

National Leadership Roundtable
on Church Management

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Use

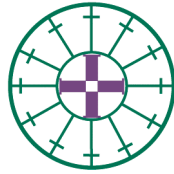
**CatholicPastor.org Launches
Priests Now Share Online Collaborative Networking Platform**

Imagine a scenario in which a pastor in San Francisco is grappling with how best to approach his parishioners about a looming budget shortfall and the finance council's recommendations for cutting vital programming. He knows that his decisions will be met with resistance from many members of his parish, no matter which programs survive. But the money simply is not there to continue operating at current levels. He is unsure about how to proceed.

In Boston a few months prior, a pastor grappled with similar challenges. When he went to his finance council, they advised him to hold a series of conversations with parishioners about the state of the parish's finances, how much money various programs require to continue, and to ask for input on ways to move forward. When the time came to cut programs, most people understood the process, and while many lamented the loss of key programs, they expressed their goodwill for the pastor and the process.

What if there were a way to connect the pastor in California to the one in Massachusetts? The parishioners in San Francisco could benefit from the process used in Boston. The pastor at one church could learn ways to involve as many as possible in crucial decisions, thus ensuring that a possibly tumultuous and divisive process proceeds smoothly.

This is the goal of CatholicPastor.org, a new initiative from the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management, made possible through a generous grant of the Catholic Extension Society. The Web site and forum connects pastors to other pastors, encouraging them to share ideas on leading a parish, living their priestly lives, finding solutions to common challenges, and creating a community to discuss their experiences as priests.



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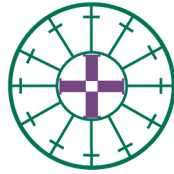
Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Jim Dubik, a Leadership Roundtable trustee, is spearheading the project. “The idea is to create a place online for the community of pastors to connect and to collaborate. We want to establish a platform for the community of pastors to engage in extended conversations with one another, to learn from one another, to share best practices with one another, and to take what’s going so well in some parishes and pass that along as fast as we possibly can so that it can be adapted and applied to other parish communities. The forum will also serve as a link to other resources useful to pastors,” he explained.

The site aims to offer a holistic approach to priestly development, with sections devoted to management, spirituality, and collaboration. The administrator of the site will be a pastor, and only current Catholic priests will be granted access to the secure forum. This way, priests can discuss issues that are important to them and their ministries candidly and openly, soliciting the best advice for particular situations.

For the past several months, Dubik and others have been meeting with Catholic pastors to discuss ways that an online connection to other pastors could improve their ministry. Rev. Kevin Kennedy, a pastor in the Archdiocese of Washington, explained that pastors’ schedules today are increasingly overbooked, and as a result, they need more time and collaboration with colleagues to perform their ministries well. “It’s very hard to get pastors together with our busy schedules, especially to discuss issues of pastoral concern in a peer-to-peer manner. This Web site can serve as a way to get pastors to communicate and interact with one another,” he said.

CatholicPastor.org is uniquely outfitted to serve the needs of Catholic pastors working in an environment that demands they play several roles to different constituencies, and is modeled from a similar platform used in the US Army and other professional communities of practice. It is a collaborative effort between the Leadership Roundtable and several affiliates, including the Catholic Church Extension Society, the National Institute for the Renewal of the Priesthood, the Vatican II Institute, and the National Federation of Priests' Councils.

If you are a Catholic priest who wishes to utilize this dynamic new platform, please contact Michael O’Loughlin, communications officer for the Leadership Roundtable, either through email at michael.oloughlin@nlrcm.org or call (202) 223-8962 x18.



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A screenshot of the new CatholicPastor.org, an online community to connect Catholic priests to one another in order to share ideas on leading a parish, living their priestly lives, finding solutions to common challenges, and creating a community to discuss their experiences as priests.



Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Jim Dubik, left, listens to feedback from pastors during a workshop announcing the creation of CatholicPastor.org. He is joined by Lt. Col. Nate Allen, who helped implement a similar program in the US Army, and Fr. Kevin Kennedy, a pastor in the Archdiocese of Washington who helped in the design process.

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