

New study: Successful parishes are missionary, emphasize lay leadership

“Open Wide the Doors to Christ: A Study of Catholic Social Innovation for Parish Vitality,” released last week and published by Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities (FADICA) enumerates shared characteristics found in Catholic parishes with vital communities, which are described as ones with strong leadership and “a balance of Word, Worship, and Service in the life of the parish.”

As parishes begin to re-open, we are pleased to be releasing the findings of this timely study,” said FADICA president and CEO, Alexia Kelley in a statement. “Perhaps one outcome from this period of pandemic could be that pastors and parish leaders equipped with the study’s findings might find life-giving strategies relevant to their own context.

Among the common attributes of welcoming parishes are ones that have an engaging website, trained greeters to welcome individuals to Mass, a focus on hospitality, and systems in place to follow-up with newcomers.

Further, they recommend that canon 517.2 under Church law be employed, which allows a bishop, where there is a lack of clergy, to appoint “deacons and other persons who are not priests” to provide for the pastoral care of parishes.

By embracing co-responsibility and diversity, they conclude, parishes and pastoral leaders will find new ways to “Open Wide the Doors of Christ,” both “literally and figuratively.”

“We found lay women and lay men working together with clergy, co-responsibly stepping up and bringing life to the parish. We saw them more welcoming than aloof. We found leaders open to personal, flexible, and adaptive relationships with young adults, rather than bemoaning or blaming the culture. And rather than seeing diversity as an obstacle, leaders welcome it as a grace, embracing our brothers and sisters of every culture and ethnicity,” they write.

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2020/06/new-study-successful-parishes-are-missionary-emphasize-lay-leadership/>