

## **National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management Inaugural Award for Best Practices**

*Introduction: Geoffrey T. Boisi, Chair, National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management*

*Remarks: Rev. J. Bryan Hehir, President, Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of Boston*

### **Geoffrey T. Boisi**

Our mission at the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management is to promote excellence and best practices in management, human resource development and finances by capitalizing on the talents of all members of the Church. This is evident not only in our members who are leaders in the Church, but also in those Catholic leaders who hold very significant positions in all sectors of our economy and our country. It is a very impressive group of people, and I cannot tell you how proud I am to be affiliated with each and every one of you.

Tonight, the Leadership Roundtable inaugurates what we intend to be an annual event: the Award for Best Practices to recognize institutions and individuals who, through their actions and words, have strengthened the Catholic Church. Indeed, one of the most important services the Roundtable can provide is to identify, honor and support those who selflessly strive to strengthen the Church for the benefit of all. By shining the spotlight on those who perform acts of excellence, we inspire each other to do our best to advance the mission of the Church, and further spread the Gospel.

I was thrilled when the Board started to focus on our inaugural honoree, for it is an institution which has had a profound impact on my life. As many of you know, I am a proud son of Boston College, and during my four years there I was a parishioner in this wonderful archdiocese. College years, of course, are a period of questioning and testing one's faith, and I can tell you that I did that from every angle. The Jesuits at Boston College were critical to my formation, but so was the Archdiocese of Boston through the parishes in which I attended Mass, the hospital chapels where I would go, and the friaries affiliated with the diocese that I would visit. At a point in my life when I was asking myself tough questions and searching for meaningful answers, these institutions were very important to me through their sound advice and sacramental comfort.

Some might describe the challenges and turmoil which the Archdiocese of Boston has endured

over the past five years as the perfect storm in this historic faith community. So, I'm ecstatic to be able to help celebrate some truly good news – something that I believe is an act of courage, that recognizes that true relationships are built on a foundation of trust, and that represents a real turning point. The only way to achieve that trust is to take a risk and be purely honest, forthcoming and transparent.

For those reasons, we recognize tonight the Archdiocese of Boston for its Financial Transparency Project. This extraordinary initiative, along with others underway in the Archdiocese, has significantly enhanced the institution's ability to achieve long-term fiscal health by providing a clear and consolidated view of its financial position. At the same time, we understand that the long-term fiscal health of the Church in Boston or, for that matter, any diocese, is not an end but a means. As Cardinal O'Malley said in his release of the project's report, "The numbers on these pages are meaningful only when they are put within the context of ministry...within the mission of spreading the Gospel."

In that same vein, my good friend and mentor Father J. Donald Monan often remarks that financially healthy and well-run Catholic institutions -- whether they are dioceses, hospitals or universities -- are fundamentally better positioned to spread the Gospel. They heal more patients, teach more students in the faith, and minister more effectively to the needs of their parishioners. This is why we honor tonight the Archdiocese of Boston -- because it elected to do what was right during extremely trying circumstances. And, because of this, the archdiocese has strengthened its ability to spread the word of Christ.

Earlier today we were treated to the details of the Boston Financial Transparency Project by Jack McCarthy, its point person. He certainly deserves our respect, admiration and gratitude. One of the things that makes the Archdiocese of Boston's project exceptional is that it brings together clergy and members of the laity with expertise in finance who also share a commitment to the Church. It is a local expression of what the Leadership Roundtable is trying to promote nationally.

There is something noteworthy and special about our unanimous decision to honor Boston, for this faith community has suffered so much financially and spiritually in recent years. But we are all part of the body of Christ, and all of us share in that suffering. By the same token, all of us can share tonight in celebrating this landmark step toward healing and reconciliation, toward transparency and the restitution of trust.

I'd be remiss if I didn't acknowledge there are other dioceses and Church organizations which annually create financial reports, perhaps not as extensive as Boston's. These dioceses and organizations should also be commended for their efforts in producing documents which we believe will become the bedrock of the Church's long-term financial health.

We honor the Archdiocese of Boston not only for its model report, but for preparing it under extremely trying circumstances. They have demonstrated great leadership in this effort and we hope other dioceses will emulate them. We hope we will start to see many more informative,

comprehensive and user-friendly financial statements, strategic plans and reports on how each of our parishes and dioceses is achieving its mission.

And so it's my pleasure and honor to present the National Leadership Roundtable's Award for Best Practices to the Archdiocese of Boston in recognition of its outstanding contribution to transparency and accountability in Church finances. Accepting this award on behalf of Cardinal Sean O'Malley is Father J. Bryan Hehir, President of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Boston. He is among the Cardinal's closest advisors and one of the most respected churchmen of our day.

### **Rev. J. Bryan Hehir**

Let me begin by expressing the thanks of Cardinal O'Malley to Geoff and the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management for this award. On his behalf, I convey regrets that he cannot be with us tonight, and the profound gratitude of the Archdiocese of Boston, including Cardinal O'Malley personally, and all of us who seek the successful return of the Archdiocese of Boston to its historic place.

This is a very meaningful award both symbolically and substantively, and I want to add my voice to the chorus of praise that has been heaped upon Jack McCarthy. There are enough people in this room who know you don't simply lead, you have to *drive* a project like this. Jack led it, drove it, inspired it, and left his imprint on it, and all of these pursuits served to enhance this highly technical, highly precise project. He deserves every bit of credit he has received. As Geoff said, people like Jack and Joe Finn, a parishioner of mine who has labored for years on the finance committee, are blessed with precisely the kinds of skills the archdiocese will have to rely upon in the days ahead.

In thinking about what to say tonight, I decided to turn the camera around...and see what the Financial Transparency Project has to say about the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management -- the role it has played and the role it *can* play.

I think there are three characteristics of the Transparency Project that help us to better understand the potential of the Leadership Roundtable. First, the project responded to the fundamental problem of trust that the Church faces. Secondly, it was a lay-led project. Thirdly, it allowed the teaching Church to become a learning Church. If you take these three characteristics and then look at the Roundtable, they speak directly to the accomplishments and the potential of this organization -- an organization which Geoff Boisi lifted off the ground by willpower, generosity and skills, and which has been carried forward by my colleagues on the Board, and by Kerry Robinson and others.

Let me first address the issue of Trust. I'm a priest of the Archdiocese of Boston. I went to Washington to assume the presidency of National Catholic Charities on the weekend that the

*Boston Globe* broke the story on the sexual abuse crisis. My new job has meant traveling from diocese to diocese, and what became clear to me throughout 2002 was that there was no place in the United States where the Church was not touched by the sexual abuse crisis, and by the loss of trust.

The question of trust is twofold. There is ecclesial trust -- how the people of the Church think of the Church. And there's public trust, how the rest of society thinks about the Roman Catholic Church.

A very heartening development was the study within the last month by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), which found that trust and faith in the Church have rebounded significantly across the country to pre-crisis level. I think we ought to rejoice in that, but be careful about it too, because the problem is so deep and so complex we wouldn't want to say too quickly, "Problem solved." The question of how one ultimately rebounds from a loss of trust, it seems to me, will require two things: first, good, solid pastoral care within the Church to respond to the ecclesial loss of trust and, secondly, a public presence for the Church in the United States that makes it a strong voice and an effective agent to support and protect the dignity of the human person, particularly those who are poor and vulnerable.

The work of the Transparency Project is of a different nature. It's about the internal life of the Church -- its fiscal structure and its efforts to be trustworthy as judged through the lens of fiscal accountability. It's not the way we typically respond to the question of trust, but it is still an important way. The focus of the Leadership Roundtable is on responding to both levels of the loss of trust. Or, to put it another way, *regaining trust within the Church and within society*.

Certainly, the broader trend in the nonprofit community of requiring higher standards of accountability is an important part of the story. We would have had to face this issue anyway. Now, though, we face it in an atmosphere in which there is deeper, more profound scrutiny of *any* nonprofit organization.

The Leadership Roundtable is a long-term process to enhance the Church's ability to be seen as a trustworthy agent of financial accountability in American society. Secondly, it is a lay-led project, as is the Boston Financial Transparency Project. To appreciate the significance of that, we should remember that we have just passed the 40th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council. One of the most noteworthy things about the Second Vatican Council is that it provided a clearer, broader and deeper definition of the role of the laity in the Catholic Church than we had seen for centuries.

A great author of multiple texts of Vatican II was the French Dominican, Yves Congar. Twenty years before the opening of Vatican II, Congar had written a book called *Lay People in the Church*. In the opening pages of this book, Congar remarked that the lay person usually has two postures in the Church: on his knees before the altar and with his hand in his pocket at the beginning of the collection. Vatican II provided a very different definition of the role of the laity in the Church. The people of God really *are* the people of God. The first thing we say about

ourselves, as the document on the Church says, is that we are a community of equals, made so by our baptism. We then become a structured community in terms of the different roles in the hierarchy of the Church.

Even though the theology of the laity was developed with new breadth and depth and insight, many have commented on the fact that we have never been able to fulfill the promise of that Council in terms of mobilizing the role of lay people in the Catholic Church. Another great name from the Council gives us a hint of why that has not yet happened. That name is Father John Courtney Murray, the American Jesuit who basically authored the declaration of religious liberty.

After the Council was over and shortly before he died, Murray gave a talk in which he described what he thought the fundamental challenge would be for the Catholic Church in the post-conciliar era. Murray said the problem is that we have talked about Vatican II as a council of renewal and reform. But, he added, we fail to understand the difference between those two terms, indeed, the tension between them. He said that renewal is an affair of the mind. It is about ideas, vision. It is the way we see things. Vatican II unleashed a great wealth of ideas and vision. Reform, Murray argued, does not have the atmosphere of the library about it. Reform has the atmosphere of the political arena about it. If renewal is about ideas, reform is about institutions. And, Murray said, the challenge we live with in the post-conciliar Church is that our vision of renewal will run ahead of our capacity to create institutions to put the vision into practice.

To be sure, our theology of the laity is ahead of our institutional practice of engaging the lay community. In American Catholicism, that has a particular edge to it. The edge is that this is arguably the most well-educated generation of Catholics the Church has seen in its 2,000-year history. The question of how one mobilizes the resources of this extraordinarily talented community is precisely what Murray was talking about. How do you build the institutions that channel the energy, guide the projects and capitalize on the outcomes that this community is capable of producing?

Once again, the lay-led Financial Transparency Project highlights the ability of a group like this to embody what the Council calls the "charism" of the laity. Charism is a word we use in American popular culture all the time. It has a more technical meaning in theology. Charism is a grace given to a person for the sake of others, not for themselves. The Council talks about the charism of the laity as the capacity to enter the world, shape it and change it in a way that brings to bear secular knowledge on history.

The Leadership Roundtable tries to bring to bear a very specific set of secular skills in the world of management, finance and human resources. The Church needs much more than that. It needs theology, philosophy and social policy, witness and saints. And they aren't all necessarily embodied in one person. This is not to disparage good solid financial knowledge. To harness that and to make it available to the Church is precisely the kind of institution-building that Murray said we need in order to allow theology to live.

Finally, the Financial Transparency Project and the Leadership Roundtable allow the Church to show a different side of itself. We talk about the Catholic Church all the time as being a teaching Church and, indeed, that is a great gift of what it means to be Catholic and to be guided by an intellectual tradition grounded in the Scriptures, and articulated in philosophy, in theology and in all the human sciences. That is a key characteristic of what it means to be Catholic, to struggle with 2,000 years of thinking about problems, not always being right, but always being serious that faith and reason are complementary and not contradictory.

The teaching Church is clearly one of our treasures. It is important for a teaching Church to also be a learning Church, a Church that knows what it does know, and has a sense of what it may not know. Murray, in one of his characteristically sharp moments, said that Catholicism sometimes sacrifices understanding on its way to certitude. That is a bit of a warning that the long slow road to reason is necessary even when one is trying to understand the Holy Spirit. So once again, the Transparency Project is precisely the way we learn what it means to be a qualitatively organized and managed institution.

What's being celebrated in this project is really one of the early seeds being brought to fruition – a seed that the National Leadership Roundtable can hopefully now bring to the entire Church.

Thank you very much.