

What is a Parish Leader?

A Parish Leader is a professional minister appointed by the diocesan bishop with the responsibility of leading a parish community that does not have a resident priest, in collaboration with a Canonical Pastor. The sacraments will continue to be celebrated on a regular basis at the parish through the ministry of an assigned Sacramental Minister (a priest) or the Canonical Pastor. The Parish Leader nurtures and renews the life of the parish in collaboration with staff and parishioners. A Parish Leader can be a deacon, religious woman or man, or lay woman or man who is specifically trained for this ministry.

Why do we need Parish Leaders?

Our diocese has a rich tradition of priests faithfully serving the spiritual needs of those entrusted to their care. In light of fewer priests serving the Diocese of Youngstown, we face a serious but not insurmountable challenge. We have 38 priests in active ministry over the age of 65; 17 of these men are over the age of 70. The use of Parish Leaders will remove the administrative burden of some priests, especially as the number of priests continues to decline in the near future. The Parish Leader concept is a way to keep parishes vibrant while being more creative in the utilization of our priests.

How will it work?

This alternative form of parish leadership has been used in other dioceses for years. Parish Leaders are not a new form of lay priesthood, but rather an opportunity for faith filled men and women to use their gifts of leadership and administration so that priests can focus on the sacramental and pastoral care of the faithful. Parish Leaders empower parishioners to fulfill their baptismal call of discipleship and ministry and use their gifts at the service of the Church. While not all parishes will utilize this model, the success of Parish Leaders requires cooperation and collaboration from parishes within the region.

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