

Don't Do It.

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Priests are good boys - some by disposition – some simply trained to “do the right thing”.
Problem: being a good boy and doing the right thing can be very damaging in today's church.

Good boys are predisposed to comply with authority – even when they do not want to - even when they judge the request wrong or ill advised. Obedience means doing what you are asked by the bishop or an importunate parishioner. The Latin “obedire” has overtones of listening and evaluating. But the English word “obey” disregards assessment and becomes “do what you are told”.

Priests feel duty bound when asked to take on an extra parish or other duties. It is a price to be paid for insisting on the indispensability of the priest when there is a drought of vocations. They have brought it on themselves. Or have they?

Most priests today have adapted exceptionally well to the priest shortage. It is a tribute to the high quality of recruitment for the thirty years after WWII. They have developed skills of leadership, management, delegation, supervision and volunteer coordination. And all of it is largely self-taught. The parish of 2012 is nothing like the one they went to when first appointed Assistant Priest twenty or more years ago. The laity now are much more sophisticated and many of them willing volunteers, doing a lot of the pastoral work - often enough under the direction of a full-time Pastoral Coordinator.

The most effective priests today see themselves as overseers of the parish life and action and less as hands-on pastoral workers. Take a step back and have a look. This is a much better model than the old one where the priest did everything. Necessity once again has become the mother of invention.

And many Pastoral Coordinators could easily exercise this priest-as-overseer role if they were ordained. The main pre-requisite for ordination should be the proven ability to lead and organize an active believing community. Ordaining untested 30 year olds is a shot in the dark.

So, Father, why not take on that neighbouring parish if asked? The Eucharist is indispensable and the priest is indispensable for the Eucharist. Isn't a priest letting the people down if he does not take on the extra responsibility? *No! He is not.* The ones insisting on the restrictive pre-requisites for recruitment are the ones responsible. A priest who cooperates is only hindering the new order and prolonging the misery. The prevailing rules (male, fulltime, life-long and celibate), can and must be changed, but the priest cannot do anything about that.

So, Father, don't delay the necessary reconstruction. If you go along with this clerical obduracy you are cooperating in a bad thing.

Just say “No”.