
OPENING REMARKS

Ms. Kerry A. Robinson, Executive Director, National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management

On July 11th 2008, this organization of remarkably dedicated laity and clergy will be officially three years old. In three years, so many of our original objectives have been accomplished and advanced. An enormous amount has been achieved in a short time and often against obstacles that smart, sophisticated, experienced people told us would be barriers to our good intentions.

Obstacles such as fear of change, suspicion of motivations or results, inertia, and—above all—the sheer magnitude of very real contemporary challenges fiscally, demographically, and managerially facing the Catholic Church in the United States at the beginning of the 21st Century. So, how to account for so much good news to be able to share with you in our first three years of endeavor? The most obvious answer is grace. This is, after all, an organization of people who are faith-filled, devoted Catholics who are grateful for our faith, grateful to the Church for informing so much of who we are professionally and personally. Although we go in with our eyes wide open to the problems at hand, let us remember that it is the Church's mission to which we are committed.

What better instrument to point us to the transcendent nature of life, to bring us into close relationship with Christ, to offer truth and meaning, and to provide a vehicle for carrying out the social mandate to care for others in our midst than the one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church to which we belong?

The consequence of succeeding and providing exceptional education to generations of Catholics in the United States is that you have before you an extremely well educated, talented, proficient laity, who know enough about our baptismal rights and responsibilities to know that when our Church—our faith community—needs our active participation and our particular competencies, it is our obligation and also our joy to extend them. Another way to account for the success is that our mission is simple, urgent, and compelling. It makes sense. It makes sense theologically and practically.

Catholics have risen to levels of affluence and influence, and can be counted among the highest echelons of leadership across industry and sector. The good news is that many of these talented men and women, ordained and lay, care so much about the Church and her mission that they are committing through the Roundtable their time, expertise, social capital, creativity, and many other resources in service to strengthening the management of human and financial resources.

As you know, we meet annually. There are at least two main purposes for this gathering. The first is to take up an aspect of our mission, whether it be Church finances, human resource development, communications, or management, and highlight it thematically for discussion, debate, and creative problem solving. As you are aware, our deliberations are transcribed, edited, and disseminated widely to other Church leaders. We make available all that we produce and do to a wide Church audience through our online clearing house of best practices, churchEpedia, which you will hear more about later in the day.

The second purpose of our gathering is to report to the membership on our activity and programmatic endeavors. This is surely intended to inform and inspire. But above all, we offer it because we eagerly seek your strategic guidance and reaction to the quality of our work. We need your help to ensure that it is disseminated and implemented effectively, and that we are on target in terms of identifying and meeting the most pressing temporal needs of the Church.

To begin our deliberations and to highlight the thematic message of the day and the half, we could find no more capable presenter than our own Fred Gluck. Former managing director of McKinsey and Company, Fred has served on our Board from the very beginning, and is setting the tone for the thematic portion of our gathering. He will offer a mini-keynote on leadership and management, the distinction between them, and the importance of both.