

Transparency and Governance in the Church

Questions asked during the webinar

May 5, 2020

1. How do you deal resistance to culture change to implement transparency in a highly conservative and bureaucratic organization or institution?
2. (For David Bender): When a superior in the Church commits an act of fraud or corruption, does it often involve a level of complicit action among inferiors? What can inferiors do especially if they fear some act of retribution from the superior?
3. Beautiful discussions. Granted the Notions, Dimensions and Fundamentals of the topic at hand, can we say there is NO objective transparency anywhere except for a subjective transparency? This makes transparency a relational issue; raging from between man to God and man to man!
4. How do we reconcile the issue of Transparency with the issue of secrecy in terms of the oath of confidentiality taken before assuming certain offices in the Catholic Church?
5. What do you suggest as a remedy where the diocesan authority is reluctant or afraid to be transparent especially with regard to the money matters? What's wrong there if the faithful know of the inflow as well as the outflow of the fund? After all it's the result of their sweat only I believe.
6. (For Claudia Ciocca): I very much concur with your suggesting there need to be ethical people as well as intentional processes for ensuring transparency in an organization. It seems to me that transparency needs to also be integral to the governing philosophy. A board is obligated to not just direct an organization to the maximum benefit of shareholders (or leadership of whatever kind), but to the human beings in the organization and benefiting from the organization. They must not be treated as cogs in a wheel but as proper ends themselves as holding dignity endowed by God. If you love someone then you will be honest with them.

7. (For Prof. Vaccaro): Thanks very much for your presentation. You mentioned that right transparency is an equilibrium between two extremes. What factors do we need to keep in mind for establishing and maintaining that equilibrium? Thank you.
8. Any insight into how the transparency reform is going at the Vatican? Reasons for hope or despair? What would be needed to get to the optimal transparency in the Vatican? What are reasons for the Church to resist some of the good practices (i.e. internal processes, external audits, etc)? What are our answers to these reasons and how can we convince more church partners to take up these best practices?
9. (For Claudia Ciocca): While delineating the principles of transparency, you spoke of limited and programmatic disclosure to the public. In the case of the Catholic Church, it would seem that the relationship between hierarchy, institutions, and lay faithful (People of God) requires a much more radical transparency due to the Communion of Saints that establishes a relationship quite different from that of many other corporations and their relationship to the public. Consequently, is there not an obligation within Church institutions to share and disclose information to the lay faithful so as to give them an account of their own contribution of prayer, holiness, and almsgiving?
10. Sometimes, in our context, you want to be transparent but FEAR sets in – fear of being robbed if people hear of the quantum of parish income or fear that people would not give if they think the parish has a handsome account. This tends to limit transparency. How do we handle the fear creatively?
11. Sometimes information is given with the intention to repair or make amends, but it may be misinterpreted and used against the organization. What can be done to avoid this situation? Moreover, in mission areas sometimes transparency can attract thieves and robbers to attack the Church or parish like the case of kidnapping to pay big sum of money.
12. I would like to explore the link between transparency and culture. Several studies, including the Cross-Cultural studies, have established links between an organization's performance and its organizational culture, and the surrounding culture in general. In my point of view, it seems to me that in some cultures, transparency is more naturally accepted and practiced, but in some other cultures there is a lot of resistance. In contexts of limited resources (like in my origin country –

Haiti), being transparent can be even a risk. For example, (in some areas), if the parish priest shares the amount of the quests with the parishioners, it can be detrimental to him, bad ears may think he has money, he may even be attacked, stolen.

- 13.** (For Claudia Ciocca and Antonino Vaccaro): Church as an organization must be transparent keeping in mind the basic value of truth and Good. For the Church, what would it mean to be transparent in the context of rampant corruption...? Corruption in the society, in the Government, corruption in the administrative system, in the judiciary system, etc. When the government itself is very corrupt, exploitative, communal, and divisive and tries to exploit, damage, and suppress everything contrary to their interest, how can the Church function properly, keeping in mind the principle of Transparency and truth? Thanks.
- 14.** We hear much these days about full disclosure of clergy “credibly accused” of sexual misbehaviour. There is some lack of clarity about the term “credibly accused”. Where there is doubt, is there a presumption that the information be released in the name of transparency?
- 15.** Can transparency be used as a tool to foster participation of lay people to the common aim of the Church?