



July 2008

## *Development Directions*

A free resource for pastors, principals, development directors, volunteers and anyone engaged in the ministry of Catholic development.

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### "CATHOLIC DEVELOPMENT in a TOUGH ECONOMY"

By Frank Donaldson, President

All any of us has to do is open a newspaper, turn on the TV, pump gas at the local service station, look at our grocery receipts in amazement, read about the number of foreclosures, or see what the market has done over the last twelve months to realize that this country is in a tough economic climate. In the Catholic world we continue to hear many stories that are not the most encouraging - Sunday collections are down; capital campaigns are off their mark; annual funds didn't meet goal; tuition dollars are too high for some folks to afford; endowments are not bringing the percentages that are needed to fund needed programs and services; key financial leaders in our parishes and schools are sitting tight until they can see where all of this is headed. The list goes on and on.

Where does this leave us as Catholic leaders in our dioceses, parishes and schools? One thing is clear: we are in the midst of tough financial times. For some: tuition dollars are hard to come by; 5-6-7 figure gifts are not as plentiful as in the past; some Catholic school teachers can no longer sit idly by and realize that their public school counterparts are making \$10,000+ more than they. Does this mean that all is lost and we just have to wait it out and do nothing? Absolutely not!

For the many more who now understand true Catholic Development - ***the meaningful involvement of people in your mission and vision for the future*** - now is the time to activate and integrate this philosophy and culture and move full steam ahead. Now is NOT the time to raise tuition, to start asking for more money from the pulpit, to add a few more fund- raising events, or to get rid of the development, stewardship and marketing personnel at your Catholic school and/or parish. Now is the time to closely assess how and why you are inviting people to become engaged in your Catholic institution. Now is NOT the time to start pointing fingers at those people who are unable to "make good" on their 3 year pledge or their weekly offertory intention. Now is the time to inform, invite, involve and engage people into the life of our parish, our school,

our diocese.

Why not consider the following - as radical as some of these points may be:

- Freeze or lower tuition for 2009-2010 school year and announce it now.
  - As strange as this may be, I would much rather have 400 elementary school students paying \$3,000/year than have 300 paying \$3500/year. I would much rather have more families spread the word of what this Catholic school is trying to do in terms of working with families rather than taking the stance of, "Sorry, but this is what it takes to run the school." I would much rather have 400 kids out there bragging about their school rather than 300. I would much rather have more people participate in activities, fund- raisers, family events, etc. than less.
  - By doing this in August or September, it would also give you a lot more time to work on scholarships and seeking foundation grants and individual donors who will respond well to what you are trying to do - make Catholic education attainable.
- Begin working on one of three plans or a combination thereof and involve hundreds of people in the process.
  - Customer Service Plan for Catholic Schools
  - People Engagement Plan for Parishes
  - Strategic Plan for Development for Parishes and Schools
- Personally visit with (preferably in their home) every new Catholic school family who enrolls in your school for the 2008-2009 school year - by the end of the calendar year.
  - This can be done with teams of 2 - involving administration, faculty, and parent leaders.
  - The "visit" should be 20% about things the family needs to know about the school and 80% about what that family needs you to know about them and their child(ren).
  - It is all about building relationships.
- Personally visit (within 90 days) every new family who registers at the parish - making sure to build this people engagement process around five areas:
  - Letting them know more about the parish;
  - Understanding what needs they have from their new parish;
  - Inviting them to come to the parish for a new family "get-together" with the pastor and others;
  - Inviting their gifts of expertise, wisdom, talent, and things they would like to "give" or "offer" to the parish;
  - Explaining that the parish does invite Gifts of Prayer, Involvement and Financial Participation.
- Begin a vibrant Greeters' Ministry at the parish where all people who come to worship at any of the weekend Masses will feel welcomed and believe that they belong to that parish.
  - This may take a number of months to set up, and the ushers may think you are stepping on their toes, but a strong Greeters' Ministry is so much more than just saying hello. This is all about engaging people and inviting them to belong. This is also about recognizing new families and visitors and getting to know them while they are there.
- Create a monthly Family Night at the parish where families can bring their children for a covered dish supper or to watch a movie or to play games or to have a Chili (or Gumbo) "Cook Off."
  - As I heard a father say in a recent meeting in the Nashville Diocese, "Last Saturday night, my wife and I took our three kids out to eat, then to a movie, then to get ice cream. It was a great time, don't get me wrong. But, as we were driving home, we

asked each other, "Why can't we do something like this at our church?"

- With your Stewardship Outreach over the next year or so, invite those three gifts at the same time - Gift of Prayer, Gift of Involvement, Gift of Financial Participation.
  - Go strongly after all families to participate with one or more of these gifts. If they give the Gift of Prayer and that is it, then that is wonderful! Money does not have to be the only gift that someone can bring to the Altar of God.
  - Recognize - alphabetically - all of the families who participate with their Gift(s).
  - Keep reminding people over and over and over again that it is not the money that matters; it is whatever gifts you are able to bring at this station of your life.
  - To move to this culture takes a while, so please be prepared for some people to ALWAYS equate your invitation to money and nothing else. However, be persistent, and after 2-3 years, you will begin to see the change.
  
- Understand "Critical Mass."
  - One of the most important points to understand in true Catholic Development is "Critical Mass." For example, let us say that you have a Catholic school that is undertaking an Annual Fund that seeks to invite financial leaders, parents, alumni, faculty and staff and the business community. So many times, everything is centered around, "How much money did you raise?" Although this is a key point, it should not be the only point. Please allow me to explain.
  - Let's take the Parent Division which, after you pull out the 65 financial leaders, ends up having 235 families. Most Annual Funds concentrate solely on the \$\$\$\$. Why not shift this paradigm and concentrate on those three Gifts - Prayer and/or Involvement and/or Financial Participation?
  - I would much rather have 250+ families walking around feeling good about their participation, talking about the school, and seeing their names on a list of people who gave one or more "gifts" rather than hounding them for money because they did not "do their share."
  - "Critical Mass" is reached when 50-60% of the people who are invited actually participate. Can you imagine if 60% of your parishioner base participated in some manner? Can you imagine if 55% of your alumni base got involved with some kind of gift?
  - "Critical Mass" is powerful because it engages people and people know people and people talk and the wonderful "buzz" about your parish or your school needs to broadcast throughout your community. Do you want 1,000 people saying great things about "their parish" or "their school" or 350? Shoot for "Critical Mass."

These are tough times, and it does not look like things are going to ease up for some time; however, now is the time for true Catholic Development to shine. The above eight points are only scratching the surface. There is so much that can be done to engage people and develop relationships for a lifetime. I can remember right after 9/11, we had kicked off a capital campaign in the Cincinnati Archdiocese and everyone was very concerned with how people would respond because of the economy. Well, we emphasized the "Critical Mass" and had 76% of those 2600 families participate. The Campaign went through the roof - both in dollars and in people.

Our senior associate, Bernard Dumond, just completed a campaign in the Diocese of Baton Rouge last month. That Campaign also did great - mainly because the emphasis was put on people and what that parish would be like long after the Campaign was over. Evangelization was the "strong suit" that was played and folks responded. "People give to people." And money is not the only gift that people have to offer.

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- ***An Introduction to ISPD's Total Stewardship Process***  
(available now)
- ***Creating the Strategic Plan for Development for Parishes and Schools***  
(coming August 2008)
- ***Inviting, Involving, and Engaging More People into the Life of Your Catholic Parish***  
(coming September 2008)
- ***Getting Ready for a Capital Campaign, Part I***  
(coming October 2008)
- ***Implementing a Capital Campaign, Part II***  
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To receive your free 15 minute DVD, please visit the [Resource Center](#) on our website.

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Each announcement should be no more than 200 words and should invite people to submit a resume to your specific address (e-mail or physical). We ask that you mail new requests (with the announcement attached in a Microsoft Word document) to [ISPD@aol.com](mailto:ISPD@aol.com), including the name of your contact person and a telephone number where we can reach you, just in case we need clarification on the announcement. Announcements will be put in alphabetical order by institution.

- [Click here to read more about these job opportunities in Catholic development](#)

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## CATHOLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT TALK

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We hope you'll join us!

### Topics Include:

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- \*\* Become a More Welcoming, Engaging & Affirming Catholic Parish \*\*
- \*\* Best First Steps to Take in Beginning Your Catholic Development Efforts \*\*
- \*\* Capital Campaigns That Produce Results \*\*
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- \*\* Customer Service in Your Catholic School \*\*
- \*\* Long Range Planning \*\*
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### Locations Include:

Arlington, VA - Atlanta - Baton Rouge - Chicago - Dallas/Fort Worth - Dayton, OH  
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Philadelphia - Pittsburgh - San Francisco

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The Institute of School and Parish Development (ISPD) is a national, Catholic development consulting firm created to serve Catholic schools, parishes and dioceses in the areas of planning, marketing, fund-raising, and resource development.

**Please feel free to forward this newsletter to anyone you think could benefit from this information. If there are any topics you would like to see covered in a future newsletter, please contact us.**

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