

An excerpt from Archbishop Cupich's Column in *Catholic New World*

Creating communities of communities

The following is adapted from remarks delivered by Archbishop Cupich at the Presbyteral Assembly, which is a gathering of archdiocesan priests, June 7.

What Renew My Church means for our vision of parish life.

Our life as church here in Chicago has been organized around the parish. This has created loyalties and deep affection on the part of our people for their own parishes, and has motivated extraordinary generosity and devotion. At the same time, we have to recognize that the vibrancy of these parishes could be taken for granted in an earlier era, given the social fabric and connectedness that defined our neighborhoods and society at large. These neighborhoods were marked by residential stability, social mores and shared values, and a familiarity among people that was often based on similar ethnic relationships. But the world is much different today, and the social and cultural infrastructures that buttressed our parish life have evaporated to a large extent.

Today, people are more mobile in their residential patterns. Their cohesion of values has been disrupted if not destroyed by a closed-end secularization, by globalization and economic forces beyond their control, by new forms of communication and by an entertainment industry that reshapes how we see one another.

The social structures our parishes once relied on to support what they were doing as individual communities are no longer present for the most part. We need to create a new kind of networking, a set of relationships among ourselves in which we are not independent, living in our own silos, but interdependent. As parishes, the challenge is to become communities of communities that are stronger and more effective in mission than when we worked in isolation. We need to move beyond a model of parish that is independent and self-reliant.