

Chapter 5

What Kept the Secrets Secret?

This book has discussed what Catholics need to know to personally respond to grace (Chapters 1 and 2) and to help the Church accomplish her mission of carrying on Jesus's work of salvation (Chapters 3 and 4). In the light of Church teaching, readers can judge for themselves how important the principles I have presented are. Assuming that they are as important that I have tried to show, readers can also judge whether the pastoral life of the Church has made us sufficiently aware of those truths. If not, there must be serious omissions in the pastoral training of priests.

There is an even more serious problem concerning priestly formation, however. Almost all the ideas in this book resulted from the author's participation in various Church renewal movements, the Cursillo, the Antioch Weekend and the charismatic renewal. Many excellent priests, including bishops, also participated in those movements and in other fine movements that are providing missing elements in the pastoral life of the Church. Priests usually became active in those movements because the movements had renewed their personal Christian lives, but their pastoral lives were rarely renewed other than by their joining the movements. Few of those priests changed their fundamental pastoral ideas about how the sacraments become effective that they got from their formation. This book is an attempt to teach things that renewal movements have failed to teach priests. But that leaves the deeper problem of why movements were not able to teach those things to priests. If our post-Tridentine pastoral history explains how the best kept secrets in Christianity became secret in the first place, what explains why renewal movements have not been able to teach priests what is lacking in their pastoral ideas?

Unless we can answer that question all the renewal movements, all the pastoral conferences and education programs, and all the pastoral books will have only limited success in renewing the Church. To explain the failure of movements to alter priests' pastoral

ideas, I will offer some reflections based on forty-five years of working with scores of excellent bishops and priests in renewal movements, Catholic college faculties, parishes, committees and other contexts. Hopefully, these reflections will further explain why priests and seminary officials are blameless for our pastoral ineffectiveness.

1.

I have heard sincere, intelligent, practicing-Catholic lay people, including teachers at seminaries, make statements like “They don’t get it,” “They’re out of touch,” “They’re in their own world” to describe self-sacrificing, prayerful, theologically sound priests. I believe these descriptions are much too frequently true and that we did not have to see the behavior of prelates in response to priestly sexual abuse to know that. On the other hand, I do not believe that most of the priests these statements describe are to blame for it. The problem is much too frequent for that. Those priests must be innocent victims of a system, certainly the system of training that has become inappropriate for today’s Church and probably the bureaucratic system of Church leadership. Although it did not take the hierarchy’s response to priestly sexual abuse to show that there is something wrong with the system, that response does show it. Some bishops not only displayed arrogance, detachment, tunnel vision and “group-think,” but they often seemed to be the ones least able to recognize it. Apparently they were only behaving as they thought they were expected to behave because of their formation.

Well before the sex and cover up scandals, I established a web site called The Catholic Pastoral Crisis¹ concerning the ineffectiveness of pastoring in doctrinally sound segments of the first-world Church. At the time, I was fortunate enough to be on a committee with a number of priests, including a presiding bishop, who by any standard were dedicated and prayerful men; so I asked them to be a focus group to help me choose the title of the web site. Instead of “pastoral crisis” the other titles they chose from used phrases like “pastoral weakness” and “pastoral reform.” Another lay person and myself had predicted that “pastro-

ral crisis" would be least favored by priests since it was so strong. Instead, they chose it as the only one they did not dislike, and the reason why is revealing.

They said that the other titles sounded as if I was criticizing the Church and implying that its pastoring was at fault for our problems. A crisis, on the other hand, at least sounded like an opportunity and can be the fault of external circumstances. I first reacted by thinking "Boy, if you can't criticize the Church pastorally, it's no wonder that we've got so many problems." My second reaction, however, was even more disturbing. I realized that there was a very good reason why they felt that their pastoring shouldn't be criticized: They knew they were doing exactly what was expected of them. But of course, that is precisely what's wrong. What their seminary experience led them to think should be expected of them is not working. That experience, however, was so powerful that they still could not see that the expectations it had given them were inadequate. These men happened to be involved in, because they had profited from and knew others could profit from, some of the best renewal movements in the Church. Yet it had not even occurred to them that the way they had seen God working in those movements should lead them to revise some of their basic ideas about how to conduct their own pastoral ministry.

Priestly formation produces its effects, not just by what is explicitly taught in the classroom, but also by the environment future priests experience. Environments create cultures. Professional training is especially prone to creating cultures. Medical, legal and military schools, graduate schools of science, liberal arts and education can all create their own cultures. Those cultures have one thing in common. Such schools give people their sense of professional identity and therefore a significant part of their sense of self-worth. Their acquisition of professional skills bestows on them the ability to make important contributions to others and the right to be respected for it. The impact of graduate education can be powerful. I have more than once seen well formed undergraduates in my own field, philosophy, seem to lose valid insights they left college with and acquire opposite points of

view after only a year of graduate school. One of them explained it to me this way, "Now I'm a philosopher." Read: "Now I have skills that justify my professional existence and enable me to make contributions that deserve to be highly valued by others." If secular training can have effects like that, how much more can training for a vocation that is incomparably exalted above any secular profession and incomparably more connected with someone's personal identity?

Another aspect of priestly training contributes to its cultural impact. Other professional and graduate school environments do not produce the intense sense of community that seminarians, who share the same exalted aspirations and vocation, enjoy. Probably, only the service academies produce a sense of community anywhere near as intense. How ironic that this experience of community is a by-product of the preparation for what has been called "the loneliest life," that of the parish priest. (Is marriage the cure for that loneliness? Perhaps, but more fundamentally, we need Christian brother/sisterhood, which can reinforce the priest's awareness that, as consubstantial with the life of sanctifying grace, the royal priesthood he shares with brother and sister Christians has primacy over his ministerial priesthood. Without Christian brother/sisterhood, marriage for the clergy wouldn't be any more successful than marriage for the laity is today. Instead of Christian brother/sisterhood, we have a Church where the word "brother" is rarely used other than by priests when referring to those, their "brother priests," they had solidarity with the in last place they had any strong sense of community, the seminary.)

The subliminal cultural effect of priestly formation can manifest itself in a variety of ways. A Protestant minister once told me that you could tell from preachers' sermons when they had gone through the seminary. I first took him to mean that many people stop trying to learn new things after they are ordained. But no, if my experience with many good Catholic priests gives any indication, the problem is worse than that. Seminaries have such an impact that even priests who have the benefit of being exposed to new pastoral approaches

instinctively subordinate what they learn from them to the categories they got at the seminary, or they translate what they could have learned into those categories.

A few years ago, I presented the first half of Chapter 3 to a group of dedicated, prayerful priests who had experienced some of the best pastoral approaches offered by current renewal movements. My purpose was to try show them the pastoral goal their training should have given them but did not, the goal of a Church keeping Jesus's law of, and answering Jesus's prayer for, mutual love of Christians for Christians. Almost exactly as I do in chapter 3, I carefully explained Scripture and Vatican II on Christian brotherly/sisterly love, explicitly distinguishing it from universal love, and specifically called for love between Christians to be the goal of their priestly ministry. When I was through, they asked several questions, and made a number of comments and criticisms, that ignored the whole issue of Christians' love for Christians and gave the impression they thought the talk had been on love in general. It was mind boggling. A few weeks later I ran into one of the priests. As we discussed their reactions, he said "Oh, you were talking about Christians loving other Christians." They had listened attentively to the whole talk and apparently filtered out, without even knowing it, whatever did not fit into the categories their formation had given them.

2.

I had already seen many other instances of this kind of tunnel vision and group-think. When led correctly, the Cursillo has been an authentic conversion experience for many people. So friends of mine and I would stand in awe as priests who had made the Cursillo and seen its fruits in the lives of lay people went back to living their pastoral lives exactly the way they had before. One friend said, "They get something like the Cursillo and don't know what to do with it." I am not talking about priests who were suspicious of the Cursillo. Suspicion is a good attitude to have toward new renewal movements, since so many of them are dangerous (in fact, they can all be dangerous, if not led properly). I am talking about priests who now knew because they had made the Cursillo that when it was

conducted according to the intentions of its founders, it was theologically sound and spiritually healthy. For far too many of them, what the Cursillo was accomplishing had little to do with their own pastoral agenda, the agenda they left the seminary with.

For most priests, that agenda seems to aim at keeping people in contact with the sacrament delivery system of the institutional Church. Prior to Vatican II and the decline of natural community in the first world, priestly formation often succeeded in enabling the ministry of priests to strengthen the institutional Church. Priestly training probably still has that purpose, but in contemporary culture it produces the opposite effect. Other priests had personal pastoral agendas like social action – again, something good and much needed – and used movements for these agendas rather than for other good things that we need much more. But the pastoral agenda of most priests in the Cursillo and other movements still defined the life of the Church from the viewpoint of the sacerdotal sacraments rather than seeing the sacerdotal sacraments from the viewpoint of what those movements could teach them about the life of the Church. I believe that is a major reason why renewal movements have not been more successful in revitalizing the Church.

For example, part of the Cursillo's pastoral plan for fostering environments of Christian brother/sisterhood is the "Ultreya," a relatively large gathering intended to complement the Cursillo's small "group reunions." In many, and perhaps most, places, however, the Ultreya has been replaced by an enthusiastic liturgy. In fact, a Catholic newspaper quoted a priest Cursillo leader referring to "a special Mass called an 'Ultreya'." But according to the Cursillo instruction manuals, the Ultreya does not include a Mass. Instead, it consists of activities aimed at making the Masses cursillistas have already participated in bear fruit in their lives. None of those activities, for example, a talk given by a lay person, are in any way as exalted as the Mass, and that may have been the excuse for replacing them with a Mass. But replacing them with what is most exalted still leaves us with our problem concerning what is most important: how to create environments that encourage and support

our response to the graces that come from what is most exalted, the response for the sake of which what is most exalted exists. Or it leaves us with that problem if we have been able to hear the Cursillo's message of our need for environments of Christian brother/sisterhood. The formation priests received in the seminary apparently prevented most of them from hearing that message. ("Oh, you were talking about Christians loving other Christians.")

In fairness I am not sure the Ultreya as designed by the Cursillo's founders can be as effective in our society as it was in the pre-Vatican II Spain of the Cursillo's origins. In my limited experience, it is much easier to get people to come to an enthusiastic liturgy than to an Ultreya. And by drawing people enthusiastic liturgies do in some way perpetuate the environment formed by the Cursillo weekend, even though they do not build environments of brother/sisterly relations nearly as well as we need them to be built, nor as well as the Ultreya is intended to and at its best actually did.

But if it is difficult to get people to come to the Cursillo's large gathering, at one time it was not difficult to get people to come to large charismatic prayer meetings. In fact, the charismatic prayer meeting created what the Ultreya was intended to create but in our society often did not: a supportive Christian environment larger than the Cursillo's group reunions. And the prayer meeting often succeeded in teaching people how to make the liturgies they had already participated in bear fruit in their lives. At prayer meetings, you learned how to pray spontaneously by listening to other people pray and by praying spontaneously yourself. You heard teachings that came from the actual experience of your peers, not just from those who were professional religious leaders. You were taught and encouraged by the examples of your peers as they gave testimony to how the Lord worked in their lives, how they learned to handle difficulties, how the Lord answered their prayers, how they evangelized others. You formed friendships based explicitly on your personal relation to Jesus. Etc., etc.

In terms of the goal of teaching us to respond to grace, it is hard to imagine a more

complete pastoral instrument than charismatic prayer meetings, which are still thriving in other parts of the world as much or more than they did in the first world during the 1970s. Perhaps it was God's plan all along that in western society the large prayer meeting would give way to the thousands of smaller prayer groups that now continue to meet. Is not the Church much better off with them than without them? We will not know whether that was God's original plan until we get to heaven. But there is at least one thing that we can say with confidence now: In our society, most of the charismatic renewal was not blessed with the kind of local leadership that would have been necessary for it to continue to thrive as it did in the beginning. Lay leaders in the Church can only do so much. If the Church's official leadership does not get the idea of the kinds of pastoral reforms needed to unleash the power of the sacraments, renewal can only be limited and fragmentary.

When the charismatic renewal was thriving in our society, it probably produced many more vocations per participant than any other part of the first-world Church. Presumably, therefore, if it had continued to thrive and if it had taken root more widely in the Church, we would have many more priests than we have now. But for the charismatic renewal's impact to be longer lasting and more widespread, the renewal would have had to be more successful in reforming the pastoral ideas of already ordained priests.

Catholics were coming to the charismatic renewal because, through the pastoral work done in the prayer meeting and the Life in the Spirit Seminar, they were experiencing the presence of God living within them. But in many places the prayer meeting was supplemented by, or even replaced by, an enthusiastic liturgy. Those liturgies probably drew more people to those meetings. But unlike Ultreyas, prayer meetings without a liturgy usually did not have difficulty drawing people. When the charismatic meeting did include a liturgy, that liturgy, not the pastoral work that was making the sacraments effective in people's lives, often, and probably most often, became the main focus. People would say that the enthusiastic Mass was the heart of what they were doing at their meetings. They did not under-

stand that the differences between those Masses and the Masses they were accustomed to were by-products of the pastoral work God was doing in the prayer meeting, the Life in the Spirit Seminar, and the environment of Christian fellowship that they created. A woman at our meeting once asked me if there could be "something like this" in her parish. I told her there already was a prayer group in her parish. She said, "I don't mean the prayer meeting; I mean the Mass."

Perhaps a lay person could not be expected to have the pastoral discernment to see that prayer meetings were doing pastoral work that made the Masses and other sacraments we had already received bear fruit; it was that pastoral work that made people in the charismatic renewal enthusiastic about the liturgy. But priests should have been able to see that. Sacramental grace is meant to produce its fruit through the interactions of Christians and particularly by empowering the Church's pastoral ministries. The attitude, however, of almost all the priests who celebrated at our group was summed up by one of them who, after congratulating the people for coming so faithfully every week, said "I know you're really here to honor Jesus present in the Eucharist." No, they were there because they had discovered the reality of Jesus present within them and, therefore, in their brother and sister Christians, the presence of Jesus that is the purpose of his presence in the Eucharist.

Time and again other priests gave evidence of thinking like that priest. There was the learned theology professor who gave a carefully prepared homily about how we should be aware of the different ways God is present with us. He mentioned God's presence in the Eucharist, Scripture, nature, our neighbors and perhaps some other presences. He neglected to mention the presence that constitutes the essence of Christianity and alone makes the difference between heaven and hell, sanctifying grace. There were the many priests who, carried away by the enthusiasm of the liturgy, would let it run over the full hour we allotted for it, often not leaving enough time for those who wished to share at a prayer meeting of several hundred people — up to a thousand at one point — to do so. Those well meaning

priests were sawing off the limb the enthusiastic liturgy was sitting on. For them, the pastoral work the charismatic renewal was doing to achieve the goals of the sacraments was of secondary importance.

There was the charismatic priest, call him Fr. Bill, who even bragged that each week at his group more people attended the Mass than the prayer meeting. That also happened at our group. But the people who did not stay for the prayer meeting after Mass did not have to come to us for a Mass; there were plenty of other Masses, including evening Masses, in our area. So their reason for coming to us must have been the uplifting experience our enthusiastic Mass provided. We all need uplifting experiences, and the Church certainly does not provide enough of them. Seeking uplifting experiences, however, and avoiding the opportunity for spiritual growth that the prayer meeting provided was not the sign of spiritual maturity that Fr. Bill thought it was.

Then there was the priest in his mid-fifties whose ministry had recently been transformed by his realization that Jesus's presence in our souls is just as real as his presence in the Eucharist. Why had it taken years of training and dedicated service before that good priest had realized what the essence of Christianity is? (I mention him because he was an exception proving the rule. If you think my other examples may not be typical, where are the counterexamples? Among the scores of priests who served us, he was the only one.)

Members of our group sometimes justified having the enthusiastic liturgy by jumping from the theological truth that the Mass is the greatest prayer to the pastoral conclusion that it was more important for us, pastorally, than the prayer meeting. That was a fallacious way of comparing them. Enthusiasm is good, but the liturgy is the greatest prayer whether or not it is celebrated enthusiastically. As prayers, the less enthusiastic liturgies people could have attended elsewhere were in essence just as great as our liturgy. The relevant comparison is between the importance of what the extra enthusiasm of our liturgy was contributing to people's spirituality and what the prayer meeting was contributing. What the

liturgy's enthusiasm contributed was certainly not justification for so using the liturgy that it interfered with the pastoral work God was doing through the prayer meeting and nowhere else at that period.

3.

Tunnel vision is not the only obstacle the seminary culture puts in the way of priests' pastoral wisdom. In Chapter 3, I mentioned music ministries that let their desire to serve interfere with the purposes of their meetings. In one such case a fine young man, call him Al, had led the music ministry at a charismatic group before entering the seminary. The leaders of that group taught him to use music to support the spontaneous prayers of praise in the body and not to interrupt them. So Al learned not to start a song while the body was praising spontaneously but to wait until the praise quieted down somewhat. After his ordination, he returned to that group to lead the music. Now one song was hardly over before he started another. This happened so often that one week someone tracked the length of time left for spontaneous prayer between songs: approximately 30 seconds. The community would start praising spontaneously for 30 seconds and then be interrupted with another song. Finally, the other leaders had to ask Fr. Al not to start so many songs, in order to have more time for spontaneous prayer. He refused and left the community in protest.

Vatican II was supposed to have remedied clericalism by insisting on the priest's role as servant. For some priests, the result seemed to be that they left the seminary with a need to serve in order to find personal fulfillment. But serving by merely being a leader of a prayer community who joined with the others to praise the Lord every week did not seem to be sufficiently fulfilling for them. They could not be our brother Christians first and our "fathers" only second. They had to find fulfillment by using their sacramental powers or special talents like music, no matter that their manner of using them might interfere with the pastoral work God was accomplishing through something like a prayer meeting.

No doubt most priests who felt the need to serve by using their sacramental powers

did so not to find personal fulfillment but because they thought that kind of service was expected of them. They were configured to Christ the head of the community at all times, not just for short periods each day, and so they were supposed to lead in the ways that are specific to the priestly ministry whenever possible. But everyone in sanctifying grace is configured to Christ at all times in an infinitely more important way. The priest's specific way of being configured to Christ should not keep him from ever participating in our communal life the way anyone else who is configured to Christ through baptism does.

The Church must recognize problems like these for what they are: dangers built into the priestly vocation precisely because it is so exalted. By and large, these problems are not the fault of the individual priests; they are too common for that. They have to be the fault of the system, the system of formation to begin with and then the bureaucratic system of Church leadership. Priests are innocent victims of a system that not only puts them in their own world but in a world that is to a significant extent an unreal world. And their enculturation by that system hinders them from learning how unreal that world is.

In Boston, two long-time lay advisors to Cardinal Law resigned during the sexual abuse cover-up scandal because, at a time when you would think repentance and humility would be the Boston Church's highest priorities, they said they had never seen such arrogance in their own fields of business and politics. If so, was that the Cardinal's fault? Perhaps, but I have seen too much of how the system that produced him works not to give him the benefit of the doubt.

Not everything is wrong with the culture created by priestly formation; far from it. All cultures have good characteristics and bad characteristics. And criticizing priestly formation is not the same as blaming seminary officials for our problems. Seminar teachers and administrators are just passing on the only clerical culture they know, a culture that they were given through no fault of their own.

I should also add that problems of tunnel vision and group-think are hardly confined

to seminary graduates. For example, I know of several cases of philosophers reading things meant to undermine widely held assumptions that are foundational for those who hold them without being able to see that those assumptions were being challenged. Instead the philosophers made criticisms of those writings that were beside the point because they took the truth of those assumptions for granted, as if their truth wasn't the very thing at issue. For those philosophers, discussion began only after those assumptions were accepted, because those assumptions were the background against which the philosophers saw everything else. It would take the academic equivalent of hitting those philosophers over the head for them to even conceive that someone might question those assumptions.² For many priests, likewise, thinking about new pastoral ideas only begins after certain assumptions are accepted, assumptions that form the background against which they see everything else. But if seminary graduates have no monopoly on group-think, they have much better reason for it due to the exalted character of their vocation and the intensity of seminary community.

After 2000 years, the Church should be aware of the necessity for vigilance about pastoral imbalance, especially in the education of the clergy. I doubt that the 2007 PBS series on the Inquisition had any intention of diminishing clerical guilt. Yet, it clearly showed the degree to which the inquisitors thought they were doing God's will, as they cooperated with "the secular arm." That blindness was a product of their culture, but not just of the secular side of their culture. They sincerely thought that they were saving souls; so that blindness must have been supported, at the very least, by the culture created by seminary formation and the Church's bureaucratic structure. In no way are our pastoral imbalances comparable to the Inquisition in its complete contradiction of the meaning of Christianity. But if intelligent and well intentioned seminary graduates can suffer from such an horrific cultural blindness for century after century, how much more easily can they be misled by lesser, but still pastorally damaging, cultural myopias? Can we see a similar attitude in the post-Inquisition hierarchy and the post-scandal American hierarchy? The attitude of "Well,

that problem is behind is now; so we can get back to doing everything else exactly the way we did before.”

The true meaning of Christianity has been available to us for 2000 years, except to the extent that our pastoral cultures have kept some of it “secret,” and it might always be the case that some aspects of clerical pastoral formation will be inspired more by contingent historical conditions than by the Great News. Let us be forewarned.

The clergy who by Christ’s design will always be the ones leading the Church will also be the first ones in the Church affected by whatever the clerical culture of their time is. As those who directly experience the culture, they will be the most able to see many of its shortcomings, but as those who are the enculturated, they will also be the least able to see some of its shortcomings. Part of the Church’s vigilance, then, must be openness to criticism from the laity. I have encountered the attitude “What can you a lay person tell us about priestly pastoral education?” But we should expect lay people often to be better able than many priests to understand certain problems in the clerical culture.

4.

Because of experiences like those I have described, and because of the paucity of counterexamples in forty-five years of working with so many excellent priests in diverse pastoral contexts, I felt this book could not be written simply as a positive presentation of principles for cooperating with sacramental grace. The presentation would have to say not just what new ideas should be added but what old ideas had to go. I could not expect a treatment that was merely positive to overcome the enculturated obstacles that had prevented the movements that spawned these ideas from getting through to seminary graduates. Pastoral principles based on truths at the top of the hierarchy of truths would continue to be coopted by principles derived from quasi-distinctively Catholic truths or from other pastoral agendas and theories: “He who abides in love abides in God, and God in him,’ so preaching love is how to bring people to God in a salvific way”; “The Catholic Church is the

body of Christ,' so converting people to Catholicism is how to bring them to Christ in a personal way"; "Christ is really present in the Eucharist,' so fostering devotion to the Eucharist is how to bring people to accept Christ as their personal Lord and Savior." Such reasoning might appear to be logically impeccable, but it is pastorally inadequate. For a presentation of solid pastoral principles to be effective, it had to be made in explicit opposition to the attitudes that had prevented those principles from already being understood. Those attitudes can be so deeply ingrained that it wouldn't occur to us to think that a newly proposed idea might require us to modify them.

Another attitude that needed to be addressed by the way this book was written was the unspoken assumption that all of the first-world Church's pastoral weakness was due to the flimsy or even heterodox theology believed to be prevalent in many seminaries. Apparently, that assumption is very common. Reading Catholic publications, and attending Catholic conferences, that are doctrinally sound you easily get the impression that the only sources of our pastoral weakness are watered down and perverted doctrine. In fact, when I suggested to editors of two widely respected Catholic journals that they do something on the pastoral weakness of the doctrinally sound Church, they told me they did not plan to, as if that did not need to be a high priority.

There is one attitude I have not addressed, however, that should at least be mentioned: the desire to return to the pre-Vatican II Church as a way of solving our pastoral problems. Our problems did not just spring fully-formed from the mind of Satan after Vatican II. They are too big for that; the seeds for them must have been laid a long time ago, and the period preceding Vatican II was the time when they were in gestation. Not everything was wrong with our pastoral approaches then. And those, for example, who prefer to attend Mass in Latin should certainly be allowed to do so; for lay people, this author included, are as much products of their culture as are clerics. The lesson Church leaders should learn from the diversity in lay pastoral criticisms is the need for pluralism in our

pastoral approaches — as long as they all reflect the spiritual significance of the hierarchy of truths and take into account the decline of natural community in the developed world and soon to come in the developing world. The pre-Vatican II world was dying at the very moment the Council was bringing us up to date with it.

It has been said of generals that they are always magnificently prepared to fight the last war. Whether or not that is true, it often seems that priests' education does a magnificent job preparing them to handle the pastoral problems of the past. And we can safely predict that there will come a time when the Church will face pastoral problems to which this book will no longer be directly relevant. Even if my analysis of our current problems is correct, for example, they may be about to be replaced by very different problems. No matter how good and well founded on the hierarchy of truths the pastoral principles presented here may be, we will someday need a fresh statement of these principles, a fresh approach to them adapted to pastoral misunderstandings not now foreseeable. In time even the perceived meaning of the words used here can change, as the perceived meaning of the words "the source and summit of the Church's life" change depending on how we understand the nature of the Church's life.

Seminaries often seem to be the last places to comprehend new pastoral conditions and the challenges they present. But getting rid of the seminary system would not be the solution. My preference would be for the Church to ordain mature men who have raised their families, but this book is not meant to lobby for that — and that policy would have its own disadvantages. Any method of priestly formation the Church adopts will produce a culture as a side-effect, a culture containing both good and bad. And if the Church made it a policy to ordain mature men to the secular priesthood, what about religious orders of priests? Could they still send young men to seminaries? In any case, seminaries are going to be with us for the foreseeable future; for the time being, therefore, we have to find a solution to our pastoral weakness that works in concert with the seminary system that has given our

brother/sisterhood so many wonderful elders.

Notes

¹ Visit <http://world.std.com/~pastoral>.

² Academic group-think is hardly confined to philosophy. It abounds in almost all fields other than the hard sciences (and sometimes even there). For example, see Daniel C. O'Connell's critique of group-think in psycho-linguistics, Critical Essays on Language Use and Psychology (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1988).