

# INTENTIONAL PRESBYTERATES I - ASSEMBLY MODEL

INSTITUTE FOR PRIESTS AND PRESBYTERATES



*Saint Meinrad*  
Seminary & School of Theology



# “CLAIMING OUR COMMON SENSE OF PURPOSE AS DIOCESAN PRIESTS”

## A Presbyteral Assembly Model

**T**his presbyteral assembly model is provided by the Institute for Priests and Presbyterates, a program of Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, to help create an event that will serve the needs of the presbyterate and be based on the teachings of the Church.

The conferences listed in this assembly model are presented by Fr. J. Ronald Knott, director of the Institute for Priests and Presbyterates, and are designed to be given by selected priests and lay people of your diocese.

“Claiming Our Common Sense of Purpose as Diocesan Priests” is the first of four themes designed for building presbyteral unity. The others are:

Intentional Presbyterates II: “Honoring the Variety of Gifts within Our Presbyterate” focuses on how giving fellow priests

opportunities to share their gifts and talents with one another is part of the work of building presbyteral unity and constitutes part of a priest’s spiritual life.

Intentional Presbyterates III: “Made Holy by Our Shared Ministry” is based on themes from *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, concentrating on how a priest’s three-fold ministry is his principal means of sanctification.

Intentional Presbyterates IV: “The Asceticism of Dialogue in the Ministry of Unity” is based on a theme within Pope Paul VI’s encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* to help priests learn to speak with one another more effectively.

For detailed instructions on hosting this presbyteral assembly, you can purchase *Intentional Presbyterates: The Workbook* at Saint Meinrad’s Scholar Shop: <http://store.saintmeinrad.edu>.

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“Stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands.”

*2 Timothy 1:6*

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## GOALS OF THE PRESBYTERAL ASSEMBLY

- A. To move to a consensus on a new vision for our presbyterate built on the old;
- B. To invite our presbyterate to commit to that new vision;
- C. To find new ways to keep that new vision before our eyes and to pass it on to new members;
- D. To involve lay and religious talent of the diocese to help strengthen our presbyteral unity.



## INPUT SECTION

### Where Are We?

#### *The History, Charism and Spirituality of Diocesan Presbyterates*

The opening speaker places the assembly topic in context by addressing some of the following questions: What are presbyterates? What does the Church say about presbyterates and their relationships to diocesan bishops? How do religious priests working in a diocese fit into local presbyterates? What is specific to the spirituality of diocesan priests?

#### *A Historical Overview of the Local Presbyterate*

This speaker, a respected local historian, will be encouraged to write a short history of the local presbyterate in particular, not just a history of the diocese in general. This speaker identifies the great personalities, significant events and other major forces, like immigration, that have shaped the local presbyterate since the beginning.

#### *The Local Presbyterate as We Have Known It*

This speaker, an articulate older priest, will give a reflection on the presbyterate he and his contemporaries have known. It is expected that he will interview other older priests and gather their insights as part of his reflections. His emphasis should be objective and free of blame and personal complaints.

#### *The Local Presbyterate as We Hope to Experience It*

An articulate, younger priest will summarize the hopes and concerns of the young members of the local presbyterate. Again, it is expected that the speaker will summarize his

conversations with other newly ordained and older seminarians. Again, his emphasis should be objective and free of blame and personal complaints. It is suggested that seminarians in theology attend and participate, not only in this assembly, but in other major priest gatherings, since this is called for by Canon 245:2.

#### *What It is Like to Enter Our Presbyterate as an Outsider*

An articulate international priest, a newly incardinated priest and a religious priest will summarize the experiences of those new to the presbyterate, spelling out what worked and what would have worked better in the welcoming process.

#### *What Lay People are Looking for from Their Priests*

An articulate layman and laywoman summarize the expectations of priests by the laity: what they have liked and what they would like to see. This presentation is expected to be both positive and challenging.

#### *A Vision of Bishop and Priests Working Together: A Bishop's Perspective*

The bishop gives his vision for how he and the priests can function united with one another.

### What Help Do We Presently Have? A Report

In this talk, the diocese's vicar for priests, director of ongoing formation or some other priest reviews the programs, celebrations and services currently available to priests,

## PROCESS SECTION

### Where Do We Want To Go From Here?

This section requires a person with remarkable process skills. His task will be to get a consensus on some basic responsibilities individual priests owe the group and on some basic responsibilities the group owes to individual priests.

What are our individual responsibilities to the presbyterate, and what are the responsibilities of the presbyterate to us as individuals?

What additional help do priests need, individually and as a presbyterate?

A review of all annual presbyteral celebrations: what works and what does not? What would work better?

To what are we willing to commit?

## CELEBRATION SECTION

Banquet honoring those who have anniversaries (optional)

Prayer service

Recreational opportunities, entertainment and food

Closing Eucharist and ritual re-commitment





## FOLLOW-UP SECTION

### Keeping the Vision Before Our Eyes

A writing committee will summarize the proceedings, putting them in a useful written form for distribution and review.

A “Priestly Life and Ministry Cluster” (representatives from various diocesan offices serving priests) will make plans on how to keep the vision before our eyes, build on it, and plan follow-up assemblies, retreats and celebrations.

### Sharing the Vision

Getting the word out will be accomplished by:

- Collaborating with the diocesan communications office on how to share this process and its vision with the people of the diocese
- Publishing all documents for homebound priests, seminarians and other future new presbyteral members.

## ADDITIONAL THINGS TO CONSIDER

- According to Canon 245.2, “seminarians, while they are in the seminary, are to be trained to take their places in the diocesan presbyterate.” Inviting them to attend could be a wonderful opportunity for “group mentoring.”
- If this model is used, a donation to the Saint Meinrad Institute for Priests and Presbyterates would be most welcome.
- Planning committee questions can be addressed to Fr. Ronald Knott at [rknott@saintmeinrad.edu](mailto:rknott@saintmeinrad.edu)
- The main reason for a unified presbyterate is to offer better quality pastoral ministry to the People of God. Having this event covered in the diocesan paper, with pictures, could be an opportunity to educate the laity on the presbyterate’s efforts of ongoing formation.
- Involving the laity in an evening music concert and dessert event would give them a chance to show their appreciation for the ministry of priests in a non-intrusive way.
- Because dioceses and presbyterates are different, creative additions or subtractions to this outline are encouraged.



## FEEDBACK FROM THOSE WHO HAVE USED THIS MODEL

On behalf of our continuing formation director I would like to thank you for the fine presentation you gave at our Priest Convocation. So many priests were grateful for your timely words. One priest commented, “(the speaker) hit all the nails on the head.” May God continue to bless you and your ministry! Thank you for the generous gift of yourself, especially for the priests of the United States.

*Most Reverend R. Walter Nickless,  
Bishop of Sioux City*

I have been a priest for 46 years, and as I participated in your workshop, I realized more than ever the great need that I, as the Bishop of the Diocese, have for an “Intentional Presbyterate.” Also, in thinking back over my past many years as a priest, I believe that this goal should have been set for every presbyterate a long time ago. I would certainly recommend this workshop to any Diocese and any brother Bishop.

*Most Reverend John J. McRaith,  
(Retired) Bishop of Owensboro*

I wanted to thank you for the recent presentations. I left from those days feeling more excited about the possibilities of doing ministry together and a renewed commitment to reaching out to my fellow priests here in the diocese. As a member of the Presbyteral Council, I want us to take up this topic for further reflection with the bishop. We need a common vision and need to begin planning for some creative solutions to the problems that distance and busy-ness present to us.

*Priest of the Diocese of Tulsa, Presbyteral Council Member*

I’ve seldom been to a clergy conference during which I have been more challenged. You’ve given me some hope.

*Priest of the Diocese of Columbus*





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