Unity among the priests with the bishop and among themselves is not something added from the outside to the nature of their service, but expresses its essence inasmuch as it is the care of Christ the priest for the people gathered in the unity of the Blessed Trinity. This unity among priests, lived in a spirit of pastoral charity, makes priests witnesses of Jesus Christ, who prayed to the Father “that they may all be one” (John 17:21).
The Process

- Initial visit to diocese by a representative of NOCERCC and CARA to explain Cultivating Unity in depth
- Customized approach for each diocese
- Survey development
- Confidential survey mailed to all priests and returned directly to CARA
- Two 90-minute listening sessions facilitated by CARA
- One-on-one interview with the bishop by CARA
- Priests and bishops appreciate this forum as dialogue is often rare in our busy world
- Delivery of detailed report to the diocese prior to the convocation

The Convocation

- Two facilitators lead the two or three day convocation which includes daily celebration of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours
- Three witness talks from fellow priests representing different generations are woven among the four 2-hour dialogue sessions
- CARA data analysis is presented in summary fashion during the first session
- The next three sessions focus on the topics that the bishop and priests consider the most important
- Round table discussion among priests and bishop
- Action plan developed
- Optional post-convocational follow-up offered

Common Topics

- The following topics often emerge and are discussed in a spirit of charity and mutual respect:
  - Ecclesiological and generational differences
  - Most priests love their pastoral ministry but feel over-worked
  - Many complain of isolation and not enough support, yet morale is high
  - The blessings and challenges of international priests
  - Priests desire to strengthen bonds with their bishop
  - Too few priests, too much work
  - Ways that priests can support each other more

NOCERCC: National Organization for Continuing Education of Roman Catholic Clergy
CARA: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University