

Michael Davis, Office of Lay Ministry & Planning



Greetings! *The first annual reports from parishes and councils are flowing into our office!*, Thank you! To those who have and are just now the annual report on behalf of their parish family or deanery council. Your dialogue, visioning, and action plans in regards to our common strategic plan, **One Future-Un Futuro** demonstrates progress for our local church

community. The first of many annual reports are witness to the hope filled and vibrant vision across the diocese. Your efforts, insights and activities witness Christ's living presence in your parish family and the community.

There are many inspiring stories within the Annual Reports, here is a sample from St. Leo's in Grand Island.

"It was inspiring to note your ongoing commitment and progress especially in Outreach and social justice. The parish's tithing, annual coat give away, support for Birthright and Hope Harbor Homeless shelter demonstrate the gospel in action serving outside the parish needs. The action plan for Stewardship will help advance the needed awareness and understanding of developing the heart and mind of a steward. These Outreach efforts along with the continued emphasis on the other components of the Strategic Plan for the Diocese of Grand Island; Faith Formation and Outreach will continue to reveal new opportunities for evangelization. This co-responsibility enhances the vision, shares the success and lightens the struggles of moving forward with strategic planning efforts."

We are looking forward to sharing your continued progress, success, and lessons learned and sharing your wisdom and best practices with Bp. Dendinger and the local church in the comprehensive report.

#### **Parishioners' & Participatory Leadership**

Co-responsibility is what our baptism calls us to; we are to fully participate in the teaching, sanctifying, and governing ministry of Christ as believers. *"Given the critical need for leadership in the church and society, the development of leaders needs to be framed as a matter of urgency and importance. It is simply not possible to lead and organize ministry without inviting, recruiting, developing, supporting and training the people."*— Dan R. Ebener, *Servant Leadership Models for Your Parish*, (source follows) This Book provides data to show that servant leadership really works. If you care about such things, consider this a "must read." to better understand that servant leadership really works in Catholic parishes, Ebener's new book, is an answer to your prayers.

Two things about Dr. Ebener's research on servant leadership's effectiveness in Catholic parishes should be noted immediately:

**Size doesn't matter** — Ebener reports in detail on parishes ranging in size from 43 to 1,690 families (over 4,500 individuals).

**Structure doesn't matter** — in fact; structure varies widely among the three top-performing parishes he studies,

confirming what we have said all along: *servant leadership is not about structure, it's about relationships.*

"What I am telling pastors is that if they serve the people, the people will serve the parish. That is the essence of my book," says Dr. Ebener. But by showing precisely *how* servant leadership is provided in a variety of parish settings, the author gives readers much added value.

Dr. Ebener's insights and conclusions are the result of two extensive studies conducted in the Diocese of Davenport. **A Parish Life Study**, which included a series of objective measures of all of the diocese's 84 parishes undertaken in 2005-06;

**A Parish Case Study**, conducted by the author in 2006-07, which built on the first study by investigating what factors accounted for the exceptional dynamics in the diocese's highest-performing parishes.

Dr. Ebener concludes that the very best parishes, as determined by the objective Parish Life Study, are marked by servant leadership — although the form it takes varies widely from parish to parish.

**In the smallest parish**, which shares a pastor with another parish, the atmosphere is one of *family*. There is just one staff member on site, a woman religious, and people mostly pitch in on an ad hoc basis to address needs as they arise.

**In the mid-size parish**, with 516 families, a full-time pastor and small staff oversee the contributions of active parishioners. *Commissions* not only serve parish needs but reach out to engage and involve parishioners on an ongoing basis. Here the atmosphere is all about *community*.

**In the largest parish**, in which a pastor leads a large professional staff, the approach is all about *teamwork*. The parish uses a series of teams and small groups to keep people engaged and support a wide variety of ministries. "One story from the smallest parish in the Davenport Diocese involves a guy who showed up for Mass 15 minutes early, and he noticed that the front door wasn't swinging properly. So he went to his truck, pulled out a toolbox and fixed the door. He went to Mass and that was the end of it. But what's significant about the story is that first, in a small parish, you can get things done smoothly and easily. Also, if the pastor of the church had seen him doing this, and asked him to stop and go through the building committee, see if it was in the budget, and fill out the paperwork, the guy would lose his initiative. A servant leadership model gives people a sense of ownership of their parish. That guy treated his church like his home. Of course, in a larger parish there are more rules. But the culture of a parish is contingent on the leadership of the pastor. It can either encourage or extinguish initiative. That story was just one simple story, but there are lots more in the book." Dr. Ebener's [\*Servant Leadership Models for Your Parish\*](#). It offers both compelling arguments for and compelling visions of servant leadership building up the body of Christ in a variety of pastoral settings.

<http://catholicroundtable.org/blog/2010/06/interview-with-dan-ebener-author-of-servant-leadership-models/>

**The local church moving forward together for a blessed One Future-Un~Futuro**

Faithfully Yours in Christ!

