

Leadership Lament: Parish Pitfalls

Doris dials the phone

Doris: Hi, Bette, It's me, Doris. How are you? . . .

You're tired?! Well, I won't ask why that is – Synod probably - but no time for that – there are too many **parish problems** to go over – that's why I'm calling – we haven't been talking for awhile. I have to tell you, I'm worried . . . What about, you ask?

Well, for starters, that **luncheon for the community seniors'** idea. What do you think of that? . . . You think it's good! Well, I never! Having all those community people come, even the ones that never darken the door of the church? Why would we open our doors to any Tom, Dick, or Harry? I don't know what we're thinking of! Crazy, if you ask me! . . . I don't see why we can't **just do what we've always done** – have a nice spring luncheon for our own ladies, and be done – tried and true, I say, none of these new-fangled ideas!

But, no, we have to have these **new people come to the parish** with some crazy ideas – they're taking over is what I say. . . . What do you mean you don't see it that way? That's what it is, plain and simple – a take-over, maybe not hostile, but a take-over, just the same. And the worst one, what's her name? Suzie? . . . No, Sukie, you say? Why can't she just have a regular name, like, like, like - Susan? Anyway, Suzie . . . Yeah, yeah, I mean, Sukie . . . Yeah, I know, she seems nice enough, but I have my doubts – like that idea to have both the tea and the coffee together on the same side of the hall – a “beverage centre”, I think she called it. Can you believe it? A “beverage centre”. We've **always** had the tea on one side of the hall, and the coffee on the other – that's the way we do it at St. B's. . . . Oh, I know, there's no problem anymore with blowing fuses, now that the electrical upgrade has been done (which our group paid for, by the way), **but why change?** “Beverage centre”, indeed! And, the other one, you know. . . Kathryn, Kathryn with a “y” mind you - well she has ideas for the table setting - just because she's an interior designer!?!?! Like we need that . . . Yes, yes . . . I know she said she could provide the materials, no problem or cost to us, and bring in some extra folks to help with set-up, but why have anyone extra, is what I want to know? We know how we want it, how we've always done it, and we can do it ourselves is what I say – tried and true, tried and true. . . . that's my motto.

Bette, I can't believe my ears – you think this is good?!? And, and, and I suppose you think it's good that we use the extra funds we have and the ones from the Flea Market for the **summer camp for all the kids in the town who want to register** . . You do?! . . . Well, I never! I don't know what's gotten into you – You've changed. It must be Synod that's done that – you'll have to stop going is what I say. I know you couldn't be at that meeting when that daft idea was decided – instead, you were at Synod – being brainwashed there, it seems. I suppose you would have voted for that camp idea, if you had been there. . . . You would have, well, I never! You can be sure I didn't. I've never heard of such a daft notion.

What I want to know is why we should use our hard earned money to pay for the leaders for that camp, the snacks, the lunch, and the other supplies? And have it open to all?! Most of those kids wouldn't know a Bible story from a comic book! . . . You mean there are Bible stories in comics!! Now, I've heard

it all. Well, I can tell you, I didn't vote for that camp idea - all those kids in our church hall when we could use that money for a new floor in the hall kitchen – mark my words, there's going to be problems. I don't want to have to say, "I told you so", but I will be, I know - just wait and see . . .

What is it you said you're getting ready for? . . . **Preparing a homily!**?! You can't do that – you're not ordained. Rev. Markus asked you!!! . . . Now I've heard it all! What in heaven's name will you be talking about? . . . Some key things you learned from Synod: *It's about MORE?* Well, I never, that's just a lot of gobbledy gook, if you ask me – *It's about MORE!!* What's that supposed to mean? That's the priest's job, sermons / homilies, don't you know? I'm surprised you didn't tell him that . . . Don't give me that malarkey about **shared leadership** – that's just Rev. Markus trying to get out of doing his job. . . . Don't "Oh, Doris" me, Bette. As soon as I heard him talk about *shared leadership* at the Annual Meeting, I knew he was just trying to get others to do his work, plain and simple – everyone knows that he is the one to give sermons, not the likes of you. And that idea of using everyone's gifts, that he talked about - that everyone has something to contribute so the parish can be "healthy". What's that supposed to mean? We know it's only a handful that do everything around here and someone has to be in charge. What does Rev. Markus think? - Just because you were a Synod delegate you can talk about Synod!?! Why do we need to know about Synod anyway? . . .

You have to go. Well, we'll talk again soon. Maybe next time, you'll be thinking more clearly, have this Synod stuff out of your system. . . . Yes, you too, Bette. I pray for you, too. Bye. (Closes out the call). I pray that you come to your senses, Bette, so that it can be like the good ole days – no changes, no shared leadership! I don't know what this parish is coming to. Tried and true is what I say, tried and true!