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### **It's all about Mission and Ministry**

Recently, CFC staff reflected on trends we have observed in parishes and schools in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis over the last five years. The number of parishes we work with and the increasing scope of services we provide have allowed us to develop a more refined understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing our parishes. We have been looking for traits that successful parishes have in common. Today this knowledge is largely anecdotal, but we hope to scientifically test our observations in the future as the result of a grant.

How does one measure success? We believe that a successful parish has a well defined mission and delivers the ministries required to support its mission. There are several key elements imbedded in this statement. Each parish we work with defines its own mission, yielding great diversity around our Archdiocese. Equally great is the diversity in how each ministry is delivered.

The traits we have observed displayed by successful parishes are:

- An engaged leadership that accepts responsibility for its actions.
- A common parish vision imparted by a consistent message.
- Shared, collegial leadership.
- Strong and open communications.
- Accurate assessments of realities facing the parish.
- An ability to think outside the box.

Successful leaders demand that budget projections correlate closely to historic trends. They adopt new strategies to deal with problems as they arise. They form partnerships with other Catholic institutions to expand the resources available to their parishioners.

Parishes, like society in general, are experiencing great pressure on limited resources. Leaders in successful parishes are able to prioritize ministries and allocate resources accordingly. They accept responsibility for both the specific mix of ministries provided and, when prudent, for the curtailment of some ministries. Wise leadership fosters the development of trust with parishioners by adhering to the shared vision of the parish. When that vision is challenged, successful parishes assess the situation and respond in an appropriate manner.

Central to Catholicism is our Eucharistic ministry. Successful parishes actively maintain the physical plant in support of this ministry. Repairs and renovations represent a core expense item in their annual budgets. Parishioners are assured that the physical assets they have entrusted to the leadership not only maintain but increase their value.

Communication with parishioners is a key element of shared, collegial leadership. A vision can only be held in common when it is shared with and owned by the broader membership of the parish. CFC has found that a true shared vision helps create long-term financial strength and success.

*Newsletter Issue: July 2007*