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PARISH NEWSLETTER
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The Spirituality of Leadership

Every parish needs a structure, a framework out of which to operate. But how is this structure made holy? Some answers appear in a new booklet, Learners and Leaders, A Spirituality for Board Members, by Mary Benet McKinney, OSB (www.ncea.org/store). It should be required reading for all parish leaders.

Some of the gems contained in this 44 page volume include:

* “The call to serve on a board (council) is a call to deepen our spirituality as well as to share our skills of public relations, visioning, dialoging, and decision making.” (p. 4)

* “We get trapped in winning rather than serving, in success rather than holiness, and in tasks rather than Gospel. And, quite possibly, our greatest weakness – we forget to be joyful.” (p. 5)

* “Think of it (council decision making) as a pot of vegetable soup. The first step in this culinary project is to get everything ready. Brown the meat, peel and dice the various vegetables, gather whatever spices or herbs are to be added, and fill a pot with water. Everything goes in. Turn on the heat and allow it to come to a boil. Obviously everything that is put into the pot has to remain there for the entire process. As soon as it reaches a boil, decrease the heat and allow the mixture to simmer. The simmering goes on for quite a time because it is during that time that all the ingredients somehow take on flavors from each other. . . . The board (council) meeting is the pot into which everything goes. The key word here is everything. All wisdom must be collected, without debate or arguing or questioning. As all listen attentively, each person shares his or her wisdom on the topic being considered. . . .”

This small book is filled with choice bits of wisdom. In her “Final Thoughts,” McKinney concludes, “Being a member of a board (council) is a challenge, an opportunity for personal growth, an invitation to nourish and strengthen church, a call to deeper and deeper spirituality. . . .”

A second resource worth pursuing is the “Pastoral Summit” (www.pastoralsummit.org). Paul Wilkes, author of Excellent Catholic Parishes (2001) is sponsoring three “Summits”, one in San Antonio (April 28-30), another in Indianapolis (June 17-19) and a third in Boston (Oct. 6-8). We attended the last one in New Orleans during the summer of 2001 where grass-roots parish leaders – not experts – shared their successes and concerns. Don’t miss it!

Tom Sweetser, SJ & Peg Bishop, OSF
(www.pepparish.org)