

Different Forms of Leadership in a Parish Community

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The word **“leadership”** has several meanings. According to Merriam-Webster, **some of those definitions are** (in no particular order): (1) “a position as a leader of a group, organization, etc.,” (2) “the act or an instance of leading,” (3) “capacity to lead,” and (4) “the power or ability to lead other people.”

We can look at the word **“leadership”** in *solely* its **traditional, organizational, management sense**: “a position as a leader of a group, organization, etc.” **In that sense**, the “leadership in a parish community” can be seen as consisting of the pastor, the trustees, the Parish Pastoral Council, the Parish Finance Council, the Liturgy Committee (consisting of the coordinators of the various liturgical ministries), the Social Concerns Committee (consisting of the coordinators of the various social-outreach ministries of our parish), and others in so-called “positions of leadership.”

Leadership, however, **can also be viewed in a less literal sense, i.e., in the intangible concepts of** “the act or an instance of leading,” a “capacity to lead,” and “the power or ability to lead other people.”

In the context of a parish, leadership may be **viewed in both senses, i.e., not only in** the sense of visible leaders, including heads of ministries, committees, and organizations. At baptism, each of us received **a share in the** priestly, prophetic and kingly ministry of Jesus. For each of the baptized, **that share is manifested in** the various gifts given to each of us by God.

Every parishioner therefore is commissioned at baptism to serve God by using our God-given gifts for the good of others, including the other members of our parish, which is our spiritual family. All of us, however, do not receive the same gifts. There is a book entitled “What Color Is Your Parachute?” which tries to help the reader in identifying their particular aptitudes, abilities, skills, and talents, in order to look at various, possible occupations for which they might be suited. As Christians, we call that process **“discernment.”** With all the tools that the Church offers us – including prayer, the sacraments, and the help of others – we try to discern (identify) what God wants me to do with the gifts He has given me.

Based on that discernment, each of us can exercise “leadership” in our parish by (A) serving as a “visible” leader (for example, as the head of a ministry, committee, or organization), or (B) serving as a “less-visible” leader in other ways, including (but not limited to) as a participating member of a ministry, committee, or organization, or as a general volunteer in a parish activity(ies). We say that we lead by example. We also say that actions speak louder than words. In various settings, a parishioner may exercise leadership in a particular “act or an instance of leading,” which might be with or without spoken words. It may also take the form of encouraging or defending or fostering or supporting or offering a possible revision to a particular idea, suggestion, initiative, etc.

Our parish needs your help, as we continue to strive to be good and faithful servants of the Gospel – the “good news” of our Risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.