

Catholic Radio: *The Instrument of the New Evangelization*

**A Tool to Fulfill Your Charge as
Teacher of the Faith**

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My Brother Bishop,

There are currently three struggles we face in fulfilling our role as shepherds: teaching the faith under all circumstances, communicating with our people quickly and flexibly, and finding enough money to do each of these. I, and your brother bishops listed below, who form an Episcopal Advisory Board for the Catholic Radio Association, have watched the development of Catholic Radio as a means to reach people in numbers and to be able to communicate easily without major financial expenditures on our part. In fact, this means of evangelization/catechesis is actually increasing the financial resources of our dioceses.

There are several different models that have developed in Catholic Radio since the Vatican II Council. The model we support is primarily a lay movement that is blossoming all over the country in response to the call of the Holy Spirit to our people to evangelize. And in keeping with the realities of our American culture, the developing Catholic Radio apostolate is showing great promise in teaching the faith to large numbers of people. It is reaching an increasing number of non-Catholics, and drawing many nominal Catholics back into the practice of their faith. This is a self-supporting ministry which works closely with the local bishop, but does not encumber him with the heavy media expenses. It is also proving to be a very effective outreach to Spanish speaking people in our dioceses.

We now have a trade association composed of most of the participants involved in Catholic Radio, from dioceses and parish and lay apostolates. This association is proving to be an invaluable resource in establishing and operating radio stations, and provides a resource through which these stations have access to many kinds of free, professionally- produced Catholic programming.

We will be sending you a packet of information in the Friday mailing from the USCCB office which will detail the evangelical outreach and financial benefits of Catholic Radio for arch/dioceses throughout the nation. We will also send you an invitation for a luncheon in Denver on Monday, June 14th at 1:00 p.m. to acquaint you with this developing radio ministry.

The members of the Episcopal Advisory Board for Catholic Radio Association are: Bishop Robert Baker (Charleston), Bishop Robert Morlino (Madison), Bishop Joseph Martino (Scranton), Bishop Placido Rodriguez (Lubbock), Bishop Salvatore Cordileone (Auxiliary of San Diego) and myself.

I remain fraternally yours in the Lord,



Most Reverend Elden Francis Curtiss
Archbishop of Omaha



“For the new evangelization to be effective, it is essential to have a deep understanding of the culture of our time in which the social communications media are most influential. Therefore, knowledge and use of the media, whether the more traditional forms or those which technology has produced in recent times, is indispensable. Contemporary reality demands a capacity to learn the language, nature and characteristics of mass media. Using the media correctly and competently can lead to a genuine inculturation of the Gospel” (Ecclesia in America, 72).

The words of our Holy Father, echoing the words of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, have certainly proven to be true in regards to Catholic radio. In the few short years it has been in existence in its most common form, as an apostolate established and promoted within the local Church, Catholic radio has had a remarkable effect. Numerous conversions and “reversions” to the Church have occurred. The faith of an untold number of Catholics has been strengthened and deepened in a profound way. The work of ecumenism has been advanced at the grass roots level as many non-Catholics have found the misconceptions they had about the Church were erroneous.

Catholic radio has been found to be particularly efficacious in the sphere of evangelization and catechesis, in part, precisely because Western culture is, predominantly, a culture of the media. The desires, attitudes and ideas which most people hold, even their religious and moral beliefs, are shaped in large part as result of their choices of media consumption.

Despite several factors, including the Council’s call for the liberal use of Catholic programming over four decades ago, the Popes’ repeated encouragement of the use of this media, the successes of Catholic radio demonstrated over the past several years, and the need for new methods of evangelization to combat the steady decline of morality and hemorrhage of Catholics from the Faith, there are still fewer than 100 Catholic-programmed stations in the United States. This compares to over 2,141 non-Catholic Christian broadcast stations in the US out of a total of over 17,300 licensed facilities. This situation requires, and is at this very moment is, being remedied.

To understand the efficacy of Catholic radio in assisting the Pastors of the Church in building up the Mystical Body of Christ, it is important to answer a few questions. The first question is “Why Catholic radio?” That question can be broken down further into its constituent parts: “Why?” “Catholic?” “Radio?” Second, the related, and perhaps more practical, question needs to be answered. This question asks in what way(s) Catholic radio may assist the Church in fulfilling the missionary command of her Divine Savior to “Go and make disciples.” This is an especially pressing question with regard to the immigration of Hispanics to the United States and the intensity with which our separated brothers and sisters are focusing their efforts proselytizing the Hispanic community. Thirdly, one must ask, given the need and efficacy of Catholic radio, what is the most effective way of establishing a station? And finally, what role does and can the Catholic Radio Association play in assisting lay and diocesan Catholic radio initiatives to bear fruit, according to our Lord’s instruction on evaluating the value of any undertaking.

“Using the media correctly and competently can lead to a genuine inculturation of the Gospel.” (Ecclesia in America, 72)

Why Catholic Radio?

Indeed. Why Catholic radio? This is the essential question which needs to be asked and answered. Are there not already a multiplicity of efforts already in place in the Church to aid her in her mission of evangelization and catechesis? Is not the media best left to the secular efforts of those involved in entertainment, news, etc. already? Or, perhaps, should not Catholics simply be involved in bringing about a conversion within the prevailing secularity and immorality of the media so that it might provide wholesome entertainment and information?

One of the many attractive aspects of the Catholic Faith is its ability to be inclusive. It need not resort to an “either-or” mentality but can take the best of *both* this *and* that. In regard to the above questions, the answer is to do *both* Catholic radio *and* the Church’s other efforts *and* be a leaven in the secular media. In fact, as will be shown, Catholic radio can make the other works of the Church eminently more fruitful.

In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI answered our question as to why we should establish and use particularly Catholic-programmed stations. He said.

“Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize...”

In making this statement Pope Paul VI links the prophetic mission of Jesus Christ, “I must proclaim the Good News of the kingdom of God” (Lk 4:43), with the mission of the Church to “Go and make disciples...teaching them all that I have commanded you.” (Mt. 28:19-20). This mission of the Church is precisely derived from Christ’s mission. It is his Mystical Body that carries on his (its) mission.

It is not the question of “Why?”, then, that calls out to be answered. It is evident in all that the Church does, including her many magisterial documents, that her very nature is missionary. The more pressing questions then are precisely the questions of formulating a message of evangelization that is specifically Catholic and of disseminating that Catholic message via an effective medium. In addition, we must ask why Catholic radio is a particularly effective medium, in comparison to other mediums, for spreading the Catholic Faith.

In *Redemptor hominis* Pope John Paul II calls to mind that Jesus Christ fully reveals man to himself (cf. RH, 8) and that man is made in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gn 1:26). It is this fundamental understanding of man’s nature that calls for Catholic radio. How so?

We know that God is eternal truth. Jesus himself tells us that he is “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (Jn 14:6). If then, Jesus is truth and he fully reveals man to himself. If we know from Sacred Scripture that man is made in the image of God who is truth, then we know that man is made for truth; in the same way he is made for every other attribute of God, i.e., for love, for justice, etc.

The expression of the understanding of this revealed truth is no more poetically stated than in St. Augustine’s *Confessions*:

“Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you. In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would have not been at all. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed you fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for your peace.”

Nor is it more succinctly stated than by Augustine when he says, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”

The Father’s of the Second Vatican Council understood this need of man for God and to hear the truths of the Faith proclaimed:

“Therefore, this sacred Synod advises them of the obligation they have to maintain and assist Catholic ... radio and television programs and stations, *whose principal objective is to spread and defend the truth and foster Christian influence in human society*” (*Inter Mirifica*, 17).

St. Paul himself, was faced with a culture whose religious ideas and philosophies ran counter to the teachings of Christ. Even with sometimes openly hostile religious leaders, St. Paul found it imperative to preach “Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and and folly to the Gentiles” (1 Cor 1:23). Yet in preaching in a way that would have seemed folly to the experts of his time, Paul became the single most effective evangelist in all of human history.

Is mankind any different today? Is not the Crucified and the message He proclaimed a stumbling block to the prevailing religious sentiments of today? Is not the wisdom of Christ folly to secular humanists in their human wisdom? Is the power of Christ become lessened in our time that we need to couch our proclamation of the Faith in relevant language more palatable to our modern sensibilities? Need we hide the Light of Faith under a bushel basket and let out only faint rays, almost indistinguishable from those of other faiths, so as to somehow lure listeners into listening long enough to give them a snippet of Jesus Christ? Is our faith in God’s power to convert so feeble that we rely more upon the skillful crafting of our own words to bring about conversion? Do we really believe that by merely providing a form of Christian entertainment wherein we sow tiny seeds of Eternal Truth that we will have the success of St. Paul in bringing about the conversion of entire cities?

Today, just as in Paul’s time, the foolishness and weakness of God will prove to be stronger and wiser than man (cf. 1 Cor 1:25). We need only obey Christ’s command and follow St. Paul’s example.

Pope John Paul II makes this connection in *Catechesi tradendae* when he exhorts the catechist to pass on “the teaching of Jesus Christ, the Truth that he communicates or, to put it more precisely, the Truth that He is” (CT, 6).

Pope Paul VI sums up the imperative for radio programming that is specifically, unapologetically and thoroughly Catholic:

“The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs” (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, 18).

It goes without saying, even though we have forcefully said it, that there is an absolute and undeniable need for evangelization and catechesis and that that work can only be done through proclaiming Jesus Christ. But then how do we go about fulfilling that mission? Is Catholic radio a viable or effective means?

There are four reasons that show why radio should be used, and seen, as a means of evangelization and catechesis:

1. The authority of the Church
2. The success of secular radio
3. The success of Christian radio

4. The success of Catholic radio

We will look at each of them in brief.

The most compelling of these reasons is listed first and the most compelling evidence in support of this reason is the voice of the Holy Spirit in our time, the Second Vatican Council:

“The most important of these inventions are those media which, such as radio..., can, of their very nature, reach and influence, not only individuals, but the very masses and the whole of human society” (Inter Mirifica, 1)

Not only has the Council called for Catholic radio, but each of the Popes going back to Pope Pius XII! Most recently one has only to think of the voluminous writings of Pope John Paul II, including *Ecclesia in America*, *Redemptoris missio*, and his many homilies and messages on World Communications Days.

Next we turn to the second reason, that is, the success of secular radio. At this end of the spectrum, for a reason from a completely secular point of view, we can see the impact that radio has just by viewing the enormous investment in radio infrastructure from individuals and international corporations. Would those seeking a return on their investment sink billions of dollars into a medium of communication that did not influence those it reached? Similarly, would advertisers, whose sole purpose in advertising is to convince listeners to buy their product, spend billions of their dollars on advertising each year if radio had not proven to be particularly effective in driving consumers to their respective products.

Thirdly, we must acknowledge the growth of evangelical Christian radio stations. This hits much closer to home, as we see the incredible investment by non-Catholic Christians in the modern means of social communications, i.e., radio, TV and the Internet, both in English and in Spanish. Specifically in regards to radio, our separated brothers and sisters currently own over 2,141 radio transmission facilities in the U.S. alone. They are not, however, in their efforts either here or abroad, slowing down. **Just last year, non-Catholic Christians applied for over 8,000 FM translators throughout the United States and its Territories.** This does not include their pending filings with the Federal Communications Commission for stations in the noncommercial FM band, the recent AM application window nor their purchase of already licensed facilities from other commercial and noncommercial broadcasters.

Clearly non-Catholic Christians have seen sufficient response to their evangelistic outreach through radio that they continue to commit significant sums of money to the acquisition of new outlets. It is important to note that Catholics are funding this expansion of non-Catholic Christian radio in the same percentage as they appear in the Christian population.

Lastly, our final reason points to the experience of Catholic radio as it is most commonly constituted today. Such Catholic radio stations have shown significant success in both numerical growth and in being an instrument through which God has brought about conversion.

In the eight year period of 1997 through 2004, Catholic radio has seen, as a percentage of total stations, a tremendous amount of growth. In 1996 there were only seven Catholic radio stations broadcasting in the US. At the end of 2004 there were over 90, a ten-fold increase in only eight years. This growth occurred in a climate not very conducive to Catholic radio and without much experience upon which to draw.

As a means to convey the Gospel, Catholic radio has proven to be very efficacious. Below are just a few examples of the correspondence which Catholic-programmed stations have received, and continue to receive, on a regular basis.

Two death row inmates are looking into the Catholic faith because of listening to WQOP-FM. They have also started a study group based on WQOP's programs.

A Baptist minister's wife, a former Catholic, called to say that both of them are regular listeners to KJBC. In addition, she says that her husband has changed his attitude for the better toward the Catholic Church. Something she has not been able to get him to do in all of their years of marriage.

"Thanks so much for your unselfish efforts. You prosper the souls of many...The more I listen to the station the more in love with our faith I become. There is so much there. You have no idea how much you have done for those that are listening. Thanks again."

There are also seven practical reasons why Catholic radio is becoming more widely adopted as a means of evangelization and catechesis. Catholic radio is:

Available – Everyone can listen, especially the poor and homeless (no subscription or service needed).

Personal – Radio touches people personally regardless of where they are. It allows a listener to dialogue with the speaker in the privacy of his own mind.

Continuous – Radio is always available, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. It can be listened to while driving, showering or even mowing the lawn.

Immediate – Radio programming can come direct to you without intermediary.

Timely – Radio can cover important issues and concerns as they happen.

Efficacious – Radio makes other efforts and programs fruitful.

Cost-effective – Dollar for dollar radio costs less than any other medium; it reaches more people in less time for less money with less staff.

There are two final practical motives for using radio. First, the seven reasons above make radio especially effective at reaching adults. Every pastor can attest to the difficulty of establishing and continuing an outreach to adults. How many well-prepared adult education classes or Retrouvaille weekends have gone under attended because adults don't have the time or disposition to attend? The result is an enormous adult population, grappling with mature and complex issues of life and morality, with a grade school, or at best a high school understanding of the Faith.

Second, radio provides the most effective means to reach out to Hispanic immigrants with the Faith as Spanish-speaking immigrants have a special affinity to receiving their information and entertainment via the radio. In addition, many parish priests do not possess the ability to speak Spanish and some immigrants may not feel comfortable, or be able to, attend formal outreaches at the parish.

Apart from the witness of personal holiness, Catholic radio offers the single most powerful means of evangelization and catechesis available to the Church today.

Chemistry 101

While actual chemistry has nothing to do with the physics involved in the operation of a radio station (and the physics involved have little to do with the efficacy of radio as an evangelistic tool), chemistry does have something to offer us in understanding how God works in our life. Although all analogies limp when applied to God, they are still useful, to an extent, in understanding God's interaction with us. So let us proceed.

In chemistry, a catalyst is an additive that lowers the energy required in a chemical reaction and increases the rate of a chemical reaction without being consumed in the process. Catalysts work by *increasing the frequency of collisions* between reactants, *altering the orientation of reactants* so that more collisions are effective or by *reducing intramolecular bonding* within reactant molecules. In the same way, Catholic radio is to the process of evangelization and catechesis what a catalyst is to a chemical reaction.

We know that all is grace with God and we cannot, strictly speaking, separate God's grace from himself, yet we can think of Catholic radio as a catalyst which God uses to bring about a reaction between himself and man.

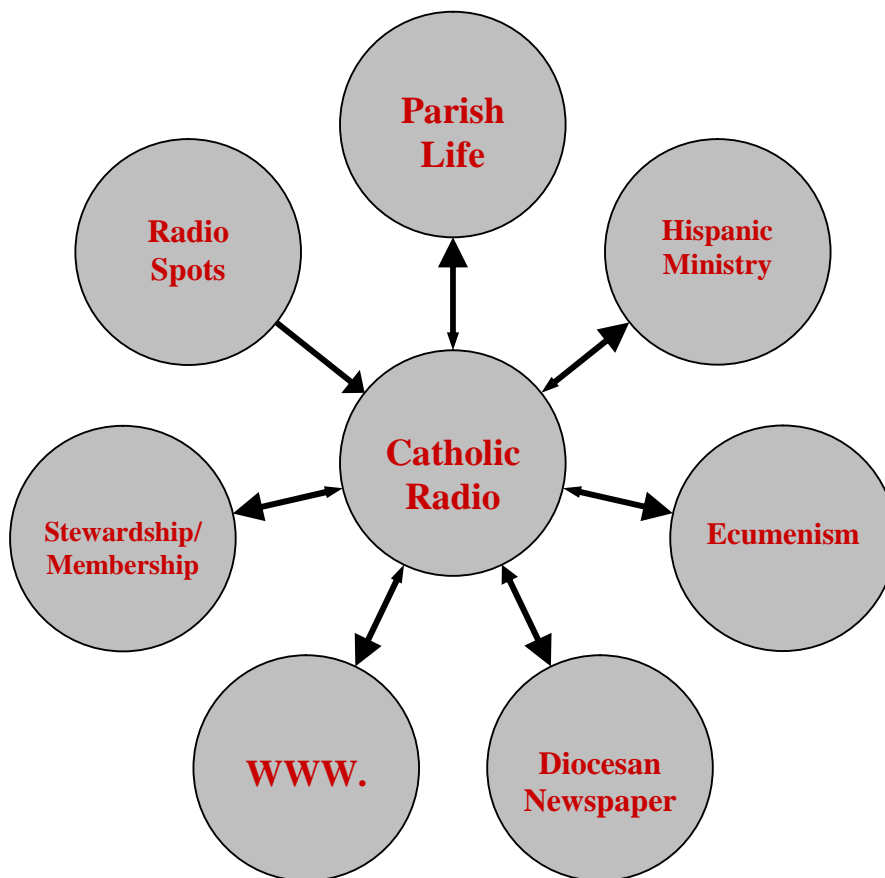
Just as a physical catalyst increases the rate of a chemical reaction, so too does Catholic radio. With Catholic radio, God is more frequently before the mind of the listener. The listener hears daily, and even several times a day, the Gospel proclaimed and in what ways a disciple of the Lord responds in love to the love of our Savior. There is not, as is typical, a seven day, or even 24 hour, interruption in the reaction process.

Through Catholic radio God makes our interactions (reactions) with Him more fruitful. Through Catholic radio He builds upon the graces received in the Sacraments, He multiplies the fruits of prayer with His continued presence and teaching. The reaction need not stop when the listener leaves Mass or is going about his or her daily life. It is continued with and through Catholic radio.

Lastly, through Catholic radio God can reduce our attraction and bonding to sin through exhortation to live a life of virtue. It is in living a life of virtue that we become free to react more fully with God.

A Synergistic Effect

Not only does Catholic radio serve as a catalyst to the Faith, it also works as a multiplier to the many other outreaches present in the Church.



“Catholic media work is not simply one more program alongside all the rest of the Church's activities:...[social] communications should be an integral part of every pastoral plan, for it has something to contribute to virtually every other apostolate, ministry, and program” (*Aetatis Novae*, 17).

Some Basic Considerations

Cost?

One reason for the expansion of Catholic radio is the increased availability of free, well-produced Catholic programming. Since the greatest operational expense in running a radio station is the expense of producing programming, and the greatest technical impediment is the production of quality programming, the availability of free, well-produced programming has been a tremendous boon and has made radio viable in areas where it otherwise would not have been, or would only have been with tremendous local expenditures.

While some costs are higher or lower depending upon the market and the local outreach, the experience of member stations in the Catholic Radio Association shows that most stations operate, on average, for approximately \$100,000 per year or less, even in major US cities. This is significant for several reasons: First, these stations are generally fully listener-supported. Some revenues may be acquired through underwriting, but these are generally a small percentage. Second, these stations operate with little, and usually no, diocesan money. Third, as listeners begin to understand and live their Catholic faith more fully, they begin to take their stewardship responsibilities seriously. They become more active parishioners and more active in support their local Catholic stations as well as the other outreaches of the Church.

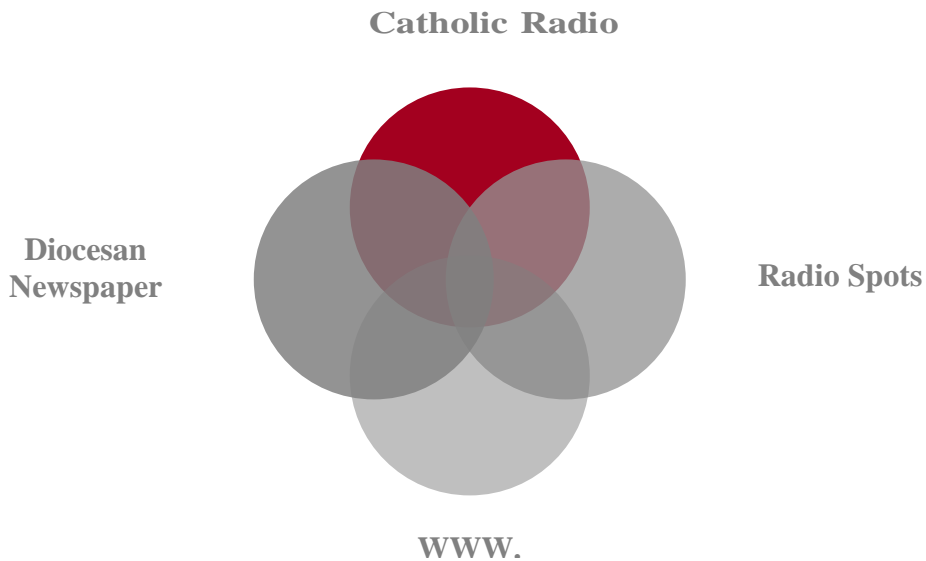
The Effects of Catholic Radio

The graphic below, while not plotted to any specific scale, demonstrates the effect which Catholic radio can have within the Church if properly integrated.



A Complete Media Approach

Catholic radio is not only simple to operate, it completes and complements other media efforts in the Church. Because of its complementarity with other media, in cross-promotion and support, Catholic radio is a tool in responding to the increasing convergence of the media. It allows for other media in the Church to come together and work in union to proclaim the Gospel. It creates a way for the efforts of the Diocese to be promoted and supported by Catholic radio.



WHY LOCAL CATHOLIC RADIO?

It's Responsive – Those raised and/or living in a locale generally have the greatest awareness of what is needed and the greatest desire to bring it about.

Fiscal Control – The funds to establish and operate any station will be raised locally to begin with. Local ownership and operation keep the funds local.

Program Control – A locally-owned station has full control over all aspects of programming and outreach, i.e., web site, newsletter, marketing, fund raising, etc.

Lower Overhead – The annual operating cost to run a local station is generally significantly lower than a network station.

Sense of Ownership – A locally-owned station engenders a greater sense of ownership and therefore support and involvement.

Subsidiarity – As seen above, a locally-owned station exemplifies the moral principle of subsidiarity.

Solidarity – A locally-owned station, an active participant in the local Church and the Association and supported by the Association and its members, visibly lives out the virtue of solidarity and aids other stations in doing the same.

How Can the Catholic Radio Association Help?

The Catholic Radio Association was formed in 1999 by the leaders and pioneers in the lay Catholic radio movement in response to the growing need for knowledgeable, professional and objective assistance to the many diocesan and lay radio initiatives underway at that time. To date, its directors and officers have helped establish over half of the Catholic stations in the United States on the air today.

Members of the Association include the USCCB, dioceses, parishes, religious orders and lay apostolates involved in the production of programming or the operation of Catholic radio stations.

To assist its members in carrying out the work of the New Evangelization, the Catholic radio association offers the following services:

- Diocesan media integration
- Pastoral media planning
- English and Spanish Programming from EWTN, Catholic Answers, Ave Maria Radio, St. Joseph Radio and others
- Station acquisition assistance
- Engineering/technical
- Station operating systems
- Marketing
- Legal
- Insurance
- Resource sharing
- Purchasing discounts
- Regulatory updates and guidance
- Newsletters/information exchange
- Training
- Education & Consulting
- Special events
- National Radiothon

For more information about establishing a Catholic radio station, incorporating Catholic radio into your diocesan pastoral plan or assistance in evaluating current or planned radio efforts, please contact:

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