

Go, you are sent... to find leaders

“...the Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve...”

MARK 10:45

Re-orienting parishes from an internal focus to an outward-looking approach requires people who can lead. In previous times most people saw the priest as the sole leader of the parish. With fewer and older priests, lay people have increasingly assumed leadership roles in parishes. In some places in the Archdiocese trained lay pastoral leaders work collaboratively with priests. Across the Archdiocese many lay people have taken on leadership roles in a voluntary capacity.

Parish leadership can become primarily about maintaining the life of the parish, which, while very necessary, is not enough. A Church (or parish) which only sustains its own internal activities is in the words of Pope Francis “self-referential” – it “keeps Jesus Christ within herself and does not let him out”.

If there is to be a new focus on mission in the parish, the parish priest and pastoral council will play a key role in fostering and supporting that reorientation. Encouraging new leaders to come forward and developing new initiatives with an external focus will be part of that process.

Leadership can be exercised in many ways and at many levels. It may be leading a one-off project, longer-term leadership in an area needing specialist skills, or participation in a leadership team, or taking the initiative in starting something new. Whatever form leadership takes and for however long, at its heart it is always service.

1. What can we do to respond to the challenge to lay people “to apply the Gospel to the transformation of society” (*Evangelii Gaudium* 102)?
2. What can we do to encourage new initiatives and leadership in our faith communities in response to the needs outlined by Pope Francis in his interview with Eugenio Scalfari??



“Even if many are now involved in the lay ministries, this involvement is not reflected in a greater penetration of Christian values in the social, political and economic sectors. It often remains tied to tasks within the Church, without a real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society. The formation of the laity and the evangelization of professional and intellectual life represent a significant pastoral challenge.”

EVANGELII GAUDIUM 102

“We must be a leaven of life and love, and leaven is of an infinitely smaller quantity than the mass of fruit, flowers and trees that are born from that leaven. I think I said before that our objective is not to proselytise but to listen to needs, aspirations, disappointments, desperation and hopes. We must restore hope to the young, help the elderly, open up to the future and spread love. To be poor among the poor. We must include the excluded and preach peace. Vatican II, inspired by John XXIII and Paul VI, decided to look to the future with a modern spirit and to open up to modern culture. The Council Fathers knew that opening up to modern culture would mean religious ecumenism and dialogue with non-believers. Subsequently, however, little was done in that regard. I have the humility and ambition to want to do it.”

POPE FRANCIS, INTERVIEW WITH LA REPUBLICA'S EUGENIO SCALFARI OCTOBER 2013

“We need lay people who take risks, who dirty their hands, who are not afraid to make mistakes. We need lay people with vision of the future, not [preoccupied] with the little things of life. And I said to the young people: we need lay people with the flavour of life's experiences, who are animated by dreams.”

POPE FRANCIS, ADDRESS TO PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR LAITY JUNE 2016

