

# INTENTIONAL PRESBYTERATES IV

INSTITUTE FOR PRIESTS AND PRESBYTERATES



*Saint Meinrad*  
Seminary & School of Theology



# THE ASCETICISM OF DIALOGUE IN THE MINISTRY OF UNITY

## Learning to Talk to One Another More Effectively

- in our families
- in our communities
- in our parishes
- in our presbyterate
- in our Church
- in our world

**T**his booklet is intended to help you plan a presbyteral gathering for your diocese or archdiocese that will provide ongoing formation for all members of the presbyterate. Each gathering will be as unique as each presbyterate.

The following suggestions are 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, be based on the teachings of the Church and allow the diocese/archdiocese to avoid the expense of outside speakers' fees.

"The Asceticism of Dialogue in the Ministry of Unity" builds on previous Intentional Presbyterates' themes: "

Intentional Presbyterates I: "Claiming Our Common Sense of Purpose as Diocesan Priests" focuses on the theology of presbyteral unity, on writing a common vision statement and on hearing the expectations of internal and external stakeholders.

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 threefold ministry is his principal means of sanctification.

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We Catholic bishops of the United States find it appropriate to offer a reminder about the importance of civility in discourse within and outside the Church. When [civility is ignored], a disservice is done to those subjected to it, to the church community or to society at large, and ultimately to those who engage in such tactics. This happens when [people] encourage disagreements on policy to degenerate into personal hostility or when they allow the *ad hominem* attack to replace discussion of issues. Within the church community, this disservice occurs, above all, when not only the positions held by others are questioned, which may be legitimate, but also persons' characters and their fidelity to our common beliefs.... The ministry of unity for which we bishops...are responsible has great bearing on this matter.

*Civility in Media*

*United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), June 16, 2000*

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## Pope Paul VI's "Asceticism of Dialogue"

Pope Paul VI offers a structure for dialogue in *Ecclesiam Suam*, his follow-up document to Vatican II's document of ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*. He lists his principles under what some have called "the asceticism of dialogue."

"Dialogue," he says, "is a recognized method of the apostolate. It is a way of making spiritual contact." For the focus of this presbyteral gathering, we will use three of his characteristics: (a) agreement on the essentials, (b) meekness and respect in our language and (c) consensus on non-essentials.



## RECOMMENDED SCHEDULE

### Day 1: Welcome

1:00-5:00 p.m.	Arrival and welcome
5:00 p.m.	Social
5:45 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 p.m.	Vespers
7:30 p.m.	The bishop's update
8:30 p.m.	Social

### Day 2: Agreement on the Essentials

Today, the presbyterate gets clarity on what is negotiable and what is not.

“In the case of religious belief, which is central to who we are, such debates are deeply felt and, on occasion, passionately argued. This is nothing new in the Church, as the debates recorded in the Acts of the Apostles attest. While at times such disagreements can be frustrating and hurtful, good can also come from thorough and balanced expositions of different positions, so long as the teaching of the Church on the matter being reported is clearly and fairly presented.”

*Civility in Media, USCCB, 2000*



7:00-8:15 a.m.	Breakfast
8:30 a.m.	Lauds
9:00 a.m.	“Tradition and Traditional: Essential and Non-Essential”
9:45 a.m.	Break
10:00 a.m.	“Individual Conscience and Being a Public Person”
10:45 a.m.	Break
11:00 a.m.	Mass
12:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 p.m.	Eucharistic Adoration
2:00-5:30 p.m.	Free Time
5:30 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 p.m.	Vespers

### Day 3: Meekness and Respect in Our Language

The focus is on the avoidance of arrogance, barbed words and bitterness. Talks will concentrate on the need for individual patience with contradictions, developing an inclination toward generosity and magnanimity, and acceptance of the fact that divergent views often serve to complete each other and contain some truth.

“The means of mass communication increasingly appear to be as likely to divide people as to bring them together.... In this situation,...the Church provides: the offer of an alternative to the way of the world.... Search for the truth, report the truth, and respect the human dignity of those about whom you report, whether you find them worthy of praise or blame.”

*Civility in Media, USCCB, 2000*

7:00-8:15 a.m. ....Breakfast  
 8:30 a.m. ....Lauds  
 9:00 a.m. ....“The Power of Language  
 to Heal and Hurt”  
 9:45 a.m. ....Break  
 10:00 a.m. ....“Conflict Management  
 and People of Faith”  
 10:45 a.m. ....Break  
 11:00 a.m. ....Mass  
 12:00 p.m. ....Lunch  
 1:00-5:00 p.m. ....Free Time  
 5:00 p.m. ....Vespers  
 5:30 p.m. ....Social  
 6:00 p.m. ....Banquet

**DAY 4: Consensus on Non-Essentials**

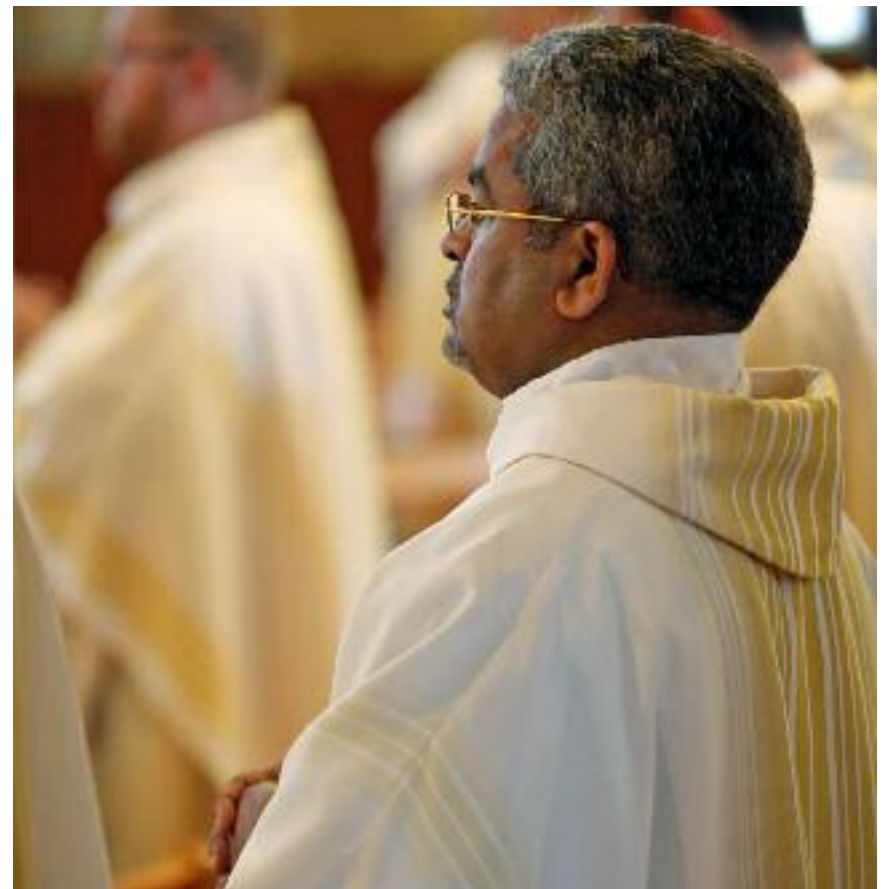
Today’s focus is on:

- individual non-attachment to one’s own preferences and points of view
- cooperative discernment (broad consultation and individual responsibility for directions to be taken and choices made)
- universal acceptance of a workable and reasonable, even if imperfect, structure for the sake of unity.

“It becomes obvious in a dialogue that there are various ways of coming to the light of faith and it is possible to make them all converge on the same goal. However divergent these ways may be, they can serve to complete each other. They encourage us to think on different lines. They force us to go more deeply into the subject of our investigation and to find better ways of expressing ourselves. It will be a slow process of thought, but it will result in the discovery of elements of truth in the opinion of others and make us want to express our teaching with great fairness.”

*Pope Paul VI, Ecclesiam Suam, 83*

7:00-8:15 a.m. ....Breakfast  
 8:30 a.m. ....Lauds  
 9:00 a.m. ....“The Communal Aspect of a  
 Priest’s Promise of Obedience:  
 Non-Attachment to Personal  
 Preferences and Points of View”  
 9:45 a.m. ....Break  
 10:00 a.m. ....“The Spirit and Process of  
 Coming to a Consensus”  
 10:45 a.m. ....Break  
 11:00 a.m. ....Mass  
 12:00 p.m. ....Lunch and Dismissal





The great challenge facing us in the new millennium is to make the Church the home and school of communion, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and to respond to the world's deepest yearnings. The unity of the Church is not uniformity, but an organic blending of legitimate diversities.

*Novo Millennio Ineunte  
Pope John Paul II*

Of special importance is the capacity to relate to others. This is truly fundamental for a person who is called to be responsible for a community and to be a "man of communion." This demands that a priest not be arrogant or quarrelsome, but affable, hospitable, sincere in his words and heart, prudent and discreet, generous and ready to serve, capable of opening himself to clear and brotherly relationships and of encouraging the same in others, and quick to understand, forgive and console.

*Pastores Dabo Vobis, 43*

Priestly obedience has also a "community" dimension. This aspect demands a marked spirit of asceticism in the sense of not being too bound up in one's own preferences and points of view... setting aside all forms of jealousy, envy and rivalry.

*Pastores Dabo Vobis, 28*

You have heard the commandment "You shall love your countryman but hate your enemy." My command to you is: love your enemies, pray for your persecutors. If you love those who love you what merit is there in that? Do not tax collectors do as much? If you greet your brothers only, what is so praiseworthy about that?

*Matthew 5:43, 45-47*

Precisely because within the Church's life the priest is a man of communion, in his relations with all people he must be a man of mission and dialogue.

*Pastores Dabo Vobis, 18*





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“Why should a priest not take pride in the praise given to a fellow priest as though it were given to him? What brotherhood fails to rejoice in the happenings of its brothers wherever they are?”

*St. Cyprian  
Office of Readings for the Feast of Ss. Cornelius and Cyprian*

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