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Sharings

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

FALL, 2005

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St. Charles Borromeo - Building the Kingdom

Love begins at home, and it is not how much we do... but how much love we put in that action. Mother Teresa

Parishes call themselves "home" for their members, but at Cinnaminson, NJ's St. Charles Borromeo the point is graphically made.

The parish offices are located in a split level, in a residential area, several blocks from the church. Activity flows from the living room to the kitchen and down to the "family" area. Pastor, Father Tom Triggs oversees the constant activity, but like any family much happens behind the scenes.

St. Charles embodies a vision for its future, which could well model the future

for all the church.

This vision encompasses the people of the parish, many of whom are active in "Core Communities," an ever evolving commitment to a collaborative process between leadership and laity with a strong conviction to building the kingdom of heaven while here on earth.

There are four Core Communities, representing 42 parishioners, active for almost a decade: Worship, Formation, Outreach and Community Building.

Each of the Communities understands they have real responsibility for the parish's future in their specific area. According to Father Tom, they do not

"rubber stamp" ideas, concepts or initiatives. They know their decisions will be respected and are also free to make mistakes.

Complementing them is a unique Administration model starting with the Pastor whose staff includes three full time deacons: Bill Sepich as the Pastoral Associate, Carl Sondeen as Parish Manager and Jack Hvizdos as Youth Minister. They, in turn depend upon a capable staff and two additional Permanent Deacons.

This division of responsibility has encouraged a much wider participation than seen in some churches. "Sure we have the people who do everything but we also have the people who traditionally never get involved. Parishioners get invited to get involved - a process that begins when they are invited to lunch when they join the parish."

"Like a family, we grow, have disagreements, settle them and depend on one another's skills," says Fr. Tom. "It works!"



At the parish "kitchen table": Deacon Bill Sepich, Janet Ridgway, Fr. Tom Triggs and Toni Martino

Lynn's Thoughts...



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**-Thinking Spring
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Deacon Bill Sepich, from St. Charles Borromeo, Cinnaminson, NJ called one September morning in 2001 to ask if I was the Lynn Cummings who helped parishes increase their weekly income. I assured him I was and he said "We've been looking all over for you." I thought that strange since I do at least 5-6 mailings a year to make my company known to the churches in the area (some pastors think I do twice that). Deacon Bill said the Pastor, Father Tom Triggs, and a committee of 5 were meeting in the Rectory dining room. Could I come right over? An unusual request, but I went - the first of probably 60 trips I have made to the parish since.

The only thing I knew about St. Charles was their famous spring carnival. They are far more than a Carnival! It is a parish alive with robust spirituality and parishioners who enjoy friendships along with shared responsibility for the future of their parish.

Founded in 1961, its buildings reflect many constructed in the early 1960's. The school was built first with a gym "temporarily" used for the church. After 44 years, it's still the church!

Advised to increase their weekly giving prior to a capital campaign, my firm was pleased to conduct a Stewardship of Treasure Appeal that November. Our technique of personalized letters produced results far greater than even I predicted. This allowed them to start a building fund and ask for Diocesan approval to move towards building a church and administration center to return the gymnasium to the school.

In April, 2003, St. Charles conducted a Feasibility Study. The results suggested they could raise a minimum of \$3 million. The resulting capital campaign enlisted over 200 volunteers. Clearly this parish understood building the church, the people, was as important as building the church, the building.

Though many pledges were generously offered, building costs escalated, and the \$4.5 million

project now was \$6 million. Capital campaign leaders and I developed creative approaches to reach new donors. Continuing Stewardship of Treasure Appeals increased weekly giving, while respectful to those also paying on pledges.

I highlighted St. Charles Borromeo Parish to show some parishes never lose hope. After planning for more than 5 years, and raising money for more than 3, Father Tom Triggs is patient and hopeful the people of St. Charles will indeed worship in a new church.

I could end here, but Deacon Bill Sepich just called again. The Diocese has given the approval to build! The auditor confirmed they were fiscally ready for the entire project! Alleluia!!

There is great rejoicing at St. Charles. The staff and consultants of LCD Consultants couldn't be happier either.



They Did It!