

the BridgeDialogues

laity & clergy reimagining the church

A collaborative effort of Voice of the Faithful, FutureChurch, & Association of U.S. Catholic Priests



ASSOCIATION OF U.S.
CATHOLIC PRIESTS

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Discussion Questions after reading “Confronting the Systemic Dysfunction of Clericalism”

After reading the paper “Confronting the Systemic Dysfunction of Clericalism,” use these questions—or those you devise on your own—as a way to begin the dialogue. Note that you may spread questions over multiple sessions or use these initial questions as springboards to later sessions and other questions about how clergy and lay people both experience and engender clericalism.

1. What story (or stories) in the testimony most resonated with you? Did any stories surprise you?

2. *For lay people:* Have you ever changed parishes, stopped attending functions, or withheld donations because of the way a pastor or other cleric treated you? Without expressing your feelings or saying why you are doing so?

For clergy: Have you felt frustrated by expectations that you will please every parishioner all the time? Do you make unilateral decisions on most issues because you dread “negotiating” with different parish factions?

3. Think of a time when you experienced clericalism or, even inadvertently, acted in a clericalist manner (remember, anyone can promote clericalism). How could you have acted or spoken differently in that situation?

4. If you can imagine ways to alter or call out (nicely) the clericalist behavior cited in Question 3, would you actually do it? (Be super honest with yourself!) If not, what do you need to change or learn in order to address that behavior?

5. What is the biggest obstacle for you, personally, in seeing and trying to remove clericalism and its many branches?