

CORPUS SURVEY – PART TWO – DISCERNMENT (combined results – snail mail and online form)

DISCERNMENT: To What Is the Holy Spirit Calling Us Now?

Following are five propositions. (You can add one or more if you like.) Please study each one and then, looking ahead through 2020, indicate your first and second choice.

1. LET'S LET CORPUS DIE.

PRO: Members are graying, balding, wrinkling, and dying. No young ones are joining us. Plan an exit strategy! Let's turn out the lights, lock the door, and throw away the key.

CON: The old gray mare ain't what she used to be but she's still breathing, so let's see if we can do something so she survives.

2. LET'S GO FOR MORE MEMBERS AND MORE DONORS TO SEE IF WE CAN RESUSCITATE HER.

PRO: She has a long history of being a leader and has done so much for so many people over the years. She deserves to live a little longer.

CON: Our numbers are dwindling, there aren't that many priests leaving anymore and those that are, have no interest in us. Maybe it's time to let her fade away.

3. LET'S JOIN WITH OTHER RENEWAL ORGANIZATIONS SO THAT, JOINED TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE A REALLY LOUD NOISE FOR REFORM.

PRO: We can increase our numbers and thus have a loud, clear, powerful voice to urge for optional celibacy and the ordination of women.

CON: A significant number of "renewal organizations" are experiencing the same thing we are: dwindling numbers, lack of interest, lessening income. Our joining with them will just be prolonging the agony.

4. LET'S FOLLOW BRAZIL'S EXAMPLE AND URGE OUR AMERICAN BISHOPS TO PETITION THE POPE FOR PERMISSION TO ORDAIN MARRIED MEN.

PRO: The bishops of Brazil are gathering to plan for the ordination of married men and the Pope is encouraging them to ask him to do that. Now is the time to strike! We can urge our American bishops to join with them in a like petition.

CON: In pushing for a married priesthood, we are pushing for the continued growth of that cancer on the church body called clericalism. When we advocate for a married priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church, we are not advocating for the *renewal* of the priesthood, but for the continuation of the same old clericalism with a new coat of paint on its face. The "fix" can't just spread the misery around in a new way!

5. LET'S TRY SOMETHING THAT IS OLD BUT NEW.

PRO: The starting point is recognizing that the Church needs to change its failed strategy. "Among U.S. Catholics who have stopped participating and remain unaffiliated, nearly 80 percent did so before the age of 24" (N.C.R., Mar. 2, 2017). This has to do less with a lack of belief than the fact that people want a church they can believe in. Younger people embrace community-building and outreach, they value questioning constrictive Christian doctrine. Doing "the same ole, same ole" is not renewal. Mindlessly repeating past actions while expecting different results without changing anything is one definition of "crazy." Do we have to prove we don't know what time it is? Or do we allow ourselves to feel expansive, constructive, hopeful, even helpful? Remember the beginnings of Christianity. Consider CORPUS members fostering small groups to meet in "block churches," homes, house churches, convents. Think small base communities (Boff, O'Murchu). In these informal and friendly groups experimentation and exploration can be the normal thing. Justice and mercy in our Church will really begin to be served when those who are not offended and victimized are as outraged as those who are!

CON: We'd have to change our ideas as to how to be "church." We'd have to look at the Eucharist as a sacred meal to which all are invited instead of a sacrificial offering for the initiated few. That's hard to do. Besides, you know the old way is the way we've always done it. We are getting too old to change our ways and we're getting tired. Are we "up" to such a monumental task? And keep in mind what Lord Acton wisely wrote: "Everybody likes to get as much power as circumstances allow, and nobody will vote for a self-denying ordinance."

THIS IS A COMPILATION OF 70 RESPONSES TO THE ABOVE PROPOSALS FROM THE CORPUS MEMBERSHIP

First Choice	1	2	3	4	5	Total
	3	4	19	15	29	70
	4.29%	5.71%	27.14%	21.43%	41.43%	

Second Choice	1	2	3	4	5	Total
	7	7	19	21	16	70
	10.00%	10.00%	27.14%	30.00%	22.86%	

ADDITIONAL MEMBER-SUPPLIED PROPOSITIONS

Wives will make sure there is no clericalism!

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1. Let Corpus Die - we like the CON There may be alternatives
 2. More members/donors – PRO If it's only to resuscitate, then let it die.
 3. Join other groups – PRO There may need to be a complete new direction.
 4. Petition Bishops – CON Trying to break down a brick wall with tennis balls.
 5. Try something old... Totally confusing to our 8 decades old minds!

Key is to discover and promote what it means to be church today. We will have to jettison old beliefs that are worn out and develop newer theologies that better tell the Jesus story and witness for a quantum world. CORPUS has done a lot already in this vein, so there are some good starting points. Without a 21st century theology and a modern mission, the church and CORPUS will die out.

I have long believed the US Bishops will not act in the way we desire until it becomes financially imperative. The various organizations mentioned above should unite to create a Trust Fund to collect and manage funds which all parishioners should be encouraged to send in, while withholding part of what they normally give to their parish.

The mission of CORPUS to have an inclusive priesthood, renew the Church and support those married priests and families is not over. As long as we have members let's keep on keeping on.

Christian reform is an on-going, never ending process. If we are not part of the solution, we are part of the problem. I admit progress has been slow since Vatican II (the 'Ecumenical' Council) but momentum is finally building and the sense of hope is strong. Reform minded Christians world-wide must put differences aside and join together in a critical mass as an ecumenical movement. I believe Corpus has so much to offer and should be part of that.

I do not view 4 and 3 as "either-or" but as "both-and".

Am grateful for all that CORPUS has been corporately. As an FCM'er, I have continued to perform occasional marriages and officiate at funerals. Our Church remains upside down in so many ways. Francis will have to be energetic until he is one hundred to give ample appointments of truly servant, pastoral bishops and bright and truthful theologians and church historians and biblical scholars to render the gospel and the Trinitarian God as present in the hearts and minds of church members. We have tried to give our witness. Maybe time to join in the larger group of organized reform movements!?!?!

My guess is that the majority of CORPUS would not return to ministry without a more radical transformation of the R.C. Church than is even remotely possible from within the existing Church. My tenuous relationship with CORPUS is only to stand in solidarity with my sisters and brothers in our diaspora. The Church does not need reform, it needs nonviolent revolution. Destroy the existing and begin again to create a community of the Way to serve the coming of the kingdom of God. The fifth proposition is a possible step in that direction. God bless your good efforts.

I'm for #5 as a first choice and then #3. But we need bodies to do this. We need like-minded allies who see hope in something new amid the present depressing situation. There are young people with fresh ideas speaking out and calling for change in our political landscape. Can we somehow tap into the energy of those who are faith-based (perhaps at Catholic Universities)? Can we better market our cause toward Catholics who are not being "fed" by the authoritarian and clerical structure (need to move quickly here before they just "leave")? Can we find some social media gurus to help promote our cause to create a People of God according to mind and heart of Jesus?

We must be the change we desire. The hierarchy is not capable of meaningful change. They are not partners but a rear guard. Forget about interacting with them and just begin to put together small groups with invitations to the youth. Learn the use of the dreaded social media. The Good News is not obsolete, but millions are deciding that current mainline Christian structures are. FCM can work with CORPUS on this project.

Merge with the Federation of Christian Ministries (FCM).

I think we need to have a real shakeup of the whole establishment. Theology has radically shifted and the thoughts of 90 %of the hierarchy have not been able to make that shift. The thoughts of Boff and O'Murchu are not really in the scope of most of the Bishops. My cardinal will not even respond to my letters. We just have to do what we perceive is the right thing to do and just act. The early faith community did that from its Temple Hierarchy and that caused disruption and struggle and martyrdom. We won't be martyrs in the blood sense of the terms, but we will be shunned. Pope Francis is trying his best. He told the youth in Rio "go home and make a mess". Maybe that is what we need to do.

I don't have one but all of the above have powerful negatives. Francis got elected so maybe the Holy Spirit has an alternative plan. I am 84 and do not expect to see the change in my lifetime.

Studying the Belgian model of involving the laity in the full participation of the Eucharistic celebration, consecrating along with us.

It seems that there's a core group that continues to place some hope in CORPUS. I suggest that that group meet in a spiritual retreat, a period of silent prayer. Two or three days of reflection -- no rehashing the old points given above. At the end of that time of reflection... decide!

CITI has organized married priests and gives them a platform from which to continue ministry, especially to disenfranchised Roman Catholics. FCM has evolved over the years to be an organization of individual ministers who do all kinds of ministry, traditional, nontraditional and new. FCM encourages members to form faith communities. Roman Catholic Women Priests ordains women who minister to all kinds of people. I think that doing the things that are part of the vision of the future is more important than advocating a married or renewed priesthood.

Finally, I don't think there should be an ordained priestly cast. It encourages clericalism. The fact that there are fewer canonical priests has given rise to more lay people getting degrees in ministry, serving in roles that priests used to function in, and is paving the way for a different approach to official ministry in the RC Church (although changes may be forced by circumstances rather than by authority from above).

Be bold. Give the Holy Spirit free reign. With Love always as the root...not formalism, legalism, protectionism. Love is what attracts and what binds and what multiplies!

Why quit now. Our job of an inclusive priesthood and a renewed and vital church is not over. Why turn out the light?

I find these choices somewhat confusing. However, I hope they will start a NATIONAL DIALOGUE so we can come up with a 3 YEAR PLAN FOR CORPUS & come up with some realistic GOALS & OBJECTIVES which will involve many people.

More print ads for soliciting new members and advertising Corpus; more letters and/or e-mails sent directly to members of other reform groups inviting them to join Corpus; more outreach to young Catholics involved in social justice organizations and the like; more news coverage about Corpus activities and/or of its members' activities; more inter-religious ministerial efforts for members; more Corpus "in the limelight."

As a prerequisite to #2, and even along with #3, increase the membership of CORPUS by broadening the membership base to attract more than priests (and their spouses and families) who have been sidelined because they sought the sacrament of matrimony. CORPUS should seek to attract those who are drawn to a Church renewed in the spirit of Vatican II. "CORPUS" should be reconstituted as the "Corps of Renewed (Reformed / Revitalized) People United for Service."

I've thought about making contact with Cardinal O'Malley to be sure he is kept up to speed on our thinking and abreast of some of our concerns as a group of priests, organized for action – in a Church with some places and organizations ready for change.

It's true our CORPUS organization inspired us when we were young. But it no longer inspires the young to come join us. At this rate, we (CORPUS) will die soon of old age. What can we do or say that will inspire the young and old. Perhaps we need to listen and learn from His example.

Drop "Roman" adjective – Catholic means universal. Had I my way, the Vatican would move to Jerusalem and rent the space it returns to Italy. The church started in Jerusalem and it should continue there, and should invite the World Council of Churches to work for peace.

NCR should publish an update on CORPUS