

Grant will help parish leaders grow leadership, financial skills



Msgr. Paul Koetter, left, pastor of Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis, speaks on Feb. 25 with Kathy Peacock and Suzanne McLaughlin, the parish's business managers, in the office of the Indianapolis East Deanery faith community. A \$1 million grant recently awarded to the Archdiocese of Indianapolis by Lilly Endowment Inc. will help pastoral leaders in central and southern Indiana nurture their management skills and financial knowledge. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

By Sean Gallagher

Criterion On Line Edition

March 4, 2016

Priests, deacons and parish life coordinators are called in their ministry to help grow the faith of the people in their parishes and to support them in times of need.

In some cases, especially in parishes that have a school, they also have to oversee dozens of employees and annual multi-million dollar budgets.

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis recently received a \$1 million grant from the Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment Inc. to help pastoral leaders in central and southern Indiana bring these two areas of their ministry together, and help them grow in their understanding of finances and personnel management.

Focusing on the continuing formation of clergy and other pastoral leaders in central and southern Indiana in this particular area is confirmed in the fact that, over the past decade, Sunday and holy day collections at archdiocesan parishes have increased by less than 1 percent annually while health and property insurance and utility costs and minimum raises for staff have increased at a much higher rate.

Lilly Endowment awarded 28 such grants late last year to religious organizations across the country as part of its National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders. The Archdiocese of Indianapolis was the only Catholic group to receive such a grant.

The "Empowering Pastoral Leaders for Excellence in Parish Leadership and Management" grant will fund an array of programs through 2018.

"The emphasis is on supporting pastoral leaders who are at the center of a network," said Matt Hayes, the grant's project director. "They have a solid foundation in theology and philosophy. What we want to do is to make sure they have a solid foundation in institutional and personal financial literacy and leadership and managerial skills."

Among the programs funded by the grant is Catholic Leadership 360, which will help pastors and parish life coordinators identify strengths and areas for growth in ministry through feedback gained from interviews of people with and to whom they minister.

Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin will participate in the first group of archdiocesan pastoral ministers in the program.

"Catholic Leadership 360 offers participants new insights into their own ministerial style. As a participant, I will take part in guided self-evaluation and I will receive valuable information from others, who will be asked to evaluate my ministry," he said. "I am confident that his process will help me improve my pastoral service to the Archdiocese of Indianapolis."

Msgr. Paul Koetter has served for nearly 20 years as pastor of faith communities with large budgets and many employees.

A participant in the first group of pastoral leaders in Catholic Leadership 360, he recognizes the good it can do for priests and parish life coordinators across the archdiocese to bring pastoral ministry and administration closer together.

"The administrative role is not, I think, a natural movement for most priests," said Msgr. Koetter. "In fact, it might even grind a little bit with us."

"Trying to figure out how to bring together being a chief administrator and a pastor is very challenging. Whatever help we can get, pastors especially, to bring those two together where both are honored is so needed."

Father Dustin Boehm will also participate in Catholic Leadership 360. Ordained in 2011, he was appointed to lead St. Gabriel Parish in Connorsville and St. Bridget of Ireland Parish in Liberty just three years later.

"It would be wonderful to know the right questions to ask when you first come into a place [as an administrator]," said Father Boehm, "or the right questions for me to ask tomorrow so that I can move on to the more pastoral and catechetical side of the job of pastoring."

Other programs funded by the grant will help pastors, parish life coordinators and parish business managers gain a better grasp on effective financial management of parishes and how to encourage increased support of parishes by their members.

Hayes said this practical knowledge is helpful for parish leaders to apply the spiritual and theological knowledge that is so much a part of their pastoral ministry to practical matters that are necessary to attend to in order for that ministry to take place.

"A person is doing pastoral leadership because they're answering a call, which gives them a mission, as St. Ignatius would say, to change the world," he said. "They're going to steward their time and their talent to do that in a more efficient way. My hope is that this grant will help people better understand how they can leverage their time and their talent on behalf of the mission."

One of the goals of the grant is to work to have the programs it will fund be a part of the life of the archdiocese after the three-year period of the grant is completed.

For example, plans are in place to make the principles of Catholic Leadership 360 continue to be made available to clergy and parish life coordinators in the future, and to expand its availability to Catholic school principals and parish catechetical and youth ministry leaders.

The effectiveness of the programs funded by the grant will also be carefully evaluated, said retired Father Jeffrey Godecker, who helped write the grant proposal for the archdiocese.

"We don't just need to hand out evaluation forms," he said. "We need to know what happens to people when they go home, what happens to the parish over time."

Archbishop Tobin ultimately hopes that the programs funded by the grant will help people who help lead parishes across central and southern Indiana grow in their ability to minister with care to the people they serve.

"For all of us—ordained and non-ordained—our service to the Church is not simply a job, volunteer activity or hobby," Archbishop Tobin said. "Rather, it is a generous response to God, who loved us first, as well as an art. Any art requires discipline, practice and evaluation. I hope that this grant will help all of us learn the art of loving service." †

###

Lilly grant will fund array of programs through 2018

The Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment Inc. recently awarded a \$1 million grant to the Archdiocese of Indianapolis to help advance the leadership and financial literacy of clergy and other pastoral leaders across central and southern Indiana.

The “Empowering Pastoral Leaders for Excellence in Parish Leadership and Management” grant will fund an array of programs through 2018 to achieve this goal. The programs include:

Catholic Leadership 360—Developed by the National Leadership Council on Church Management and the National Federation of Priests’ Councils, this program assesses the communications, leadership, relationship, planning and personal management skills of pastors and parish life coordinators through feedback gained through interviews by trained staff of people to whom they report and with whom and to whom these pastoral leaders minister.

Creating Cultures of Generosity—This seminar will help parish staff members give a new perspective on giving and generosity in members of their parish communities. The seminar is sponsored by the Indianapolis-based Lake Institute on Faith and Giving.

Executive Certificate in Religious Fundraising—This four-day intensive program helps pastoral leaders gain practical applications of the cultural, organizational and philanthropic principles unique to religious organizations which help donors grow in spiritual motivation and religious values in their giving. It is sponsored by the Lake Institute.

Ministerial Excellence Fund—This fund will provide grants to priests, deacons serving on parish staffs and lay ecclesial ministers dealing with large amounts of personal debt with such causes as student loans and catastrophic illness. Helping clergy and lay ecclesial ministers resolve personal debt helps them become more effective ministers.

Pastors Toolbox—Developed by the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management, this program helps new pastors understand day-to-day management skills needed in parish leadership that will help their faith communities live out the Gospel with vibrancy. †