

2003 PASTORAL ASSOCIATE SURVEY SUMMARY

A survey of Pastoral Associates in the Archdiocese of Chicago was conducted in early 2003 through the Office for Ongoing Formation in Ministry. Information was gathered by Mary M. Foley, Certified Pastoral Associate, who was serving at the time as Interim Associate Director of OFIM. This survey was put together quickly to help OFIM with some new program development. While PAs only had two weeks to respond to the survey, a total of 56 did so (50 certified PAs, 6 working toward certification). This was a very good 40% return rate for a project done so quickly and there was input from a wide-spectrum of PAs (from a good balance of socioeconomic settings). Below is a summary of basic data from the survey. (OFIM, OLEM, and PAAC each have a copy of the original 50-page report.) A summary of Mary Foley's recommendations can be found at the conclusion of this data summary.

ONGOING FORMATION NEEDS

PAs gave their own answers to open-ended question. Some had more than one answer.

Answers grouped by category and listed in order of priority:

- **Spirituality – 29**
(retreats, programs for spiritual enrichment, spiritual direction, etc.)
- **Leadership and Collaboration – 24**
(most answers – but not all – related to collaboration with clergy)
- **Practical Ministerial Skills – 19**
(variety of responses, including: transferring Gospel values to secular world, communication skills, forming consensus, time management, balancing family and ministry, working within structures of the church, concrete ideas about social justice, working with the elderly, bereavement, etc.)
- **Cultural Issues – 12**
(Spanish language classes, faith/culture integration, working with diverse cultures, etc.)
- **Canon Law – 9**
(especially with regard to marriage and annulments)
- **Parish Administration – 9**
(business skills, marketing, computer training related to resources, management skills, etc.)
- **Liturgy – 8**
(preaching, liturgy workshop/formation)
- **Continued Theological Education – 6**
(advanced theology, church history, theology in the computer age, sacramental theology, Christology, etc.)
- **Archdiocesan Connections – 5**
(education about Archdiocesan offices and programs, workshop on social service resources)
- **Catechesis – 4**
(processes and structures for adult education, catechesis for all ages)
- **Ecumenical and Interreligious – 4**
(ecumenical and interreligious work)
- **Evangelization – 4**
(evangelization, breaking from the status quo – bringing new life into parish)
- **Conflict Management – 2**
(conflict resolution)
- **Miscellaneous – each had one response**
(book discussion group, applying family systems therapy to work environment, more vicariate days with good speakers, video lending library for OFIM programs)

PROBLEMS IN MINISTRY

Again, PAs gave their own answers to open-ended question

- Collaboration in ministry – **13** (with 12 of these responses relating to clergy)
- Need for ministerial/job descriptions and clarification of role for other staff – **4**
- Struggles with being overextended and/or having imbalance between ministry and personal life – **4**
- Difficulty with recruitment and training of parish volunteer leadership – **3**
- Dealing with growing conservatism among parish populations – **2**
- Adjustment to new pastors and their styles – **2**
- The need for better communication (including meetings) with staff members – **2**
- Dealing with cultural transitions in parish – **2**

Additional problems reported by PAs included the following:

- The transition of PAs becoming lay Ecclesial Ministers is not a simple process
- Difficulties with foreign priests (language, attitudes towards women, etc.)
- Need for more emphasis on spiritual rather than social dimension of community
- Power of pastors in decision-making
- No back-up in case of illness; it is hard to take time off from work
- In a changing parish, there is little done to welcome or to ease the discomfort of change
- Unchurched persons – Catholic and non-Catholic
- Need to curb church gossip mill
- Realize PA is not “Mr. Fix-It Now”
- There is more work and less priests
- Need for retreats that welcome spouses
- Need to make a salary that will sustain a standard of living and ensure a future – especially for single person
- There is a need for new ministerial configurations
- Priests are aware of the need to develop lay ministry but then tend to replace professionals with persons who have little or no training

The survey also collected information from PAs about: their recommendations for good PA/Pastor teams; recommendations for good speakers, teachers, etc. for ongoing formation programs; their ideas for good program times, cost, etc. All of this information was given to OFIM for further research and consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOLLOWING SURVEY AND FOLLOW-UP CONSULTATION
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In addition to the survey, Mary Foley conducted follow-up consultation with PAs in different vicariates. At the conclusion of this entire process, the following recommendations were offered:

- I. The Need For Education About The Role Of Pastoral Associate**
- II. Relationship To Bishop Must Be Developed**
- III. Ministerial Support Is Needed (Pastoral Care For The Pastoral Associate)**
- IV. Vocations [*to both ordained and lay ecclesial ministry*] Should Be Encouraged, Identified, And Developed**
- V. There Is A Need for Further Development in Programs Of Initial And Ongoing Formation**
- VI. Collaboration With Ordained Ministers Must Be Addressed**
- VII. Grievance Procedures And Due Process Must be A Priority**

The order of these recommendations was designed in such a way as to demonstrate one building upon the other. The first two, the need for education and the need to build a relationship between PAs and the bishop, are really intertwined. Everything else depends upon these two and the steps that proceed from them. In other words, for example, better collaboration between PAs and clergy depends upon everything else that ranks ahead of its place in the listing.

Extended comments on each recommendation can be found in the original survey report.