

Opening Remarks

Kerry A. Robinson, Executive Director,

National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management



I'm delighted to welcome everyone to our annual membership conference at The Wharton School. We come from many places across the country, and we represent a diversity of sectors. And we're well aware of the extraordinary privilege and responsibility we have to be agents of change and a positive influence on the U.S. Catholic Church.

I want to acknowledge and thank Bishop Dale Melczek, an early and steadfast advocate of the Leadership Roundtable, and the many other bishops across the country who have worked closely with us and invited us into their dioceses, who are attending this membership conference today and have done so in previous years, and who have engaged us in consultancy efforts, promoted and used our materials and resources, and served as advisors, advocates, and emissaries to their brother bishops. I also want to thank everyone from Cardinal Levada—who participated in our very first conference and is featured in our DVD series—and Archbishop Sambi, the papal nuncio with whom we meet and keep informed of our resources, to the 40 core bishops on our Advisory Council.

Thank you all for this collaboration and partnership in faith. I also want to acknowledge our incomparable host, Pat Harker, who is enjoying his penultimate day as dean of The Wharton School after many years here, before assuming the presidency of the University of Delaware on July 1st. Pat, on behalf of your fellow Board members of the Leadership Roundtable, I am deeply grateful to you for your tremendous hospitality. Being able to meet here has mattered, because it's one more sign of how serious, credible, professional, and committed to managerial and financial excellence we are in all that we offer to the Church we love.

Next month will be two years since the Board of Directors first convened in Washington, D.C. For some of us it feels as though it's been a lot longer and, truthfully, many of us have been meeting, strategizing, deliberating, and, ultimately, conceiving the Leadership Roundtable on Church Management since the devastating sexual abuse crisis first captured our attention and broke our hearts in 2002. We have spent considerable time dealing with the challenge of language translation between the culture of business and the culture of the Church. And we successfully drew on both cultures to form a partnership of managerial and financial advisors in service to the Church.

In both of these cultures, the idea of family is strong. And when a family is suffering or in crisis, you do what you feel is necessary as a responsible and

committed member to bring healing, reconciliation, vitality, and wholeness to that family.

That was our impetus. To do nothing would have been irresponsible. You have to have wisdom to know what you can affect, and you have to have the courage to act. You, the members of the Leadership Roundtable, have both. A tremendous amount has been accomplished in these two formal years of the Leadership Roundtable life, and I want to thank and congratulate you. In particular, I want to thank Geoff Boisi, who has been an exemplary Board chair.

Geoff and I have met weekly for the past two years to review the progress, strategic direction, challenges, and opportunities to enable the Leadership Roundtable to be of maximum service to the Church.

The Board of Directors has now met nine times in two years to advance the mission of service to the Church. That's a profound commitment. We have progressed significantly in all aspects of this important initiative, at a particularly critical time in our Church's history. Your own sacrifice of time and your generous offerings of expertise, creative ideas, influence, financial support, energy, and dedication to strengthen the temporal affairs of the Church have been an inspiration and vital sign of hope to Catholics throughout the United States. We've also had an impact on Catholics abroad, including bishops from other countries who want to find out how they can avail themselves of our resources.

Over the past two years, we have assembled an exceptional group of senior-level executives and collectively advanced our relationship with the Episcopacy by earning the respect and trust of many bishops across the country. We have conducted successful consultancy programs in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, the Diocese of Paterson (NJ), the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis, and with national Catholic organizations. In each case, those efforts have yielded products, recommendations, or templates that have enjoyed wider application within the Church.

We have received positive press coverage, including front-page articles in *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*, and an op-ed by our treasurer, Tom Healey, in *The Philadelphia Enquirer*. We have given structure to our organization, formed committees and working groups, set in motion a plan of action, and methodically advanced its priorities. You're all aware that we have produced seminal resources in service to the Church, including professionally produced DVDs and accompanying workbooks for parishes and dioceses to assess and improve their own management of human and financial resources.

We have also published *A Parishioner's Guide to Understanding Parish Finances*, a simple but effective guide to getting a handle on the financial complexities and health of one's parish. This afternoon we will focus on our newest resource, *Standards for Excellence: An Ethics and Accountability Code*

for Catholic Parishes, Dioceses and Nonprofits. This is our fourth national assembly, and as we have done three times before, we are publishing and disseminating a full report on our deliberations for wider benefit. We also distribute all our materials on our web site, **www.nlrcm.org**, so they're accessible by all.

Speaking of the web, we will officially launch tomorrow **www.churchEpedia.com**, our online clearing house of information and best practices for the Church, with hundreds of "knowledge documents" we are committed to growing and making available to all members of the Church in one freely accessible place.

After two years, we have a terrific foundation of record; a reputation for fidelity, respect, and competence; and a clearly important mission with concrete successes to point to. I look forward to moving to the next level with you. I hope that over the next day and a half you're renewed in your appreciation of the difference you're truly making in improving the management, finances, and human resource development of the Church—and that you're eager for the next and even deeper level of engagement.

With that, let us turn to the conference itself and the subject at hand: *Give Us Your Best: A Look at Church Service for a New Generation.* Having focused on Church finances last year, we address human resource development this year and

anticipate that management will be our overarching theme next year, thus completing our three core areas. We have a stellar group of presenters to lead our discussions, which are intended to be highly interactive and participatory.

I would now like to ask Tom Healey—the treasurer of our Board, former Undersecretary of the Treasury, Goldman Sachs partner, Harvard professor, and indefatigably active contributor and participant to the Leadership Roundtable—to please come forward and introduce our keynote speaker.