

## Graduates bring business expertise to parishes through new program

Robert Delaney of The Michigan Catholic  
Published June 22, 2007

Detroit — In a program designed to take some of the parish management burdens off of increasingly stretched pastors, the Archdiocese of Detroit awarded certificates to the first 16 graduates of its parish business manager training courses June 12.



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Members of the first graduating class in the Archdiocese of Detroit's parish business manager program are (from left) Moira Shaum, Beth Meyer, Catherine Diethorn, Mark Baker, Mary Jane Bassil, Greg Boyer, Debbie Schrandt, Paul Borucki, Lorraine Goetzinger, David Elsey, Virginia Achade, Pauline Peterson and Rita Wesol. Not pictured are Beth Herzog, Karen Roosen and Nancy Vendittelli.

The graduation ceremony at [Sacred Heart Major Seminary](#) might turn out to have been the first of many across the United States, as Detroit's first-in-the-nation program could become the model for other dioceses.

"We have applied for certification of our program from the [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops](#)," Fran Ashe, director of Parish Support Services for the archdiocese, told the graduates and their guests at a luncheon following the ceremony.

As Ashe explains it, the three-level business manager course seeks to take parish bookkeepers to a higher level, so they can become qualified advisers to the pastor on financial matters and other aspects of parish operations.

Likewise, it also offers certification to those who already have the parish business manager title, adding some specialized knowledge about parish management to what they already know from experience in the business world.

Fr. Ed Zaorski, who serves on the review board for the program, said having certified business managers will "give pastors more opportunity to really be pastors."

"It's not that pastors don't still have overall responsibility for the running of parishes, but certification will give them confidence they can act on the advice of their business managers without having to research every issue of parish management themselves," he said.

With so many pastors having had to take on additional pastoral duties because of the shortage of priests, priests are looking for the assistance trained business managers can provide, said Fr. Zaorski, pastor of the three-parish cluster of [All Saints, SS. Andrew & Benedict](#) and [St. John Cantius](#) in southwest Detroit.



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Lorraine Goetzinger of St. Lawrence Parish in Utica receives her certificate from Msgr. John Zenz, vicar general of the Archdiocese of Detroit, at a June 12 graduation ceremony for parish business

"This is very much in line with the issues addressed in the Total Pastoral Plan for Priests and [Together in Faith](#)," he continued, referring first to the archdiocesan plan devised to combat priest burnout and then to the strategic plan for parish clusters, mergers or closures that has guided the restructuring of the Detroit Archdiocese.

Among those graduating with Level III certification was Catherine Diethorn, business manager at [St. Michael Parish](#) in Livonia. "I think all of us would say we were very impressed with the program Fran Ashe and Dan Oliver (director of the archdiocesan Department of Finance and Administration) put together. It gives us all of the tools we need to do our jobs better," she said.

Diethorn went to work for the parish three years ago after voluntarily leaving a 16-year career at Daimler-Chrysler Corp. after deciding she wanted to find a way to serve the Church.

She already had a bachelor's in economics from the University of Michigan and a master's in accounting from Wayne State University, but the parish business manager program covers many areas particular to parish management – not only accounting issues, but matters such as preventive maintenance to keep up the physical plant.

Mary Jane Bassil, office manager and bookkeeper at [St. Mark Parish](#) in Warren for 22 years, said she enjoyed the related bookkeeping topics course offered by the Parish Support Services Office so much that she wanted to go on to take the business manager training.

"It reinforced what I was doing. I felt really supported through the whole program," said Bassil, who graduated with Level II certification.

Moira Shaum, business manager since 2001 at [St. Peter Parish](#) in Mount Clemens, also a Level II graduate, said the program provided a lot of useful information for a person such as herself, who had come from an automotive industry background.

While some of the graduates work for just one parish, others such as Level II graduate Karen Roosen apportion their time among a number of parishes.

More information about the parish business manager certification program is available from Fran Ashe, (313) 237-5903

manager students.

### **Business manager certification**

All three levels of parish business manager have responsibility for stewarding the physical, financial and personnel resources of the parish to enable other ministries to function effectively, and help the parish fulfill its mission and purpose.

Level I is the first level of certification; Level II requires a bachelor's degree in accounting and at least three years of accounting experience, or an associate's degree with five years' experience. Level III requires a bachelor's in accounting, plus five years' accounting experience, two years of directing plant and maintenance operations and three years experience in parish work.

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