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CNS documentary service

The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community

Congregation for Clergy

The Vatican's Congregation for Clergy issued a new instruction on pastoral care that focuses on parish renewal in a missionary sense and offers guidance in parish reforms and restructuring. Titled "The pastoral conversion of the parish community in the service of the evangelizing mission of the church," the document was released July 20. While it does not introduce new legislation on pastoral care, the Vatican press office said it was developed by the congregation as a guide related "to the various projects of reform of parish communities and diocesan restructuring, already underway or in the planning process." It also clarifies the role of the deacons, consecrated

"The parish is called upon to read the signs of the times, while adapting both to the needs of the faithful and to historical changes."

men and women as well as the laity in dioceses where there is a shortage or lack of priests. The Vatican press office said, "The text, fundamentally, recalls that 'in the church there is room for all and everyone can find their place' in the one family of God, respecting each person's vocation." Parish reform is not the sole responsibility of the parish priest, but should include the people of God, and happen gradually and flexibly, the document emphasized. Msgr. Andrea Ripa, undersecretary of the Congregation for Clergy, said their office created the instruction as a way to help support and guide bishops and dioceses in parish reforms and diocesan restructuring. The instruction was not a "one size fits all" approach, he said in a written presentation, but a concise overview of current norms and indications that can be used by the different dioceses and parishes according to their unique situations. The instruction follows.

Introduction

1 The ecclesiological reflection of the Second Vatican Council, together with the considerable social and cultural changes of recent decades, has resulted in various particular churches having to reorganize the manner in which the pastoral care of parish communities is assigned. This has made it possible to initiate new experiences enhancing the dimension of communion and implementing, under the guidance of pastors, a harmonious synthesis of charisms and vocations at the service of the proclama-

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