

ACTIVE MEN CAN SAVE THE PARISH!

In local parishes, many pastoral planning meetings focus on this familiar lament: “Mass attendance is shrinking, and donations are down, and our parish just doesn’t have the spirituality we used to have!”

As a layperson with first-hand experience, I can tell you the ANSWER to that all-too-common lament is to invigorate the faith of men in the parish. However, men need a catalyst to boost their spiritual involvement, and not every parish has an active Men’s Group.

Four years ago I took on the responsibility of serving your Diocese and the Archbishop of Hartford by becoming the director of the Connecticut Catholic Men’s Conference (CCMC). It is a year-round commitment, doing a little, day by day, to prepare for this annual event, where “Active Men Save Their Parish.” Pastoral planners at your parish need to recognize the Men’s Conference as a tool that can help save your Parish. Since I started attending conferences, my service to my parish family has increased dramatically. I’m sure it is not only true for me, but also true for thousands of men who have attended the CCMC since 2008.

This year, as a concerned parishioner, I wrote to the pastoral planning committee of the Archdiocese of Hartford about their process for making the decision to link, merge, or even close parishes. I received a remarkable and thoughtful response from Deacon Ernest Scrivani. One of my questions was, “To keep from being closed, is it better for a parish to focus purely on evangelical efforts rather than on fundraising efforts?”

Deacon Ernest Scrivani’s reply was, “[T]here are no silver bullets when considering the longevity of a parish. Evangelical efforts are certainly a factor and the one of the most important goals we’re driving for in pastoral planning. When all is said and done, we hope to enable the parishes that

remain to be living centers of spiritual life in the community – a place where those who are thirsty and hungry can come to be refreshed and reinvigorated to the point where they can carry the torch forward building up the kingdom in their locale.”

I suddenly recognized that the Holy Spirit has been guiding and embracing the CCMC men’s efforts. When we provide men a once-a-year spiritual experience, they return to their parish families invigorated, and ready to “carry the torch toward building up the kingdom.”

I am firmly convinced that active, sincere men—laymen, deacons, and priests—are the key to having vibrant parishes. When a parish is vibrant, filled with men who are on fire for the Lord, the chances of being linked, merged, or, God forbid, closed down are greatly diminished.

In conclusion, I respectfully ask all people involved in parish life to share this information with your men’s group, the Knights of Columbus, Fathers For Good, Men of St Joseph, the Legion of Mary, etc. and your parish council leadership. Save the date, October 22, 2016, and visit www.ctcatholicmen.org for details and tickets.

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