

**A White Paper  
for  
The Roman Catholic Diocese of San Jose:**

**A CALL TO ACTION**



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## A Call to Action:

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a White Paper that presents the views of two married Catholic laymen in the parish of St. Joseph of Cupertino. Both of them have raised families, love the Church and have served it in a variety of functions over the last three decades. Joe Tembrock is a founding member of the Parish Outreach program and a founding board member of both Cupertino Community Services and of Sacred Heart Community Service. He is also a 5-year Confirmation instructor, a Eucharistic Minister and co-chair of FAIR. Dick Schumacher has been an RCIA instructor, choir member, Cursillo leader, lector, Marriage Preparation leader and is currently a Eucharistic/Pastoral Minister and member of the FAIR steering committee.

We are concerned about the future of our Church --- many parishioners can't find a personal place in the Church, and many, perhaps most of our young adults are not continuing life as practicing Catholics (and some not as Christians). Some of our own children have regarded their Catholic heritage as irrelevant to their lives. Although some young people return to the Church as they marry and bear children, we think that the numbers are small compared to those leaving. In any case, we judge that the tens of years or more that young people are away from the life of the Church is an unacceptably long time and that it impacts directly on the lack of vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life. It hurts us to remember that it used to be the pride of a practicing Catholic family that at least one, and sometimes several sons or daughters would have vocations to a fuller life in the Church. Now we are reduced to hoping and praying that that some will continue going to Mass regularly!

As the average age of our Priests and Religious continues to increase and the rate of vocations stays low, we come closer and closer to the day when it will be rare for a parish to have the luxury of even one full-time priest. We have already reached the point where it is unusual to have Priests or Religious teaching class in Catholic elementary or high schools and even less likely in a Catholic college. **We believe that highest priority attention is needed to address this situation.**

We both are over 50 years old and have time and energy to work within the

Church. One of us (Dick Schumacher) has recently retired and the other (Joe Tembrock) plans an early retirement. Both of us are searching for ways we can contribute to the welfare of our Church. We are interested in activities that are possible to undertake in the near future, under the control of, and with the blessings of our Pastor and Bishop. We are not interested in controversial issues such as the married priesthood or rules about contraception.

## Organization

We have divided this paper into the following sections:

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## Introduction

Our Vision:-That Catholics live and demonstrate what the Bible says, “See how they love one another”.

- That service be the mark of Catholics (to their family, parish, community and society).
- That Christianity be a real part of the everyday life of its members.
- That many small, love-filled, spiritual parish communities be encouraged to grow within the parish (e.g., Youth, Education, Worship, Outreach, Holy Name, Parish School, etc.).
- That the liturgy (the Mass and sacraments) be a meaningful and uniting force for the parish.
- That the Church organization and leaders share the goals of helping people realize happiness now in preparation for eternal happiness.

Why are we writing this?

- We love our Church. We believe God's fullness is within the Catholic Church. We know that we are the Church and that we can make a difference in what the Church is and what it does.
- We are both over 50 years old, currently healthy, and hope to have large amounts of time and energy to work within the Church. Thus, we are beginning a search for areas to use our time and talent fruitfully. We are looking for ideas and practical activities that are within the control of the Bishop, Pierre Du Maine and our Pastor, Father Joseph Milani.
- Many of the young are leaving the Church and possibly Christianity. We wonder why Catholicism and Christianity is not always relevant to them and we are particularly searching for ways that we can contribute to addressing this problem. We see this as an extremely urgent situation. We currently know intimately about a

dozen Catholic families in which the parents have been and continue to be very active in the Catholic Church as leaders and doers, but less than 25% of their independent children are practicing Catholics. This is a great sadness for us and our friends.

But please note:

-This is not a negative evaluation of the Church or a complaint about our Clergy or Religious, but rather a framework for ideas about how to address problems and improve the Church. No mention is made of the many areas of the Church that work very well. No mention is made of the Sacraments or formal prayer of the Church. We believe the formal worship of the Church is beautiful and that Vatican II has made the worship and sacraments more meaningful. Also, we note that the Church is very diverse and that people relate to the formal worship of the Church in many different ways.

## People

Observe:

- Many parishes are very large. Pastors, staff and parishioners may not know each other.
- Parishioners are very diverse (in age, culture, economic resources, race, conservative/liberal, etc.).
- Most parishioners are very busy (jobs, recreation, other organizations). Their use of time is very important to them. Many consider that their spiritual obligations are fulfilled by completing an act (e.g., going to Mass) rather than how they live their life and how they use their time.
- Parishioners are looking for relevance and meaning (laws and rules are no longer as important to them as they were historically, but the why and what it means to each individual is very important).
- Parishioners are seeking a deeper spirituality.

- There is continual change in the parish (our mobile society), and children of parishioners often cannot afford the high home prices in northern California, so they settle elsewhere.
- Many do not know the current Church (after Vatican II).
- There are many inactive Catholics within the parish (perhaps as many as are active).
- Many do not have a language that includes ways to describe religious experiences or know ways to have personal religious experiences (that is, practical ways to get to know Jesus).
- Many Catholics are not active in the Church (especially the youth). Many non Catholics may be interested in joining the Church.
- Parishioners enjoy festivals and get togethers.

Recommend:-Periodically (every 5 years), formally survey the parishioners to find out their needs and vision (as the Bishop did in earlier years).

- Visit the people. Every 3 years the Pastor or representative will visit each parishioner. The Pastor will bless/pray with the parishioner; get to know them; learn about their needs and invite them to participate in parish activities.
- Establish a Renew program to teach, energize and introduce parishioners to the Church and parish communities. The Renew program is also an excellent means of bringing inactive Catholics back into participation in the Church.
- Seek opportunities for parish fun activities.
- Present the concept that personal use of time equals personal priority. Provide practical ways for the people to get involved in parish activities (e.g., an annual parish fair introducing the people to all parish communities).

- Encourage and support groups and organizations that help people get personal, practical religious experiences (e.g., Cursillo, Marriage Encounter, charismatic prayer groups, etc.).
- Periodically and tied to the theme of a Mass, have a joint homily with the celebrant and a representative of a parish organization. Introduce the organization as a way to more fully experience Christianity.
- Recognize that the parish boundaries contain many people that are inactive Catholics or potential Catholics. Consider these people in parish planning and resource allocation.

## **Resources/Organization**

Observe:

- The priesthood and religious orders have smaller and smaller numbers of active members each year.
- Soon (in ten years or so) most people will not personally know a priest or a religious. Only large parishes will have a full-time priest and smaller parishes will be missions.
- Soon the remaining priests will become Pastors at younger ages, regardless of their preferences or talents.
- As the number of priests decreases and the Church continues to grow, the demands on the remaining priests will grow; the priesthood will become a frustrating and perhaps impossible job.
- Currently, the Pastor is responsible for the spiritual needs of the parish as well as the physical and corporate/legal requirements.
- In many parishes, all decisions seem to funnel through one person (the Pastor), who tends to become the sole leader of the parish. Decisions may be made without input from the people and parish communities.

Recommend:-Draw in more of the tremendous talent, resources and energy of lay people to participate in running their parish, their Church community.

-Separate the spiritual responsibility of the parish from the physical/corporate responsibility. Form a parish council that has real responsibilities for the physical plant, with or without an administrator (depending on parish size) and delegate real responsibilities. In this scenario, the Bishop will continue to have overall spiritual/physical/corporate responsibility. The Pastor will still represent the Bishop in the parish and will settle impasses in all matters. He will still be the parishioners' communication link to the Bishop.

-Decentralize the decision process to as low a level in the parish as possible. Maintain accountability but expect continual group dynamics to occur (as in the early Church). Use trust, love and prayer as unifying bonds.

-The diocese will develop models of different types of parish organizations and will provide training and facilitators to implement the training. The diocese will establish a model for an "ideal" parish organization.

## Community/Communities

Observe: -We think of a community as a group of people linked together with a personal bond of fellowship and a common goal.

-There are many communities within a parish (e.g., Education, School, Worship, Seniors, Holy Name, Outreach, Altar, Youth, etc.).

-There is not always a visible spiritual life in the parish communities.

-New people may not feel welcome or comfortable joining a parish community.

- There may not be enough leaders identified for parish communities. It may be that the leaders are available but either not trained for parish work, or if trained, may not be encouraged to come forward.
- Parishioners may not know about parish communities and how they can actively participate.

Recommend:-Actively support existing parish communities and where there is a need, form new communities (for example, a young adults group).

- At least annually the Pastor or a representative will visit each parish community. The Pastor will bless and/or pray with the group; learn about the group; hear the group's ideas and concerns and share his ideas and concerns.
- Actively welcome new members to parish communities. The quiet/shy members may have the most need and the most to contribute.
- The Pastor or representative will help develop each parish community's spiritual life.
- For large parishes, consider breaking down the parish into small geographical areas (perhaps 12 areas or fewer, depending on parish size). Use this organization for communication and for forming small, caring communities.

## **Religious Education**

Observe:

- Very difficult to find/keep teachers
- Religious education may not be very integrated with family life and/or service to the community.
- For many, religious education ends with Confirmation.

-Religious education may not seem relevant to the students. Parents may not take an active role in their children's religious education, but assume the Church and teachers are responsible for it.

-Parents may not know how to pass on their religious values or may not feel comfortable talking about religion to their children. They may not realize that in the current environment, children may not listen to the formal Church teaching. Unless the parents pass on their values to their children, these values may be lost.

Recommend:-Change the primary responsibility of youth education from the parish and teachers to the parents.

-Formally challenge parents to develop home religious programs and to allocate family time for this activity.

-Establish training courses and teaching aids for the parents. Parents can teach just their own children or form small groups of children that meet in their homes or use the parish facilities. Periodically there will be large group sessions, ideally as part of a Mass. Current teachers would become facilitators and backup teachers. Special sessions will be arranged for unique situations.

-An integral part of the education will be service projects in the parish or community.

-An introduction to the Bible as a lifelong learning guide will be a key part of religious education.

-Individuals will be encouraged to witness their Christianity and to share personal experiences.

-Students and parents will be challenged/encouraged to maintain a lifelong Christian education program. Courses will be offered at the parish and off-parish courses will be advertised by the parish Education Community.

## **Leadership**

Observe:

- The Pastor and staff seem to exercise the major leadership roles for many of the parish activities.
- Effective leadership needs to share and delegate leadership to others. Leadership assumes accountability and the willingness to positively accept and promote the goals of the parish.
- Small groups are essential for effective, meaningful parish communities (between 10 and 20 members is a good size).
- Many leaders are required.

Recommend:-Recruit, train and support parish community leaders.

- Give maximum responsibility to parish community leaders. When in doubt, err on the side of more, rather than less responsibility.
- The diocese will provide leadership training.

## **Finances/Facilities/Planning/Information**

Observe:

- Complete financial information may not be available to the parish and parish communities.
- People may limit their contributions to the parish based on a lack of information about how the money is used or because they are not involved in the parish budget decision process.
- The physical plant takes major resources and many decisions to maintain.
- There may be legitimate needs that are not heard for facilities use by parish communities or parishioners.
- Annual and long range plans that are developed by consensus and available for review by parishioners may not be available.

-Many Catholics are very affluent. Nonetheless, there seem to be growing difficulties in funding parish and diocesan programs. In the current Catholic Church, people may tend to give small amounts because they are not involved in the dynamics and decision making of their Church. Problems of funding become the Pastor's and the Bishop's problems.

Recommend:-In addition to the current annual parish financial summary in the bulletin, have available complete financial reports of the parish and all parish organizations. Provide explanations as needed of major parish activities.

-Develop a parish annual and long range plan. Get input from all parish communities and the entire parish.

-Involve the entire parish in the budget process. The budget should reflect the priorities of the parish and the parish plan.

-Develop a parish facilities long range plan, with input solicited from all parish communities and the entire parish.

-Establish parish communities for finance, planning and facilities.

-Evaluate all non-sacramental diocesan and parish programs at least every five years. This practice will be very helpful in the planning process.

## Conclusions

- The Church is undergoing great changes and will continue to change as the number of Priests and Religious dramatically declines.
- For Christianity to be real, it needs to be lived on a daily basis. The Pastor or representative will periodically visit each parishioner and parish community to understand their needs. This information will be used to evaluate and improve parish life so that all parishioners will feel welcome and that there are meaningful activities for everyone to participate in.
- The Church is the people. But the Church needs more than the sacraments to keep people (especially young people) as members.
- Priests need to be free to primarily perform the role they were ordained for, to celebrate Mass, lead other liturgies, make sacraments available and inspire spirituality. In times of scarce resources, managing the physical plant and meeting the corporate requirements of the Church can best be accomplished by lay people.
- A parish council should be the major decision-making entity for the parish, with input actively solicited from all members of the parish. The Pastor's special role would then be to resolve impasses and to be the channel of communications to and from the Bishop.
- Develop annual and long-range plans for the parish that have input from all the members of the parish. These plans would support diocesan plans.
- Establish a parish budget. The budget will be developed with the inclusion of all parish communities and input from all parish members. Inactive and potential Catholics will be considered when allocating resources.
- Establish and maintain parish communities with the responsibility of accomplishing the major goals of the parish. Spirituality is a major part of each community.

- Religious education will be the responsibility of the parents, with the Church providing support.
- Catholics that are active, dynamic members of their Church will generously fund their Church's programs.

In summary, we have developed the following chart to compare our view of the Church in our community today with our proposed, ideal model for the Church. (See next page).

## A Comparison: The Church Today vs. Proposed, Ideal Model

<u>Aspect of the Church</u>	<u>Today's Church</u>	<u>Proposed Church</u>
Sacraments	Priests	Priests (with more time)
Parish Communities	<p>Minor spiritual support from priests</p> <p>Mainly historically based &amp; not related to current parish needs.</p>	<p>Major spiritual focus</p> <p>Life of the parish, support people's current needs.</p>
Organization	<p>Bishop &amp; Pastor control all.</p> <p>Little shared decision-making.</p> <p>Pastor is primary administrator.</p> <p>Much of Pastor's time &amp; energy spent in managing the organization.</p> <p>Planning done centrally.</p>	<p>Diocese/parish councils have active decision roles.</p> <p>Have paid or volunteer parish administrators.</p> <p>People are involved in planning.</p>
Funding	<p>Continual difficulties</p> <p><i>Financial problems are the Bishop's and Father's problem.</i></p>	<p>Fundraising easier</p> <p><i>Church becomes my Church &amp; my community and financing is my problem.</i></p>
People	<p>Many (perhaps most) of the young are leaving.</p>	<p>Young will stay and adults will return because there are communities to participate in.</p>