



March 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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"TOO FEW VOICES CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS"

By Frank Donaldson, President

By now I am sure many of you have seen the latest results from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (see link below) that was published recently in many media sources. This study was the compilation of 35,556 phone interviews done here in the United States. Detailed results can be viewed online; however, what is interesting is, "The Roman Catholic Church has experienced the greatest net losses (of people) as a result of affiliation changes. About 1/3 of respondents (in the survey) raised Catholic said they no longer identified as such." Some go on to other religions, and others simply continue to live life with no religious affiliation. The Study also says that those religions that have lost parishioners are offering impersonal religion - as perceived by those leaving - and those winning parishioners are offering smaller scale opportunities for engagement.

It is also interesting to note that the Catholic religion, according to the survey, has held somewhat steady in our numbers, yet the main reason for that is immigration. The majority of the immigrants are Christian and half are Catholic.

As Catholic leaders, we all are faced with the daunting challenge of engaging people.

In the Archdiocese of Baltimore, I am wrapping up a series of five workshops that began in September 2007 and will end in May 2008. These are taking place over three nights in the three different vicariates. Approximately twenty parishes are participating this first year. The total focus is on "Inviting, Involving and Engaging People into the Life of Your Catholic Parish." All of these parishes have Core Teams who attend the workshops held every other month, with membership between 6-10

members; and, all of the Core Teams are following their homework assignments as they seek to engage people into the life of their parish. At the end of seven months, progress can definitely be seen as these parishes are positively and pro-actively calling attention to the fact that engaging people is a high priority; they are inviting the uninvolved; they are reaching out to all of the key ministries and getting them into the communication loop; they are conducting a parish-wide survey to determine what specific challenges they face in their own parish in regards to engaging, involving and welcoming; they are taking on new initiatives such as beginning or re-engineering a vibrant Greeters Ministry; they are gathering action plans on how to reach out and involve young people ages 16-25; they are inviting their parishioners to come and help them put together the action plan for the next 1-2 years that will reach out and "chip away" at those 70% who are not involved in any way.

What I am trying to say is that these parishes - regardless of their rate of progress - are doing something positive. They have focused their compass in the right direction. They are actively addressing the challenge of, "How can we reach out and invite and engage people to continue to be or begin to be an integral part of our faith community in our parish." I am very proud of their progress, especially some who are faced with folks in their parish who guard their kingdom and are totally against any change or receiving any input from the very people they serve.

The first step is to recognize the importance - to acknowledge the problem. According to the Gallup organization, approximately 70% of our parish families do not see their parish as important to their daily lives. According to the Pew Survey, the Catholic religion loses more parishioners than any other. This has a profound impact on enrollment in our Catholic schools, both now and in the future. It also greatly impacts the ability of a parish to move forward with vibrant ministries and to have the necessary resources - people, financial, community - to make a positive difference. **We all need to strive to be the exceptional parish and school!** And, only we can define what that means.

We need to begin, or actively continue as some of you are doing, to address this issue of people engagement. In the surveys that many of our clients conduct, we see and hear that more people leave a parish or a school because their needs are not getting met or they do not feel like they belong. No one reaches out and invites them personally. In the book *The Dream Manager* by Matthew Kelly he maintains that the number one problem that organizations and institutions face is the disengagement of people. Most do not feel connected, invited or affirmed, and the turnover or dropout rate continues to soar until someone or a group of leaders face the issue and do something about it.

All of us need to face this issue head on. In working with parishes in people engagement and Catholic schools in customer service, I can assure you it will be a challenge, and a change of culture will take time. Yet, even met with resistance, I often ask the questions: What are the alternatives? What are we doing as Catholic school leaders to invite and involve and spread a feeling of belonging among our parents, faculty, staff, alumni and parishioner base? What are we doing in parish life so that anyone who walks into our church will feel welcomed into a warm and embracing environment? How are we reaching out to those who do not sit in the pews on the weekends? The questions can go on and on, and yet the answers are right in front of us.

At a recent workshop I was doing in Toledo on people engagement, I was asked the question, "Frank, please name five things we can do to get us to start thinking

differently and becoming more people oriented." Here were some of my suggestions.

- Have your leadership (pastor, president, principal, board, council, etc.) understand the value and sense of urgency and go ahead and make the commitment to people engagement and customer service. In understanding this urgency, do the research (Gallup, CARA, PEW Survey) on the studies about why this is so important to the future of our Catholic faith and our Catholic schools. Google "FISH!"; go to the ISPD website and read the backlog of articles we have written on this subject; become a student of Total Quality and Change Process; invite speakers to come to your parish and/or school and address this subject, and the list goes on and on.
- Put in place a team of 8-12 leaders to guide your Catholic institution through this process. Be creative in deciding upon the name of this team.
- Evaluate through interviews, questionnaires, open discussions with your core team of leaders, town hall meetings, surveys, etc. how well your constituents think you are doing in the area of engaging, affirming, inviting and involving - in your parish and in your Catholic school.
- Once the compass is set, begin the communication and education process to ALL. State your mission of what you are trying to do. Establish the goals that you will seek to achieve in the first 12 months.
- Take on a project and show success. Maybe it is beginning a new Greeters Ministry; maybe it is home visits to new families coming into the school in 2008- 2009; maybe it is establishing a phone outreach ministry; maybe it is having all of your administration, faculty and staff watch the FISH! video and then start implementing an effective affirmation process for all.

We need more voices in this wilderness who are willing to change and understand that people will believe when they feel like they belong. It is left up to us to pick up the banner and march forward. We invite you to champion this cause; it just may mean the difference between surviving and prevailing.

May you and your family have a Wonderful and Blessed Easter!

- [Click here to access the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life](#)

ISPD OFFERS FREE SERVICE: A Place for You to Announce Job Openings in Catholic Development, Advancement and Total Stewardship

Beginning this month, ISPD is now offering a free service to any Catholic parish, school or diocese. We are opening up a separate button on our website at www.ispd.com entitled **Development Job Postings**. By clicking on this button,

anyone can go directly to this page and view the job announcements and opportunities from those Catholic institutions who send them to ISPD@aol.com. Twice per month in our two e-newsletters, ISPD will mention this opportunity and invite all readers to go to the website in order to view the announcements. These e-mail newsletters reach over 6,000 Catholic leaders each month.

Each announcement should be no more than 200 words. The announcement should invite people to submit a resume to your specific address (e-mail or physical). In mailing your request (with the announcement attached in a Microsoft Word document) to ISPD@aol.com, please indicate for us the name of the 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. This month there are two Catholic institutions that will begin this new service - Archbishop Moeller High School in Cincinnati, OH and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Slidell, LA.

- [Click here to read more about these two announcements](#)

ISPD 15 MIN Educational DVDs on Catholic Development Free upon Request

Beginning in April 2008, ISPD will begin offering one free educational DVD per month on Catholic Development topics. Listed here are those topics and the month they will be released.

- ***An Introduction to Long-Range Planning for Catholic Parishes***
(April 2008)
- ***An Introduction to Long-Range, Strategic Planning for Catholic Schools***
(May 2008)
- ***An Introduction to ISPD's Total Stewardship Process***
(June 2008)
- ***Creating the Strategic Plan for Development for Parishes and Schools***
(August 2008)
- ***Inviting, Involving, and Engaging More People into the Life of Your Catholic Parish***
(September 2008)
- ***Getting Ready for a Capital Campaign, Part I***
(October 2008)
- ***Implementing a Capital Campaign, Part II***
(November 2008)

To receive your free 15 minute DVD, please visit the [Resource Center](#) on our website or send your e-mail request to ispd@aol.com.

CATHOLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT TALK

ISPD is your Catholic School Enrollment Solution for maintaining and/or increasing the quantity, quality, or diversity of your elementary or secondary Catholic school enrollment. *Catholic School Enrollment Talk* is our free monthly online newsletter for anyone interested in Catholic school enrollment solutions.

- [Subscribe today!](#)

SPRING 2008 WORKSHOPS

Dynamic presenters share proven strategies and discuss development issues during one and two day seminars for Catholic parishes and schools. These workshops are conveniently held across the country at an affordable price of \$69-\$250 .

We hope you'll join us!

Topics Include:

- ** Become a More Welcoming, Engaging & Affirming Catholic Parish **
- ** Best First Steps to Take in Beginning Your Catholic Development Efforts **
 - ** Capital Campaigns That Produce Results **
- ** Catholic School Enrollment Solutions - One and Two Day Seminars **
 - ** Charge Up Your Development Battery **
 - ** Customer Service in Your Catholic School **
 - ** Long Range Planning **
 - ** Total Stewardship **

ISPD Also Conducts On-Site Workshops

Offered to Catholic schools and parishes within a single diocese, these workshops are designed to meet your specific needs.

- [Check Here for More Information on ISPD Development Workshops](#)

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Visit our web site for free resources and valuable information. 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.

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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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