

MEMO REPORT

FIRST FINDINGS FROM THE BISHOPS' 1984 SURVEYA. Purpose of Report

This memo report is intended only for the Committee on Pastoral Development. It covers only a portion of the data contained in the recent questionnaire to bishops, and a final report (sometime around June, 1985) will include far more analysis of this survey data and data from other sources in the study - i.e. interviews with bishops, bishops' time diaries, and Diocesan Council survey data.

The purpose of this report is: 1) to get some handles on beginning to digest the findings contained in the enclosed "Overall Responses" from bishops on the questionnaire; 2) give some ideas for interview questions or "probes" in the forthcoming interviews with bishops; 3) assist the Committee suggest further types of analysis or issues they would like to see examined in more depth from the survey data on bishops.

The following report is based on the enclosed "Overall Responses" and some correlations run between items on the questionnaire. Percentage distributions can come about in response to a particular question for any number of reasons, some of which can be ascertained by correlations. Significant correlations (.05 level or better) tell which items are associated with one another, or for example, whether bishops who agree with one statement are likely to agree with another (or disagree), whether or not they are of a certain age, certain kind of diocese (large, small, rich, poor, etc.), or have been in the episcopate a relatively long or short time and the like. However, just because items are correlated with one another significantly does not mean that one is automatically the "result" of another, e.g.: the fact that fire engines are found at fires does not mean that fire engines cause fires. Further, two items may be correlated only because they are related each to a third characteristic, e.g.: the folk tale that storks brought babies is said to arise from the fact that storks liked to make nests on the thatched roofs of peasants at a certain time of year, the same time of year that the peasants produced a lot of infants! These caveats are given as a warning and a request for assistance from the Committee. More checking of correlations that will be presented needs to be done, and help from the Committee in their opinions about why particular correlations presented came about and especially what other correlations should be run.

The return rate for this survey of bishops is very, very good given the length of this questionnaire, over 85% return. (Several were on sabbatical or had retired to whom this questionnaire was sent, so an exact rate is a little difficult to determine). Findings herein are reported on all bishops who answered, 108 total (sometimes fewer on a particular questionnaire item), 85% of whom are diocesans or coadjutors. If desired on certain items, it is very easy to get the percentage distribution just for diocesans and/or coadjutors, assistants, suffragans. The total of 108 also includes 5 overseas bishops.

B. Overview: A More Positive Picture of Life as a Bishop Than That Which Emerged From the 1975 Study

A much more positive picture emerged from this survey data about the bishops' experience in the episcopacy that was seen in the 1975-76 study of bishops. For example, compared to bishops surveyed in 1974, those surveyed in 1975 were less likely to report role conflict between what they wanted to do in terms of a certain role and what was expected of them by others in their dioceses, 53% reported some role conflict in 1975 compared to 37% in 1984. More bishops in 1984 felt comfortable having political and economic clout in the Church, 36-46% of the bishops in 1975 report felt comfortable (agree-agree strongly) in having economic clout and political clout compared to 80% in 1984 who said it was at least "somewhat true" that they felt "comfortable having political and economic influence in the Church". Similarly, far fewer bishops in 1984 compared to 1975 said they felt a need for "early retirement", 44% saying they at least "sometimes" felt this need in 1975, compared to 11% in 1984 who said it was at best only "somewhat true" in the last year they felt such a need. Even more encouraging, while the majority of bishops in both 1975 and 1984 felt supported well by other bishops, in 1985 53% of the bishops said it was "usually true" in the last year they felt well supported by other bishops compared to only 14% in 1975 who "strongly agreed" that they felt such support.

The difference between the 1984 and 1975 surveys may partly be due to question wording differences, but it is far more probably the case that there is actually a more positive feeling in 1984 about being a bishop than in the middle 1970's. This is further attested to by the fact that in 1984 73% of the bishops said it was "usually true" in the last year that they had "thoroughly enjoyed my ministry as bishop". This is not to say that many of the problems in being a bishop uncovered in the 1975-75 study have disappeared completely by 1984, it just seems that bishops can perhaps deal with the daily frustrations with a little more equanimity than in the turbulent seventies.

C. Characteristics of the Most Esteemed Bishops and Bishops with High Professional Self-Esteem

As in the earlier study, in 1984 bishops were asked to name "four bishops whom you hold in high regard and esteem", and to "explain why you admire the particular bishop". Of the 125 or so different bishops who were named, about 45 of them are not presently in dioceses (either on the national staff, executive in some non-profit organization, retired or deceased). The qualities of esteemed bishops most often mentioned as reasons why other bishops admired them (see "O.R.", page 21 of the enclosed) are the qualities of being pastoral in particular, being spiritual and developing this quality in others, leadership skills in administration being decisive and courageous, having high integrity and sincerity, being stable and easy to work with, being an advocate for social concerns, as well as being creative and innovative, intelligent and wise, dedicated, hard-working and dependable.

Each of the bishops responding to the survey was given a score corresponding to how many nominations he received from other bishops as one of the four choices. This

score distribution (found on page 1 of the "O.R." or "Overall Responses" enclosed) ranged from 38% of the present bishops in dioceses who received no nominations to 19% who received four or more nominations. No bishop received more than 21 nominations, and two were tied for this score. It is the dispersion, rather than the clustering of nominations around a handful of bishops, that is the most striking.

Correlations indicate that those bishops who received more nominations than others (i.e. at least a couple of nominations) are more likely than those who receive none or fewer, to have been a bishop for a longer time and to be in wealthier dioceses. Both the length of time one has been a bishop and perhaps the wealth of the diocese may be factors increasing the visibility of a bishop to his peers, which is presumably of some importance in receiving nominations. Interestingly, the more highly rated bishops by their peers are more likely to have experienced role conflict in what they would like versus what others in their dioceses would like them to do in regard to particular roles. Although bishops' perception of how much influence they have in determining the policies and programs of their dioceses is not related to how many votes they receive from other bishops, the more highly esteemed bishops by their peers are more likely to report that they have Diocesan Councils especially, and (to a less significant extent) Commissions on Ministry, Staff, and Parochial Clergy who have more influence in determining diocesan policies than the less highly esteemed bishops.

Nominations from other bishops received are not related to how effective a bishop rates himself on a variety of tasks bishops typically engage in. (See page 16 of the "O.R.", items a.c.d.f.h.m.o.p, were combined in a scale of self-rated effectiveness). This lack of correlation does not necessarily infer that the bishop who rates himself as effective on a variety of activities is exaggerating his abilities, but probably more simply that what he has accomplished in the diocese and/or how effective he is in performing his daily activities is not known to bishops in other dioceses. Seeing oneself as effective in the core tasks of most bishops is important it would certainly seem, however, as an indicator of professional self-esteem or self-confidence. Bishops who rated themselves on this scale as highly competent, or had high professional self-esteem were more likely than those who rated themselves as less effective, to also see an increase in communication and interaction between the bishop, COM and standing Committee in the last ten years in their dioceses, an increase in the number of full time parochial positions, an increase in clergy authority and prestige among laity in the last ten years, and are far more likely than those bishops who rate themselves lower in effectiveness to believe that there is high morale among clergy and lay leaders and enthusiasm about the future of their dioceses. The self-rated effective bishops appear to have some objective advantages as well - in that they have proportionately fewer churches under 200 members of their total churches than those bishops who rate themselves lower in effectiveness. Bishops who have a particularly high professional self-esteem also are generally happier than bishops who rate themselves lower, i.e. they are more comfortably in having political and economic clout in the church, feel successful in overcoming obstacles and difficulties, feel liked and appreciated by most in their dioceses, feel well supported by other bishops, and report high levels of personal and professional support from clergy in their dioceses - more so than bishops who rate themselves as less effective.

D. Election of a Bishop

Around 1975 a new way of electing bishops came into use. Instead of electing bishops "from the floor" or having a small group go and interview the candidate in his own area, nominating committees were formed that began to employ a variety of techniques for ensuring a better match between bishop and diocese. Some of these techniques or components of the new election process are diocesan self-study by the nominating committee, which sometimes includes a profile of the diocese using survey data from a wider sample of clergy and lay leaders than that found on the nominating committee. Sometimes the nominating committee draws up a detailed description of what would be expected of a bishop in the diocese. Various techniques are used for learning more about prospective candidates, i.e. giving candidates a questionnaire to fill out on matters of concern to the nominating committee, often asking the candidates to write brief essays on several questions, as well as interviews of the candidates by the nominating committee, having candidates make an official visit to the diocese, having them appear before different groups in the diocese alone and/or with their wives.

Pages 25 - 28 of the enclosed "overall Responses" from bishops gives percentage distributions of what components of the election process were part of their election, and for those components they had, how valuable they deemed the component to be in matching bishop and diocese; and what comments or suggestions they would now like to make about the election of bishops.

About half of the present bishops in dioceses had none of the components listed above. At least half reported that their election included a diocesan self study, a profile of the diocese using survey data, an interview before the election with the nominating committee, and a questionnaire for them to fill out expressing their opinions on several questions. About two-fifths came to the diocese with other candidates for an official visit prior to election, and a third were given detailed written descriptions of what would be expected of a bishop in the particular diocese. A little over a fourth only either appeared before different groups in the diocese as a candidate alone prior to election and/or made such appearances, without other candidates present, but with their wife.

Bishops who were not canonically resident in their present dioceses prior to election report more components present in their election than bishops who came from within the diocese. Indeed, comments indicate that the more elaborate process of election is more necessary and valuable for candidates who are not known to the diocese. It should be pointed out, that 63% of the bishops were not canonically resident in the dioceses prior to their election, however.

Among bishops who had the particular component(s), the most highly rated were those which involved face-to-face contact between the candidate and those in the diocese - i.e. interview with the nominating committee, appearance before different groups with other candidates in the diocese, alone or (to a slightly lesser extent) with their wife.

The component of the election process receiving the lowest ratings was the "detailed written description of what is expected of a bishop in this diocese". Comments indicated that this low rating in comparison to that received by some other components was occasioned by the lack of reality in the description in what was actually expected of the bishop. Nevertheless, still 42% of the bishops who had this component rated it at least as "quite valuable" in matching bishop and diocese. Similarly, less than a fourth of the bishops rated the diocesan self-study and profile of dioceses using survey data as "very valuable" because these descriptions were more flattering portraits of the diocese than realistic portrayals. As one bishop put it:
"Need honest description of diocese - if claim is made that it is an actual description..."

A scale was formed of how many of the components of the election process listed a bishop had in his election, from none to eight. The more components of the election process which were present in bishops' elections, the more likely bishops were (not surprisingly) to have been consecrated fairly recently, were not likely to have been canonical residents in their present dioceses prior to election, and were more likely to have been elected to smaller dioceses in terms of numbers of parish clergy and congregations and to dioceses which had a higher number of churches under 200 communicants in proportion to the total congregations, and more congregations in rural areas and small towns than those bishops whose elections contained none or fewer components.

The peculiar fact that those dioceses which have used the new election process are more likely than those which haven't (as seen by number of components) are smaller and more rural, may account in part for the fact that bishops whose election contained more components are also more likely to have felt lonely and isolated last year, more frustrated with the resources of the diocese and/or people, and more likely to have had trouble with one or more clergy last year than bishops whose elections did not contain any or many of the new components. Also, these bishops who had the full election treatment have not had as much experience as bishop, and this may be a factor as well. Further analysis may shed light on these possibilities.

However, even given these more limited diocesan resources and personal/professional difficulties experienced recently by those bishops who had more election components than those who had none or fewer, those bishops who experienced more of the components in their elections were much more likely to feel they were making a contribution to the life of the diocese than those bishops who experienced none or fewer of the components in their elections.

E. General Attitudes

Pages 1-2 of the enclosed "Overall Responses" has how bishops answered in terms of agreement or disagreement on statements concerning the Episcopal Church generally. A majority of bishops are at least moderately in favor of changes in the Church during the last decade, but especially the liturgical reforms which almost all felt had strengthened the church. A three-fourths majority were in at least moderate agreement

that ordination of women to the priesthood had been generally good for the Episcopal Church and the renewal of the permanent diaconate should be continued and encouraged.

At the same time, about two-thirds of the bishops were in at least moderate agreement that "The Church needs a respite from the controversies and liturgical changes of the past decade in order to concentrate on proclamation of the Gospel", though only a fourth strongly agreed with this statement. Certainly, a majority of bishops would like to see more recruiting of minority clergy for the Episcopal Church and have the Church make more position statements on social and political national and international issues. Bishops recognize differences in belief and conviction among themselves and among their constituents, and the great majority want the Church to be inclusive, encouraging diversity of theological-liturgical positions within its body.

Any of these attitudes can be correlated with any other item in the questionnaire that members of the Committee desire. Taking one example, bishops who are in most agreement that the Church needs "a respite from the controversies and liturgical changes of the past decade" are less likely (than bishops who agree less or even disagree with the statement) to: believe that the Church has been strengthened by the liturgical reforms of the past decade, and are much less likely to agree that ordination of women has been good for the Church, and slightly less likely to agree that more clergy should be recruited from minority groups, or that the Episcopal Church should make more position statements on social and political issues. Further, bishops who affirm that the Church needs a respite from controversies to concentrate on the proclamation of the Gospel are more likely (than bishops who think such a respite and concentration is less needed) to believe that small churches in their dioceses need more attention from the diocese than they are presently getting, that in their dioceses the average lay person responds better to the ministry of someone ordained, and that Conservative Evangelicals are fairly good influence on their dioceses, while Liberal Episcopalians are not particularly a good influence, and that conflict and confrontation are not effective means of achieving desired changes in society or the Church. Bishops who respond one way or another to this statement about a need for respite from controversies and liturgical changes are not differentiated by how many votes they received from their peers as esteemed and respected bishops, how effective they personally think they are in their ministries as bishop, or how many components there were in their elections, however.

F. Roles

In terms of particular role activities, it can be seen on pages 10-13 of the "Overall Responses" that the great majority of bishops put a great deal of emphasis on being parish and mission "Vistor", or Chief Pastor to People. As a cause or consequence, it is also the role the greatest proportion of bishops cite as one of the four roles they enjoy most. Clergy pastor and counselor, or Chief Pastor to the Clergy, is about third in the proportion of bishops saying they put a great deal of emphasis on seeing that

it is done, but second in the highest proportion of bishops citing this as one of their most enjoyable roles. Being the Preacher and Proclaimer of the Gospel is the role second in the amount of emphasis bishops place on its being done in the diocese, and is third in the proportion of bishops citing it as one of their most enjoyable roles.

In contrast, being a fund raiser for the diocese was the role bishops put least emphasis on seeing done, and the role a 76% majority least enjoyed. This was a role most often delegated completely to others in the diocese, 41% of the bishops being able to accomplish such delegation.

Bishops also were unlikely to put a great deal of emphasis on being a clergy arbiter and judge, possibly because this role was equally disliked to the one above, 76% of the bishops mentioned it as one of the four roles they least enjoyed. However, though the majority were able to share some of the responsibility for being clergy judge with others in the diocese, none of the diocesans were able to get out of doing this role at all, though some suffragans and assistants can avoid it.

Being a reconciler and conflict manager is also deemed a rather unpleasant task by 56% of the bishops, and only about a fourth (26%) put a great deal of emphasis on seeing the role was done. But at the same time, 69% put at least "much" emphasis on it; and though they shared this task with others, could not delegate it away completely, if they were diocesans.

Though a slight majority put at least "much" emphasis on being either /and a teacher or theologian, less than a fifth put a great deal of emphasis on either; and almost a fifth delegated these roles completely to others in the diocese. Correlations indicate that bishops who put a lot of emphasis on being a teacher also put a great deal of emphasis on being a theologian.

A great deal more can be said about the different roles, and eventually will be - but for brevity's sake in this memo report, just a few more statements will be made. First, it is interesting that so many of the bishops share the duties of the roles with others in their dioceses, even though they may take final authority for seeing that the role activity is performed. Of course, delegation to others depends on having others to delegate to - either paid staff or willing (and competent) volunteers.

Second as noted, fewer bishops in 1984 than in 1975 report conflict over their preferred concepts of various episcopal roles and the concept held by "most people" in their dioceses. Among the roles cited by the 37% of the bishops who noted conflict, there was quite a range in which roles were matters of some dispute between them and most in their diocese in either how they were to be performed or how much emphasis were to be given. One role that stands out as occasioning some conflict - especially in bishops' reporting that people wanted them to give less time and emphasis to than they wanted to put on the role - was being a Stirrer of the Conscience of People on social behavior or public policy. In other words, "prophetic ministry", 23% indicated that they wanted to give more emphasis to it than others in their dioceses wanted them to, and conversely 8% of the bishops said they wanted to put less time and emphasis

on this role than most in their dioceses would have preferred! Generally this role does not receive a great deal of emphasis by most of the bishops (19% only), and fully 48% say they put "some" emphasis at best on seeing that it is done (though only 5% delegate it completely to others). The split among bishops in their attitudes toward this role are seen as well in ratings given for one of the four most enjoyed and one of the four least enjoyed roles - 24% of the bishops saying the prophetic role was one they enjoyed most, and 20% saying it was one of the roles they enjoyed least! (This would certainly seem from the data presented that this is one area that bishops and dioceses could be "matched on" in whether the candidate for bishop valued the prophetic role and whether most in the diocese did.)

Correlations indicate that bishops who put more emphasis on the prophetic, social activist role than other bishops are also more likely to put a great deal of emphasis on most of the roles listed, i.e. they do not single out the prophetic role particularly. However, bishops who emphasized the prophetic role were more likely than bishops who put less or little emphasis on it to see themselves as effective in "making public statements on how the faith relates to moral, social, community, national or international issues" especially, and were slightly more likely to see themselves as effective in "dealing with public media reporters and journalists", both areas where a minority of bishops saw themselves as even somewhat effective. So some success in these areas may encourage bishops in doing more of a prophetic ministry.

G. Personal Life of Bishops and Their Personal and Professional Support and Morale

Bishops were asked to what degree aspects of their lives had improved, remained the same or worsened since they had become bishops compared to the several years before they were consecrated. A small proportion of bishops felt that any area of their lives listed (see page 19 of "Overall Responses") had worsened since they became bishops, but the area most likely to be mentioned as worsening somewhat (by 34%) was "being seen as an individual, person". At the same time 24% felt this area had improved since they became a bishop, and two-thirds said they saw no difference pre- and post-consecration. Relationship with friends bishops had as priests was least likely to have improved since consecration, and 19% said it had worsened. (Correlations indicate that bishops who were priests in other dioceses were, not surprisingly, most likely to report that friends they had as priests were not as close) However, still 71% of the bishops said they had unchanged relationships with the friends they made as priests. Even for those whose past friendships as priests had diminished, a 74% majority of bishops said that "developing new relationships with clergy and laity had improved since they became bishops."

Less than half the bishops said their family life or private life generally had remained the same since becoming bishop, but were somewhat divided on whether it had improved - 38%, or worsened - 19%. A move from another diocese to become bishop seems to be slightly detrimental. In regard specifically to the bishops' marriage, interestingly a substantial minority - 46% said it had improved since they became bishops, and only 15% said their marriages had worsened. Correlations indicate that bishops were more likely

to report an improvement with their marriages since becoming bishops if they, not surprisingly, get a good deal of personal and professional support from their families presently, and if they get a good deal of personal support in particular from other clergy and especially from other bishops. This suggests that social relations with clergy and other bishops may very well include wives, thus providing couple support for the bishop and his wife.

Support received from other bishops is an area of importance in itself, as other correlations further attest. Though there is a range among bishops in how much support of a personal or professional nature they report having (see pages 20-21 of "Overall Responses"), 54% report at least "quite a bit" of personal support from other bishops, and 48% report at least "quite a bit" of professional support and critique. Of the two, personal support from other bishops appears to be most crucial for individual bishops attitudes about themselves and their jobs. Generally, bishops who report greater amounts of support from other bishops in particular are less likely to have been lonely last year, and though all sources of support (family, staff, clergy, lay, unchurched professionals, etc.) in the diocese help avoid a feeling of loneliness and isolation, support from other bishops appears to be the most important in avoiding such feelings.

Both bishops who receive less support from other bishops and bishops who are sometimes lonely and isolated (probably the same persons in most instances) are likely to feel they haven't been successful in overcoming difficulties in their ministries, less comfortable with having political and economic clout in the Church, and more in favor of early retirement. Bishops who receive less personal and professional support from other bishops and/or feel lonely are more likely to be in the smaller dioceses in terms of clergy and congregations, and in those dioceses where small churches (under 200 communicants) make up the larger portion of the total congregations than bishops in who feel supported by other bishops. Lonely bishops are less likely to enjoy their ministry as bishops, and feel less competent.

This survey, like the study done previously of bishops, points up the fact that though a majority of bishops are well supported by other bishops and clergy and laity in their dioceses, there remains about a two-fifths minority who are lonely and feel isolated, and not well supported by clergy, lay leader and especially other bishops. Though certainly there is always the personal factor, in both studies the characteristics of the diocese point to a Matthew Effect of him who has gets - the happiest, best supported bishops are in the bigger, richer, better-staffed dioceses.

Yet, though there are difficulties in being a bishop, and for some bishops more than others, generally it is an enjoyable and a very fulfilling ministry. Fully 70% say their own sense of "fulfillment in ministry" has improved somewhat at least since they have become bishop.

H. Postscript

Untouched in this report, but certainly available in the survey, are data on what trends bishops see in their dioceses, what the major problems in their dioceses they have

observed recently, what their hobbies are, what their continuing education experiences have been, and what kinds of learning opportunities and assistance they would most like to have, as well as other data. A lot more analysis will be done, but there are over 600 variables in this study. Therefore:

It would be of great help if the Committee could suggest areas that are particularly important to concentrate on in further analysis, areas in the bishops' life, ministry, attitudes, dioceses, etc. etc. they would like to know more about.