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ROUNDTABLE**  
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## Leadership Roundtable encourages Catholic bishops to focus on rebuilding trust by stepping boldly into the commitments they made this week

(Washington, DC) Leadership Roundtable, a Catholic nonprofit that advances best practices in management and leadership, welcomes the votes by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) this week that could help create a new culture of leadership and restore trust.

“Leadership Roundtable encourages the bishops to step boldly into the commitments they made this week as part of their new strategic plan and the revised Program of Priestly Formation, as well as a renewed focus on creating a diverse leadership that unites the Church,” notes Kim Smolik, Ed.D., CEO of Leadership Roundtable. “If undertaken comprehensively and adequately resourced, the USCCB’s plans could help create a new culture of leadership that restores trust in this time of crisis.”

The bishops voted to make “Protect and Heal God’s Children” one of four priorities for the conference in its 2021-2024 strategic plan. Under this priority, they included action steps such as “Extend and ensure effective collaboration with the laity” and “nurture courageous and transparent leadership,” among others. The bishops also voted on a revision to its Program of Priestly Formation that includes some changes in the ways that priests are prepared for ministry; with some revisions made directly in response to the recent abuse crisis. The bishops’ election of the first Hispanic USCCB president this week, as well as multiple assembly sessions related to young adult engagement and the *V Encuentro* signal positive strides towards engaging diverse leadership.

“If these plans and programs are robustly enacted,” says Smolik, “the bishops have the opportunity to demonstrate to Catholics that they understand the sustained gravity of the current crisis and are serious about making substantive change. Trust can be rebuilt through accountability, transparency, and engaging diverse audiences in the work of the Church.”

A [Gallup poll](#) earlier this year showed that less than half of Catholics have confidence in the United States Catholic bishops or priests in the United States in general. Additionally, 37% of Catholics say they are questioning whether they will remain in the Church.

It is clear that the Vatican recognizes the importance of restoring a sense of synodality and trust for the future of the Catholic Church in the United States. Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Christophe Pierre noted in his opening remarks, “When we speak of the healing that needs to take place, we are necessarily saying that it should include a commitment to discovering ways and means of establishing communion and trust.”

“Jesus shows us the way,” remarks Smolik. “He gave us a model of servant leadership and showed us that the priority of a leader is not to defend oneself, but to defend and care for the most vulnerable. This week the bishops took another step in that direction and Leadership Roundtable looks forward to seeing the path of servant leadership become the renewed road of pastoral leadership.”

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*Leadership Roundtable promotes best practices and accountability in the management, finances, communications, and human resources development of the Catholic Church in the U.S., including greater incorporation of the expertise of the laity.*

For more information about Leadership Roundtable, visit [www.leadershiproundtable.org](http://www.leadershiproundtable.org)