

**DR18 Divine Renovation Conference 12 June 2018 Breakout Session
with Fr Simon Lobo and Ron Huntley.**

This is a broad brush transcription. Thankfully (as at 9 Aug 2018) this video from #DR18 is still available on Livestream via North Broadcast Group; however it takes around 12 minutes for the sound recording quality to settle down and the session to start.

Fr Simon Lobo is the current pastor of St Benedict's Parish, Halifax, having taken over from Fr James Mallon. Fr Simon is the author of '[Divine Renovation Apprentice](#)' and a member of the religious order called the Companions of the Cross. Fr Simon can be found on Twitter @frsimoncc and you can watch him tell his vocation story <https://companionscross.org/priests/fr-simon-lobo> and how he came to be the pastor of St Benedict's Parish <https://www.companionscross.org/latest-news/fr-simon-lobo-cc-appointed-pastor-st-benedict-parish>

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Jen Ferrier: Welcome! St Benedict's Parish (SBP) changed my life. I used to sit in the last pew in order to sneak out early because I didn't want to be asked by the priest to do anything. My heart changed through attending Alpha in 2013. Many contributed to this work in my heart. Since then I have run Alpha at SBP for 5 years as co-ordinator evangelisation. God doesn't ask us to go it alone. The title of this session is 'Parish leadership is a team sport'.

Fr Simon Lobo: Welcome! Thank you for being here. It is a joy to be here with you, and I acknowledge the sacrifice to come and the investment needed to come. In seminary we did lots of courses on philosophy and theology, practical stuff on confessions and Mass, and about half a course on homiletics. There are 3 big areas we are called to serve in – priest, prophet and king. The laity is also called to serve in these areas through baptism. A priest has a special call to the kingly role of governance and leadership. In seminary we did a lot on 1 (priest), a little on 2 (prophet) and nil on 3 (king).

I had no concept of leadership. My parents didn't have any either. You don't know what you don't know. I had no sense of leadership.

Ron Huntley: Leadership is one of my favourite topics. Business can be just as toxic as church. Jesus gave us example of how to lead well. At SBP we talk about leadership all the time. But what's the definition of leadership?

Leadership at St Benedict's Parish is answering the call to influence, inspire and equip individuals and teams to form disciples who joyfully live out the mission of Jesus Christ.

We have learned from many people, books, resources etc but we still mess up a bit.

Think about your parish. Leadership at parish is

On a scale of 1 to 5, how well is your church doing leadership? Mostly 2's. How many want a 5? How many believe that a 5 is possible? Vision is one of the things that gets us from a 2 to a 5.

Vision

Fr Simon Lobo: Vision, it's so central to leadership. I have a friend, a father of a family, who is an engineer who started his own business as a consultant. Gradually he worked out that he could only bill for a limited number of hours a week. He came to the conclusion 'that there had to be something beyond me' and 'I need to think bigger than myself'. So he invited and inspired others to join him, and he hired people from families in the church. It worked. They are all successful because this engineer could see beyond.

Priests in parishes can be the bottleneck. I was the glass ceiling, the bottleneck, in campus ministry. Growth was good at the start, but then it slowed down when it reached the limit of what I could handle.

'Vision is a picture of the future that produces passion' – Bill Hybels

Think to the horizon, way off to the distance. On the Camino Way there is a place called Finisterre, 'Earth's End', where Christopher Columbus looked out over the horizon some 500 years ago and said, 'I wonder if there's something out there, let's go for it'.

Part of getting people from here to there is helping people to see that we can't stay here, and saying, let's go there.

I was kind of forced into this a year ago, when I was asked to give a vision talk at our vision summit to 100 key leaders of the parish. What do I say? I'm a practical, feet on the ground kind of guy. I had to give myself permission to dream and to think big. I thought I had to cook up a vision within myself, but I realised that God has a vision for the parish. So I went to Him, before the Blessed Sacrament, and said, 'God I don't have a vision, I need a vision, help me'. Then the thought came, there have been 7 years of SBP history, what would 7 years in the future (2024) look like? At the moment there are about 50 people this past year who have had a significant conversion to Jesus Christ, that's about one a week. What if by 2024 that could be one person a day? And things flowed from there.

Think of a graph where the vertical axis is skills and the horizontal axis is time in leadership – or increasing responsibility in leadership. The need for technical skills decreases as time/responsibility in leadership increases. The need for casting vision skills increases as time/responsibility in leadership increases. The need for emotional intelligence skills or the ability to work with people and deal with difficult people is low in junior leadership, extremely high in middle leadership and medium in senior leadership.

This is why we need to keep growing in the ability to cast vision.

Describe a vision for your parish, or ministry, a picture with passion. What gets you excited?

Some of the answers from the auditorium were:

- People expect God to show up with miracles every week
- A full church for daily Masses, and all three campuses full of activity (outreach, bible studies, prayer groups)

- An apostolic community with an outwards focus
- A vibrant church with lively Christians, where the best of them are known in town and regionally as the best musicians, are regularly asked for articles in newspapers and are influencing politicians for the good behind the curtain
- Helping the family grow closer to Christ
- We are a university town, a place where the young people seek us out and find relevance, where we can show them the 'porta caeli' the gateway to heaven.

Ron Huntley: In the 2016 series of America's Got Talent there was a dad who did well, whose regular job was in nursing. He was asked why he entered the show. He said that when you are in survival mode you stop dreaming. I wanted to show my kids that if I can live my dream, maybe they can too.

A small vision doesn't get us from 2 to 5. I need to be a part of something amazing, otherwise I'll stay at sports. Great vision attracts and keeps great people. You can't do the vision without great people.

What we do is not easy. We don't know how to do anything easy. This is not just for priests and pastors, but for ministry leaders too. I need your vision to be huge, exciting, compelling, dangerous. Start dreaming ridiculously God-sized dreams. What would happen if...?

57 people came to Christ this year. His vision: that in 7 years that becomes 1 a day. I want to be a part of that. How, I don't know, but I want to be a part of that.

Fr Simon Lobo: It seems possible, but it also seems bold. We will figure it out on the way. We want healed, redeemed people who have experienced Jesus.

Ron Huntley: The vision statement is a signpost – it does not exhaust the vision. The vision is bigger than that.

Structure

Structure matters. Consider the local parishes within your area: would I be right in saying that not one of them has a structure set up for mission? If everything goes through the pastor, that is ridiculously ineffective. Fr James Mallon is naturally a delegator. Our goal is to do the very thing God is calling us to do.

It may even start with structure. Are we set up for mission? If your structure doesn't move with your mission, you will soon be on the verge of collapse. It was a crisis like that which forced us to re-evaluate our structure and leadership. Structure has to be fluid and out ahead of our mission, evaluating its fitness for our mission every few months.

Most places have people who have been in the same ministry for a very long time. Are their gifts still suited to this ministry? Do they still have passion and vision for this ministry? Is that vision in alignment with the overall vision for the parish? If so they should continue. If not we need to help them find something new where this will be true for them.

If I get in the way of the vision, I will step down. If I am part of the problem, I need to know – in order to move, to change, or to get out of the way. We can't let ego get in the way of the mission of the church.

When I took over pastoral ministry, we divided it this way, if it has a heartbeat I deal with it, and if it doesn't have a heartbeat then Rob deals with it.

Jesus invested disproportionate time with Peter, James and John. They were like His Senior Leadership Team (SLT). The rest of the apostles, the other 9, they were like His staff. The 72 disciples, they were like ministry leaders.

Things must percolate from the bottom up, not from the top down. We don't use the word 'report', we use the word 'support'. Jesus washed their feet – this is what leadership looks like in the kingdom of God. There is nothing I won't do for you. How can I support you? There is no room for ego. This is using authority to love and to serve.

Do you know who you need to support? Or are called to support? It is about how many others you are raising up. Your job is to unleash people. It is critical that we get this right.

Recently I had been having trouble finding time to connect with a friend, but I kept on trying. This friend told me I was only going to get let off the hook if I was doing what great leaders do. What do great leaders do? They invest their 1 unit of energy in places that get them 5 units of return.

Remember the parable of the talents? Three people were given 1, 2 and 5 talents, and they came back with 1, 4 and 10 talents. And the one talent was given to the guy who had 10 talents. Leadership is about unleashing people and about allowing all the other gifts to flourish. As leaders we are not to be bottlenecks but bottle openers.

We must think about leadership differently.

What gets in the way? Entitlement, ego, turf, toxic personal relationships, pride, competition, burn out, lack of self-awareness etc. We need to aim the sling, and so straight after it.

Each of us has 3.5 blind-spots. A weakness is different to a blind-spot. Weaknesses are things I know I am bad at. A blind-spot is something I think I am good at, but I'm actually bad at. Ages ago I worked in a small business for Ken, he was the boss and I asked him to be a reference for me when I applied for other jobs. So my potential new employers called him up and asked Ken what I needed to grow in. He's impatient. When I found out I initially felt hurt because Ken is my friend, but do you know what? He said that because it is true, and I had no idea it was true. It is so important that we figure this stuff out.

The senior leadership team (SLT) enables us to invest in each other, and to learn to trust enough, for us to get to that place where we can deal with this stuff.

Think about a time when you were on a team, and everything just flowed. On that team there was someone who made you the best you could be. Who was that person? You need them or someone like them on your team, who is like you in vision, but who is unlike you in skill set. Your SLT needs 4-5 people at the most, and is very different to a staff team. The idea is that it becomes a safe place to call each other out and call each other on.

Fr Simon Lobo: You probably have good people in your parish, who would love and support you and come along side you. Blind-spots: ask people who are close to you what they are, and give them permission to tell you. It is a dangerous thing to do, but people who really care about you want you to be better. Ron has done this for me. I can start to micro manage and

not even be aware of it. What I think is efficient and focussed can go too far, far enough to suck the fun out of a meeting. But he said it in a loving way, 'You are a fun guy, but you don't often lead fun'.

Most people will lie to a priest's face. They will not be honest unless you build a relationship with them, and then ask them to be honest with you, and don't punish them for it afterwards. It is helpful to see me through someone else's eyes. It is still hard for lay people to tell the truth to us, unless we actually submit ourselves to them.

Meetings

An excellent resource for this topic is Patrick Lencioni's book, ['Death by Meeting'](#).

People will happily sit through a 2 hour movie where they are passive and not based in reality – but put them in a 2 hour meeting and it's 'get me out of there as fast as possible'. The reason is because they are passive and not engaged. The key to a good story is conflict and tension, that's what gives excitement to the story, and to meetings.

Our Senior Leadership Team meetings have healthy conflict, and a nerf gun to add fun. It is a safe place. With Ron, Fr James, Rob and Kate in these meetings, we actually mine for conflict. If we are discussing a topic, and you are being quiet, I want to know what is going on. If you are disagreeing with the proposals tell us, tell us now. Don't wait until afterwards. It doesn't have to get personal. It can get close to the edge, but we check in with each other later, 'How are you doing?' etc. We have different processing speeds.

Meetings are so essential. Patrick Lencioni says to avoid meetings would be like a mechanic saying that he loved being a mechanic, but if he could only get out of the time in the garage working on cars it would be great.

For leaders, priests and lay people, our leadership, our workshops happen so often in the context of meetings. I've had to have a change of heart on this, and to grow in awareness that I can't just slough these off, these are really important. We are in the business of relationships. And when we don't meet with other people what happens very easily is that people who love Jesus and who care about the mission of the church, if they don't meet regularly, there can be drift. Drift allows space for two visions to open up, and where there are 2 visions, there is division. Division and false assumptions can happen unless we take time investing in each other for the sake of the kingdom. It is that important.

There are several different kinds of meetings.

Since we have 160 people in hospitality ministry, there are going to have to be lots of meetings, small, medium and large, to keep that ministry going, thriving and unified.

There are different purposes for different meetings. Due to our desire to be practical we have prepared a handout that contains samples of what some of our meetings look like. Looking at the structure of those meetings helps people visualise what we are talking about. I don't want to encourage boring meetings.

Generic team meeting. We have a tendency to go straight to the how to deal with the urgent. While those urgent things have to be dealt with, we have to make sure that we make room for the important.

Our Ministry Leadership Team meetings go for 2 hours. They start with prayer. We put all the topics on the white board. Then we each share a high and a low from our life/ministry around the table. Sometimes if there is a low low we stop and say, let's pray for each other. We then do some kind of development eg focus on a leadership principle, do book studies (eg the book, [Made to Stick](#) for improving communication), we prioritise the list and work through the list in order of importance, and then we end with an extended time of prayer and worship or reflect on the upcoming Sunday readings.

Clergy team meetings are a bit shorter.

One on one meetings. Ron has challenged me on this. What do you mean by them? Who are the key people I need to connect with and support? These are the people who will give the 5/10 fold return on time spent with them.

The format for them is to start with prayer, and then a topic list, followed by time for personal sharings about the joys and burdens of life and ministry. Then there is time for crucial conversations eg Hey, I caught you doing something amazing and I want you to know why or to address something that felt a bit harsh. There is stuff you can do one on one that you can't do with an audience. Then we talk about the stuff on the lists. We ask 2 questions, 'What are your top priorities for this week?' and 'How can I support you?'. We invest in people in an intentional way to free people up to be great.

The Senior Leadership Team meets weekly for 3-4 hours.

Ministry Leadership Teams meet weekly for 2 hours: that's the Pastoral Leadership team, the Operations team, the Clergy team and the Communications team.

One on one meetings happen weekly.

Once a month we have an all staff meeting (15-25 people), with prayer and personal sharing.

Ron Huntley: You can't do all this without stopping some other stuff. Priest vs pastor requires a paradigm shift from executing ministry to raising up other leaders to minister. Even with our staff we had to help them change from doers of ministry to leaders of ministry, and we had to form and shape them differently. And it was not easy, because you were probably hired because of what you are good at. But if you are good at it, you are going to have to stop doing as much and you are going to have to raise up other people around you, and that is a different skill set.

When I was director of evangelisation (a.k.a. pastoral ministries), the pastoral leadership team included the leaders of the Alpha team, the Kids team, the Youth team, the Discipleship Groups team and the Sacraments and Liturgy teams.

Having one parish over multiple sites (or campuses) requires thinking differently.

People are not used to being supported, they are used to being told what to do. When leading from the bottom up we need to create places where relationships matter. We need to invest in each other, so that we can dream again and move towards our mission. That's a completely different paradigm shift, so you need to speak into that for a while before you start creating – or finding ways to create – natural teams.

If you have 2 church sites in your parish, who is the natural leader in church A (and in church B) with the natural capacity to influence, inspire and raise others up? You have to invest in them. You have to re-address your structure and then get creative because you only have so many hours a week. So you have to figure out, 'How am I going to do this in a way that's sustainable for me?'

You have to look for the people who are really good at leading. Most of our best leaders didn't see themselves as leaders. They had humility, people respected them, and they respected and loved others, but they didn't see themselves as leaders, yet people would follow them and look up to them. These are the people I am talking about. You have to figure out who your Peter, James and John are, and how we are going to structure this around those people so that we can do great things. Not who has got what job title.

With multiple sites there is a tendency to want to get an equal amount of people from each site. And what ends up happening is that you end up creating these councils (parish, finance etc). What happens is that people come in with an agenda of their location to advance and protect. What we need to start with is vision. Where does God want us to go? And then, who are the people who have bought into that vision? Because at Senior Leadership Team if people are fighting over the division of resources between sites, that's not going to work. As Fr James Mallon says, if you have more than one vision, then you have division. You need people who are bought in whole heartedly, not people who are Yes men; people who will challenge you, but they need to be people who have bought into the vision of where we are heading on this journey.

What does success look like? I know what you want, but before you tell me what you want, what do you think success looks like? Ask your staff, what do you think you get paid to do? It's a really good question. Ask them, 'What does success look like?'

John 15: I am the vine, you are the branches. The fruit bearing branches he prunes to make them bear more fruit. It begs the question, 'What does fruit look like?' So often we define ourselves by the branches, busy-ness or our programs, by how much time we have, by how much time we don't have. 'I'm really busy'. So? Are you fruitful? I don't really care how busy you are. Are you fruitful? How do you know? What does fruit look like? What's working? What's not working? How has it grown?

Tell me your vision of what fruitfulness looks like, and it had better be compelling. If it is, let's get behind it and structure it for success. We spend a lot of time in the Divine Renovation Network helping people figure that out, because there's no cookie cutter approach since you are working with real people and real skills and real gifts, and that looks different depending on your leaders.

Most of the people on staff weren't staff before, and we didn't always have a staff of 15. And it grew. The more successful we were, the more we were able to grow. Most of the people who came on as staff, came on staff from within the fruits of the ministry. (talking to Fr Simon) Think of all your hires lately – they have all been in the Game Plan.

Fr Simon Lobo: 8 years ago we had 5 or 6 people on staff, and that was already a bigger staff than some parishes. It has grown. Jen is an example of that, someone who came to us through Alpha and eventually got hired to help lead Alpha.

Ron Huntley: Alpha as a course is mediocre. Alpha as a culture is unbeatable, because it becomes the tool by which you evangelise, show hospitality, grow people and ministry, and develop a leadership pipeline. That's a huge secret of Alpha. Please don't tell anybody.

It is a leadership pipeline if done well. Think about it. When's the last time you had dinner 11 weeks in a row with someone? It doesn't happen. So what if after those 11 weeks you really get to know them? And you see in them, this is someone of capacity. So you ask them, 'Would you like to be on team?' They say, 'No, I'm not a team member.' Then you say, 'No really, you're wonderful, you bond with people, they love you, you love them, just be a helper, you don't even have to say anything.' 'Oh, I could do that'. And then they come back and we have dinner for another 11 weeks – but this time in ministry with us. Then their confidence grows and we say, 'You were fantastic, you seemed to really get this, it looked like you had a lot of fun, didn't you? Listen, I'm wondering if you would be a co-host. Like, I'm going to be here as host. But sometimes I can't be here, so would you be willing to facilitate the conversation? I'll help you, I'll teach you how to do it.' Then another 11 weeks we have dinner together. And then we say, 'Hey, you look like you really enjoyed that too, having so much fun. Would you be willing to come back as a host? So over a 2 year period we are investing in these people. We are seeing what they are made of - and that is how we grow leaders.

We identify and grow leaders through Alpha because we meet with them over and over again, and then we serve in ministry with them, and that's why it's such an amazing tool when done properly.

It is easier to give someone a fish than to teach them how to fish, because that takes time. And sometimes you teach them to fish and then they don't want to do it anymore and leave. It is painful to have all that time and energy lost, but it is the right thing to do.

Alpha is what gives us the framework with which to do that. It has taught us how to identify and raise up others. It is really important because in the Divine Renovation Network we have people too busy for meetings because they are in too much ministry. If you are too busy doing ministry, how are you going to lead? And if you have never raised anybody up before because you've been too busy doing it, that's OK, but we are going to change that, because you have to change that.

The pastoral leadership team, I was responsible for supporting them. I would meet with them 2 hours every week as a team. And we would do the High Lows, and we'd do praise and worship and continue to grow in surrendering our lives to Christ, and then we would talk about what happened at the last SLT meeting (so that people are engaged to know exactly what was going on), then we would unpack some leadership principles that were relevant to all of us and then leave. So no minutes necessary.

Then I'd have my one on one meetings with people, every week for an hour. How are things going? What are you working on that you are excited about? Give me some wins. What are you procrastinating on? We need to know what people are good at and what people are bad at – both. What do you need to be doing in the next 3 weeks to be successful? What's it going to look like? What are you putting off? Why are you putting it off? Interesting. So you need to have a conversation with that person. So let me coach you on that, and we'll role play it to

help you. When are you going to have that conversation? Hold them accountable. All that is happening in the one on one meetings, so I'm taking notes, but I wouldn't call them minutes.

So the next time I sit down with that person, I'll say 'How did you go with that meeting?' 'I didn't have it.' 'Why not?' 'I chickened out.' 'OK, remember why you need to have it. You're having it this week. I'm going to pray for you and I'm going to text you half an hour before that meeting because I need to hold your feet to the fire because I care about you and that's an important meeting.' 'Yes, it is.' 'OK, terrific.' So we don't need any minutes for that.

When we have our Senior Leadership Team meetings we make a whole list of things on the board about things we need to talk about, we prioritise them, and then we rip through as many as we can. We usually don't always get through them all. But we get through the most important ones first. So prioritise.

And then everything we talk about, we need to say 'who is doing what by when' because most organisations have an issue with executing not with strategizing – because there is no accountability.

We don't talk about things just for fun, we do that at the pub. There we solve all the world's problems and we walk away feeling good about ourselves, and nothing gets done. That's not what we do at SLT meetings. Everything we talk about we determine who is doing what by when, and then next week when we meet again we say, 'Hey, Fr Simon, you were going to talk to Deacon, did you get a chance to do that?' 'Yes, I did.' 'What happened?' 'O cool, that's awesome; dealt with; perfect.' 'No, I didn't.' 'Why not?' 'He was away, and I couldn't.' 'Are you going to do it this week?' 'Yes, I am.' 'Terrific.' And it goes back up on the accountability items.

A lot of this stuff is broken down in the Divine Renovation Association, we talk about this stuff on the podcasts and things like that.

Fr Simon, what do you do as regards minutes and structure for clergy?

Fr Simon Lobo: Similar. It's probably not necessary to take minutes. But in a finance council meeting somebody is the secretary to take minutes for that kind of a meeting. Typically we don't. What we do though, our primary way of recording what happens is we do a lot of white boarding. We have white boards in pretty much every single meeting room. And as we are writing we might have a column of items that we are trying to get through – action items – that are assigned to different people, 'who is doing what by when, and how we are going to follow up'. And then we'll take a photo of the white board and email it around to everybody, so everybody can see that.

We have also tried having Google spreadsheets that we share with everybody with a running list of action items – that's another way to do it. That's a perennial issue, of 'How do you execute?'

Volunteers. Leadership Summits are another great tool that we use. Another meeting, you could say. We do them 3 times a year. It is a morning, a Saturday morning, say from 9am to 12 noon and it is action packed. It is so much fun. We get about a 100 of our not just people in ministry, but our ministry leaders, people who are leading people in ministry – and the vast majority of them are not on staff. Pretty much none of them are on staff, but our staff come to this as well.

We spend the morning firstly in prayer, then we have a fun ice-breaker, and then a key vision talk to re-connect us to the Why. Why are we doing this? Why are any of us, whether you are a lector, or on a hospitality team, or part of the grief ministry, or in Alpha, why are we doing this? And usually it is the pastor who gives this talk, because whether I like it or not, my voice matters on this. It goes back to the very beginning, vision casting, back to the why we are doing this and where we are going. And then we have a break and some snacks and then have some kind of an exercise, like a practical leadership exercise to get people growing in their leadership skills. It could be on the theme of 'How do you apprentice people?' or 'How do you develop a leadership pipeline?' where you are moving people along from one step to the next, or it could be a fun exercise to grow in self-knowledge.

Back in September we looked at Patrick Lencioni's book '[The Ideal Team Player](#)', talking about the 3 virtues of an ideal team player – somebody who is humble, hungry and smart. By which he means people smart or emotional intelligence. Could this be a helpful schematic when you are thinking of the kind of people that we want to have involved in our ministry or leading our ministry?

Then we end with an extended time of worship and often a bit of prayer where we pray with one another as leaders to pray into whatever the needs are.

That's a really fun way, and people are actually delighted to give up their Saturday morning to come to it because it is just so rich and it is a way of investing in all of those key people who can then have a 5 fold return as they invest in their own ministries.

Culture

Ron Huntley: And that really helps us to change our culture of leadership. Changing your culture is really important. Peter Drucker, business author and speaker, said culture eats strategy for breakfast. So I sometimes see people taking our best practices and programs and applying them in their church, getting very little result and saying that doesn't work. You missed the point! You don't understand our culture. If you don't understand our culture and you take our best practices and programs and try to implement them you will probably not do very well.

And you will probably keep getting the results you've always gotten because you don't understand culture. Culture eats strategy for breakfast.

But there's another part to that I learned last year: bad leadership eats culture for lunch.

So we have a great culture at St Benedict's Parish and that story I shared earlier with Fr Simon and I, with a lot of passion and very good intent, started telling people who were already in a structure and supported.

We weren't sure whether all of that was going to come crumbling down because of his leadership. We didn't know. Because we didn't know him as a leader, and it could have.

How many of you have been a pastor or have seen a church in your diocese that was just booming and they changed the pastor and everything went to pot? Bad leadership eats culture for lunch.

So leadership matters, disproportionately unfortunately.
Leadership matters disproportionately.

There are 2 things we believe we have to invest in disproportionately – evangelisation and leadership. Because if we do those things really well, everything else gets backfilled. So we are really intentional about creating a culture of leadership at St Benedict's Parish.

So how is culture created? 2 ways: by what we reward and what we tolerate. How many of you have people at your church who are toxic and yet serving in ministry? So you are tolerating their attitudes? (Nodding) Yeah. And what does that do? It creates a culture. And if I'm at your church and I see people behave like morons in leadership and you haven't done anything about it – I don't trust you. I don't trust your leadership. You don't have what it takes to create a safe place for people to thrive. I can't follow you. Why would I follow you? We all know that it is as obvious as heck that this person is toxic and you're not doing anything about it. I can't trust your leadership.

That's why we can't tolerate bad attitudes and bad behaviour and bullying and all those other things that happen even in the church. We can't tolerate it. Because if we do, it defines our culture and we get the very church we deserve, and that's problematic.

The other thing I see, often times we don't celebrate enough. And I'm constantly challenging people in the Divine Renovation Network to catch people doing things well and celebrating it.

The other day in Senior Leadership Team, we had 2 new pastor priests with us interning and I was my zealous self and not very patient and one of the new priests asked a question, and boy did I ever respond in ways that let them know that was a really bad idea. And I didn't really notice I did it, and I kept going. And the next day Fr Simon said, 'Ron, can I talk to you for a couple of minutes?' 'Yeah, sure, what's up?' 'Remember in the Senior Leadership Team the other day?' 'Yes, it was a good meeting.' 'But remember when Fr brought up this point?' 'Yeah?' 'Remember how you responded? I thought you were a little heavy handed, and I couldn't help but think that if I was new, and in a team like that, I would have felt really uncomfortable.' I said, 'Oh my gosh, what have I done? I can't believe I did that. I totally did that. Thank you so much for telling me.' I left his office and went straight up to the other priest's office and I sat down and said, 'I need to ask for your forgiveness' and I told him what I did. He didn't even remember. 'Oh yeah, Oh gosh, I never thought about that again.' 'Well, that wasn't nice, that wasn't kind, and I need to ask for your forgiveness. I am so sorry I did that and I'm going to work really hard to try not to do that again.' He said, 'You didn't have to apologise, but I'm really glad you did, because it just shows me that you guys really do want to be honest, be sincere and own your mistakes. Thanks a lot, it meant a lot.'

So guess what we started doing? We started telling people about that story. We started celebrating that story. Why? Because it is the exact culture we want to build.

We want to reward the story by telling others. That's why I'm telling you right now. I'm telling you that story because I want to reward his courage to have that conversation with me. He loved me that much that he wasn't going to let me be a moron, - even though I am from time to time – he's not going to let me do that. It's going to happen, but he's not going to let me continue to do it and have that impact effect other people. He loves me too much for that. He loves our mission too much for that. He loves our values too much to do that – and so he

would risk having that conversation with me and making me aware of one of my blind-spots, so that I could own it. And that's worth celebrating. That's why we tell the story.

What stories do you tell? What are you rewarding in your church? Think about that. What would it look like if as a staff you decided we are going to send out one email a day, as random encouragement to somebody who has gone above and beyond, and blind copy the other people on staff, so that we can start to create a culture of celebrating cool things?

One of the things I used to do is that as people were ending their Alpha time – because we boot everybody off eventually, because it is not a club, it is something you move through so we develop you and we send you out into other ministries. Alpha is not a club. It is not a place where people get stuck. It's a place where people move through or it is not going to transform your church at all. And so as people are transferring out I would often send a note to Fr James and I would say, 'Hey Fr James, I want you to know how great Jen is on the team, she goes above and beyond, she's great at leading people, she's great at calling people and setting them up. She takes no credit for their success and their impact, and as a result she is raising people up all over our church. She is finishing her time at Alpha and I just want you to know how much I appreciate her and how blessed we are to have her at our church.' And I would carbon copy (c.c.) that person.

What do you think that feels like for them? To know that somebody notices that they're going above and beyond so much that they are writing to our pastor, and heaping praise on them to the pastor, and just happened to c.c. them. What do you think that does in terms of celebrating and creating a culture? Unstoppable.

What else do we do Fr Simon in terms of the culture end?

Fr Simon Lobo: It is time to wrap up. There's a great book called '[Crucial Conversations: Tools for talking when the stakes are high](#)' by Patterson, Grenny, McMillan and Switzler. I was getting a bit misty on the side as you shared that Ron. It's so beautiful to be able to have relationships with people that you can be that honest, right? Because we desire health, that's how badly we desire to be healthy.

All of us have bad days. I love your expression Ron, 'It is one thing for a leader to have a bad day, it is not OK for a leader to have a bad week, and if they have a bad month – watch out.'

Because everything rises and falls on leadership and the impact that we have as church leaders, whether as ordained or lay people, it's so huge, so significant, and let's use our leadership for good.

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