



National Leadership Roundtable
on Church Management

PRESS RELEASE

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Global Church demographics present opportunities for transparency, accountability

PHILADELPHIA—Catholic journalist and commentator John Allen addressed over 100 members of the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management and Church officials at the organization's 2010 annual meeting Thursday at the Wharton School, highlighting major demographic changes in the global Catholic Church and the opportunities that they present in promoting transparency, accountability, and collaboration throughout the Church.

"In the twenty-first century, it will be difficult to make an argument for anything using only American or western viewpoints," Allen said, noting that only a century ago most of the world's Catholics were white and lived in the developed world. By 2050, 75% of Catholics are expected to reside in the global south, representing new and complicated contexts. The changing face of the Church worldwide means that advocates for transparency, accountability, and collaboration must find new ways to spread their messages, taking global experience into consideration.

Christians in the Middle East, Allen noted, understand especially well why these "virtues of stewardship" are essential for the Church to adopt. The local Church in the Holy Land is experiencing a mass exodus, as external pressures force many to flee to safer and more prosperous areas. The result is a tightening of resources that, if not well managed, will run dry, putting the future vitality of the Church there at risk. With only 3% of the local population now identifying as Christian, down from over 20% at the beginning of last century, adoption of transparent and accountable practices may literally be a matter of survival for the Church there, Allen said.

Likewise, the Church in Africa and India presents similar opportunities to reframe the debate. In Africa, Catholic bishops and other Church leaders are some of the most vocal anti-corruption leaders, recognizing that public corruption is the premiere social justice issue on the continent today. To keep the moral authority necessary to continue their crusade against corruption, Allen said, local Church leaders must ensure that they and their staffs are insulated against the same corruption plaguing their governments. While all scandal will not be eliminated, the Church can take steps to ensure that scandal is minimal and that those responsible are held accountable.

In India, where the Catholic population is exploding due to the attraction of Christianity to the "untouchable" classes, some charge that the Church is paying for converts, undermining the Church's message there. Transparent financial practices will ensure that the Church in India retains its moral integrity by demonstrating clearly where its money goes, and where it does not.

The quest for advancing transparency and collaboration in the Church must become global in scope, Allen said, and results will follow. "Look around the Catholic global world, and Catholic leaders are open to and desperate for tools for transparency, accountability, and collaboration. We must speak to global experience to be successful," he concluded. "It is the importance of perspective. Start with experience and then craft solutions for success that speak to those experiences."

The National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management is an organization of laity, religious, and clergy working together to promote excellence and best practices in the management, finances, and human resource development of the Catholic Church in the U.S. through the greater incorporation of the expertise of the laity. More information is available at www.TheLeadershipRoundtable.org. ###