

Get Your Parish Ready

If your parish falls, if you have no place to pray, no community of Christians to rely on, you will be in more trouble than if you had no food or shelter.

Address this step before you address any private concerns.

Your pastor is probably too busy with parish business to keep up with financial news - or at least we hope he is. Get a copy of this book into the hands of your pastor and parish council. We ask that you be honest and pay for their copies since we need to earn a living, too.

Approach your pastor when he isn't overwhelmed. Keep it concise and try not to sound too hysterical. Present an overview in a calm and logical manner and suggest that this is something he might want to think about.

Begin to develop a team to address the issues below. Even if you don't take action, it is always beneficial to have a contingency plan in place before you need it.

Social Justice. If your parish doesn't have a social justice committee set up, do it now. How will you minister to those who are here illegally? How will you help those who are imprisoned and their families? How will you assist those who are suddenly and unexpectedly unemployed and reeling from the shock? How will you ensure that everyone is treated fairly, that preferential treatment isn't offered only to "insiders" when resources dry up?

Small Faith Communities. If there is no mechanism in place to help members form small faith communities, start right away. If you are going to survive, you're going to do it in Christ. Help families to form small groups to meet in homes if necessary, even just to share a Sunday dinner together and to pray. Be sure to include the elderly and those who live alone. It is critical that this be an active outreach effort. In every parish there are the social gadflies who seem to glide in and out of everything with ease. More common, however, are those who are a little introverted and uncomfortable or fearful of making new connections. Maybe they don't know how. Help them do it now.

Parishioner Skills and Talents. Does your parish census have information on skills of parishioners that your pastor can call on in the coming times of trouble? More specifically, does it have a database that can be sorted by skill and the need for work? Every parish falls into the same trap of calling on the same people all the time with the end result that those volunteers burn out and others who are not called feel shut out. In the worst scenario a skills data base paired with information on who has become unemployed might help someone who is sitting at home in a funk to feel useful. It can also serve as an impromptu jobs or barter bank when currency is worth nothing.

Get a Grant Writer Most parishes have someone who works on grants like those issued by FEMA or Catholic Charities. That person is usually saddled with coordinating whatever the Bishop's Appeal is called in your parish along with several other tasks as well with the end result that every opportunity available isn't exploited. If that isn't the problem you're your grant writer is just burned out, bring in someone he or she can work with to collaborate. Got a grant for refrigerators to store food? How about expanding it to include funds for the electricity to power them? Do you have a space that can be used as an emergency shelter? Fabulous! If you enter – very carefully – into a deal, why not leverage an emergency generator and the fuel to run it? Even if you have a skilled grant writer, if services dry up where will you turn for help to continue outreach services and to help keep the Church open? Make sure your grant writer has every opportunity to network with other, wealthier parishes.

Start a Community Garden and a Fishing Club. Not only is it a good wholesome activity that bring people together, it might be a critical source of food. You probably already have a garden of some sort. Why not plant it with attractive food bearing plants – just in case. And while we're at it, are there parishioners who hunt or fish? All well and good to say you'll eat pigeons – ahem – squab – if you have to, but how will you catch them? Does the parish own a cat trap?

Security. Who will protect the Church -- and more importantly the priests who serve it -- if things turn violent? People can get crazy in times of trial and desperation and act irrationally. They may place blame on institutions they perceive as having wealth - even if that's not a valid assumption. Poor boxes, gold chalices and tabernacles will all be targets for thieves. Those who have gone crazy with fear might even set a fire. **Your first priority is to protect the Eucharist.** Your second priority is to protect your clergy. Who will provide security for

your outreach volunteers when things get nasty and you can no longer provide the help your clients have come to expect?

No one wants to think about the ultimate horror - **a nuclear attack** - but we live in a world where even the unthinkable can happen. We will all need to preserve the health of our Priests so we can have access to the Mass, to confession, to last rites. Get him some potassium iodide pills at [Nitro Pak](#).

The Eucharist This item really should have come first, but we saved it for next to last so that the other items would have a cumulative effect and sink in. The Eucharist is the source and summit of our lives as Catholics. Like every parish, you probably order large plastic containers of hosts on a regular basis. What if your source unthinkably dries up? Does anyone know how to make a host? Do you have an old fashioned host press hiding in the attic? What if there are no hosts? There will be no Eucharist! Similarly, ensure there is wine and if things get tough, that it is hidden from marauders and even from volunteers who might turn to the bottle to numb their confusion.

What happens if there's no heat? No water? No electricity?
Do you have candles? Oil lamps?

Will your parish center be a safe haven or a target for marauders?