



The Heart of the Matter

Convictions Underlying *Vibrant Parish Life* - Part 2

“Living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into Him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body...brings about the body’s growth and builds itself up in love.”
(Ephesians 4:15-16)

In Part 1 of “The Heart of the Matter” we read about planning in a spirit of “communio”. In his pastoral letter, *Vibrant Parish Life*, Bishop Pilla wrote about two additional convictions – subsidiarity and collaboration. These convictions are critical – and cannot be sacrificed – in all planning for the future of the Diocese so that it may live to its fullest. This article will focus on *subsidiarity*.

What is subsidiarity?

- X subsidiarity is a term from the social justice teaching of the church; the term comes from the Latin, *subsidium*, which means “support”
- X subsidiarity refers to the proper working of a community, in which each part accepts its own abilities, responsibilities and authority and offers support to every other part of the community

What does the principle of subsidiarity mean for the Vibrant Parish Life initiative?

- X This deeply Christian approach to leadership allows for authentic Church life because action is taken at the local level.
- X Parishes and local communities know their gifts and needs best.
- X Parish leaders take initiative and responsibility for change and action.
- X The diocese has the responsibility to provide direction, set parameters; parish leaders have the responsibility to choose how to best apply them.
- X The diocese has the responsibility to make decisions which affect the common good of the whole diocesan church – for example, in allocating and assigning priests.
- X The diocese and diocesan offices have the responsibility to provide support and resources to local parishes and clusters, so their ministry can be effective.

Why is subsidiarity used instead of an authoritative style of leadership?

- X Subsidiarity does demand that leaders recognize and use their authority – appropriately.
- X Subsidiarity gives room for the work of the Spirit and provides opportunities for true Christian discipleship.
- X Subsidiarity allows for trust and reliance upon the good judgment of parish leaders who are closest to the needs and possibilities of each local situation.

- X Research has shown that dioceses where local communities have high levels of local participation and decision-making also have had the most successful planning results.

The principle of subsidiarity allows for the importance of true Christian leadership. Hard work and perseverance by all parish leaders are necessary for this conviction to be appreciated at its fullest. The direction and resources will be provided from a diocesan level. The choices of how to best apply those strategies are to be made at the parish level.

JEREMIAH 29:11 -14

“Yes, I know what plans I have in mind for you, Yahweh declares, plans for peace, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. When you call to me and come and pray to me, I shall listen to you. When you search for me, you will find me; when you search wholeheartedly for me, I shall let you find me, Yahweh declares.”

Going Deeper:

1. What do you like about this conviction of subsidiarity? What if any concerns does it cause for you?
2. Why do you think it is said that subsidiarity allows for the work of the Spirit and an opportunity for authentic Church life?
3. What types of decisions does subsidiarity allow your parish to make?