

# **CATHOLIC DEVELOPMENT + QUARTERLY +**

An informational DIGEST to guide development personnel in the emerging field of development.

Volume XI, Edition 4

## **MSGR. JOHN A. FLYNN (1926-1997): "HIS WORK, PHILOSOPHY AND HIS MINISTRY OF DEVELOPMENT."**

"Bringing Christ to people and people to Christ." This was the message that Msgr. John A. Flynn delivered for more than 30 years in his work to advance the mission of the Church and Catholic education, in particular. Development was the ministry that brought Christ to people and people to Christ. Certainly, the Church is blessed with abundant opportunities to minister to people, but development was his ministry.

I had the privilege and opportunity to work with Msgr. John Flynn for 15 years. He was a true visionary who changed the face of Catholic education in the latter part of the 20th Century and prepared Catholic education and Church leaders in the United States for the New Millennium.

He believed that development was not developing financial resources to fund our ministries, but rather development was developing people: their faith and relationship with Jesus Christ through their participation in finding the resources for Catholic schools, parishes, arch/dioceses, agencies and religious communities.

The goal in development was involving people; a result of achieving the goal was financial support.

### **CONVICTION, BELIEFS AND ASSUMPTIONS**

The reasons why Msgr. Flynn was so successful were conviction, belief in the ministry of development and an important set of assumptions. These were the key elements that he preached to bishops, administrators, lay leaders and development officers. He constantly cited Mother Theresa, St. John Neumann, Mother Katherine Drexel, Mother Catherine McCauley and St. Elizabeth Seton as people with strong beliefs and conviction who were successful in their ministries because of their beliefs. Criticism or opposition to their work did not intimidate them.

Msgr. Flynn had that same conviction and commitment to the Ministry of Development. His beliefs and assumptions included the following:

- development included works of faith and grace; it was "faith building work" and inviting people to share in that work was a ministry and a means of salvation for those involved.
- the donor's need to give is greater than the institution's need to receive.
- "multiply" rather than limit and legislate how people can give.
- major gifts are the key to good development.
- concentrate on gifts of people's assets even more than gifts from people's income.
- the best development programs work with an outside consultant.

On many occasions, he emphasized how good development programs emanated from the "totally positive" attitude and outlook of effective leaders. That positive attitude springs from the "Good News" of the Gospel. The story of Jesus inviting Peter and the Apostles to become "fishers of men" was his view of development through the invitation to people to share their time, talent and treasure.

## **THE FOUR PRINCIPLES OF DEVELOPMENT AND THE PARADIGM SHIFT**

When the great out-migration of sisters, brothers and priests, from Catholic schools and the Church, occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, Msgr. Flynn realized a new system of funding our schools was needed. Enrollment would decline 50% and cost would increase 100% in the Archdiocese of Omaha and throughout the United States.

He had the vision to view the college model as a means from which to learn. Many naysayers told him that in Omaha "there wasn't any money" and if there was Creighton University and Boystown already had it. Msgr. Flynn's response was that perhaps Creighton and Boystown did the Catholic schools a favor and educated people, in advance, how to be involved and support Church institutions. He was right and 100 million dollars in school and parish endowments later, as well as 250 million in direct gifts, his instincts were correct.

"The concept of development holds that the highest destiny of any institution can only be realized by analyzing the institutions programmatic philosophy, crystallize its objectives and continually following through on them until realized." -- Gonser Gerber Tinker Stuhr, Naperville, IL

Key to that concept are the Four Principles of Development

- Quality Catholic Education, Parish or Arch/Diocese.
- Sound Business Management.
- Effective Public Relations attracts
- People and Dollars.

Essentially, the message is that a successful development program starts with a quality product be it a school, parish, arch/diocese, agency or ministry. Quality includes mission, personnel, training, service, facilities, teaching, commitment and vision.

The next component is sound business management. Examples of sound business management include the obvious: good financial reporting and systems, stewardship of facilities, hiring and personnel procedures, effective use of technology as well as budgeting and accounting principles. Moreover, it also includes issues such as charts of organization, evaluation of staff and boards, strategic planning, management procedures, published goals and functions, governance issues and use, staff assignments and delegation.

The third principle of development is effective public relations. Again, the obvious examples of effective public relations include: press releases, news stories, printed materials, videos, etc. But effective public relations also includes sound marketing, identification of our "publics," influencing the influencers, recruiting positive board members -- men and women of faith, influence and affluence who are difference makers.

Issues such as staff, board, office and volunteer interaction with the public over the phone, in the parking lot or at the mall are critical issues of public relations.

The fourth principle of development that Msgr. Flynn espoused was People and Dollars. The first three principles of development are important to attract people to the development program. Development Councils, Endowment Boards, Alumni Leaders, Parents, Parishioners and Diocesan Leaders are essential to the development program efforts. Msgr. Flynn believed that selection of lay leaders would make or break a development program.

## **PARADIGM SHIFT**

In our society, the term "paradigm shift" has been bandied about for a number of years reflecting an ever-changing society both social and economic. But a dynamic "paradigm shift" also occurred in the Church and Catholic schools and parishes. For hundreds of years, we were blessed with a "Living Endowment" of sisters, priests and brothers. Their services underwrote our ministries. Over the last 30 years that endowment has faded replaced with tuition and quick fix fundraising which impedes our mission. Msgr. Flynn and all of us in the Omaha Development Movement believe that the long term answer is replacing the "Living Endowment" with real, financial endowments.

In the interim, we have funded our Catholic schools through a flawed system called tuition in an ever-attempting effort to provide just and equitable wages on the "income" of parents and their willingness to pay tuition.

The way to build endowments is through major gift calls, planned gifts and educating people to give from their assets rather than their income: a paradigm shift. The basic concepts of development are paradigm shifts that many find difficult to accept.

Another paradigm shift is Finance Councils and Development Councils. Most Finance Councils are composed of good, dedicated people who are committed to the work of the Church and Catholic education. However, with some exceptions, most Finance Councils are minimalists with accounting mentalities. Their real focus more on accounting, budgeting and monitoring rather than raising money.

Development Councils do development work -- not Finance Councils. Msgr. Flynn believed the old paradigm of Finance Councils conducting development (as opposed to staying in finance), rather than creating a new paradigm (Development Councils) simply won't work.

He also believed that Stewardship was important but only if it didn't "limit and legislate" how people should give. Stewardship is a Christian lifestyle and relationship with God -- not a collection system.

---

## **+QUARTERLY+ CHECKLIST**

This edition's **CHECKLIST** is a nostalgic look back on some of the most instructive and insightful recommendations and comments on development offered by Msgr. Flynn.

**ON ENDOWMENTS** -- "When you establish an endowment it elevates your program because now you are in the major gifts, planned gifts, gifts of assets and accountability business."

**ON DEVELOPMENT VS. FUNDRAISING** -- "Development attracts people and assets, fundraising attracts short term solutions and only people's incomes."

**ON WHERE TO FIND THE RIGHT PEOPLE FOR LEADERSHIP ROLES** -- "Usually at daily Mass."

**ON SELECTION OF LEADERS** -- "Never recruit a volunteer to 'convert' them to your cause. They should be converted before they are invited to serve."

**ON MAKING CALLS** -- "Making calls is the single most important aspect of development. Jesus made calls. He asked the Apostles to give their whole lives. We're giving people the privilege of investing in that original call. Get out and make calls."

**ON CASE STATEMENTS AND STRATEGIC PLANS** -- "Go out and call on people who have already demonstrated their financial commitment. Listen to what they say and your case statement and planning processes will be much shorter and more productive. Make sure the case statement and planning process doesn't become a convenient excuse NOT to make calls."

**ON CONSULTANTS** -- "The best development programs are the ones that work with a consultant on an ongoing, continual basis. Know the difference between consultants. There are PR consultants, planning consultant and campaign consultants. But a general counsel consultant should be used continually. The research is in our book *Effective Funding of Catholic Schools*."

**FINALLY ON DEVELOPMENT** -- "Development isn't developing dollars but developing people through lasting, loving relationships devoted to carrying out the mission of the Church: bringing Christ to people and people to Christ."

---

[ [Return to the CDQ Online Index](#) ]



Copyright (c) Publishing Division of Richard P. Garrigan & Associates,  
16647 Farnam Street, Omaha NE 68118, 1-800-426-8198.

This publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission