



August 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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"Pews, Coffers and Classrooms Are Filled: What Do We Do Now?"

By Frank Donaldson, President

As strange for some as this may sound, there are a fair number of Catholic parishes and schools throughout the country who are doing quite well. New families register on a consistent basis; offertory collections are climbing at a steady pace; classes have waiting lists; and, throughout the community there is the perception that everything is great.

Usually these Catholic institutions are in this shape because of two reasons:

1. The leaders at that Catholic parish and/or school have worked hard in getting themselves to that position by believing, exhibiting and implementing excellent Catholic Development and Total Stewardship philosophy and processes.
2. Because of demographic shifts, an undesirable public school system, a church or school closing, or a mass exodus from a nearby parish or school, a Catholic institution takes advantage of what has been presented to them.

In working with or hearing about some of these folks through our workshops, presentations and consulting, I am always puzzled when that # 2 group listed above does not realize that the position they are in can be a very precarious one. The # 1 group is always a pleasure, because they know that they are only as good as their latest test scores, the last Liturgy that was celebrated, their last Open House for new parents, the last home visit to a new parish family, or the last planning process that they launched which included hundreds of people. They get it! They understand how to build a stronger faith community.

The # 2 group I always worry about. Please allow me to share several experiences I have had

over the past year with Catholic institutions whom I would say fit into the # 2 category.

Experience # 1: While visiting a Catholic parish of 1700 families, whose offertory collections are at \$27,500/week, I was surprised by the demeaning manner of those who presented at that Liturgy. The homily was condescending; people in attendance were talked down to when given instructions at the beginning of Mass; the request for money was in a demanding tone, and one person was publicly criticized because her cell phone rang during Mass. That tirade from the altar lasted for over a minute. And, I really believe she did not know that she had left her cell phone on in her purse.

Experience # 2: There were waiting lists at this one Catholic elementary school whose classrooms were filled because of changing demographics. Once a rural parish and school, this place found itself in the midst of a great population shift with the diocese making no promises to build anything new in the foreseeable future. Because of this "unexpected" growth, some grades had as many as 33 students, and other grades had split into two and three classes with uncertified teachers at the helm. Calling the school office was a unique experience, simply because the person answering the phone did not make you feel as welcome as you would have liked. The "gatekeeper" controlled the gate as opposed to opening it.

Experience # 3: In a workshop I was doing in the Midwest this past year, two of the attendees introduced themselves as the pastor and Pastoral Council president of a nearby parish. When asked what they expected to get out of the workshop, one of them said, "Not that much really. We're already doing most of the stuff your brochure said you were planning to teach. So, if we leave with just one little nugget of wisdom, that would be great. By the way, we may have to ease out of here around noon."

In probing further with all of the attendees that day, I asked what the top two challenges were that their parish was facing. Many were straightforward and stated things such as lack of involvement of young people, the same people doing the same thing, lack of "new blood", parish debt, the school draining the parish, not a strong Total Stewardship effort, and the list goes on. With the two attendees from the parish who did not feel they were going to get too much out of the workshop, they said, "We are registering between 15-20 new families each month, but we are also losing about the same." Obviously, flags were not going up in their minds, and those leaving were allowed to leave without any exit conversations.

As I said, the above three examples are not the norm. Many parishes and school are surging forward with vibrant Catholic Development and Total Stewardship efforts, and yet there are those who simply do not seem to get it. After all these years in this business, I have come to the conclusion that they simply think that their situation - growth and prosperity - are going to remain that way forever. Unfortunately, as we all know, sooner or later they will be sadly mistaken. Nothing lasts forever.

- When things are going great, then **NOW** is the time to kick it in stronger.
- When people seem ready, willing and able, **NOW** is the time to move forward with the 7 Is:
 - Identify
 - Inform
 - Invite
 - Involve
 - Implement
 - Invest
 - Improve
- When resources are available, then **NOW** is the time to purchase those items, hire those people, buy those programs that will advance your Catholic institution.
- When you think everything is going to last forever and all studies say that you are in perfect

position for another 10-15 years, then **NOW** is the time to forge ahead and create that new Long-Range Plan.

- When classrooms are filled and there are waiting lists in many classes, **NOW** is the time to launch the new programs, hire that extra special teacher, build that new science lab, move to laptops for all.
- When the pews continue to fill up and there is standing room only at one or two of the Masses, **NOW** is the time to create and implement a vibrant new Greeters Ministry.
- When they are climbing from the rafters at most all of your Masses, **NOW** is the time to introduce the new families who registered last month and invite those who are new to your parish at that Mass to stand and be recognized and welcomed.
- When a school closes nearby and you know that you are going to get some of those students, **NOW** is the time to open up and offer student and family guidance in order to help those families in the transition to make the very best possible decision - regardless of whether or not they come to your Catholic school.
- When school families leave or parish families no longer participate, **NOW** is the time to conduct exit surveys and interviews.
- When all seems well, **NOW** is the time for that "customer service" plan, **NOW** is the time to engage more people into the life of your parish, **NOW** is the time to excite and ignite your parish and school leaders to move forward with growth and energy. **NOW** is the time to be visionary, forward-thinking, positive, engaging, and open to new ideas, new thoughts, and new plans.
- Wayne Gretzky, the famous hockey player, once said, "I skate to where the puck is going to be, not to where it has been."

Where are we going to be in the next 3-5-7-10 years and beyond with our Catholic institutions? That answer is in our hands and also in the minds of many others who will be willing to "skate" with you - if they are personally invited.

ISPD 15 MIN Educational DVDs on Catholic Development Free upon Request

Beginning in April, ISPD will introduce a new educational DVD each month on Catholic Development topics.

- ***An Introduction to Long-Range Planning for Catholic Parishes***
(available now)
- ***An Introduction to Long-Range, Strategic Planning for Catholic Schools***
(available now)
- ***An Introduction to ISPD's Total Stewardship Process***
(available now)
- ***Creating the Strategic Plan for Development for Parishes and Schools***
(Available now)
- ***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**
(coming November 2008)

To receive your free 15 minute DVD, please visit the [Resource Center](#) on our website.

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

ISPD now offers a free service to any Catholic parish, school or diocese. We have a new button on our website entitled [Development Job Postings](#). By clicking on this button, visitors can go directly to this page and view job announcements and opportunities from area Catholic institutions. Twice per month in our two newsletters, ISPD will highlight this opportunity and invite readers to view these announcements. These newsletters reach over 10,000 Catholic leaders by e-mail each month.

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 , 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](#)

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!](#)

FALL 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 \$75-\$99.

We hope you'll join us!

Topics Include:

**** Annual Fund ****

- ** 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 ****
 - ** Customer Service in Your Catholic School ****
 - ** Long Range Planning ****
 - ** One Person Development Office ****
 - ** Total Stewardship ****

Locations Include:

Atlanta - Baton Rouge - Chicago - Dallas/Fort Worth - Dayton, OH
Denver - Minneapolis/St Paul - Nashville - New Orleans - Orlando
Philadelphia - Pittsburgh - San Francisco

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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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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