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So you are a ...
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SO YOU ARE A PARISH PRESIDENT



BY JAMES J. McQUADE, S. J.

*A QUEEN'S WORK
PAMPHLET*

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**So You Are a
Parish President!**

By

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THE QUEEN'S WORK

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THE QUEEN'S WORK

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So You Are a Parish President!

SO YOU are a parish president! It is a sort of mixed feeling, isn't it? It is certainly an honor. With that you are pleased and you should be. There is no doubt about it that you feel you have a good opportunity to assume your rightful role in the lay apostolate. And you have. At the same time you have misgivings. You wonder, first of all, about yourself. Are you able to "swing the deal?" What about your popularity among the other members of the parish? Above all, what about those who did not vote for you? What about the priests with whom you must necessarily deal in your new position?

And what about the program? Do you really know what you want to do? The deficiencies of the present program may have been apparent to you for a long time. You wonder whether they are apparent also to others. Yes, it is a mixed feeling, this being a parish president.

What you need is assurance. You need to be convinced that there is truth in the lines of Robert Browning,

"Our feet on the torrent's brink,
Our eyes on the clouds afar,
We fear the things that we think
Instead of the things that are."

Abraham Lincoln solaced himself in the midst of the worries of the presidency of the United States by reflecting that, "I have had many troubles in my life, but most of them never happened." So, it will be with

you and your new work as a parish president.

If everything were perfectly clear and you knew just exactly what to do and how to do it, you wouldn't be looking upon your new job with these mixed feelings. Your great enemy is confusion. But there is a tremendous difference between a confused mind looking at a situation and a clear mind looking at a confused situation. Confusion of mind can be avoided by taking up one thing at a time. A carefully planned program is the only answer to a confused situation. Let's talk over your new job and see what you have to do, and how you have to do it.

Calling a Meeting

Ordinarily you will be guided by the routine of the organization of which you are president. In any parish however, emergencies arise calling for more general action.

One of the things which a pastor ordinarily expects the parish president to be able to do is to call a meeting of the parishioners in general or of any specific group of parishioners. Such a request from the rectory will throw you into an anxiety state unless you have a definite program of what to do. You will develop your own special technique as time goes on in your job. In the meantime you might consider something like the following as a regular routine that you go through whenever you have to call a meeting.

The first thing you have to do in calling a meeting is let people know that there is

going to be a meeting. They must get the information. It is important that all who should be there get the information. Many a person has been hurt because they weren't "notified." Your most universal means of getting this information is by requesting a pulpit announcement at the Sunday Masses. An even more universal means is insertion in the parish bulletin. But be sure your information is clear, exact, and full. Otherwise your poor pastor will be spending most of his evenings at the phone clearing up ambiguities in the announcement. If he doesn't trust you after that, you can't blame him.

Secondly, you must remember that people have to have reasons for doing things. You have to give them more than information. You must give them some motivation. Together with the information which you send out about the meeting, there should be something or other that will make them *want* to come. To be effective a motive must not only be good, but it must be appealing to the people concerned. A little study of the wording of your announcement will pay big dividends in this regard. Many a person who would not come to a meeting for those interested in education, would certainly be there if the meeting were announced only for those who are interested in their children.

Thirdly, it is not enough just to spread the word around. There has to be "follow-up." We are all old enough to know that there is a big difference between listening and hearing, between looking and seeing, and we know how little people attend to

what they see and hear. There is nothing like a personal note to persuade someone to attend a meeting. Postcards are very good for this. In your free time, once your job is organized, you will probably have postcards already addressed and classified according to the various groups in your parish. It will be a simple matter for you to run the message side through the parish duplicator with the announcement of the meeting in an attractive form and drop them in the mail.

However, the more personal the contact the better. Wouldn't it be wonderful if just before the meeting, after they had heard it from the pulpit and read it in the parish bulletin and received the card about it, that each one whom you wish to come, would receive a telephone message about the meeting coming up? And that isn't impossible at all.

Why not make yourself a chain reaction phone service? It won't be long in this new job of yours before you begin to classify the various members of the parish in your own mind as to the degree of their cooperativeness in your work. If you want to make yourself a chain reaction phone service get a large sheet of paper. Put yourself at the top. Then under you at wide spaces place three names each with its proper telephone number. Under each of those place three more names. Again, with a proper telephone number. Then each of those with three more names and the telephone numbers to go along with each, — and so on down through your whole membership. Then have the whole list mimeographed or duplicated and give a list to each member of your organ-

ization. Then all you have to do is to call those first three, talk to them about the meeting, and ask them to pass the word on to each of his three. Those three take each again his own three. And in less than an hour everyone in the parish receives a telephone call. No one is overburdened. Each has but three calls to make.

If you do these simple things, you'll have a meeting and those whom you wish to be there will be there.

Getting a Meeting Underway

One of the first things you will realize as parish president is that you can't do everything yourself. You will be expected, of course, to conduct the meetings from the chair of the group of which you are the president. But in the course of time the pastor will call upon you to form other groups to do other things. He might very well like to have you as chairman of the group. If he does he will say so. Naturally you will assume that role. But he knows too that you can't do everything. He will expect you, therefore, to assemble a group of parishioners for a special purpose, organize them, put them on the right track, and then let them do the task. It is not so hard to do this as you might think. First of all, it is important that you be the first at the place of the meeting. Being on the scene first gives you a tremendous advantage over all that come. You meet each one that arrives. You get their names. As parish president you have the rather difficult task of knowing the names of everyone

in the parish, in as far as it is humanly possible to do so.

In most parishes names are best handled by name cards. As the people come, have them fill out a card with their name and pin it on their clothes. Then each one can refresh his memory of another person's name by a mere glance at the card. Get some assistance on the filling out of these cards so that you can circulate among the guests and make them circulate among each other as far as possible. Tell them here and there what the meeting is all about and if possible, get them discussing it in general before the meeting starts. Give them plenty of time to assemble. But beware of waiting longer than is necessary. Unnecessary waiting has killed more interest than any other fault of organizations.

Too great formality for those who are not accustomed to it spoils the spontaneity of a meeting. Let's not "call the meeting to order." Let's just say, "Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention?" As they quiet down, explain the nature of the meeting and the need of someone to take charge of this business. Tell them that you know that they are better judges than you of whom they would like to have to conduct this meeting. Offer to act as their temporary chairman. Just say, "If nobody objects, I will act as temporary chairman to get things started." Obviously no one will object. Then simply call for nominations. As a good leader, of course, you will have several nominations "planted" in the audience. You will have one of your friends present agree to nominate so-and-so; another to nominate somebody else just to get

things started. Call on your friends last. If others do have a nomination, so much the better. If they do not, you are safe with your friends. You will get a nomination.

Holding an Election

Unless you explain to them that you cannot do this yourself because of your otherwise great commitments in the parish, they will most certainly elect you. If you do not want to be elected, you must do something about it. The very fact that you are acting as temporary chairman makes them almost automatically consider you as their first choice. If you explain the matter to them, and especially if you have some of these "planted" nominations already in the audience, you will be able to get someone else to take charge.

Then proceed to hold an election. Get a chairman and at least a secretary. Depending upon the nature of the project, you may also need a treasurer. Once you have this much organization, step down, hand over the meeting to the new chairman, and conduct your business from the floor. You can ask for the floor, propose that Father so-and-so explain the nature of the meeting, if he is present. If he is not present and expects you to do so, then take this opportunity to explain just what the meeting is all about and start it off by making a motion to do the thing for which the meeting was called. You will already be prepared by having one of your friends agree to second you. The discussion will then be conducted by the chair. And you as parish

president can supervise the projects which they determine by their votes to undertake. The parish president who can thus get people to do things themselves is worth far more than the most efficient parish president who does everything himself.

Principle of Authority

One of the facts of life which every parish president must face and face squarely is the matter of authority in parish affairs. Christ set up His Church on a monarchical system, not a democratic one. The Holy Father is the monarch of the Church at large. The bishop is the monarch of his diocese. The pastor is his representative of his parish. Some bishops and pastors relegate more of the function of the apostolate to the layman, some less. It all depends upon them. Ordinarily the pastor is more interested in the spiritual formation, the moral guidance, and the inspiration of his laymen toward the full Catholic life. Ordinarily a great part of the planning and execution of the various projects of the lay apostolate falls to the lot of the laymen of the parish. But in all this the guidance of the pastor is supreme.

All this may seem at first somewhat depressing to the initiative of the ambitious layman. But it need not be so. If the layman is imbued as he should be with the basic principle of authority laid down in the natural law, all this will fit into place for him. The basic principle is that all authority comes from God. When one obeys the voice of legitimate authority, one obeys God. We are in this business, all of us,

pastor and layman, for the glory of God. One cannot give glory to God by going against God's will. The pastor is the legitimate authority in the parish and therefore we can only advance the glory of God as laymen by carrying out to the best of our power his program.

Often enough the parish president is a very capable man. Often enough he himself is a "superior" in commerce or industry. Often enough he is a man of ideas. It is difficult for him to carry on according to the mind of the Church in the role of the laity of the Church unless he grasps something of the supernatural principles by which the Church is governed. The principle behind Catholic obedience is basically one of faith. God has revealed that to obey legitimate authority is to obey God. Therefore, the practice of the virtue of obedience demands that we cultivate within ourselves a predisposition to prefer, if possible, the viewpoint of legitimate authority. In some things, of course, one simply cannot understand the prudence of a certain program. When that occurs, one simply falls back upon the basic revealed truth. It may not be the will of God that the "more prudent" thing in our view is the same as the "more prudent" thing in God's long range view. This we know, that when we are doing the will of lawful authority, we are doing the will of God.

Only in this way can the parish president, facing this fact for all it is worth, and accepting this principle with all its applications, avoid the pitfalls involved in the management and direction of all the

affairs of the parish which come within his domain.

Leadership

The parish president must face the realities of organizational life first, in dealing with men, and second, in dealing with situations. If he does not have a good philosophy with which to meet the peculiarities of human nature and the unforeseeable in situations, he will fall into one of the most common pitfalls of leadership, that of discouragement.

In dealing with men

He must remember, first of all, that all men suffer from the effects of original sin. Therefore, whoever deals with them must have infinite patience. He must know that human beings can be led, but not driven. Therefore, he must try inspiration; must avoid pressure.

He will have to be convinced that men tend to rise to our expectations of them. Therefore, he will make himself "like" his following; he will take their good spirits for granted. He cannot afford to forget that human beings are sensitive. He will therefore be very careful how he puts things; he will praise his following for their success; he will take the blame for failure on himself. It isn't hard after you do it a couple of times. He will be very much aware that men are subject to the power of suggestion. Therefore, he will use the complimentary method wherever possible; he will amplify what they suggest into what

he would like them to do. They will enjoy getting credit for the suggestion, he will have his way.

He will, of course, not be unmindful of the fact that men are jealous of their independence. When he delegates, therefore, he will really hand over a project to them. He will specialize in the art of supervising without interfering; he will be very slow to veto the propositions of others. He will keep in mind that men need motives for doing things. He will not overlook the fact that men are inclined to have their own ideas. He will therefore be willing to yield generously to group decisions, even on his own pet projects.

In dealing with situations

In all his organizational work the parish president will be faced with the sudden appearance of the unforeseen. If he is wise, he will be ready to change his plans at a moment's notice; in fact, he will always try to have at hand an alternative plan for each occasion ahead of time.

Few are the parish presidents who do not run into difficulties and obstacles in all organizational work. A good parish president simply regards difficulties as divine test of his moral strength; he looks upon obstacles simply as things to be overcome.

There is not a parish president in the world who has not been faced at times with utter failure. It is the part of wisdom simply to expect a good percentage of failures in your program: "The servant is not greater than his master." Always be ready

to pick up the pieces of a ruin and to do the best you can with what is left.

Finally, in all organizational work the parish president is faced with the complications known as "red tape." Red tape is just a necessary evil in organizational life. The parish president cannot change that. He simply learns to work patiently through the red tape, to go through the proper channels no matter what they are.

With this philosophy of men and situations, he can avoid discouragement which is the most efficient tool of the devil against the efficient administration of the parish president.

Over-All Policy

The parish president must next face the necessity of a smoothly working organization through which he can carry out an effective program. Like the meat cutter in a butcher shop, he must not only constantly cut meat, he must continually sharpen his knife. The parish president must be constantly working at the job that he has to do, and he must continuously work at the sharpening of the instrument, the organization with which he has to do it.

There ought to be in his mind, and the best way of getting it in his mind is to get it down on paper, a complete picture of his organization. This picture ought to show the function of each of the leaders under him; it ought to designate their responsibilities and the degree of authority which each one possesses. Responsibility without authority is as disastrous as author-

ity without responsibility. His job basically as president is summed up in three words: Organize; deputize; supervise.

Organize, Deputize, Supervise

First, he must "organize." He must draw up his chart of officers and members, of committees and their functions, of the various leaders and the specific areas of their operations. Once he has this, half his work is done.

Secondly, the parish president must "deputize." If he does not believe a man can do a certain job, he should not give it to him. If he believes he can do it, he should let him do it. He should not place his trust in another unless he can do it fully. It must be remembered, of course, that he has to do the best he can with what he's got. But it is certain that he will get much farther, even with less reliable personalities, if he expresses the fullest trust possible.

Thirdly, he must "supervise." This means that he carefully observes projects entrusted to functioning committees, that he encourages them, makes occasional suggestions, and steers the happy medium of supervision that lies between neglect and interference.

Get Your Bearings

It is very important for the new parish president to understand thoroughly and to realize fully just what he is parish president of. He may be parish president of the whole parish program. He may be parish president of only one element in that pro-

gram. If there is a constitution for the organization of which you are president, it is most important for you to study that constitution thoroughly, so that you will be able to answer the who, what, where, when, why, and how of all that pertains to the organization. Only in this way will you be able to know the scope and limits of your operation. If there is no constitution, find out in any way you can as much as you can about your new job. Your predecessors in office will be very helpful. Then discuss the matter with the pastor. Your investigation will undoubtedly bring questions to your mind. Propose them frankly to the pastor, or to the moderator of your organization, whom the pastor has delegated to act for him. Get a clear idea of where you stand, where you are going, what is expected of you in the best possible performance of this office. In brief, get your bearings.

You and Your Officers

Americans are almost by nature organizers. They tell a story of three planes that had to be ditched over the islands of the South Pacific. One was full of Frenchmen, another full of Central Americans, the third full of Americans. All took to parachutes. When the Frenchmen landed, they had between them evolved a completely new philosophy of love. When the Central Americans finally set foot on firm ground, they had devised a plan for an entire new revolution of the country. By the time the Americans landed they had a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer of the OFS — Organization For Survival.

As far as officers are concerned, you will at least have a vice-president, secretary, and treasurer to work with. You will have many more, most likely. We are great committee people, we Americans. Each committee must have a chairman. Chairmen of committees, especially of standing committees, are usually considered full-fledged officers of an organization. You must, first of all, know these officers very well. You must learn their jobs. You must learn them well enough to do them if necessary and to take their places when they are necessarily absent. You must keep informed in a nice way, of course, of all that is going on in every department. But above all, you must keep them well-informed ahead of time of everything that you intend to do in the leadership of your organization.

The Staff Meeting

There is nothing so confusing to the general membership as to discover that the president of the whole organization is utterly unaware of some important development. And there are few things more demoralizing to the spirit of an organization than the strong, silent leader who keeps everything to himself. The best mechanical device to take care of this matter is the staff meeting. A staff meeting consists of all the officers getting together for a special meeting apart from the general meeting of the organization. At this staff meeting all the officers report to the whole group of the operation of their respective departments and the plans they would like to carry out through motions and resolutions at the general meeting. The parish president on

his part explains to all the officers his plans, his hopes, the policies that he would like to follow. He discusses his plans with them; they discuss theirs with him. Above all, they plan carefully the coming meeting. They draw up an "agenda." They place on this agenda all the things that they would like to accomplish at the coming meeting. Out of all the proposals that are made they weed out the superfluous, the time-wasters, the things that distract from the real purpose of the organization.

If possible, it is a good idea to duplicate the agenda on mimeographed copies. These are to be handed out to all the members at the meeting. Each one will see what must be gone through at this particular meeting. It is a wonderful aid in keeping people from wasting time by unnecessary speeches and unrelated digressions from the point at issue. The officers know that certain motions and resolutions are going to be brought up for vote by the whole assembly. If these resolutions and motions are spelled out word for word on the agenda, much time will be saved and many unnecessarily long explanations avoided. Such a procedure will add greatly to the efficiency of your meeting. It will, moreover, make the members realize that you are not trying to conceal anything from them, that the whole operation is above board, and that you as parish president and they as officers are taking the whole membership into their complete confidence. Such mimeographed agendas serve as notes for the members. They can write their own ideas upon them, make notations as to the procedure and thus each member of your organization will have his own copy of the

minutes of the meeting. Later on, at a subsequent meeting when the "minutes" are read, it will be more than a dull, droning, boring routine.

It is most important also to arrange this staff meeting at a time when the director or moderator of your organization can be present. After all, it is at the staff meeting where policies are determined. There the pastor or the director whom he appoints has his best chance of guiding the program of the organization. It is far easier for him to prevent a motion from coming to the floor than it would be for him to have to veto a motion which was passed by the whole organization. He has experience and organizational "know-how" which will be of great help to you and to the officers in the planning of your coming meeting.

The Agenda

As you and the officers get more and more experience preparing for meetings, you will discover the type of agenda that works best for your group. Quite possibly the constitution of your organization determines, at least it should, the general order of business at each meeting. If it does not, here is one that you can start with:

1. The call to order.
2. The opening prayers. It is customary to call upon the director to open the meeting with prayer. If he is not present, it is a good idea to request one of the members of the organization to do so. It is one of the little tricks of giving them a sense of belonging.

3. Reading of the minutes. You may have to introduce this with a little speech because in so many organizations the reading of the minutes has become an empty formality. The minutes, after all, are the official record of the organization's accomplishments. It is very important that they be kept accurately, that things be stated correctly, that the correct individuals be credited with the things for which they are responsible.
4. The director's talk. You will have to consult your director as to his preferences in this regard. Most pastors or directors prefer to talk a little at the beginning of the meeting so as to inspire the proper kind of activity in the members throughout the meeting. Because of his previous attendance at the staff meeting, he will know exactly what is coming up. He will thus have an opportunity to explain to the members generally some of the issues upon which they will be called to decide.
5. Announcements. These should embrace all the important dates coming up in the operation of your organization. They should call the attention of the members to all the events in which the organization will be expected to cooperate with other societies. The section on announcements provides the chairman or president with opportunities of reminding the members of certain standing obligations.

6. Treasurer's report. The treasurer's report is rather important because it is necessary to keep the organization mindful of paying its own way. The extent and nature of this report should be determined by the pastor in conference with the treasurer, and if possible, the parish president.
7. Executive Committee reports. At your previous meeting certain projects have been determined upon. Certain people have been appointed to carry them out. It is important to the organization to know to what extent they have been carried out and with what success. Therefore, there should be in any meeting a time designated for the reports of those appointed to do certain work for the group.
8. Old Business. At this time the chairman directs the organization to take up unfinished business from the last meeting. The minutes are consulted. If there was a motion before the organization at the adjournment of the last meeting, that motion should have priority at the beginning of this meeting. There may be several items to be discussed because they were incompleated at the last meeting.
9. New Business. Here under this title are listed all the new projects that have been suggested by members to the officers, and by the officers themselves at the staff meeting. The clearer these are stated, the less time will be wasted in explanation. When this business is completed, the chairman may call for

10. Adjournment. It is good to set a definite time limit for the meeting. When that time comes, the president may ask for a motion to adjourn because time has run out for the meeting. It is better for a meeting to be cut off this way than for it to die a slow death of disinterest.
11. Closing Prayers. When the motion to adjourn is passed, the parish president may ask the director to lead the group in closing prayers or, if he is not present, then one of the members of the organization will be asked.

Basic Policies

Whether you realize it or not, you will unconsciously form policies. You will find as you go on certain modes of action which are advantageous and certain modes which are disadvantageous. The determination to follow the advantageous modes is the formation of policy. If this formation of policy is left to chance, you will find yourself acting on expediency, rather than on principle. This is not so good, because expedience changes too often, while principles only will give definite direction to your administration. If you have your own set of principles governing organizational work, so much the better. Here are a few which have been found by experience to be very helpful toward efficient parish organization administration.

1. Work through love. Love must be the dominant motive of all Christian living, and therefore it is good policy to try to make love the dominant motive

of all your work for others and to do your best that Christian love may be the guiding force of the apostolic action of your group.

2. Win through peace. In a way this is a result of the first policy. Your organization is not to fight for things; it is to win them through love. Love begets peace among men. It is certain that no one ever wins a fight. It is far better to drop a project than to cause internal dissention over it.
3. Supernaturalize. As a Catholic organization you are trying to produce supernatural effects. The ultimate end of all Catholic organizations is to make all men Christians and all Christians saints. To do this we need the grace of God. In planning your apostolate, therefore, you will use supernatural means. You will do a lot of praying for the program of your administration. You will get your group to offer Masses, Holy Communions, Rosaries, for the success of your organization.
4. Push the leadership. The idea of this policy is to get the members of the organization to be the very root of its activities. A good follower keeps after his leader. A good committeeman keeps after his chairman. Good organizational men keep after their officers. They must be led to expect their officers to produce. They must be inspired to push their officers into action or push them out. Pressure on the officers which you can arouse in the members

is the key to success in corporate work.

5. Accentuate the positive. You will find it very advantageous if you get the habit in any given situation of asking yourself the question "What can I do about this now?" As the old proverb goes, "It is better to light one candle, than to curse the darkness." There are always more reasons why a thing can't be done. Defects are far easier to see than virtues. If, as a personal policy you decide to "throw away the hammer and buy a horn," if you habitually reject the negative approach, you will find the progressive spirit growing more and more in your organization.
6. Make it right. There is a right way of doing things and a wrong way. If you can inspire your organization to "reach for the big leagues," and by that I mean that they should try always for the best way of doing things, the courteous way, of doing things through their proper channels, typing correctly, turning out really neat mimeographed materials, drawing up first class committee reports, submitting project plans which take care of everything, and in general making things right, you will save yourself hours and hours of labor, your organization will offer its members more opportunities for self-improvement, and it will gain a reputation in the parish and in the city for its real efficiency.

7. Keep it quiet. Your organization may not be a secret society, but your organization does have secrets. Above all, you should strive to promote the feeling of assurance in the members of your organization that what goes on in their meetings is their business. They should not fear to express their minds lest they be quoted outside. Only in this way will you get that freedom of expression which you need for a smoothly running organization. Only in this way will you get a high morale of confidence in yourself, in your officers, and in all the members of your organization.

A discussion of these policies would indeed be a good subject matter for your first talk to your organization. You will certainly add other policies of your own to this list. If you keep your list of policies close by you, and if you bring them up continuously in talking to your group, your organization will gradually be formed along these efficient lines. Certainly at the beginning of each year of activity your policies should be again explained to the group.

Personal Hints

Make Changes Slowly

One of the things that even the greatest corporations tell their executives is "Make changes slowly." Human beings have an inborn resistance to change. They like the rut they are in. It may not be the best rut, but they are used to it. Any suggestion for a change that you make will arouse a cer-

tain fear of the unknown and the unfamiliar. An unconscious resentment of sudden change is at the base of most resistance to effective planning. People simply have to get used to an idea for a while before they'll accept it.

You will have to plan the introduction of any new idea very carefully. Sketch it out on a piece of paper. Put down one step at a time. Talk about the problem here and there with individuals and occasionally at meetings. Ask *them* to think about it. Sooner or later you may get that most valuable ally of any executive: a suggestion from the floor.

It is certainly a mistake to present a new idea as an accomplished fact. If it comes first of all as an idea, then as a suggestion, then as a proposal, and gradually works its way up to an actual motion before the assembly, it will have a better chance to succeed. You simply have to give people the opportunity to get over their natural impulsive resistance to what is new.

Making changes slowly will, moreover, prevent you from making many a blunder. It is hard for one man to see all the angles of a situation from merely his own position. If you are open, frank, communicative about the affairs of your organization with all the members, you will find that you will be tapping the brains of everyone in the organization and all will be with you to an extent that is otherwise impossible.

Not Anger But Curiosity

There is no doubt about it: you will have plenty of opportunity as parish president

to "blow your top." Your natural reaction to failure on the part of others is that emotional rise in you called anger. Emotions are energizers. They are given us in order that we may be able to solve a situation, to do something about it. When this emotion goes off in an undirected manner, we call it temper, or anger. It does nothing to solve a situation. On the other hand, if in circumstances of this nature that would ordinarily arouse anger, you use the emotion aroused to get curious about what is to be done now, and how could this have been prevented, and where did you fail in this matter, curiosity will take the place of anger. You will find that you are able to discuss the matter very calmly with the individuals concerned. Above all, you will find that there is a lowering of your personal resentment. You must be convinced, too, that the failure of projects is not necessarily a reflection upon the efficiency of your personal administration. Your curiosity will lead you to understand the true "why" of things. The more you understand that "why" the less irritated you will be.

You and Advice

A good parish president will have to know how to take advice and how to give advice. He will have to seek the golden mean. There is a golden mean between taking no advice at all and taking so much advice one doesn't know what his own mind is. There is a golden mean between leaving others strictly on their own and giving them so much advice that they are not able to think for themselves.

In helping others with advice and encouragement it is essential that you regard those who seek your advice as very important. Their problem is serious to them, even though to you it may seem very trivial. It is asking a lot of you to listen carefully without interrupting, to question until you see the problem thoroughly and wholly. It is asking a lot of you to listen carefully; to try to bring the individual to see the solution by intelligent and searching questions. You might ask him what are the possible things that could be done. You might ask him which one of those things might probably work. You might ask him which one of those things he thinks he ought to try first. It is asking a lot, but if it were any easier to be a good parish president, there would be far more of them.

And in taking advice from others the parish president will have to be particularly careful lest others feel that he is patronizing them. If the parish president will make it his sole desire in consultation to get all the facts in the case through questions, to discover what reasons are behind various courses of action, in brief, to keep the problem outside of himself and his personal relationship, to be utterly objective and to have only one desire, namely, to do the right thing, then he will be able to make a right decision and he will have his consultants on his side.

Saving Face

In the course of his administration, the parish president will find individual members of his organization sometimes totally

in the wrong. Indeed at meetings it sometimes becomes embarrassing because of an utterly untenable stand taken by one of the members. The temptation is to "laugh it off." But that is very humiliating to the man concerned. A public humiliation, even if it is one's own fault, is a hard thing to get over.

The Chinese are not the only ones who make a great deal of "saving face." We all do. There are few of us who do not know we are wrong when we are in error, or who at least do not gradually come to that knowledge. If we are humble enough to admit it, most of us have on occasions refused to abandon the wrong position simply because there was no way of doing it while saving face. The parish president must be on the alert for just the right phrase, just the right expression of sympathy, the right part of a person's wrong stand, to enable the latter to leave the field without personal public humiliation, without loss of face.

Public Relations

The parish president will have to give considerable attention to "public relations." "Public relations" is a new name for a very old thing. People have always been concerned with what others thought of them. They formed their actions in order that others may have a good opinion of them. In more recent times when the great corporations of the business world, the great agencies for charitable purposes, the big educational institutions of the country, began to be concerned with what others thought of them, they invented a new name and called it "public relations."

“Public relations” has been described as the art of guiding an institution or an individual in a course of action which will gain and retain the favorable opinion of the public. Naturally, the parish president will wish to have his organization held in high esteem by the members of his parish and by the Catholics of the city and the citizenry at large as well. He will want them all conscious of the nature of his organization, of the kind of services it has to offer, and the particular contribution which it makes to the welfare of the community. It is on these things that the foundation of public relations is built.

It is beyond the scope of a small pamphlet like this to take the parish president through an exhaustive study of his public relations program. At best we can point out the need of study in this regard. The National Publicity Council has an excellent “How-To-Do-It” series on publicity and public relations techniques. The parish president would do well to get for himself a selection of these from 257 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, New York.

Your Place in the Sun

Finally, the parish president will seek for his organization a proper place in the sunshine of the bright world of organized Catholic activity. He will be broad enough to look beyond the confines of the parish and to be aware of the contribution that his organization in its own way can make to the Catholic welfare of the diocese and of the country at large.

He will make certain, first of all, that his organization is well represented in every diocesan council the bishop has set up for the coordination of Catholic activities. He will, moreover, work toward its affiliation with the proper branch of the National Catholic Welfare Conference as far as he can in the particular circumstances of his administration.

After all, the National Catholic Welfare Conference is the organization of the bishops of the United States. It is the truly Catholic organization for, as St. Ignatius of Antioch once said, "Where the bishop is, there is the Catholic Church."

So you are a parish president. It is a responsibility, yes, but it is an even greater opportunity. The role of the layman in the Catholic Church is a great one. The need of his leadership is acute. Success is surely his if the parish president will approach his task with courage born of virtue, with confidence based on grace, and with faith making everything that he does an expression of the deep Catholicism that is in his heart.



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