

Grieving, Healing and New Beginnings



Resources for Parish Leaders and
Parishioners

Archdiocese of Dubuque

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Grieving, Healing and New Beginnings

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The Archdiocese of Dubuque is grateful to the Archdiocese of Milwaukee for publishing the original document to assist parish in dealing with the process of change. We are appreciative if their generosity in granting permission allowing us to adapt it for use in the Archdiocese of Dubuque.

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee produced this manual to assist parishes in dealing with the process of change. Permission is granted to parishes for the copying of any materials contained within the manual.

Resources for Parish Leaders

Introduction

The process of change is never easy, yet it is essential if we are to remain relevant and vibrant -as individuals and as Church communities. We are proud of the rich Catholic history in northeast Iowa, and as we embrace changing times, we are confident that a strong Catholic presence will continue into the new millennium.

The pastoral aspect of helping people accept and grow through change is as important as the actual management of a parish merger. When the spirit of openness and generosity leads the way, new life will abound. When people are able to focus on the future, reverencing the past but not allowing themselves to be bound by it, creativity will burst forth. The former parishes will transform into a new faith community, enriched by the diversity and wealth of experiences now brought together. The spirit of welcoming is an essential ingredient in forming new faith communities.

The following prayers and processes are designed to help parish leaders provide a welcoming presence to parishioners who are experiencing loss due to major parish change. The enclosed materials, designed for various audiences and uses, are described below. Some of the sections lend themselves to private reflection as well as to group process. Parish leaders may recommend them to individuals struggling with parish changes. Any of the materials within this manual may be reproduced in part or whole for use with parish groups or individuals.

The Welcoming Suggestions are for use by pastors, parish directors, staff or leaders in councils and committees:

- These suggestions may be incorporated into existing parish ministries.
- They apply at times of contact with people from parishes that are closing or merging.
- Special suggestions are offered for parishes who are experiencing cultural or ethnic change in their neighborhoods.

The Small Group Reflection and Prayer Process is based upon one of the principles of grief ministry: In order to work through grief, people need to talk and pray about their thoughts, feelings and experiences. Scripture calls us to look at our loss through a perspective of faith, moving us toward hope in God's faithfulness.

It is important that a parish staff person or council leader tell parishioners of the option to have a small group reflection and prayer process. This person should also schedule gathering times and arrange for someone to facilitate the process. The facilitator could be a parishioner who has group leadership experience or a staff person from the archdiocesan offices.

24 Ways for Parishes to Welcome People in Times of Transition

- 1 Whether you are a pastor, parish director or parish council leader, take the responsibility to build a worshipping community which welcomes and expresses care for guests and strangers.
- 2 If some members of the former parishes have not yet come to the new parish, personally invite them to do so. Let them know the parish misses them.
- 3 In situations when parishes merge, communicate through words and actions that all newcomers are full members of the new parish.
- 4 Know your neighborhood, town or rural community. Arrange bus or walking tours periodically to keep in touch with demographic changes, particularly in parishes where parishioners "come from all over."
- 5 Invite neighbors to an open house to acquaint them with all the parish has to offer. Engage parishioners in conversation and invite them to share the stories and traditions that come from their cultural heritage or their former parish. As we share stories with one another, we begin to realize we have much in common.
- 6 "Let by-gones be by-gones." In both rural and urban settings, competition and prejudices rooted in history may still affect attitudes toward "those people in the next parish or the next town." It is no longer "we and they," but all of us as one parish community. Attitudes of openness and reconciliation are essential
- 7 Love, community and family are universal values, yet they may be perceived and demonstrated differently among people from varying cultures or places. We must understand people's cultural or ethnic standards before we judge their behavior or traditions.
- 8 Ask parishioners about their needs. It is risky to assume we know what those needs are.

9

Invite all parishioners to assist in planning liturgies and other events that incorporate and celebrate elements of their culture. Celebrate the rich diversity within in your parish.

Appearance of the Parish Facilities

10

Display signs that are visible, clear and informative throughout the parish complex. Maintain well lighted and clearly marked parking lots near the parish office for visitors.

11

Make meeting and gathering areas accessible for people with disabilities.

12

Have welcoming and informative literature available in the church and other parish buildings. Provide contact names and phone numbers on this literature, along with information about parish services and programs.

13

Use bulletin boards to display prominently the parish mission statement. Post a listing of parish services and other pertinent information, as well as photographs of parish council and staff members.

Greeting at Mass

14

Encourage all parishioners to actively welcome people, both original members and new members from former parishes. We can not be strangers in God's house.

15

Ask families with children and/or seniors to act as greeters at Sunday liturgy or other gatherings. Include families from each parishes coming together in the new parish.

Registration

16

Clarify that all parishioners need to register in the newly formed parish. Although some parishioners will be worshipping at familiar site of their former parish, the newly formed parish brings a fresh beginning for everyone.

17

Organize procedures for registration that are convenient and personable. Nothing replaces the warmth of personal contact, especially during stressful times.

18

Be prepared to listen without defensiveness to people who may still be grieving over losses. Respect the confidentiality of information shared throughout the registration process.

19

Send a personal follow-up letter to newly-registered parishioners expressing appreciation for their participation. Include an invitation to upcoming parish events.

20

Periodically evaluate the registration and welcoming process, inviting newcomers to provide feedback. Ask what was helpful in the registration process and how it might be improved.

Symbols

21

Include symbols and ritual objects from all former parishes in the church and in services. For example, display statues, sacred vessels, a stained glass window, or important documents that signify the stories of former parishes that now compose the new faith community.

Invitation to Involvement

22

After a period of initial adjustment, conduct a census or visit all members to learn people's interests, talents, needs and ways they would like to become involved in parish activities and ministries. It is then important to follow through with ministry placements that fit the person and the needs of the parish.

Community Building

23

Acknowledge diversity--racial, cultural and ethnic. Include special representative objects or practices in environment and services.

24

Encourage the creation of small groups for prayer and faith sharing. Their impact on parish life and the development of personal relationships cannot be underestimated.

A Small Group Reflection and Prayer Process for People Experiencing Loss amidst Major Parish Change

by Rosalie Hartmann with the Committee for Small Christian Community Purpose

Purpose

The purpose of this process is to give people a chance to articulate their grief, anger or sadness and to move through it in order to continue as faithful disciples of the Church. The process invites parishioners to give parish leaders prayerful feedback about their hopes for the new parish at appropriate stages in the planning process.

Setting

Manageable settings for this reflection may be:

- in organizations, committees, functional groupings, etc.
- as an open forum in which the assembly is divided into small groups.

Arrange chairs in a circle or prepare several circles for small groups. It is important that the environment invite prayerful reflection and open discussion.

Conveners

A pastor, parish director, staff member, council or committee chairperson or an interested parishioner in cooperation with parish leaders may extend an invitation to parishioners. The purpose of the gathering should be made clear at the time people are invited to participate.

Ground rules

It is essential that all participants commit to confidentiality. People must be comfortable in knowing that what they say in the small group will remain within the group.

Another ground rule might be simply to listen with respect, rather than to agree to disagree. It helps to put the group at ease if they agree that silence is O.K. and that people may "pass" when they are not ready to speak.

The group may decide that it wants to name additional ground rules so that all will feel welcome to participate.

Assumptions

A grieving process of parish members is similar to that of an individual suffering loss. Possible stages may be:

- Denial -- I don't admit the loss.
- Anger -- I blame others.
- Bargaining -- I set up conditions.
- Depression -- I blame myself:
- Acceptance -- I accept what has happened.

One way to alleviate grief is to talk about the loss. The experience and support of others helps a person to let go gradually. Even more deeply, together we can bless the past and hope for the future through common prayer and ritual.

The small group process

The facilitator begins the sessions by reviewing the context of the gathering. S/he may remind the group that all parishes in the archdiocese will be experiencing various changes. The facilitator clarifies the changes directly affecting this parish community.

The gatherings may begin and end with the song, "Shepherd me, O God," based on Psalm 23. (By

Marty Haugen, Oregon Catholic Press, copyright, GIA Publications)

Response to change

The facilitator asks people to take time to reflect personally on the following questions:

- What will I/we miss about our parish as we knew it?
- What losses have we experienced?
- What change(s) will be the most difficult for me/my family?

Participants talk about their responses with three to five other people. In one or two word phrases, they list the key losses on a piece of newsprint. This will be used later in the prayer ritual.

Experience of change in light of Scripture

Select from the following passages. Proclaim aloud a reading in your group (large or small).

- Romans 6:3-8, "If we have died with Christ we shall also live with him."
- John 12: 24-26, "... unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies"
- Luke 8:22-25, "Master, we are perishing!"
- Numbers 13:25-28, 14:1-8, "Would that we had died in Egypt!"
- Romans 12:1 -6, "Be transformed by the renewal of your mind."
- Jeremiah 31: 31 -34, "I will make a new covenant . . ."
- 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24, "Test everything; retain what is good."

Respond to the reading with a song or one of the following psalms:

- Ps. 33: 4-5, 18-22, "Our soul waits for the Lord who is our help and shield."
- Ps. 133: 1-3, "How good it is, how pleasant, where the people dwell as one!"
- Ps. 46: 1-12, "God is our refuge and our strength."

Hopes for the future

As a part of naming people's hopes for their parish in the future, ask the group to reflect upon the criteria that Archbishop Weakland has stated are important to a parish. Read them aloud:

- Parishes ... will show evidence of quality ministries of the word, worship, service, and administration.
- Parishes ... will show credible evidence that they can afford what they propose to do.
- Parishes ... will show that their structures are congruent with civil and canon law.
- Parish plans for the future will show evidence of responding to the projected priest shortage, the laity's call to ministry and the availability of permanent deacons and demographic shifts in population.

Choose from the following questions to reflect upon personally and ask participants to talk about their responses with the people near them:

- What opportunities and possibilities do you see in the losses and changes we are experiencing?
- What treasures, spiritual or material, do you bring with you from your former parish?
- What do you hope for in an ideal parish? - people who ... - a place where ... What would Jesus Christ envision the parish to be?
- Given both our losses and our hopes, where do we go from here?
- As disciples of Jesus Christ, what will it "cost" us to bring about our new vision, to realize the new possibilities? What is being asked of us?
- As members of this church community, to what are we called?

List key responses on a page of newsprint, separate from the losses.

Response in prayer and ritual

Before the session, prepare a central prayer table with flowers, candle(s), the Scriptures and other

symbols important to the group. Have a large basket available to receive the rolls of newsprint with the losses. Have tape available to display near the prayer table the newsprint with hopes for the new parish.

Gather in a large circle or in several small circles.

- Together pray the Lord's Prayer.
- Invite one person from each group to bring the list of losses, rolled and tied.
- Place them in the basket at the table.
- Proclaim a scripture passage from the list on page ~ or select another passage.
- Invite one person from each group to bring forth the list of hopes and tape them on the wall, making them visible to all present.
- After a time of silence, offer spontaneous petitions with the response, "O God, hear our prayer."
- Pray together "A Prayer for the Journey."
- Share the sign of peace.
- Conclude with refreshments and socializing together.

A Prayer for the Journey

Adapted from prayer of Archbishop Weakland

Lord, Jesus, source of all strength. Make us, your Church of northeast Iowa, into a strong and vibrant community -Strong through believing in you and in the power of your Spirit. Courageous through hoping for your gifts now and in the future. Steadfast through trusting in your generosity to us and those who follow us.

Send laborers into the harvest. Go before us in our dream; Stand beside us in our doubts; Sustain us in our sacrifices. Teach us to travel lightly as we proclaim your goodness. Increase our love and our zeal for your Word, for your Sacraments, for your Church, for your people. Come, Lord Jesus, come! Amen.

Pray Together:

Holy Spirit, you are the Spirit of unity. We invite you into our lives this day. Keep us singular in mind and purpose as we work to bring God's Kingdom upon earth.

Bless our Church -- all its leaders, its members, its young people. Help all of us to overcome trials, separations, mistakes, and ignorance. Ward off any extremes or superstitions. Ignite us with your fire of zeal and courage.

May your truth be our beacon and our shelter. May nothing separate us, or those we love, from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

By Joan M. Bernier, SND from Summer Reflections, '97 Archdiocese of Hartford, CT
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A Psalm for Healing When a Parish Changes or Closes

Remembering and Lamenting the Loss of the Temple

by Rev. Steve Dunn

Psalm 137

¹By the rivers of Babylon -
there we sat down and there we wept
²On the willows there -
we hung up our harps.
³For there our captors asked us for songs,
and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

⁴How could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?
⁵If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither!
⁶Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth,
if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy.

NRSV Translation Background

Background

In ancient Israel, the Book of Psalms constituted a major part of the liturgy of temple worship, as well as a resource for daily prayer within the family. These poems covered the wide range of human emotions and experience from praise and thanks to grief and lament. Because the sacred poems fully embrace common human experience and enable us to initiate a conversation with God, they have remained an important prayer resource for Judaism as well as for Christianity.

In a situation such as the closing of a long-established parish church, praying psalms of lament enable the grieving members to name their troubles, fears, anxiety, pain and sense of loss. Before any of us can experience healing, we must honestly and prayerfully name and confront our pain. Through psalms of lament, we bring our problems out into the open, placing them before God with faith and trust. God hears and answers with steadfast love, faithfulness, and mercy - the hallmarks of His covenant with Israel (see Exodus 34: 6-7).

Theologian Walter Brueggemann bemoans what he calls "the costly loss of lament" in our modern society. He believes that in order to embrace authentic praise and thanksgiving, as well as healing, we must first confront and name our sinfulness, guilt, anger, loss, and pain. This produces a catharsis that enables us to move forward in faith.

Healing, and the movement from grief to a "new orientation" in the faith life of those experiencing the painful loss of a church closing, can be enhanced through a meditation on Psalm 137. After the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and their deportation to Babylon in 587 B.C.E., the people of Israel sang a song of lament. Their song was not only to lament the loss of their homeland and place of worship, however. It was also a sincere plea to keep open the conversation with the God

whom they trust will eventually re-establish them in a new temple. We mourn the closing of parish buildings. But we, like our Israelite forebears, must express our lament in a context of openness to God in our hopes for a renewed parish. Central to the theology of Psalm 137 is remembering that the exiles find comfort, hope, and new strength through their memory of the Holy City of Jerusalem and the temple in which they worshiped. Despite the mockery of their captors (verse 3), they will not give in to sacrilege and mockery. Their faith in God's covenant love enables them to pray with an implicit hope that one day a new temple will be built in which they will again worship together.

Remembering is central to our Eucharistic worship. We remember God's love manifested in Christ as together we partake in the spiritual sharing of food and drink as a faith community. So too, remembering the richness of our former parish life gives us hope that our communal life will be renewed in our new or re-structured parish.

Verse 1:

"By the rivers of Babylon..."

Between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Babylon (modern day Iraq) there existed an elaborate system of canals, the "rivers" of Babylon. This land was very different and unlike the familiar confines of Jerusalem, which made the exiles' sense of loss even more painful. They find comfort by remembering Jerusalem, the temple worship and communal life.

Having to leave one's home parish to worship in a new or restructured community will be unfamiliar and somewhat uncomfortable at first. It is only natural and healthy to remember our past, as the Israelites do in verse one. Naming our loss, and remembering the good things we had, becomes the first step before we can look with hope to a new experience of parish life.

- What losses are you experiencing?
- What memories will continue to be a part of your faith foundation?

Verse 2:

"On the willows..."

The exiles will hang their harps - instruments used in temple worship - on the trees, since they are grieved by the loss of their land and temple.

The anger and alienation that may result from a parish closing will cause some members to be disappointed. We need to name these feelings honestly.

- Describe your feelings at a time of loss.
- How do you pray at such a time? Alone? With others?

Verse 3:

"Our captors asked us for songs..."

Here and in verse four the word "songs" refers to the temple liturgy, where music and song were essential aspects to the joyful and reverent worship of God. Now that the temple has been destroyed and the Israelites exiled, the Babylon captors taunt them by asking them to sing songs in praise of the God who seems not to exist. This presents a major theme found in the lament psalms, the taunting by oppressors who question the existence of the God of Israel: "Where is your God?" (42:3, 10, 14:1), "Sing us one of the songs of Zion" (137:3).

Despite the taunts, the psalmist, speaking for the exiles, cannot even think of singing under false pretenses. Again this shows the implicit faith and trust of the exiles who will not make their worship a mockery. They will save their music for the future worship in the restored temple.

As a people united through our common baptism in Christ, we are challenged to maintain faith and

trust in God as we look to the future in our new or restructured faith community. During the painful and uncertain times of transition, this faith sustains us. Although it will be difficult to sing joyfully during our period of mourning, our underlying faith should enable us to realize that Church transcends a particular building. We are the People of God, made one in baptism and called to community.

- What opportunities and possibilities do you see in the losses and changes we are experiencing?

Verse 5:

"If I forget you...let my right hand wither..."

Implicit in this verse is the psalmist's hope of restoration. If he forgets Jerusalem and loses faith, he will never again be able to play and sing songs of the Lord in Jerusalem. The image of a withered hand, the hand he would use to play the harp, conveys the importance of his remembrance.

Likewise, we must not forget our faith community and give up hope for the future -- the time when we also will be restored and restructured and will once again sing and play before the Lord.

Verse 6:

"Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth..."

Should the psalmist (representing the community of faith) forget Jerusalem, he/she will lose the ability to sing again in the restored temple, as depicted in the image of the tongue clinging to the roof of the mouth.

Failure to remember our identity as a community of faith weakens our faith and lessens our hope for a restoration of community life. Like the singers of Psalm 137, we must honestly name and embrace our loss, also remembering that our identity as a Christian community has its foundation in our baptism, not in bricks and mortar. The closing of a church or the merging of parishes can cause much pain and a sense of loss. However, remembering that our life as a Christian community lies deeply rooted in God's steadfast love, we will maintain faith and hope as we embrace changes in our parish life.

- What treasures, memories, sacred objects, or pictures, etc., do you bring with you from your former parish?
- As members of this church community, to what are we called?

Additional Psalms for the "Ascent" to a New Community

"Songs of Zion," psalms 120-134, are called the "songs of Zion" or "psalms of ascent" because the Israelites sang them on their annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem. We pray these psalms in preparation for our "pilgrimage" to our new and restructured faith communities.

A few "psalms of ascent" include:

Psalm 121 - God's sure protection Psalm

122 - prayer and praise on entrance to the Holy Place Psalm

125 - trust in God's protection from evil and abundance of peace Psalm

133 - prayer for unity within the community of faith

Meditation

At a Time of Loss and Change

By Rosalie Hartmann

Lord Jesus Christ, you have walked through the valley of darkness from death to transformed life.

At this time of loss due to major changes in our parish, I do not yet see the life about to come through this painful experience of death.

When I feel anger, may I acknowledge it and surrender it to you. May I find people with whom I can speak to lessen the pain.

When I don't want to face the reality of change, help me to trust that you continue to guide your Church human as it is - through the power of your Holy Spirit.

When I am tempted to tear down connections between people in your Church, give me strength to build up your Body.

When sadness overcomes me as I remember how this parish nourished me and my family over the years, help me to turn toward your plans for this faith community in the future.

Give me the strength to pray with you: "Father, not my will, but yours be done." (Mt. 26:42) and "So I said, 'Here I am to do your will is my delight.'" (Ps.40:8-9)

With you, in praise of the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, we pray, Amen!

Thoughts from Facing the Future with Hope

"God has given our generation a special challenge as we plan for the future of our local Church. The Archdiocese of Dubuque, like so many dioceses in the country, will face a greatly reduced number of priests in the next decades. We face that future with hope, because we know that we are loved by God no less than previous generations and believe that the Church continues to be under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We face the future as a Spirit-filled faith community in union with the whole Church and its universal pastor, Pope John Paul II. In fact, this predicted shortage can be a blessing for us, because it forces us to look deeply at many ecclesial questions in the light of our Catholic tradition as we adapt to the new challenges of the times. We came well-prepared for this new challenge and the collaborative models and projects we have been working on in all of the Archdiocese."

Questions:

- Think of a challenging experience in your own life, or that of your family. How was God supporting you at the time?
- Who walked with you and encouraged you?
- How did you pray?
- How is God supporting you at this time of change in your parish?
- What gives you hope?
- How do you pray?

"Unquestionably, we know that we must intensify our prayers, so that we can discern God's will for us in these exciting but crucial times. It is also evident that sacrifices will have to be made. All of us will be called upon to change some of our ways of thinking and acting. In addition, greater efforts must be directed toward understanding and preserving our Catholic heritage. Our young people, in particular, must grow in their love for the Church, assume responsibility for its mission, and sense that they truly belong to a vital community of believers, rooted in the tradition of the past, but willing to face the challenges of the future with courage. We all pray for strength and wisdom as we continue to walk together."

Questions:

- What of your faith story do you want to pass on to the younger generation?
- What must the adult community do at this time of change to give a good example to younger people?

"But parishes change, too. They are constantly growing and maturing. They are affected in ways beyond their control by changes in the region or neighborhood where they are found. For this reason each parish has its own history, one that gives birth to its particular characteristics. We certainly do not want to lose these specific qualities. Many parishes were founded with strong ethnic roots that were important in maintaining adherence to the faith.

"It takes great courage for a parish to see that it is no longer viable and that, for the good of the future parishioners, a merger with another parish is needed. Indications that a parish should consider a merger with another are the signs of a lack of growth evidenced by few baptisms and weddings, deficit budgeting, and, in general, the inability to serve properly all the needs of the parishioners in all the ministries needed for a viable faith community."

Questions:

- What leads us to blame other people or institutions for the change happening in our parishes?
- List some of the changes that are beyond the control of church leaders?

- What values from your original parish do you want to retain?
- How do we discern the action of the Spirit among us?

**"What should a parish look like now and in the next decades?
Let me describe my dream.**

"It should be the center of good worship with qualified and trained musicians and liturgists to make sure that what is done is in the best of the Catholic tradition. The faithful should be aware that their moment of prayer is something special and distinct from their daily routine and chores. Liturgy in the parish should be an experience in which the faithful encounter the presence of God and where they are stimulated to seek a deeper holiness in their lives.

"The parish of the next decades, either alone or in collaboration with their neighbors, should have programs of education in the faith at all levels. They must have an RCIA process for newcomers. The parishioners should have access to a Catholic school for their children, to good religious education classes and Faith experiences, to youth and young adult ministry, to a good Confirmation program, to adult religious learning and formation possibilities, especially in Sacred Scripture. Qualified personnel are needed to administer and facilitate all these programs.

"The parish of the next decade needs to have coordinated outreach ministries, again with qualified personnel. The extent of poverty and the need for such outreaches cannot be overestimated.

"Each parish will need many support groups to assist and aid all kinds of parishioners in their individual needs, e.g., family programs to aid those preparing for marriage, care for the sick and elderly, programs for those seeking parenting skills, counseling at all levels, support groups for the widowed and divorced, for the chemically dependent, and so on. No single parish can afford an individual minister for each of these needs, but they should have someone who coordinates them, knows how to evaluate the best of such groups and where they are available, in addition to assessing the religious values that ground them. Our own Catholic Charities must play an important role in some of these areas where professional help is required; other groups will be composed of volunteers.

"All of the above takes means and, thus, requires much collaboration. It demands good stewardship and the willingness to share with others, the poor with the rich, the rich with the poor, one cultural group with another. Collaboration goes beyond sharing in the same district or neighborhood and includes twinning between parishes with different cultural roots.

"In particular, I would hope that the parishes would be caring and welcoming communities of faith, places to which people come willingly, places where they will feel at home, places where they will know they can grow in their faith, places where they can find God and be reconciled when they seem lost, places where the accent is on people and their individual worth and dignity. A parish should be, above all else, a good place in which to grow spiritually - a supportive, caring community, one to be proud of."

Questions:

- What elements of description of the parish in the future excite you?
- Where will you put your effort to assist in the continuing growth of such a parish?

Quotations: by Archbishop Rembert Weakland, 1991

Thought Provoking Questions

by Bishop Sklba "Herald of Hope" column, Catholic Herald, April 17 and June 12, 1997

For both the early Christians and for forebears in the Church of northeast Iowa, "the Eucharist both signified the sense of faith community already existent and created a deeper sacramental unity in Christ."

"How does a parish demonstrate its sense of relationship to the larger church?"

"Is there any new model in this time of fewer available priests which can:

- preserve the importance of the fullness of the Eucharistic celebration for us as Catholics,
- preserve the sense of close community where people know and care for each other,
- enable the priest to be a member of that parish community,
- eliminate the overlap of parish boundaries no longer separated by different language, and
- give the priest a healthy sense of pastoring real people, not being just a sacrament machine?"

"Should a parish remain in existence merely because it has accumulated sufficient saving in reserve? Is that Catholic?"

"Should a schedule of Mass times be retained in a parish for the convenience of a minority (with small numbers in attendance) when a neighboring parish might need the presence of a priest for Sunday Eucharist? Is that Catholic?"

"Should a parish remain in existence if it celebrates Sunday Mass, but offers no religious education for its members, nor actively supports work of charity for the needy? Is that Catholic?"

"Should a parish composed of members who travel from the suburbs remain in existence merely because they gather for weekly Eucharist, but demonstrate no communal concern for the needs of the neighborhood in which the parish is located? Is that Catholic?"

"Should a parish remain in existence if members never seek or welcome newcomers? Is that Catholic?"