or problems or needs until lunch time. I need to know what is going on with other staff and parish people and ministries so I can work more effectively and be a more effective minister."

Organizational Stories. The following stories were among those classified "Organizational" or "Corporate" and concern organizational values, from reflections on actual happenings to a current church joke:

Mike: It's amazing the things people get hung up on. I remember a story of two novices who were in violent disagreement on the proper day a feast should be celebrated. They went to the Novice Master, an old fellow, and

wanted him to settle the argument. He thought awhile, and finally said, "As far as our beliefs go, we do believe in a God who made us and who cares about us. And we believe -- and we hope -- in Jesus, who was especially sent by God to reveal himself. When we get beyond that, well, let's just not push it."

Mike: Up at St. Theresa they had a celebration for the jubilarians. There were mostly guys there -- a few women who were friends of the families. Well, they started singing some of those Latin numbers that they knew from the novitiate -- *Tantum Ergo*, and *Salve Regina* -- it was beautiful. I think when they threw out the old music, they went too far. Some of it is really beautiful.

Mike: They've been doing it [inclusive language] at some parishes. In fact some baptisms are valid, but not licit, if they baptize "In the name of the Creator and of the Redeemer and of the Sanctifier." The rules specifically state that you use the terms "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." I have a problem with that other language, because all the relational values are taken out.

Lori: I have a story. This bishop was standing at the altar next to the pastor, watching this involved procession coming down the main aisle. There was one of the "movement ministers," -- you know, the dancing girl - - and she was going [mimed arm movements]. The bishop leaned over and said to the pastor, "If she asks for your head, she's got it."

Only 14 stories were classified "Organizational" as opposed to "Personal" or "Collegial," although many of the personal and collegial stories also concerned organizational values. There were no comments on the questionnaire which addressed this, but indirect comments regarding values were made in the interviews with the storytellers and story hearers. I discuss this further in the section of this chapter titled: A Church in Transition. This small number of organizational stories contrasts with Zimmermann, Seibert, Hougland, and Billings' (1994) findings in their study of church leaders' storytelling. Zimmermann et al. (1994) found that out of 36 stories collected, 20 were organizational (termed "biblical") while only 8 were personal and 8 collegial. I think that

this is due to the fact that Zimmerman et al. (1994) studied public storytelling, while my study was of private storytelling. If I had collected stories told during homilies or religious education classes, more organizational stories would be present.

Unclassified Stories. Only a few of the stories eluded classification. Examples are included below:

Chris: Did you catch the crude joke in the paper? They had a spelling contest between Quayle and Packwood. Packwood lost. He got one letter wrong in "harass" and thought it was two words.

Mike: There was someone in congress who was being very patronizing to Dianne Feinstein regarding the gun bill. He started saying, "The gentle lady from California should look into the handgun situation. She has several facts wrong..." Anyway, when he finished, Feinstein stood up and said she had vast personal experience with handguns, and told about having her windows shot out, and trying to stop the blood flowing out of Moscone when he was dying, and so forth. When she was finished, you could have heard a pin drop. Then they voted on the Brady Bill, and it passed.

Mike: Did you see the article in "Sports Illustrated" about the basketball player? Well, this guy has been signed by the '76'ers who is seven foot seven. He's a Mormon. Played one year of college basketball, went on a mission to Australia, and the 76'ers are training him -- in the pros -- with a contract of 14 million! The Mormons take care of their own, though. The bishop in Pittsburgh had the guy move in with him, and his wife is trying to feed him. He has to eat 7,000 calories a day, and with all the working out, he hasn't gained any weight. He's getting a lot of muscle, though. There was a picture of him walking across a lawn with his girl friend. She's normal height. It's really something. He really needs to put on some weight, though. He'll fly across the court if one of those big guys elbows him.

Glenn: (laughing) I read where the "New Yorker" had a picture submitted for a December cover, of Santa Claus taking a leak in the street. There was a dog taking a leak on a hydrant, and Santa going in a doorway. It was supposed to show that in spite of all the decorations and stuff around Christmas, nothing really changes. They decided not to run it.

Gloria: Well, I'm glad. I would have decided not to run it.

Al: That is a problem with the homeless, though. Where do they go?

Gloria: Weren't they going to do something in New York about public johns? Someone said they didn't work because people were suing the city.

Lori: I read that the doors would automatically open after a certain time. That would make me very nervous. Imagine just getting to the point of no return, and there the damn door swings open and all of New York is watching you. . .

Mike: Why would they time the doors like that?

Lori: So the bathrooms couldn't be used for sex.

Gloria: They were quite the thing, though -- they were automatically sanitized each time someone used them. I guess they sanitize the streets somewhat. When I worked downtown, early in the morning these machines would come by and hose down and disinfect the streets, and the bus stops. You notice at the bus stops, everything is made of stone and glass -- stuff that can be washed. I guess they know the people use them as toilets.

Lori: I took Lou downtown on Friday, and when we came back on the trolley she said, "Mom, don't go in the elevator!" And I said "I know -- I'm *not* going in there."

Al: (explaining to others) People use the elevator as a bathroom.

Gloria: Well, if they had places where they *could* go, maybe they wouldn't.

Lori: Well, I think some of that is done by people who are angry and just want to deface something. Just a different kind of tagger. . .

Even though these could not fit neatly into Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo's classifications, an argument could be made that the above stories generally discussed values of other organizations and of our society. In Mike's two stories he expressed admiration for Dianne Feinstein's comments on gun control and the mutual caring of the Latter Day Saints. In the last communal story discussing public facilities there are some personal reflections. In a time of major change in both the church and society, discussion of values is common in the staff lunch conversations.

Determining The Purpose

The responses of both storytellers and story hearers corroborated Seibert's (1989) findings, which were "organizational members said they were trying to explain a point, be funny, and share their feelings with others" (p. 11). Of the 88 stories collected, I interviewed the tellers of 80 of the stories and hearers of 78 of the stories. Since both tellers and hearers occasionally gave more than one response, the number of responses were greater than the number of stories used.

Explaining a Point. In 32 of the stories the teller gave "explaining a point" or "giving information" as a reason for the story. The following stories, which were told while discussing the problems involved with counseling in an age of litigation, are examples:

Mike: We had a priest from back east out here, and he was taking one of these Pastoral Care courses at a hospital, and he was this super-brain type -- not cuddly at all -- and he was just about flunking this little CPE class. Every time they saw a patient they had to immediately write up these verbatims -- you get pretty good at that after awhile. They didn't think he was doing a good enough job relating. One of the people in the class asked to see him for counseling, and she was upset about something, and he leaned across the desk and just pushed a box of kleenex over to her. Later, the group told him that he was too cold, and that she really needed a warm response and he should have hugged her. It is hard to know what to do. This was back in '85. I think today they'd be against hugging. You aren't supposed to do that. Especially with women -- a guy can't go around hugging women who are emotionally upset. They might read something into it. Especially if you are in a helping relationship.

Al: I was talking to George Finnerty. He is retired now, but used to be a counselor at Central High School. He said that he always did counseling with his door open. They were all told that. Don't close your door when you are counseling a student.

This category, "Explaining a Point," had the biggest discrepancy between tellers and hearers. In only 11 of these stories did the hearers give "explaining" or "information" as a response. Five responses fell in the "be funny" category and 14 responses were in the "share feelings" category. Two examples of story discrepancies are:

Lucy: Some parents were really confused. They don't have a clue what to do as far as family devotions and time. One woman kept asking me, "What about the other weeks of Advent?" And I said there was a list of other things they might do together as a family. It turned out she wanted the prayers for the Advent Wreath, and she didn't know how to form the question. And, of course, there are always some who just dump off the kids and don't come in.

Gloria: I had one grandmother bring in a little boy, who was delighted that they had even got to the appointment stage. Fourth grade -- no religious education whatever. The father told the grandmother it was okay, and then he changed his mind. Doesn't want the kid in religion classes. So the grandmother bought a book and is going to try to do something at home.

Both the above tellers gave some form of "explaining a point" as the reason for the story. "Informing people about our area, for better understanding -- maybe even better interaction," was one response, and "To help everybody get in touch with the needs of the people," was the other. In both cases the story hearers said "expressing negative feelings" and "expressing frustration." A third example is:

Norma: Well, in May the Social Justice Committee had a program for people to bring things for the poor. Each week they brought a can of food. And they wanted it to stay in the church for the month -- sort of a visual aid to show how if each family does one little thing it really mounts up. After a couple of weeks they started bringing clothes, too, and the sanctuary started looking like a rummage sale. Whenever we had a funeral we had to lug it all out and lug it all back."

Norma said, "I was quoting the most outrageous example we had... to illustrate the point." The hearer stated, "She was telling what all she had to do -- the Family Circus we have around here!" Another story illustrating the mixed reaction was:

Sally: Someone took the microwave oven. Jim noticed it was gone right before he went on vacation, but he didn't say anything because he thought someone here on the property borrowed it. It was still missing two weeks later when he got back. Well, remember when Ellen bought the little soap dispenser and kleenex holder for the bathroom, and they walked away a few weeks later? That really got to me. How can people *be* like that?

Sally said she told the story "because it happened. To fill in the blanks -- like it wasn't surprising; this has happened before." The hearer thought Sally was expressing annoyance.

Being Funny. In 23 of the stories the tellers gave some form of "being funny" as their reason. In the following examples of parish organizational humor both tellers and hearers agreed that humor was the motive:

Sally: Did you hear about [what happened at the festival]? When the beer people came to settle the bill we had a fifteen hundred dollar credit from last year. Marty never picked it up. So, after they gave us a discount for bringing the wrong truck, and some money off for *some other* mistake, we came out with five hundred something. The beer guy said, "You went through all those kegs of beer, and *we're* paying *you*?" Dan was dancing around. He was in charge of the beer.

Ellen: That was so funny. Doris came in yesterday and Jim was running them [reference is to "shooting the moon" in Hearts -- a continuing card game], and she said, "I've been in there twice when you were playing cards and Jim mooned that time, too." I said, "Doris, there's another way of saying that!" And then she said, "Jim mooned *twice*." And then she realized what she was saying and got all flustered.

Mike: The elevator at the (clergy) retirement center is padded now. It's supposed to protect the furniture they're moving. Well, actually there was a problem a few years ago. One of the guys who was pushing ninety was caught on the elevator between floors. It took a couple of hours to get him out. They were calling down to him, and he didn't even have the strength to call back very loud. There was a meeting and a discussion of emergency equipment for the elevator. Well, they figured they'd need a chair. And someone suggested a bucket. And, of course there had to be water, and even food. We thought we'd put together a fresh peanut butter sandwich each morning and leave it in the elevator... We had a chair in there for some time. It's gone. There was another two floor elevator, when the kitchen was below the dining room. Now they have a safety door on it, but before that was put in, if the elevator was on the first floor, the door upstairs would open onto an open pit. On one of the major feast days they had a cart loaded with dishes, and the guy who was pushing it got distracted, and shoved the cart into the pit.

Some of the classical funny stories invoke a fantasy chain reaction. The following example involves clerical snafus:

Steve: I still think the funniest one was when Burt led the prayer for the woman who was having a vasectomy. He meant mastectomy.

Lori: [One priest] had trouble with names. During a baptism, he'd usually get the kid's first name right, but mess up on the middle name. I remember one Sunday he had a baptism at mass, and the kid was about one and a half, and was *not* cooperating. By the time he got the water on the kid's head, he had just about soaked him from head to foot. Jack said, "Thank God he's not a rabbi..."

Norma: And the times the clip mike was on and the priest didn't know it. Once you [Steve] were out front talking to people and your voice was booming through the church.

Steve: You have to be very careful about that. Like going to the bathroom with the mike on... And the time there was a funeral and the priests were in the sacristy [dressing room]. One told a joke and they were all laughing, and it could be heard by everybody.

Of the 23 stories in which the teller gave humor as a reason, the hearer corroborated in 14 stories. Six hearer responses were some form of "share feelings" and 3 three responses were some form of "explain a point."

Sharing Feelings. In 37 stories the teller gave some form of "share feelings" as a reason for telling a story. In 32 of these the hearer corroborated. This was the most common reason given by both tellers and hearers. I found it interesting that in 21 of 78 stories the hearer gave some form of "share feelings" as a response when the teller did not. I suspect that this sensitivity toward (or projection of) feeling nuances is probably higher in those who constantly deal with people on a feelings level, such as those in church ministry. A common theme of both tellers and hearers is "sharing our lives -- sharing who we are." As one respondent commented, "Around the lunch table sometimes we just share adventures -- different people doing different things -- part of our lives. In sharing these we get to be closer."

Lindy: After the first of the year I have to start working extra days. Peggy has a chance to go to France next summer on an exchange student thing, and I'd like to see her be able to go. It's going too fast, folks. Kids are growing up. We did our Advent prayers yesterday -- we were working all day Sunday, so we waited 'til last night --- and Peg said, "Mom, we have only one more year to do this as a family." And I cried. Peg's a junior; that's why she said, "one more year." She wants to go away to college so she won't be around 'til Christmas vacation then.

Lindy told the story because "it had touched something deep in me, and I needed to share that. This was a group I felt comfortable being that open with. Also I knew there was a common experience here -- they could understand how I was feeling because they had all been there. It was comforting to share with people who had been there and could support, and even encourage me." The hearer said the reason was to "share herself."

Carol: [We went to] my brother's 45th birthday. But we weren't celebrating his 45th -- we were celebrating his 21st, back in 1969. And of course the people who were there were his friends who went through that time with him. They looked like bikers and hippies and what all. [Here there was a joking question: "Any marijuana?"] One of those rooms did

smell a bit peculiar! Actually, Jean, his wife, really had the place looking great. She had tie-dyed sheets over all the furniture and hanging from the ceiling. One of his friends had gotten all his old records and taped the songs. The trouble was Greg and I were just on the sidelines watching during all that summer of love time, and they had really *lived* it. Well, they were grooving to all this music I had just missed *out* on, and there was this guy that made me very uncomfortable. He was dressed like a biker and looked really grungy. Had those big round sunglasses that look like mirrors -- you can't tell if he's staring at you or not. Turns out he was a friend of Ron's from law school. An attorney from Washington, D.C.! And he looked like a Hell's Angel. So we were feeling a bit out of it. It was a good party, though. Ron was really surprised. He didn't suspect a thing.

Carol said that she wanted to share the party theme because the group was interested in different and creative "fun" activities, and also, "I was interested in sharing my feelings and my response to actually being there. I was surprised at my own feelings -- almost uncomfortable, but it was fun, too. Like I was stepping back in time. It felt so real. Just sharing an experience." The hearer corroborated that she was "sharing feelings." Another sharing of personal history and feelings was:

Gloria: The big thing was going to revival meetings. I remember going with my aunt in Texas. I was scared. Well, they got pretty emotional. My aunt would always sit in the third row -- the third seat in --and we were right up front. The evangelist was really loud and scary. One night he came out and [mimed putting hand over eyes to look around and focus on someone] and said, "Someone here has *sinned!*" I slid down in my chair [acted out being scared]. It turned out to be some man, and the evangelist made him come right down front and confess and repent. He had been to a bar, with some woman who wasn't his wife. Well, the evangelist had the whole *family* down there, and the man had to ask forgiveness of his wife, too.

Gloria said, "It was one of the most scary experiences I had as a child. The church I was brought up in was not like that, and I wanted to show that the revival was quite a different thing. And to share that we should really be thankful that we don't have to do this

to try to get people in a forgiving mode." The hearer corroborated that Gloria's reason was to "share her life -- a human interest story."

Other Reasons For Telling Stories. This study corroborates Seibert's (1989) findings that "These three functions, explaining, being funny, and sharing life's experiences and information, were the only ones consistently discussed by organizational members when asked why they told particular stories" (p. 12). There are, of course, other reasons for telling stories. In 7 of the 80 stories the tellers mentioned seeking feedback as a motivation. Some comments were: "I was testing the waters -- to see if the others felt the same way," "to get perspective," "looking for somebody to give me some ideas," "it helped me to get some feedback -- I was using you as therapy!"

Examining my own motivations for lunchtime storytelling, I came up with the following bottomline categories: 1.) a need to get my share of the attention, 2.) furthering a personal agenda by telling a supporting story, which can cover such issues as "We need to use inclusive language," and "I am doing a very good job," right down to "So-and-so is a jerk," and 3.) showing off my storytelling skills (Can you top this?).

Since lunchtimes are often large and noisy affairs, I would guess that I am not alone in vying for the spotlight. However, the only reply that came close to "getting my share of the attention" was from one respondent, who said, "If a group of people are around talking about something you have the *least* knowledge of, I'd think you'd want to share something you know. I'd think [my story] was just as interesting as [the other]. It was just something you'd like to add, and join in. Just to be part of the conversation." No one mentioned anything close to showing off or furthering an agenda. Seibert (1989) states, "the three story functions, to humor, explain, and share experiences were most frequently discussed... It may be that these functions are particularly important in this organization

and/or that these functions are the easiest ones about which to converse" (p. 13). Some motives are more socially acceptable than others, and probably people feel a certain reticence about claiming motives which might reflect poorly upon themselves. I suspect that this is especially true when they are speaking into a tape recorder for someone who is writing a paper.

Story Themes

Down Memory Lane. Communal stories which invoke a fantasy chain reaction often come from the shared or similar memories of the staff, who are close in age. The following exchange took place after Carol brought in a birthday cake made from an old San Francisco recipe:

Carol: They [Blum's] should have put out a cookbook before they went out of business.

Tom: All those old San Francisco landmarks! Remember City of Paris?

Lori: My [high school] uniforms used to come from there. In a big box, via UPS.

Ann: Mine too, but then someone decided that it was a bit far to order from San Francisco down to Watsonville, and a local store took over.

Tom: There was City of Paris, The White House, I. Magnin, J. Magnin, and another high class store -- something-hoffs.

Alice: Bergdorf Goodman's?

Tom: No, it was hoffs. [tried several names] Ransohoffs! That was it. I went into all those stores in my khakis and S.I. sweater, picking up purses that needed mending, and dropping off those that were fixed. It was my job. I went after school, and was always in the traffic going home.

Lori: Remember the Christmas tree at City of Paris?

Tom: Yeah. It went up three stories in the middle of the store.

Lori: I wonder how they got it in there. They must have lifted the roof and dropped it down. And the decorations! They were real toys -- wagons and dolls and things hung from the branches. You'd go up on the balconies and see different things on each story.

Sally: Wouldn't it have been fun if they raffled it off each year? Imagine taking it home!

Tom, who told the story about his high school job, said, "I enjoy talking about the good old days to people who relate. It's something we have in common." A hearer said that we tell those stories as a means of "connecting with each other and with our past." In a discussion of the closing of some San Francisco churches, Tom told the following story:

Tom: St. Joseph's was one. We went there when I was a kid. Even though we lived in Visitation Valley, my grandmother lived there, and we would go there. Those churches have a lot of memories, though. I remember on Holy Thursday -- when they would decorate the side altar -- we would have to go "pay a visit" at seven different churches. That was the custom. My uncle would bring his pickup around and all us kids would pile in the back and we'd visit seven churches. We always went to St. Joseph's. They had the prettiest side altar.

Another exchange that discussed childhood memories was:

Lucy: [Speaking of hometown in the midwest] It does chill down early there. When we were little we could never be ghosts on Halloween because no one would be able to see us.

Lori: Some kids [this Halloween] were wearing little necklaces with a penlight or something. I'd never seen them before. Gee. When I was a kid there was nothing like that. You couldn't even buy costumes.

Lucy: No, we just made do with whatever we could find.

Gloria: I have a book on making costumes. It's neat. One year Jack was a lobster -- they were all things you could make out of paper bags, and scraps and boxes and things. I was going to pass it on, but I guess I'll keep it and give it to Grace when she has children.

All of the participants mentioned "sharing our lives" as a reason for this exchange. Gloria said, "We were all sharing, in a personal nature, about how things had changed."

Lucy commented, "It was remembering -- a -- root in me. To bring others into that. To have others understand my journey -- who I am." In the following communal story some staff members shared how they met their spouses:

Mike: I was in on the discussion when one of our high schools was deciding if they should go coed. It's funny -- the staff of the girls' high schools were against going coed. It is known that it is good for the guys to go to school with girls -- more civilizing, and really more academically challenging. But it's the opposite picture with the girls. They do much better academically by themselves.

Lori: Socially, it's the pits. What we went through to get dates. It was always negotiating for someone's brother, or someone's brother's friend.

Ann: Ours was coed. But we had all gone to school with one another since grade school, and the girls thought the boys were awful. We all dated the guys from the public school. That's how I met Gus -- his cousin introduced us.

Lucy: I can't remember *meeting* Dave. He sat across from me in the first grade.

Norma: First grade! That must be some sort of record!

Lucy: Well, he moved across town during grade school, and then we didn't see each other until high school -- we started dating when we were freshmen. When we got married I had this friend who said, "I always knew you two would wind up getting married. I used to watch you looking at each other back in the first grade!"

Norma: I met Carl at the Newman Club in College.

Mike: I always thought it would be a good thing to meet a girl in church. Some years back before I entered the seminary, I met a girl that way. She was at daily mass, and I stopped her one day and said, "How about going to breakfast?" And she said, "yes!" Jeannie Daly -- she was quite a gal.

Lori: I could say I met Jack in church. He says he met me in a bar. In a way both stories are true. I joined the Extension Volunteers after college, and they had all the volunteers' pictures in an issue of Extension Magazine - - about the size of my thumbnail. Remember the old Extension Magazine, with all the sappy fiction and the truss ads? Well, when they got the list of the girls who were coming to Cheyenne, Jack looked up our pictures. He decided he liked my looks, and especially the fact that I was coming from the west. The first day in Cheyenne, we all went to mass, and Jack was there. We said hello in passing. Later another guy came by our house and

took all of us down to the Knights of Columbus Hall -- which was essentially a bar -- and then we were formally introduced.

Lucy: Yeah. You could use either the bar or the church story.

Lori: I prefer the version that he saw my picture in a magazine and fell madly in love.

Again, this sharing of the past, with the commonality of meeting significant others in a church, or church school setting, was bonding for the group. So were the following shared memories, albeit on a less sublime level:

Glenn: The swimming pool near my home in L.A. -- the parents were always complaining about the amount of chlorine they put in it, and they said, "Well, we wouldn't have to use so much if your kids didn't pee in the pool." I guess we were swimming in a pretty strong solution.

Lori: Not to mention the other hazards.

Glenn: What?

Lori: The other stuff floating by -- band-aids, boogers...

Norma: *Yuk!* That's *gross!*

Lori: We went swimming down at the high school. It was only two blocks away and you could swim all afternoon for a dime. There were always so many kids in there that it's a wonder that there weren't any drownings. You sure couldn't keep track of anyone.

Glenn: My pool was free. You had to pay to use the locker rooms, so of course none of us ever used the locker rooms.

Norma: We had to pay a quarter at the park pool.

The story participants mentioned "entertain," and "sharing childhood stuff" as the reason for telling these stories. A hearer commented that it is unusual for a staff to share these kinds of memories, and shows "how comfortable we are -- a family. We share who we are in order to know one another better."

Other fantasy chain stories take place at ritual gatherings, such as birthday, anniversary or farewell parties:

Ellen: The only time I have ever seen Lindy speechless was on that first trip to Tahoe. We were on this bus, and the trip was just terrible. At one point a bird hit the windshield, and we all turned immediately to look at Lindy.

Gayle: We *heard* Lindy.

Lindy: No you didn't. I did *not* scream.

Gayle: You did too.

Lindy: I went (inhaled sharply).

Gayle: Well, we heard *that*. We thought we were going to have to stop, find the bird, and have a funeral. That was the bus trip from Hell. One of them.

Ellen, the storyteller, said that since this was a party honoring Lindy, she was sharing a funny thing that had happened, as well as telling about how caring Lindy is, and her love for animals. A hearer mentioned that this type of reminiscing cements relationships. "Reminiscing reestablishes a connection through ritual telling. It happens when my son comes home. We tell all the old family stories. My youngest daughter, who isn't old enough to remember, thinks it is boring, but we need to do that after having been away from each other. It connects us again." I have seen this happen many times at family holiday gatherings, when the parents and/or siblings reestablish their connections by regaling one another with "remember when" and "remember so-and-so" stories. In a typical experience, I find that the in-laws endure this with varying degrees of patience and the children listen with varying degrees of fascination, absorbing their (often embroidered) family history. It happens at "family gatherings" with the parish staff, too, especially ritual ones such as an anniversary or farewell party.

Heroes, Villains, and the Twilight Zone. As one of the respondents said, "Some of the people around here are just larger than life -- our myth people. They are the ones we relish talking about because they add so much." Like any organization, the parish has its outstanding contributors, its difficult people, and its characters. Eighteen of the 80 stories fell into this category. Three were about parishioners who worked overtime on the festival. One comment was, "These are enjoyment stories -- sharing good warm fuzzy thinking about people."

Mike: Well, you know it was the Bakers' anniversary, and Howie planned this surprise dinner for Liz, right here at the church festival. She likes Chinese food and so he had a Chinese catered dinner, with champagne and everything. He's an electrician, so he and Bob rigged up this chandelier above the table. He even wore a tuxedo. Liz had gone home -- she'd been working here all day, and was zonked. It took some doing to get her back here. She thought he'd forgotten all about the anniversary.

Mike: There's another kid -- the one with the haircut and the ponytail.

Lucy: Don Wells. You should see how he works.

Mike: I've seen! He's got this little tent out there. Last night I told him he could come into our house and sleep on our futon, but he said, "Nah -- I'd rather stay here. If someone tries to get in, I'll know about it."

Lucy: He'll be on the go all weekend. He's the runner for the food booths. Last night he was going through the hall when the kids -- Sarah and Cindy and Kim -- were decorating for the dance. They were having a hard time pasting up the ends of the crepe paper, and Don walks through, all macho, and they go: "Donnnie!!"

Mike: Dan was doing everything this weekend. Did you see him dancing?

Gloria: Yeah. He's a real character. He was all grungy and wet and came over to me and said, "Glory, gimme a hug!" So I was doing cleanup detail. Some of the people emptied the plastic bag from the garbage cans and didn't put in new bags. It was a mess. One can had a lot of watermelon in the bottom and I went at it. So I go over to Dan and here I am with the plastic gloves, all over watermelon, my shirt's a mess, and say, "Danny -- it's hug time!" He's a good carpenter. Do you know he has all

these weird hats? They're hanging on the wall in his room. One day he was working on our roof, and he had been to Burger King with Scott, and he worked the whole afternoon wearing a Burger King crown. There he was, up on the roof, wearing this Burger King crown.

Some stories involve people members of the staff find difficult to relate to. Since most staff members are a fairly liberal, progressive group, often the folks they find difficult are those of a different persuasion:

Norma: I was having a meeting discussing whether we should have a statue or a picture in the chapel, and Edith was there, of course, and she said, "Jesus wants the statue." I said, "Huh?" And she said that Jesus wanted statues in the church. It seemed like someone in the midwest had a vision that confirmed this. I said, "Edith, since that vision has not been approved by the church, I think we'll go along with the diocesan directives."

And there are the inevitable squabbles:

Lori: Rod was all steamed up about what Harry said about Dick. He was over at the hall when Harry was telling Dick how to do something, and Dick told Harry to butt out. There has been a thing going ever since. Well, Harry said something the other night and Rod took offense. There was yelling. I wasn't sure Rod wasn't going to sock him one. I was worried -- he's had heart problems, and he was just seething mad. Marge was crying. She said she just couldn't stand all that personal attacking. It wasn't Christian at all. I didn't get to sleep until 3:30 that morning.

Parish personalities are the subjects of stories. The following communal story concerns a woman who attends services regularly:

Tom: I wonder why Wanda prays standing up. She seems to need to do that.

Lori: I'm glad she stands in the back, though. That way she isn't distracting everybody.

Mike: Well, she manages to do that, too.

Al: *I know!* One day before mass I was talking to a family that had just lost someone, and she comes over and tells us all to shut up, that we are in the Lord's house. I couldn't believe it!

Gloria: She's done that to a lot of people.

Lori: One morning at the prayers of petition she prayed that all those who had come in late would be forgiven for insulting God.

Lucy: She came in late one morning.

Lori: Damn. I wish I'd been there. I could have prayed for God to forgive Wanda for caring so little about Him that she walks in late. That would have been a hoot.

Lucy: Once during the prayers of petition Wanda stood up and said that Mary had told her that we should all be carrying our rosaries, and she said that we should all go home and get them.

Lori: There was a couple in our Newcomers Group that had made a Marriage Encounter -- you know how spooony people get after that. Well, after communion they were kissing each other and Wanda walked by them, coming back from communion, leaned over and said out loud, "If you want to do *that*, go home!" They were appalled. Really insulted. When they told me about it the wife was crying. I tried to defuse it. I said, "You'll have to take Wanda with a grain of salt. She's our resident character."

Al: That's a good way of phrasing it. One of our many resident characters!

And, in the same vein:

Chris (to Mike): Have you had the evening mass yet?

Mike: Yeah, a couple of times.

Chris: Then you've seen the guy in the front row.

Lori: The one who pounds on his chest so loudly that -- well, it makes me really tense.

Chris: And he swings his foot back and forth like he's making field goals. Well, Mike, there is a group there. We have some pretty strange devotions going on.

Myths, Legends, and Fantasies

Brown (1985) states, "As stories begin to accumulate within the organization, related themes emerge in the body of narrative. Myths evolve as composites of these stories. A myth, that is, can be considered a collection of stories about a common theme" (p. 28).

At the parish under study, the snafus that have occurred at sacred moments have evolved into legend and mythology. Easter is the most important liturgical feast in the church, and the Easter Vigil mass, lasting approximately two hours, is the main celebration. It includes the blessing of fire, the lighting of the paschal candle, many scripture readings, and the baptism and confirmation of those who are entering the Catholic Church. There is much preparation; there are many people involved; there are overwhelming logistics and possibilities for mix-ups. Added to this, of course, is the fact that the humor of incongruity involved with the sacred is only surpassed by the humor of incongruity involved with the most sacred. One of the central parish stories follows:

Lori: "The Blue Bucket" has achieved the status of myth. Several years ago one of our liturgists was at the parish day and night for a week getting ready for the Triduum services [Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Vigil on Holy Saturday]. Well, the Easter Vigil is videotaped each year. When it came time for the baptisms Steve looked in the font, and there wasn't any water in it. Steve said, uncomprehendingly, "No water." They just stood there for awhile, until a deacon went back into the sacristy, found a blue bucket that had contained cleaning solvent, washed it out, filled it with water, and carried it reverently back into the church and poured it into the font. The whole thing took about five or six minutes, while an overflow number of people just sat -- or stood -- and waited. And fidgeted. When the deacon reappeared with the bucket everyone laughed and applauded. The videotape was viewed with glee many times.

The term *blue bucket* now inevitably sparks fantasy chaining, and has become a lead-in, or wind-up, to discussions of the outrageous:

Norma: I meet with other liturgists, and they have no problem with logistics at the Easter Vigil. Like they have five or six people to be baptized. We have about thirty.

Glenn (to Mike): And you have to pour a whole pitcher of water on each of them. Steve did that. He said, "In the name of the Father, -- pour pitcher, and of the Son, another pitcher -- and of the Holy Spirit, another pitcher. There wasn't a curl left in the bunch.

Alice: Then he'd kiss them on the top of their head.

Gayle: Maybe we should just use the blue bucket.

Mike: Maybe we should just get the dunk tank back.

Gayle (laughing): And we could get the sponsors to throw the balls -- In the name of the Father, smack, splash -- and of the Son, smack, splash...

Lucy: You wouldn't have to arrange for videotaping. We'd have CBS out here.

And, in a similar vein:

Mike: Gloria, I have been thinking about Easter -- actually I was thinking while doing the Nordic Track, when I do my deep thinking --

Lucy: Like when I vacuum? (laughs)

-- since we have so many baptisms, could we do them *all* at the Vigil, and have two stations? I'd baptize on one side, and Glenn could do it on the other side?

Gloria: I don't think so. Baptism should be the focus, and we'd have a divided focus...

Lori: "And in the center ring we have..."

Gloria: To speed it up, maybe we could get you a squirt gun. Anyway, one side would have the baptismal font and the other would have some temporary thing.

Lucy: Like the blue bucket... (laughter)

Other Easter Vigil stories in the staff repertoire have added to this "Murphy's Law" Legend:

Alice (to new pastor): One thing you do have to watch for. You'll get permission from the bishop to do the confirmations, and Steve missed a whole part of the rite once. I was sitting there in church, and he turned two pages instead of one, and skipped the prayer calling for the Holy Spirit to descend on the candidates. I didn't know what to do. The church was full. I didn't want to embarrass him, or embarrass *myself*. When the mass was over we had the reception in the hall and all the new people were going over there with their families. I went up to Steve and said, "You skipped the invocation of the Holy Spirit." He said, "What do I do?" Well, we got the confirmandi into a room and Steve did the prayer. Thank God. I don't know what we would have done if they had all left.

Lori: Remember when Len was here as liturgist? He was just out of the seminary and determined to do everything *big*. A lot of us didn't know it, but he had hired a couple of people from the symphony to enhance the music for the Easter Vigil. So during Holy Week Carol gets this call asking: "What time is the 'gig' on Saturday night?" She was temporarily speechless. One of the symphony people obviously wasn't into solemn liturgical celebrations. "The gig." Zeesh. Just when you think you've heard everything... "

Norma: One year Len had everybody come outside the church for the lighting of the paschal candle. The pews were all marked so people wouldn't lose their seats. They came outside carrying banners, and were going to process in following the candle. He had a wonderful big bonfire out on the grass. Well, it hadn't rained in months, and while we were out there it started to pour. The ushers were running out with umbrellas so we could get the candle lit. The slippers I usually wear for movement ministry were soaked, and I had to change back into shoes. The candle made it into the church, but there wasn't much of a procession. When the rain started most people just split for the church.

A Church In Transition

In the pre-Vatican II church, liturgy was not a spontaneous affair. Ritual books were adhered to rigidly. Liturgical music had to meet diocesan guidelines. At my wedding, in 1964, I was not allowed to use the traditional wedding marches from *Lohengrin* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, because they were not approved by the

diocese. Funeral directives were equally strict. Cremation was not an option, and Catholics were expected to be buried in Catholic cemeteries following a requiem mass at church. The services were grim affairs, with the priest vested in black, and the casket covered with a black pall. Emphasis was on the Final Judgment, and, had it not been chanted in Latin, the survivors (of all but the most saintly) would probably have been unnerved by the mandated nineteen verses of the *Dies Irae*, which included the lines:

That day of wrath, that dreadful day...
 The book is opened, that the dead
 May hear their doom from what is read
 The record of our conscience dread.
 (Maryknoll Fathers, 1961, p. 611-12)

The church of my childhood had strict behavioral norms for reverence. On entering church one became silent; any necessary conversation was limited and whispered. When reaching the pew one genuflected and made the Sign of the Cross. The priest in the sanctuary was separated from the worshipers by an altar rail, and conducted the services in Latin. Even when prayers and hymns were in English, the archaic language (*thou*, *vouchsafe*, etc.) was far removed from our everyday speech. My memories focus on statues, incense, and sanctuary bells, kneeling or sitting quietly, keeping my hands folded in prayer position, and my eyes cast down. Clothing was important. Modesty guidelines prohibited any dress that was low-necked, short or sleeveless. None of my contemporaries would have considered entering a church wearing shorts or pedal pushers. If we were without a hat, scarf, or chapel veil, a common solution was to "bobby-pin" a piece of kleenex in our hair for ritual covering.

After the council there were many ritual changes, and many variations in attire and behavior. In some parishes, like the one in my study, there was almost a backlash effect. Out went the statues, incense, and bells, in came the banners, streamers, and balloons. Out

went *Panis Angelicus* and *Tantum Ergo* -- In came rousing new vernacular hymns with verses such as, "We will sing and dance in my Father's house," often accompanied by clapping and symbolic gestures. Instead of downcast eyes and folded hands, we hugged one another at the Sign of Peace and held hands for the Lord's Prayer. Attire changed drastically. Girls and women stopped wearing hats and everybody started wearing whatever they pleased -- from Sunday-go-to-Meeting clothes to shorts, tank tops, and thongs.

Paraliturgical devotions also changed. The pre-Vatican II church had a limited menu, such as the Rosary, Benediction, Novenas, and, during Lent, the Stations of the Cross. In the parish under study, those devotions were, for a long time, downplayed or eliminated (in recent years the pendulum has swung back a bit). New devotions included Charismatic prayer meetings, which have an emotional, pentecostal style of prayer and were often a huge culture shock to the pre-Vatican II Catholic.

It is no surprise that tensions exist as the parish seeks to find a ritual and cultural balance. Added to this precarious structure are the many immigrants who have arrived in the area during recent decades, who bring their own cultural norms, and are often confused -- if not appalled -- at the ones they find here.

Dealing with cultural tensions, and other issues involving the changes of Vatican II and being a church in transition, constitutes a large part of staff activity and concern. Almost half --39 out of 84-- of the lunchtime stories directly dealt with the humor and/or frustration involved with cultural changes regarding liturgical celebrations, women's issues, social awareness, religious education and church demographics. Some examples of liturgical celebration stories follow:

Mike: I was going to ask if one of the other priests could take the 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, but I thought I'd better jump back in. I forgot that there

was a baptism, and several other things. As I was going over this priest appeared. I'd forgotten -- it was several weeks ago -- that this family, they're Filipino, was having a priest relative visit them, and he wanted to say mass here. And I said, "Fine, bring him over." Well, he was there. And the look on his face said, "Is this really a mass? Does this count?" The kids were all over the place. He asked me, "Have you been here long?" And I said "No." Like, I had nothing to do with this.

Mike: I was concerned about [musician] because he was very loud and the piano is right up against the chapel wall. But when we started mass he quit and just waited until we were through. He would have drowned out Frank and his guitar music. Now, *that* was different. It was Gene and Margie Reddick's wedding anniversary, and they got married in Hawaii. So here is Frank singing all these love songs -- "Blue Hawaii" and "Hawaiian Wedding Song." Any liturgist would have a fit.

Mike: In the middle '70s a friend suggested that I attend a Charismatic prayer meeting. When it was time for people to give testimonies, one older man got up and said that he had been driving his car when, "Jesus started talking to me, just as loud and clear as I am talking to you." Then he went on with all that Jesus had told him. I was thinking, "Hey, wait a minute!"

And others involved in liturgy shared their experiences in dealing with cultural change:

Glenn: Well, it was pointed out to me that a couple of people were actually wearing head phones during the evening mass to listen to one of the games of last year's World Series. People were hooked up to radios! Jeff was ushering and came to me after mass and told me. Maybe we should just announce the scores as we go, like they do with some TV programs. Get the dancers to cross the sanctuary with signs like, "49'ers ahead by three," "Dallas made a touchdown."

Norma: (After the new pastor's installation mass) Well, I was surprised. When the kids came up to the altar for the "Our Father," little Amy Dunne went right up to the bishop and offered her hand. And he is against doing that liturgically. I was sitting next to Jon Wright, the diocesan liturgist, and we exchanged looks, like saying, "When in Rome..." And the bishop was holding hands with the kids.

Norma: It was a suggestion for the planning committee. Sue Hoffman suggested that for Christmas Eve masses we have a live nativity scene, and

have Mary riding a real donkey up the aisle. The point is, once you have a donkey, or a crying baby, the entire focus is right *there*. It loses the whole thing. I don't want to hurt Sue's feelings, but there is no way I am having a donkey in the church. I do make it a point of taking all suggestions to the committee just as I receive them, but I let them know that that is just not going to happen.

Funeral services have undergone many changes. The emphasis has changed from fear of judgment to the hope of resurrection. Black vestments and the *Dies Irae* have been retired, and the casket is usually covered with a white cloth, representing the robes of baptism. People are encouraged to choose scripture readings and approved music to personalize the services. Cremation is a viable option, but while the casket containing the body of the deceased is present at a funeral mass, if the body has been cremated the urn of ashes is not supposed to be present. If the body is not present, the service is termed a memorial mass instead of a funeral mass. However, occasionally the urn shows up, sometimes with unusual accompaniments. Being sensitive to the pastoral needs of a grieving family, this is obviously not the best time for the priest to insist on protocol.

Norma: The worst was one Steve did. Remember the urn of ashes with the reindeer antlers? Reindeer antlers, right on the urn. They also had a big candy bar and a picture of the person on a little table in front. [They had the antlers because] she was sick a long time and she really had the message "Be happy." The whole thing really blew me away.

Chris: And we don't even have the urns at a memorial mass. One time they did have an urn, and the mother of the girl who died came up to me after the mass and was asking about the catechetical program. She had been carrying the urn under her arm like a football, and when she went to make some notes, she just put it down on the table. I was shocked. I wanted to say, "That's your daughter!"

Lori: I have an urn story. When my Aunt Millie died -- she was the wife of my Uncle Dan -- Dan had her cremated. He got her ashes in a cardboard box, and put her up in the bookcase. She did double duty as a bookend until Dan died. Then his kids, who were horrified at the whole thing, gave him a Catholic burial up at Holy Sepulcher. I think Millie went in with him.

Another issue which can be divisive is that of social concerns. The pre-conciliar church had teachings regarding social justice, but these concerns were seldom heard from the pulpit on Sunday morning. When priests began talking about volatile issues such as nuclear disarmament, war, capital punishment, etc., the reaction was mixed. The liberals applauded the change, the conservatives protested that the church had no business getting involved in politics, and, as always, the apathetic just sat there. An associate pastor shared his experience following a homily:

Glenn: I thought it went pretty well. No one walked out on my homily on Sunday. Although I did get some comments on it later -- one woman said I shouldn't mix religion and politics. It was on the anti-immigration bills, and the racial attitudes behind them. Some of the objections were "you priests live in an ivory tower and don't know what you're talking about, and so forth."

Another priest shared his experience:

Mike: I had this friend, John Riley, and he was always getting involved with demonstrations -- he'd go over to the munitions dump -- and got arrested a couple of times. He wasn't at all shy about telling people what he thought, either. I was there at his church one Sunday, and he was telling me that all the masses had a different character. The early mass was older and more conservative, and then it gradually slacked off until the noon mass, where basically people didn't care *what* you were saying. It was true. He got up at the 8:30, and said, "Now, I'm going to say some things you might disagree with, but I don't want any of you walking out. At least stay and hear what I have to say, and I'll be happy to talk to you about it afterwards." He laid it right on the line. So he starts by saying the buildup of nuclear arms is immoral, and sure enough, one guy gets up and starts out. And John says, "Hey, Ed -- don't go! At least hear what I have to say!" But Ed keeps going. And so do some others. Well, at the 10:00 a.m. mass John gives the same intro: "You won't all agree with what I have to say, but please don't walk out." Well, there was some fidgeting and frowning, but they all stayed there. At noon, he didn't say anything up front -- just gave the homily. No problem. People just sat there looking zonked out. He was right. Each mass did have its own personality.

Another cultural change has been the role of women in society and in the church. Before Vatican II women were relegated to passive participation in the liturgy (Attwater,

1958). And even though today they are visible in the parish, taking the roles of usher, lector, musician, communion minister, etc., they are barred from ordination. To date, the official rituals do not use inclusive language and refer to "sons of God" and "for all men." Again, the conservatives and the progressives have strong feelings, and the staff attempts to mediate:

Mike: The group that is against inclusive language want to have another meeting. It's not just inclusive language -- it's the whole thing about feminism, and their not getting a promotion because it went to a black woman instead, and stuff like that. It's all in there and that's what they're reacting to. You can't have a logical discussion with something like that... Glenn [associate pastor] keeps avoiding the use of the male pronoun in the prayers -- now he just pauses when there is a male pronoun, and that ticks them off even more. They get all emotional. One fellow said that he can't even pray at mass because Glenn is ruining the prayer of the church.

Another, more humorous, story dealt with the issue of women's ordination:

Mike: In one of my classes on sacraments we had to officiate at all the sacraments -- it wasn't the real thing, none of us were ordained yet. But we had to get them videotaped and the final exam included the videotape. We were in groups of four, so someone would be the presider, someone the acolyte, someone the reader and someone run the camera. We went through the whole thing. Well the prof. wanted us *all* to do this. Sister Rose was in the class and she was a liturgist, and he said you never really understand what's going on until you are the presider, so she did it too. Well that was the year that we had gotten a letter from the department. They were going through some accreditation process with Rome, and they said "Please just cool your jets this year until we get this over with. No campaigning for women's ordination." All the video presentations went off as normal, until it came to Rose. I was safely behind the camera on this one. But that day all these nuns and other women were coming around and asking "Where is the seminary chapel?" The chapel was *full* of them. Standing room only. Rose was vested in this gold chausible with a sunburst -- it looked real good on her. Well, she looked great, and we did the video. But for trying to keep a low profile, there were our seminarians as acolyte and reader for Sister Rose's "First Mass." We were pretty nervous. To top it off just about all those women had cameras and took pictures of everything.

Some of the changes since the council have involved a developing theology regarding sin and forgiveness. The concept of sin today seems more tempered with understanding and mercy. In the pre-conciliar church confession was strictly a private

affair, usually taking place in a confessional box in the church. Many Catholics who were children before the late sixties have memories of being frightened by the procedure. Today, the actual confession of sins to a priest is still individual and private, usually in an open reconciliation room. But scheduled times for confession can now include a Penance Liturgy, in which groups of people participate in a service which acknowledges the communal character of both sin and forgiveness.

One of the parish religious education coordinators shared this story of a reconciliation liturgy for the children:

Gloria: Over the weekend we were talking about reconciliation with the children, and we used the parable of the Prodigal Son. I went to the fabric store and got this striped material and cut it into little pieces, to represent the robe that the father gave the son when he returned. It was a symbol of restoring him to the family, like the shoes and the ring. Now, I told the kids and their parents, "The prodigal son was already forgiven by God -- as soon as he was really sorry. Why did he have to go home? Was it just to get the robe? I don't think so. It was to *experience* the forgiveness and *experience* his father's love for him, which had been there all the time." Some of the parents had asked, "I told God I was sorry, so why do I need to come to a sacrament of reconciliation?" That's why. To experience being reunited with the family. So, all the kids took their little piece of material home, representing their "robe" as a member of the family of God. I have more of them. I'll send them over to the staff meeting for all of you.

The following story speaks of a theology which tries to strike a balance between orthodoxy and pastoral needs:

Mike: Back in the seminary they had classes on hearing confessions, and of course they had all these theoretical sample cases you had to take and work through. Part of the assignment was to make up a few cases for the class and see if the guys could dodge them. One case concerned a woman who had almost no religious instruction, and had led a very dysfunctional life. Had been married several times, had a couple of abortions, and was currently living with a boyfriend, using drugs, and all kinds of things were going on in her life that were problematical. So she comes to confession. Now she isn't bothered about the boyfriend or any of the other stuff, but she is really sorry about the abortions and she comes to church to get that off her chest and be forgiven. Well, one school of thought is that since she

really isn't a functioning member of the church -- she hasn't gone to church in years and years -- she would have to deal with getting her life together and come back to the church before she can receive the sacrament.

Another school of thought says that she is basically unaware that a lot of elements in her life are at odds with the teaching of the church, and that since she comes in good faith, she should be given the sacrament, and then encouraged to come to church and gradually deal with the other stuff. So we have this situation. Do we give the person the sacrament and let them experience the love of God, or try to get in their heads and rearrange all their furniture first? It isn't just in confession. People will come in for pastoral counseling and say they have a problem -- "A" -- and when they start talking about themselves it becomes obvious that "A" is the *least* of their problems. But you can't throw all that at them immediately because they aren't equipped to deal with it. It would be overwhelming.

The demographics of the church have changed considerably since Vatican II. Church attendance and religious vocations are both down, and the results have had a large effect on the future. The following story expresses concern regarding the closing of several parish churches in San Francisco:

Sister Sandy: Dealing with all those parish closings has to be an awful task. I wonder if they are going to get anybody to replace Greg O'Brien at St. Hildegard's. He was doing such a wonderful job. Basically the parish had two different groups -- a bunch of older people, and gays from the Castro district. He had meetings, and worked with them, and they were really forming into one parish community. Now you wonder what's going to happen...

Sister Sandy also told a story expressing pride in how her order has made meaningful use of property that they no longer have the manpower to staff:

Sister Sandy: A lot of our high schools have lay administration now. I was at this restaurant and the girl who was waiting on our table said, "Oh, I like your cross! I go to a Catholic high school and lots of people wear that cross." And I said, "I'll bet you go to St. Ann's," and the girl said, "yes." Well all our sisters wear this same cross. We don't have many sisters left down there, though. We leased the convent to a group that takes care of children who are wards of the court. There was some concern when they first came, about having that kind of residence right next to the school. It's worked out fine, though.

These and other stories reflect the signs of the times and give insight into the parish and those who are on the staff. As "church" they struggle together with transition.

Chapter 6

Implications, Conclusions, and Limitations

Usefulness of Typologies

"A qualitative study's transferability or generalizability to other settings may be problematic" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 146). I found that it was very helpful to use the typologies of other researchers. Putting the stories into Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo's (1983) categories of *personal*, *collegial* and *corporate*, along with examining Martin et al.'s (1983) "uniqueness paradox," and Bormann's (1983) treatment of fantasy themes, helped me to relate my study of parish staff stories to other organizational story research, and see both similarities and differences. Seibert's (1989) study of the meanings that tellers and hearers attributed to organizational stories was, of course, the most valuable for my study.

The results of this study corroborate Seibert's (1989) findings that the reasons most commonly given for telling stories in the organization are to "explain a point, be funny, and share their feelings with others" (p. 11). However the order of occurrence was not the same. The most responses, from both tellers and hearers, fell into the "share feelings" category, followed by "explain a point" and "be funny." As I mentioned previously, this could be due to the nature of the ministerial occupation. Are those who choose to work with people in the helping professions more attuned to, and/or more comfortable with expressing, their own feelings in the organizational setting? This would be an interesting area of future research.

Seibert found that the story hearers had difficulty in assigning function to another's story. My respondents did not seem to find this difficult, but tended to use qualifiers such as "probably," "I think," "could have," etc. Their ease could be partially due to the long, close association of staff members, and the feeling of knowing one another well enough to second guess the motivation behind a story. It could also be partially due to the long association I have had with the respondents, and the feeling of mutual trust which has developed.

Limitations of Study

Since I conducted this research as a participant observer, the stories I gathered were limited to those I heard. I was not present at all lunch gatherings, and, when a large number attended, I often heard only the conversation at my end of the table. Certainly my own interests and perceptions influenced what I heard and retained. Another limitation of the study was that stories were collected in a semi-public setting (the lunch gatherings) in which participants probably monitored their conversation. Even though the conversation flowed smoothly and the stories show a high level of mutual trust, the type of stories (gossip, dirty jokes, etc.) that are usually told in one-on-one or select group situations, did not occur. In my experience these types of stories constitute a minimal percentage of parish staff communication, but they do exist. Weick (1983) states: "When people talk, we know nothing until we also know what possible things they could have said but did not. Talk has a way of seeming obvious, sufficient, inevitable. The talk becomes a datum only when readers see what else could have been said but was not" (p. 16).

Other stories that were absent were any involving general church problems, such as clerical pedophilia. During the time of my story collecting, the issue was current, and there

was a lot of media publicity, but no lunchtime stories directly referred to it. In my experience stories involving church scandals are not often told in any setting. Perhaps there is the feeling that since the staff really cannot do anything about the situation, dwelling on it would not be productive. Another factor might be the age of the participants, who grew up in an era when talking about sexual matters, especially in mixed company, was taboo. There could also be an element of denial present. Hoffman (1991) states: "Just as sexual abuse is a hidden problem in a number of dysfunctional families, it is also one of the quieter factors in our dysfunction as church" (p. 41). Hoffman says further, "There is a noticeable lack of public curiosity about these kinds of things [clerical pedophilia]; we do not want to know. The more we know, the more responsible we are to make a choice about this relationship, and we do not want to choose" (p. 126). A major factor, of course, was that while sexual abuse has been a problem in the church, it has not been one at this parish -- certainly not during the time of my study.

There were not many corporate stories, containing morals, told at the lunch table. If I had collected public stories, such as those told during homilies and religious education classes, this would have been a more prominent theme. In the backstage setting of the lunch gathering, it was not.

In a decidedly hierarchical organization, this element was not reproduced in the lunchtime stories. Lunchtime was a pretty democratic gathering. This informality was mentioned by several questionnaire respondents: "an opportunity to relate to each other differently (socially) than we might normally," "a good time to socialize in an informal and personal way," and, "everyone has equal status, no hierarchical structure." However, this was not a total consensus. One questionnaire respondent noted, "How much the staff shares does seem to depend on the personalities of the priests present."

This study is a snapshot in time -- of a particular parish staff. It portrays a culture that is friendly, knowledgeable, progressive, and delights in the humorous side of organizational life. It only shows one type of parish organizational culture, and there are many others. However, even though this study does not represent the entire Catholic Church, even in the western United States, it does represent aspects of a broader organizational culture in transition.

Future Research Possibilities

The study of organizational stories is relatively new, and as Seibert (1989) states, "The bulk of story research has been conducted without the benefit of participant observation" (p. 51). Perhaps an ideal study would involve two participant observers -- one who was not familiar with the organizational culture, and thus able to bring the fresh view factor, combined with a colleague who was a long-term part of the culture, and could provide the understanding and trust factor. This is especially true when the culture, like that of a church, is complex and in many cases lifelong. I would not have questioned the absence of stories regarding sexual abuse if the issue had not been brought up by my committee, and there may well be other areas of "what *isn't* said" that only someone from outside the culture would notice. The metaphor may be mixed, but the field is wide open, and *thar's gold in them thar hills!*

I have discovered through this research that the stories told among the staff comprise parish communication in its most natural, basic, and human form. Of course stories, like more official forms of organizational communication, can be rehearsed, contrived, and/or self-serving. But I found that when naturally occurring stories are collected through participant observation from a large enough number of people over a long

enough period of time, a serendipitous picture of organizational culture begins to emerge -- one that might give new insight to even those who are most intimately involved in the organization. For instance, when I began to collect stories for this thesis, I had no idea that it would include the material in the section of Chapter 5 titled, "A Church in Transition." I would have guessed that the staff members were dealing with some ambiguity management, but both the amount, and the intensity, were surprising.

I found many other potential research possibilities in my review of the literature on organizational stories. In this thesis I touched on fantasy chain analysis; it would be interesting to look at fantasy chaining in organizations, and find the similarities and differences. Martin et al.'s (1983) "uniqueness paradox" might come into the picture. For example, the parish I studied might be the only one in the world with a literal "blue bucket" story, but I would imagine most worshipping communities of any faith and denomination have experienced an outrageous (and outrageously funny) incident during their most sacred observances which sparks fantasy chaining in their staff and/or members. (That would make a great study in itself. If it were mine the title would be: "What Color Is Your Bucket?")

Another valuable area of research would be Mumby's (1987) call for political analysis of corporate stories. One important use of stories is to reinforce the status quo in an organization. Stories can recognize and inculcate issues of power and status. They are used to empower and disenfranchise, and organizationally approved stories do not generally empower the lower level employee. If organizational stories can be analyzed to show not only what and who is the object of reverence, glory and power, they can also be analyzed to discover what and who is excluded, trivialized, marginalized, and rendered invisible. Since both groups are often taken for granted, such a study could raise consciousness and focus attention on social inequities.

I think this present study has contributed greatly to the understanding of the functions and importance of organizational stories. The study examines the staff stories of a non-profit religious organization, through the method of participant observation. There has been little research in this area before. As a participant observer I was allowed access to the backstage of an organization which would not be easily granted to an outsider. Also, through the use of the collected stories and related material, I hope that this paper provides the reader with greater insight into, and understanding of, the organization I have studied.

FOOTNOTES

1. In this paper my use of the term "reality" refers to social and perceptive reality, and does not refer to the philosophical or religious use of the term.
2. I was surprised that the "sleeping together" story did not fit into a broader common story type. Certainly stories of romantic interest/involvement have circulated in all organizations to which I have belonged.
3. I suspect, from the size of the letters on the wall, that they stood for the company name. During a class I interviewed several people who worked for local corporations, asking them about stories, and the play on company initials is common. Some are officially generated and feed the corporate image, such as H-P's (Hewlett-Packard) "Have Pride," but most seem to be countercultural: FMC (Food Machinery Corp.) becomes "Funny Mushroom Company," LMSC (Lockheed Missile and Space Corp.) stands for "Let's Make Some Coffee," and IBM (at least in its glory days) was "I've Been Moved." This tie to the company name must make the negative versions especially pernicious to the management -- not only does it border on sacrilege, but it makes them virtually impossible to eradicate.
4. I thought it interesting that being a "priest" (clergy) and being a "priest" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982) are, in this parish, mutually exclusive classifications. Deal and Kennedy (1982) define "priests" as being "human encyclopedias" of organizational history, and the turnover of clergy in this parish would preclude any from attaining that status.
5. Rev. David Schwartz, S.J., gave me invaluable help by reading over Chapter 4 and suggesting changes and clarifications. He suggested that I include the broad canonical prerequisites for election to the papacy even though they had not been applied in recent history and were not likely to be applied in the foreseeable future. Father Schwartz said that the fact that church law contains a possible structure for organizational change is important.

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APPENDIX A

Dear

12-2-93

As part of my research for my thesis, I would appreciate it very much if you would answer the following questions as descriptively as possible -- as if you were explaining our organizational "ways" to someone who was not familiar with them. Use the back of the paper if you need more space. Your replies will be confidential. No one will see them except me and my thesis committee. Thanks! *Kay*

Do you think our lunch gatherings are important to parish staff functioning? Why?

List any positive -- and/or negative -- aspects of our lunch gatherings:

If you were giving advice to a new staff member, what would you tell them about fitting into our lunch gatherings -- what would they have to know in order to be considered a member of the group?

I go to our lunch gatherings because:

Complete metaphor: Our lunch gatherings are like: