

Introduction

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From Archbishop: Inside the Power Structure of the American Catholic Church (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989)

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In our western civilization only one formal organization, the Roman Catholic Church, claims a substantial age.

Chester I. Barnard/1

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Kennedy and Heckler/2

American Catholic bishops are front-page news. Their involvement in important national issues is chronicled because they are influential and sometimes controversial participants in the political process. Their opposition to abortion and their pastoral letters on peace and on the U.S. economy have been widely discussed and debated. A more recent focus of attention has been the division within the American hierarchy over whether include information on condoms in AIDS education programs. Not only the media but also politicians have paid attention to what the bishops are saying. The Reagan White House attacked an early draft of the peace pastoral. And Geraldine Ferraro could not ignore Cardinal John O'Connor's questions about her stand on abortion.

Despite the media attention given to their positions on public issues, the bishops actually spend very little of their time on public policy or writing pastoral letters. Most of their time is spent on internal church matters in their own dioceses. But little is known about what bishops do in their dioceses, the ecclesiastical territories for which they are responsible. What power do they have? How do they make decisions? How do they spend their time? When the diocesan work of a bishop does come to the attention of the press, it tends to be about highly controversial issues: the closing of a parish or school, a lawsuit dealing with a pedophilic priest, or some other crisis.

Even in his own diocese, the daily work of a bishop is practically unknown. Everyone agrees that bishops are important in the Catholic Church, but few people, including Catholics, know much about their local bishop or his work. Most Catholics only meet a bishop once in their lives, when they receive the sacrament of confirmation. Normally the bishop confirms when he visits a parish every year or two. His visit is usually only long enough to talk to the pastor, celebrate the liturgy, and go to the reception for the newly confirmed and their relatives. The people come away with only the briefest impressions of the personality and views of the bishop and with very little understanding of his other work.

The public ignorance about what bishops do is matched by a similar ignorance in the scholarly community. Canon law describes the power and responsibilities of bishops but does not usually examine how that power is actually exercised. Numerous theological books and articles have been written about bishops, but they are primarily abstract, theoretical treatises on the role of

bishops in the church. Often these studies say that the bishop is or should be a spiritual leader and pastoral teacher without any concrete explanation of how these roles are carried out.

Some histories and biographies tell about bishops and what they did in the church of the past, but very little describes the bishops of today and what they do in the post-Vatican II church. There are practically no studies of the bishops from a social science perspective, which is surprising since the Catholic church is the oldest surviving complex organization in the world. What was said in the multivolume *The Catholic Priest in the United States* in 1972 is still true: "Empirical research by psychologists and sociologists on bishops and other [church] administrators is apparently nonexistent."² This lack of interest on the part of social scientists is shocking considering the long existence of the church and the fact that it has been undergoing major changes in the last thirty years.

Purpose of Book

This is not a theological or spiritual book. I approached this study as a journalist who is a political scientist and Jesuit priest.³ It is not an attempt to describe the Spirit working in the church; rather it attempts to describe the people, the processes, and structures through which the Spirit must work. Social scientists cannot measure or evaluate the spiritual nature of the church, they can only describe and analyze its external manifestations in people and organizations.

This book describes what the American archbishops do for a living. It seeks to answer questions such as the following: Who are these men? How do they become archbishops? What do they do besides confirm? How do they spend their time? How do they make decisions? How do they organize and govern their dioceses? What control do they exercise over what is happening in their dioceses?

This study uses social science methodology and theory to gain a greater understanding of church organization and decision making. It examines the decision-making process archbishops use for allocating resources and assigning personnel. It studies how they provide leadership within their archdioceses, how they spend their time, how they get information, how they make decisions, and how they communicate with their priests and people. The role of their chanceries and diocesan consultative bodies in helping them to fulfill their leadership and decision-making roles is also examined.

A major thesis of this book is that archdiocesan governance, like the governance of any organization, is affected by the personality and preferences of the leaders, the environment in which they operate and the "technologies" employed.⁴ "Technologies" are the means, skills, techniques, and knowledge used by an organization to attain its goals. In the church, these technologies (preaching, counseling, education, etc.) would be organized into ministries. The structures and strategies of an organization, including the church, are determined by its leadership, but they are also rooted in an organization's technology and task environment. An organization's leaders, technology, and task environment do not operate in total independence of one another; each can influence the others.

Church leaders, archbishops, and the people they appoint, can make a difference. Intellectual, interpersonal, organizational, and pastoral talents vary among bishops. This is most frequently noted when comparing a bishop with his predecessor. Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago relates better with his priests than did his predecessor Cardinal John Cody. Cardinal John O'Connor of New York and Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston delegate more to their chancery officials than did Cardinals Cooke and Medeiros. The three current cardinals play a larger role nationally than did their predecessors.

But the same men's influence would be different in a different environment. An archbishop's power is limited (or enhanced) by the canonical, political, financial, demographic, and historical environment in which he must operate. Without resources (money and personnel), without the support of his priests and people, an archbishop is very limited, especially if the environment is hostile or indifferent. Competitors in the environment, such as evangelicals among the Hispanics, can cause concern. Law and tradition encourage stability, but demands and feedback from the environment stimulate adaptations of goals and procedures. These changes are normally incremental. Different archdioceses provide different environments, and even a single archdiocese has a variety of environmental factors that affect governance.

Finally, what an archbishop does is dependent not only on his personality and environment but on the technologies available to accomplish his goals. For some of his goals (construction, financial administration, fund raising, education), he can use technologies that are similar to those used by secular organizations. For his more spiritual goals, ecclesial technologies or ministries (preaching, sacraments, etc.) that are unique to the church must be employed.

Some technologies or ministries employed by the church are more susceptible to bureaucratic management than others. As a result, various parts of the archdiocese will be governed in different ways. Financial administration, for example, can be highly routinized, even computerized, but pastoral counseling cannot. The more intensive the technology (the more it requires professional skills, imagination, and response to feedback), the less its use can be controlled by regulations and a central office. Nor can many ecclesial technologies be easily evaluated. In the face of human freedom and the mystery of grace, ecclesial technologies for "saving souls" or promoting vocations cannot work perfectly. In fact, measuring efficiency and effectiveness of technologies with spiritual goals is by definition impossible, especially where the desire is for quality as well as quantity. This uncertainty and complexity encourages decision makers to limit the number of variables examined (bounded rationality), to seek a satisfactory rather than optimal solution to a problem (satisficing) and to respond with incremental rather than radical changes.

The research for this book was done primarily through interviewing archbishops and their cabinet-level staffs (auxiliary bishops, vicars general, chancellors, secretaries to archbishops, moderators of the curia, and the directors of finances, personnel, pastoral service, social service, and education). Over four hundred persons were interviewed.⁵ All thirty-one archbishops (including all of the cardinals) agreed to participate in the study and every archdiocese was visited between June 1985 and January 1987. The interviews, most of which were taped, provide the factual information for the study and also the opinions and examples that are quoted in the book. In some archdioceses I was also allowed to sit in on meetings of the archbishop's

presbyteral and pastoral councils. I was also allowed to attend meetings of some archbishops with their staffs, auxiliary bishops, and cabinets.

Because of the size and complexity of the Roman Catholic Church it was necessary to limit the scope of this study. Eastern-rite churches in union with Rome were not examined because their unique structures and traditions would require a separate book. These churches serve only one percent of U.S. Catholics. Nor did I examine the military archdiocese, a nonterritorial archdiocese that ministers to Catholics in the U.S. armed forces.

The study is limited to the thirty-one Latin-rite archbishops and archdioceses. The church in the United States is divided into 175 geographical units called dioceses or archdioceses depending on whether they are headed by a diocesan bishop or an archbishop. These separate and independent sees (a generic term for dioceses and archdioceses) cover every corner of the United States and are grouped into thirty-one provinces each headed by an archbishop who is called the metropolitan of the province. Some of these archbishops and diocesan bishops are assisted by auxiliary bishops.

All together the archbishops, diocesan bishops and auxiliary bishops add up to almost three hundred Latin-rite bishops working in the United States, plus another eighty or so retired bishops. Interviewing all of them is impractical. Constructing a representative sample of these sees and their bishops (and getting them to agree to participate) is problematic.

As a result, I concentrated on the 31 Latin-rite archdioceses: Anchorage, Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Denver, Detroit, Dubuque, Hartford, Indianapolis, Kansas City (KS), Louisville, Los Angeles, Miami, Milwaukee, Mobile, Newark, New Orleans, New York, Oklahoma City, Omaha, Philadelphia, Portland (OR), St. Louis, St. Paul, San Francisco, Santa Fe, San Antonio, Seattle and Washington (DC). These sees are called archdioceses, rather than dioceses, because each is headed by an archbishop rather than a bishop.

As will be explained later, an archbishop's duties and authority are the same as a bishop's except that as metropolitan he has limited supervisory jurisdiction and influence over the bishops in his province who are known as suffragans. Studying archdioceses enabled me to examine a limited number that includes the most important sees in the United States. Their archbishops are also the most well-known Catholic prelates, and include all of the cardinals residing in the United States. As cardinals they elect the pope.

While not a perfectly representative sample, archdioceses are in every part of the country which guarantees that the study is geographically representative. Archdioceses differ from dioceses primarily in size. Although some archdioceses are very small, they tend to be twice the size of the average diocese. The average U.S. see has 186 diocesan priests and 286,000 Catholics, while the average archdiocese has 395 priests and 695,000 Catholics. Archdioceses also tend to be more Catholic, with 27 percent of their area Catholic as opposed to 22 percent for the nation as a whole.⁶ Most dioceses are like the small and medium-sized archdioceses in this study.

Archbishops do the same things as diocesan bishops, plus a few extra things. They tend to be more active than other bishops in the national and international church. Archbishops also tend to be older, better educated, and more experienced at the time of their appointments.⁷

Organization

Archdiocesan governance, like any form of governance, is the result of the interaction of numerous factors. It is primarily affected by the personality and style of the archbishop and the makeup and needs of his archdiocese, which he governs within the boundaries set by canon law. This book therefore begins with a chapter on how bishops are appointed, since who is appointed has a tremendous impact on how an archdiocese is governed. Once he is appointed, the new archbishop must govern his particular archdiocese with the power and constraints of canon law. Chapter 2 describes the canon law governing bishops. It also shows how archdioceses vary greatly in terms of demography, geography, institutions, and history. These social, economic, ethnic, geographic, and cultural factors affect how an archdiocese is governed. Chapter 3 describes the personalities and styles of archbishops and explains what structures archbishops use in governing.

The next three chapters then examine how archbishops deal with important parts of their archdioceses. Chapter 4 describes the relationship between the archbishop and his parishes. For most Catholics, their parish is the church. To reach the people, the archbishop must work through the parish structure. Chapter 5 describes his role in the finances of the archdiocese: how he raises money, how he decides to spend it, and how he controls spending by parishes and other archdiocesan agencies. Chapter 6 studies his relationship to his priests, especially through his appointment of pastors. Without the support of his priests, he can do little. Chapter 7 describes archdiocesan governance of Catholic schools and Catholic social services, two of the biggest ministries of the church.

Chapter 8 examines the role of the archbishop outside his diocese, especially his relations with the bishops of his province, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB), and the Vatican. Archbishops can be affected by what happens outside their archdioceses, and they can also have an impact on the national and international church. The Conclusion describes the episcopal decision-making process and summarizes some of the issues archbishops must give attention to.

In all of these chapters, the emphasis is on the role of the archbishop and his top staff: What problems come to them? What decisions do they make? What strategies do they follow? Through extensive quotations from the interviews, they are allowed to tell their own stories.

Finally, it must be remembered that this is not a static system. Archdioceses in the United States are constantly undergoing change. Archbishops retire or die and are replaced by new men. Archbishop Donnellan died after being interviewed. Cardinals Manning and Krol and Archbishops Gerety and Power left office after they were interviewed (I also interviewed the new archbishops of Atlanta, Portland, Los Angeles, and Newark). In other archdioceses, cabinet-level staff changed shortly before or after my visit. Even archdioceses with stable leadership were often undergoing reorganization or changes in procedures and policies. As a result,

descriptions and examples from individual archdioceses should be considered only snapshots of moving objects.

On the other hand, many of the problems and issues these archbishops face are not going to go away soon. Some archdioceses, like Los Angeles, are just now establishing structures and programs that have been in place for some time in other archdioceses. And as old problems are solved, new ones will arise, and it is likely they will be approached in the ways described here. The church is always changing and always the same.

Since this is the first book of its kind, there will be errors and omissions. It is hoped that more researchers will enter this vast and open field of research to correct and build on what is here.

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Footnotes

1. Chester I. Barnard, *The Functions of the Executive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), 5.
2. Eugene C. Kennedy, M.M., and Victor J. Heckler, *The Catholic Priest in the United States: Psychological Investigations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Catholic Conference, 1972), 216.
3. For a cybernetic analysis of the church, see Patrick Granfield, *Ecclesial Cybernetics: A Study of Democracy in the Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1973).
4. James D. Thompson, *Organizations in Action* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967).
5. All quotations that are not footnoted are from these interviews.
6. *The Official Catholic Directory 1988* (Wilmette, IL: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1988). Estimates of the percentage of Catholic population in the United States by Gallup are higher than estimates in the directory. See Dean Hoge, *Future of Catholic Leadership* (Kansas City, KS.: Sheed & Ward, 1987), 228.
7. Thomas J. Reese, S.J., "A Survey of the American Bishops," *America* 149 (November 12, 1983): 287.