

Sample Message from *Amazing Parish*

How do you avoid hurt feelings or politics when some people don't get chosen for the team? This is one of the biggest fears that drives pastors away from establishing a team. To overcome that fear, a pastor has to know that weeks after the initial disruption, the parish will begin benefitting remarkably as a result of creating the right team. In other words, the rewards outweigh the costs. That seems easier said than done, but as long as you go about it with confidence, clarity and sensitivity, the benefits will have an incredible impact on your parish.

To be clear, it is the job of the pastor to present the new structure for parish leadership team meetings in a clear, mature, compelling way. **He might say something like...**

"Listen everyone. I've recently come to the conclusion that the only way to take the parish to the place we all want it to go is to change the way plan and lead. That is my responsibility and I'm convinced that it is what we need, and that after we dig into this and ask questions in a frank and honest way, we'll all come to the same conclusion."

"First, we are going to establish something called a parish (discernment*) team. I'm not talking about the parish council or finance council, and I'm not talking about the staff team that includes everyone who works in the parish office."

"What I'm talking about is a small group of people, four or five probably, who will take on considerably more work to help me oversee the entire parish, regardless of what their day jobs are. This parish is too important, and we have too many **wonderful opportunities to bring people to Christ** to allow our current way to continue. We need to be more nimble, strategic, informed and clever. That doesn't happen with all eight of us in a room, or with twelve people in the conference room on Mondays. We have to do something different. Now, that doesn't mean we still won't have meetings with all of us to talk about what is happening in the parish or to brainstorm how a new program might roll out. But we can't possibly vet out the right answer and argue about it and pray about it and push back and forth with more than a small handful of people on the leadership team."

"Now, I realize that there is potential in situations like this for people to be nervous about whether they'll be on the team or not. I get that. And I realize that much of that nervousness comes from the idea that if we aren't on the parish leadership team, we have somehow been demoted or disrespected. I get that. But it just isn't the reality of what we're doing here."

*The Archdiocese modeled the Parish Discernment Team after Amazing Parish's Parish Leadership Team. This was to avoid any confusion about the role being one of authority.

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“Being a member of my small (discernment*) team is **not a reward** for good service. It’s not an indication of where you stand in the parish in terms of importance and impact. And it is not a message to you about whether you are considered a strong member of the parish staff. Some of our most talented and senior and committed people might not be on the team, not because they aren’t fantastic at what they do, but rather because they are appropriately focused on one particular aspect of what goes on in the parish. Or perhaps they won’t want to sign up for what I’m requiring leadership team members to do. Because being on the (discernment*) team carries with it a weighty set of responsibilities, with little or no public attention or formal upside.”

What is important here is that the pastor is up front with people about what it means to be on the leadership team.

When a pastor is confronted with a disappointed staff member or volunteer who thought he or she should have been chosen, it is best for that pastor to **listen kindly** and with **genuine empathy**. The pastor must then explain, in confidence, the purpose for the new team and the fruits that it will have to yield. He should also remind them, “you will **not be excluded** from providing insight and ideas relating to your area of responsibility, and your input will always be welcomed in any area where you want to contribute.”

If a disgruntled person persists in his or her belief that they should have been on the team, that is where a pastor can communicate kindly and in a dignified way, but with NO sense of apology, the specific reasons that the person wasn’t seen to be the best for the limited spots on the team.

If all this can be handled with eagerness on the part of the pastor and other leaders, and with genuine concern and dignity for the person who is upset, and with no sense of apology for what the parish is trying to