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O'MEARA,  
FERGUSON,  
WHELAN,  
AND CONWAY

[www.omearaferguson.com](http://www.omearaferguson.com)

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## What is Mission Advancement?

The term *mission advancement* refers to a comprehensive, systematic process designed to carry forward the mission of the Church in a diocese, parish, religious community, school or other Catholic organization. This concept is clearly related to *development* or *institutional advancement* as it is used by various kinds of nonprofit organizations both faith-based and secular. What distinguishes development or advancement in the case of a Catholic organization is its deliberate focus on the mission of the Church, which is both divine and human and which is paradoxically both similar to and completely different from other kinds of organizations that seek to develop or advance their missions.

### What is similar to all other organizations?

Successful advancement requires strong leadership, excellent communications and a well-managed organization with an effective fundraising program.

### What's different?

Although Catholic organizations use principles and techniques of financial management, personnel administration and professional fundraising to develop and manage the temporal resources that are essential for ministry, in the final analysis, the Church's mission extends beyond the practical day-to-day realities of institutional life to a realm that is profoundly spiritual. This all-important dimension of mystery (the sacramental nature of the Church) should never be an excuse for poor stewardship of the Church's resources. But it does require us to "look deeper" when we talk about our vision for the future and to attend to the special character of the Church as the Body

of Christ when we formulate strategies and action plans for carrying out Christ's work in the world today.

Mission advancement requires the active leadership and support of the bishop, pastor, religious superior or chief administrator who is charged with the responsibility for expressing a clear sense of mission and priorities, building strong relationships with the people whose help is needed to carry out the organization's mission, and developing the human, physical and financial resources that are needed to make the organization's vision and plans for the future a reality.

What are the signs of a successful mission advancement program in a diocese, parish, religious community, school or other Catholic organization?

- Strong leaders with a clear sense of purpose and a plan for the future.
- Excellent communications that inform, inspire and invite clergy, religious and lay people to become engaged in the organization's work for the Church.
- Temporal resources that are well-managed and that grow in proportion to the organization's vision and priorities.

In the end, a mission advancement program is only recognized as successful when the work of the Church is carried forward. This requires spiritual vitality, evangelization, the work of charity and the human and financial resources needed to sustain Christ's work. Mission advancement is never an end in itself. It is always a means to a much more important end—proclaiming the Gospel and building up the Body of Christ.