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Laypeople must share responsibility

by Tom Gallagher

NCR Today

Laypeople must share responsibility for church, pope tells delegates

The pope's timely message is important, especially in the U.S. Church with declining membership, parish closings and an increasingly tiny Catholic school system.

At the same time, the church's internal code of law reduces lay people to mere "advisors" to the pastor, hardly a robust form of engagement. Those of us with state licenses (e.g., medical, legal, accounting) are cognizant of the type of service we deliver because we are subject to malpractice suits. Our engagement is different because of the nature of our engagement.

The format of laypeople being mere voluntary advisors to the pastor materially contributes to the lack of robustness and vitality about which the Pope speaks.

Until we find new ways to organize ourselves at the parish level that incorporates fiduciary responsibility for laypeople for our parishes, expect more parish closings and declining membership in the U.S. Catholic church.

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