

Plenary Council

Theme 6: Open to Conversion, Renewal and Reform: Reference Material

This reference material has been loosely grouped into vision, the three sub themes, and an additional grouping for material to help with writing responses to topics of controversy, together with two drafted answers to submission questions about the status of women in the church, and women in ministry and leadership.

The majority of it was prepared as part of an application for the Discernment and Writing Group phase of the Plenary Council for Theme 6: Open to Conversion, Renewal and Reform.

So this material is dedicated primarily to those who have been chosen to be part of this Discernment and Writing Group, and secondarily to the various Diocesan groups and Diocesan Synods who are also working with this theme, as well as to anyone of goodwill who might be able to make use of it.

This reference material should be useful for choosing people to interview and lines of inquiry for research, and providing common language to talk about these ideas.

Hopefully it will help all these groups to 'hit the ground running'.

News came through late on Monday 12 August that I didn't make the short list for this Discernment and Writing Group.

Where the research for Theme 6 led was rather a surprise, but then we do serve a God who loves to surprise and challenge and call us forth to the best versions of ourselves that we can be.

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May the intercession of Our Lady, Help of Christians, patroness of Australia, St Mary of the Cross McKillop, Ven Caroline Chisholm, Eileen O'Connor and all holy men and women of Australia be with you as you work, research, ponder, pray and write.

Vision – Why it matters and What to go digging for

The starting point has to be research into how God has worked in the past to bring about conversion, renewal and reform, particularly in the Australian context. There are some buttons that God can press to which there is a universal response, but there are other buttons that God can press to which Australian hearts will particularly respond, and others that are more regional in nature (eg what might touch a heart in far north Queensland may have no impact in suburban Adelaide, and vice versa).

This is essential work, because without cleansing our lenses to see through God's perspective the relative merits of each Listening phase submission cannot be accurately weighed. We were after all supposed to be listening to what God wanted to happen in Australia, not telling Him what we wanted to happen.

Some theoretical examples might make my purpose clearer. You could say with some justification that truth, beauty and goodness open up the human heart to the things of God. They would be universal buttons.

But are there any patterns of truth, beauty and goodness that particularly open up an Australian heart to the grace of conversion? Are we more responsive to the beauties of nature than other nations are? Do we need our truth laced with humour before we can engage with it? Is there any correlation between generosity in the face of a natural disaster (floods, bushfires) and an increase in conversions in the giving and receiving communities?

Some places around the world have particular devotion to the infancy of Jesus (eg The Philippines) or to the youth of Jesus (eg South America). Is there an aspect of the life of Jesus that has particular resonance for Australians? Is our collective imagination more engaged by His parables or by His miracles or by His mercy (we know that the Greeks look for wisdom, and Israel for miracles). When it comes to the Passion of Jesus, are we as Australians more drawn to His Agony, to His Crowning with Thorns or to His carrying of the Cross?

We need to study the renewal movements that have been successful in Australia, no matter from which faith denomination, and have a go at determining why they were so successful. Are there any patterns to be found?

We also need to study the various movements of reform, in church life, in religious life, and even in secular life. Which ones can we look back on and say, this reform was from God? Are there markers to be found that reveal His fingerprints in the process, which can guide us today in determining whether a movement of reform is from Him or not?

Only if this preparatory work is done, (and the Plenary Council is the best excuse we have had in a long time for doing and funding this kind of research), will we be able to find the nuggets of gold in the piles upon piles of submissions to the Listening phase.

If we can discern the patterns that God has used consistently in Australian history, then we have a chance of bringing ourselves into alignment with those patterns and seeing the greatest outpouring of grace that our nation has ever seen.

If the prophetic voices of our times are worthy of belief, then we stand at a turning point in history, where every expectation is for the biggest outpouring of the Holy Spirit that there has ever been. It is no accident that the Plenary Council is happening at this time in the place called The Great South Land of the Holy Spirit. If so, then our challenge is to prepare the Australian church for it by discovering anew how to be open to conversion, renewal and reform as individuals, movements, parishes, dioceses and nationally.

Each country has a distinct purpose and destiny in God's plan of salvation for humanity; a plan that was set in motion millennia and centuries ago, and which is still unfolding. There are clues to this plan scattered throughout the history and religious experience of our nation. In the Discernment and Writing Group for Theme 6 is the best opportunity we have ever had to go digging for those clues and bring them together, and use them as the filtering lens with which to sift through the response data from the Listening phase of the Plenary Council.

If we can determine how the Holy Spirit has been active in the past in our nation, and what He is blowing upon in our own era, we will have the greatest chance of actively partnering with Him for this massive outpouring of grace, and the greatest chance of producing the new wineskins to sustain the impact of that grace long term. No one wants to see that grace fruitless because the soil was unprepared (lack of openness) and there was nowhere to store the harvest (lack of wineskin-structure). Without preparation we risk a flash flood. It is better to be like the farmer who, knowing that big rains are coming, prepares as many reservoirs as possible to catch the rain and also takes measures to preserve as much of the top-soil as possible lest it be carried away by the flood rains.

With that said, here is my suggested list of people who should be interviewed, and those interviews should be recorded, released on YouTube and preserved for future generations to study and be inspired by.

Interview list (preliminary wish list)

Archbishop Porteous, his reflections on which events have had the most lasting positive impact upon souls, and why eg WYD Sydney, Pastoral Training School, Scene, March for Life/ Day of the Unborn Child, iWitness, ACYF, Proclaim Conferences etc.

Bishop Macbeth-Green, his reflections upon what he saw God touching people through most during his time at Penrose Park.

Shayne Bennett, Emmanuel Community, his reflections upon PTS 1988, the exceptional one at Bathurst before the three communities started holding independent Summer Schools, which Fr George Kosicki visited, as well as his reflections upon the fruit of NET teams and which aspects of the life of Jesus resonate most with Australians.

Mother Hilda at Jamberoo Abbey, her reflections upon what the Holy Spirit is using most to engage the hearts of youth and adults.

Fr Chris Ryan MGL, his reflections on travelling around Australia with the WYD Cross and the places where he saw most impact and any considerations on why these places responded to grace and other places had far less response.

Fr Douglas Harris of Perth and his experiences in promoting Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the fruit he is seeing in the faith communities that are doing this in Australia and elsewhere.

Fr Tadeusz Seremet of Carlton. He was at East Gosford for several years and invited many speakers and groups to minister in his parish. His reflections on which of these had the most lasting positive faith impact upon his parishioners would be most valuable.

Interviews with the leadership in Australian parishes and faith communities that are part of the Divine Renovation Network. To report on what is working and isn't working in the Australian context.

Interview with leadership from Hill Song about what they see initiates Australian hearts having the biggest response to God.

There should definitely be several members of the Discernment and Writing Group present at ACYF Perth, 8-10 Dec 2019 to see for themselves what young people are responding to, and to interview many of the presenters for their input on what they see initiating the greatest response to God from young people.

Interviews with Church historians from both Catholic and non-Catholic backgrounds; with an emphasis on large group spontaneous responses to God in Australian history (a.k.a. revival).

How did they start? What were they preaching about? How long did they continue? What caused them to fade? What long term impact did they have?

Interviews with priests who served as Missionaries of Mercy in Australia during the Year of Mercy.

Interviews with retired superiors of religious orders resident in Australia. Their reflections upon the stories they heard about events before they joined the order, and their own experiences of what things most caused a renewal and deepening of faith and love in their religious members. Also their reflections upon reform and restructure, the good, the bad and the downright ugly.

Essential Reading List (pre-requisite)

[No Silver Bullets](#) by Daniel Im

Particularly Chapter 2 on From Output to Input and Chapter 6 on Introducing Change. We don't need to 'reinvent the wheel', much of the research we need has already been done, even though it is from an American context. One of the take home thoughts from Chapter 2 is that personal daily reading of scripture is guaranteed to produce outcomes of conversion and discipleship. A take home thought from Chapter 6 is below:

"In our bodies our immune system cannot differentiate between disease causing microorganisms and the cells of a life giving transplant... No wonder change is so hard to implement in our churches. It's like the immune system of our church body knows when we try to transplant foreign ideas. And not only does it detect the new idea, it sees it as bad bacteria, a virus – thus resulting in its rejection...In order to accept the transplant the church's unique personality, history, leadership style and culture must be regarded and the right dosage of change and the areas to which it needs to be applied need to be determined."

Tim Keller's masterful article on Leadership and Church Dynamics

<https://seniorpastorcentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Tim-Keller-Size-Dynamics.pdf>

How strategy changes with growth. This explains why growth in membership necessitates structural change, otherwise the growth stagnates. It also talks about the discomforts a parish experiences prior to and after a change in structure due to church growth.

[Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire: What happens when God's Spirit invades the Heart of His people](#)

by Jim Cymbala

The story of how God took an almost dead congregation and made it a light to the nations.

<https://www.amazon.com/Rebuilt-Awakening-Faithful-Reaching-Making/dp/1594713863>

by Fr Michael White and Tom Corcoran

Hymns, homilies and hospitality; are the three major things that draw those on the periphery in if they are good and turn them away if they are bad.

For an introduction to 'Rebuilt', read these transcripts from Proclaim 2014 where the authors spoke:

<http://www.societyofsaints.net/blog/proclaim-2014-first-half-of-23-august-keynote-speech>

<http://www.societyofsaints.net/blog/proclaim-2014-second-half-of-23-august-keynote-speech>

The trends from the 2011 National Church Life Survey as given to Proclaim 2014

<http://www.societyofsaints.net/blog/proclaim-2014-first-half-of-22-august-keynote-speech>

<http://www.societyofsaints.net/blog/proclaim-2014-second-half-of-22-august-keynote-speech>

Around 7% of your congregation has a natural talent for evangelisation.
The importance of the role of family in handing on the faith far outranks everything else.

<https://www.amazon.com/Whats-Wrong-World-G-Chesterton/dp/1438279787>

by G.K.Chesterton

His timeless defence of the family and the need to bring it back to primacy in society.

Dave Ahlquist's summary goes like this:

'What's wrong with the world?'

There are four main things wrong with the world: big government, big business, feminism and public education.

Why? Because they all undermine the family, which is the basic unit of society, the thing that must be stable for society to be stable, the thing that must be strong for society to be strong, and the thing that is most under attack in our society today.

What's the solution?

It must be to restore the family to its proper place. We need a family-based economy and a family-based social system, where both state and commerce are subordinate to the family. And chapter 4 of the Chesterton's book contains this gem:

'The future is a blank wall on which every man can write his name as large as he likes; the past I find already covered with illegible scribbles, such as Plato, Isaiah, Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Napoleon. I can make the future as narrow as myself; the past is obliged to be as broad and turbulent as humanity. And the upshot of this modern attitude is really this: that men invent new ideas because they dare not attempt old ideals. They look forward with enthusiasm, because they are afraid to look back. Now in history there is no Revolution that is not a Restoration. Among the many things that leave me doubtful about the modern habit of fixing eyes on the future, none is stronger than this: that all the men in history who have really done anything with the future have had their eyes fixed upon the past. I need not mention the Renaissance, the very word proves my case. The originality of Michelangelo and Shakespeare began with the digging up of old vases and manuscripts.'

<https://www.amazon.com/Divine-Renovation-Apprentice-Learning-Disciple-Making/dp/1593253362>

by Fr Simon Lobo

For an introduction to 'Divine Renovation Apprentice' read this transcript from DR18

<http://www.societyofsaints.net/blog/divine-renovation-conference-tuesday-12-june-2018-breakout-session-with-fr-simon-lobo-and-ron-huntley>

It contains excellent input on leadership, vision, structure, meetings and culture. Leaders can choose to be bottlenecks or bottle openers, to limit growth or to equip and empower others.

<https://www.amazon.com/Hero-Maker-Essential-Practices-Exponential/dp/0310536936>

by Dave Ferguson and Warren Bird

In Acts, 39 of the 40 miracles the Holy Spirit performs occur outside the church. We need to expect that kind of ratio today. The real power of the Gospel is released as ordinary, Spirit-filled people multiply the Gospel wherever they go, into every part of their communities.

John Wimber, Signs Wonders & Church Growth Conference Case Histories 9/12 and 10/12
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wtxh6edmxHU&list=PLGI42ZL3eqTI3UNmYGzFc_DqGsPF7z4NN&index=11&t=0s 1 hr 51 mins

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lena6tko_i8&list=PLGI42ZL3eqTI3UNmYGzFc_DqGsPF7z4NN&index=12&t=0s 1 hr 38 mins

How Vineyard began, <https://www.vineyardchurches.org.uk/articles/how-the-vineyard-began/> (although that isn't the full story as John tells it)

These YouTube clips may or may not contain the segment where John notices a distressed woman at the church. She is heart-broken because with all the strange newcomers to the church everything that she really liked about going to church has disappeared. He agrees with her that things have changed, and that it is hard, and he even cries with her, yet he tells her that Jesus wants to save the lost, and that's what they had been doing, and what she had been praying for.

However they do contain pastors talking about what happens when they let God be God of their congregations, and also what happens when they resisted His will.

<http://www.societyofsaints.net/blog/a-new-pentecost-for-a-new-evangelisation>

with Fr Dave Pivonka and Dominique Ferry

'You have to keep going in your listening to the Spirit. Because in 1993 they founded something they called the Festival for Young People in France. And it was a success, but in 2003 things were going down and down and down. 10 years later the need was different. The young people were different. They were not ready to abide by the same rules as the ones 10 years before. But the core of what has to be announced is the same. It is the kerygma, because the kerygma has a power in itself.

Understanding what this evangelization is causes me to reflect that perhaps that we should have spoken of the new Pentecost before the new evangelization. It causes me to think of the disciples, who had every advantage. Who taught the disciples how to pray? Jesus. Who taught them how to forgive? Jesus. Who taught them how to heal? Jesus. They had every advantage. They spent time with Jesus. They saw everything that Jesus did, and yet it was not enough. That they needed more than an encounter with Jesus – they needed the Holy Spirit. The disciples were not able to evangelise until they had experienced Pentecost.

I believe that we will not be able to evangelise until we experience Pentecost.'

https://www.amazon.com/New-Generation-Practical-Revitalizing-Church/dp/0310525225/ref=dp_ob_title_bk by Lee Kricher

Another story about how a parish in major demographic decline turned things around and began to thrive.

He spoke in testimony briefly at DR16:

<http://www.societyofsaints.net/blog/divine-renovation-conference-tuesday-14-june-2016-evening-plenary-testimonies>

<https://www.amazon.com/Three-Religious-Rebels-M-Raymond/dp/1933871407>

by M. Raymond

The story of the development of the Trappists through three saints, St Robert, St Alberic, and St Stephen Harding with insights into the various changes and reforms that they undertook as well as how they came up with a novel way of governance.

A Kindle version is available.

<https://www.amazon.com/Art-Forming-Young-Disciples-Ministries/dp/1622824822>

by Everett Fritz

How many teens do you think will become lifelong disciples out of your youth ministry? What did you do differently with those ten that you didn't do with the other teens in your youth ministry?

If we are losing our young people in the Church today, it isn't due to lack of effort.

<https://www.amazon.com/When-Spirit-Word-Collide-extraordinary-ebook/dp/B013X97GJ2>

by Jarrod Cooper

Details of what happened in 2011 when God's power became manifest over groups of people. Including reflections on those experiences; and upon a 1947 Smith Wigglesworth prophecy of three distinct moves of the Holy Spirit. 'When the Word and the Spirit come together, there will be the biggest move of the Holy Spirit that the nation (Britain), and indeed, the world has ever seen.'

<http://www.ordinariate.org.au/musings/musings-july-2019-edition-33/>

Mons Harry Entwistle

Within the Catholic Church of Australia at this time, the bishops have posed the question to the faithful, "What is God asking of us at this time?" This is not a question asking what the faithful think should be done to 'fix up' the Church and make it 'relevant' to modern liberal Western society. To attempt to do that is pursuing fool's gold.

The question is not one about how to enable the Church to survive in our age. It could only do that by ceasing to be Catholic. Nor is it one about finding strategies to revive the Church. Like the raising of Lazarus, revival is restoring someone or something to what it was before, and everyone has their own view about what this should be.

The question is about what GOD wants, and what GOD has always wanted from the creation onwards, is to bring order out of chaos, which is nothing less than resurrection.

God is not asking us in the ~~Ordinariate~~ Church to struggle on as best we can in the hope that we will grow and somehow survive. Neither is He asking us to revive some glorious era of ~~Anglo-Catholicism~~ within the Catholic Church.

He is calling us to the new life of resurrection ~~by finding a new place within the Australian Catholic Church~~ at this time so that we can be faithful to our heritage while being committed to the mission of the Church and its evangelisation of the world.

(my edits)

Open to Conversion: Individual conversion and outreach to individuals

<https://usml.edu/seven-marks-of-a-new-evangelist/>

Fr Robert Barron 19 Feb 2015

In love with Jesus Christ:

Passion and enthusiasm:

Knowledge of the story of Israel

Understand the culture:

The heart of a missionary:

Knowledge of the traditions of the Church:

Adept at using the new media

<https://www.catholicweekly.com.au/from-new-york-with-love-a-charism-of-life/>

21 Jan 2016

Reflection on the Sisters of Life visit to Sydney Dec 2015

“So what a great time, in their teens and entering university, to be posing that question to the Lord: ‘What did you make me for? What is my call to love?’

“They were very open and very receptive to that thought.”

<http://catholicleader.com.au/people/how-a-cathedral-pulled-this-young-man-out-of-depression> 25 Jan 2016

Australian conversion story, worthy of follow-up

3 Feb 2016 Aurora, Maitland Newcastle Diocese

'Missionary of Mercy on his way to the Hunter'.

Online article no longer available.

This Missionary should be interviewed.

https://catholicherald.co.uk/news/2016/02/24/mercy-bus-run-by-former-stand-up-comedian-tours-the-north/#.Vs66vR_3wxM.twitter 24 Feb 2016

Double decker bus being used as a reach out to lapsed Catholics. Diocese of Salford.

Fr Frankie Mulgrew. Worthy of follow-up/interview

Tweet from Peter Kreeft @ProfessorKreeft 5 May 2016

'Nothing else can ever cure our sick world except saints, and saints are never made except by prayer.'

<http://catholicleader.com.au/people/son-of-a-preacher-man-returns-home-to-the-catholic-church> 10 May 2016

Australian conversion story of Protestant pastor

<https://www.goodsams.org.au/article/vague-wanting/>

Feb 2016 Sr Patty Fawcner sgs

“Do you want God?” The retreat director’s question to me.

“I vaguely want God,” I replied somewhat evasively.

It was a moment of clarity – yes, a moment of conversion. Did I want God? Did I? My prayer was raw, not even “God, help me to want you”, but a more primal “God, help me to want to want you”.

Who was this retreat director? He should be interviewed.

<https://www.faithandleadership.com/makoto-fujimura-function-art>

9 May 2011 Interview with Makoto Fujimura

The arts are fundamentally connected with the realities that God has created in the universe, as well as in communities of His people. Look at everything from the Genesis account of Adam being asked to name the animals to passages in Revelation that are full of images... All those things are the language of the arts... The reason that we need the arts is not so we can have more artists in the church, but for the sake of the gospel. The arts are a cup that will carry the water of life to the thirsty. It's not the water itself; it's the vessel. What we are doing in the church today is we are just picking up water with our bare hands and trying to carry it to the thirsty. We can still do it, but the effect is minimized by not fully utilizing what God has given us.

<http://catholicleader.com.au/wyd-2016/krakow-2016-what-happens-after-world-youth-day>

24 June 2016

In 2014, Archbishop Anthony Fisher explored the effectiveness of events like World Youth Day and the Australian Catholic Youth Festival, writing that “in the long run, (their) effectiveness ... depends hugely on the formation that is offered in advance of attendance and the follow-up that occurs afterwards: what opportunities there are for sharing, evangelising, worshipping, leading and serving for those who will go and for those who return on fire with faith” When those opportunities are available, pilgrims are able to integrate their “mountain top” experience of WYD with the way they live out their faith in their everyday life.

Does Archbishop Fisher have empirical data on this that he could share with us?

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/mamaneedscoffee/2016/07/making-disciples>

28 July 2016 Jenny Uebbing

Personal reflection and an introduction to the thoughts of Jason Everett on Youth Ministry 'My faithful attendance every Sunday night at 7 pm did not, for all the boxes and boxes of pizza consumed and all the ice breakers performed, ensure a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church. Did not, as best as I can remember, *communicate a single meaningful thing to me about the faith*. And now, 15 or so years removed from the experience, I know of 2 other former members of that youth group who are still practicing Catholics. Out of 35 of us. That isn't good enough.... What saved me, is what brought me to my senses and brought me home, finally, coaxing me back through the church doors not just in a physical return, but a whole-hearted spiritual and emotional return, was a relationship with a mentor, a FOCUS missionary who invested in me and believed that I deserved to have a personal relationship with Jesus and with my faith.'

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/the-catholic-church-desperately-needs-artists-48643> 17 Dec 2016 Mary Farrow

“Beauty is a key to the mystery and a call to transcendence. It is an invitation to savour life and to dream of the future. That is why the beauty of created things can never fully satisfy. It stirs that hidden nostalgia for God...” wrote Pope John Paul II in his 1999 Letter to Artists. This article talks about recent initiatives of Catholic creatives.

<https://thosecatholicmen.com/articles/how-mens-and-family-ministry-can-save-youth-ministry-from-itself/>

10 Oct 2016 Jason Craig

While poor catechesis and soft morality do perpetuate the problem, it is the decline in the family that usually precedes the decline in faith. No, it’s not an “either/or” issue, but we at least need to understand that the health of the family and the health of faith are inseparable. Like a DNA strand, “family and faith are the invisible double helix of society – two spirals that when linked to one another can effectively reproduce, but whose strength and momentum depend on one another” (Eberstadt).

I wanted to reach those young people. I really did have a heart for them. But it took a while to learn that if I really loved young people and wanted to reach them, I had to reach their parents.

Question arising: Could the presence of the married couple, 'in loco parentis' in the Antioch movement account for some of its success?

<http://catholicleader.com.au/news/missionary-of-mercy-took-on-the-burdens-of-nsws-far-flung-faithful-and-will-do-it-again-in-2017> 23 Nov 2016 Emilie Ng

Fr Richard Shortall SJ and Sydney Ukrainian-Catholic priest Fr Simon Cjuk, were commissioned by Pope Francis [as Missionaries of Mercy](#), and expected to be “a living sign of the Father’s welcome to all those in search of His forgiveness” with a special focus on being confessors. Fr Shortall has finished an exhausting mission to lift the burdens of people in regional Australian communities. Living out of a motor home that ran off the water and electricity of churches, the Jesuit priest spent the past nine months visiting 30 communities in Maitland-Newcastle diocese to bring God’s mercy as a commissioned Missionary of Mercy. “I believed that for us as Australians, in that part of the country, the emphasis would be on allowing people or giving people the opportunity to sit down with me and to tell their stories,” he said. Like the inside of a confessional, all of Fr Shortall’s conversations were private, and some, but not all, turned into the Sacrament of Penance. “Some people have come along to me and said specifically that they wanted to celebrate the sacrament and they’d been enabled to speak about matters which have been sitting in their hearts for years and years and they’ve been just too frightened to mention them in the sacrament in churches.” In his nine months as a Missionary of Mercy, Fr Shortall has recognised the power of spiritual conversation for the broken. “And as people have told their stories, many of them have said, ‘I’m sorry I’m laying this burden on you’,” he said. “So part of my work has been the burden of carrying the stories.”

<https://www.firstthings.com/article/2017/06/thanks-for-everything-pope-francis>

June 2017 James Zacchaeus

A deep insight into how the narrow way of truth can lead to joy; and how compromise on the truth about marriage helps no one.

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/how-catholic-culture-can-thrive-on-the-internet-89699?platform=hootsuite>

23 Jun 2017 Kevin J. Jones

On the internet, success is hard to predict. The success of a ChurchPop post about how all the apostles died and where one can find their remains today was surprising. That was by far ChurchPop's most successful content across all languages. Another unexpected success? A collection of pictures of beautiful churches. "The conversion stories are the stories that bring us the most attention."

<https://brandonvogt.com/fr-ed-thompson-prodigoal-priest-and-father-of-mercy/>

approx. July 2017 Brandon Vogt

The amazing impact of a priest rehabilitated from alcoholism. His ministry was far more fruitful in his final years because he could directly relate to the brokenness of others and their need for mercy.

<https://www.amazon.com/Walking-Road-God-everything-streets/dp/1940209331>

Father Lawrence Carney travels the country, walking the city streets in his cassock, carrying a crucifix, praying the Rosary and seeking lost souls. In his debut work, he writes of the many people he meets, the conversations that unfold and the divine appointments arranged for a priest who lives his life entirely for the salvation of souls. He also reveals his dream of a new order of priests, clerics and brothers, who walk and pray in cities around the United States in an effort to regain what has been lost.

<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2017/08/23/how-cajun-country-old-ambulance-and-1200-frog-legs-led-me-back-confessional>

23 Aug 2017 Sonja Livingston

<https://twitter.com/i/status/902599392527568896>

Meet the priest who bought an ambulance on eBay and turned it into a mobile confessional, but it is also about the writer's wrestle with returning to the sacrament of penance, and about how Fr Michael Champagne and his team's witness sowed fruitful seeds.

<https://catholicherald.co.uk/issues/march-2nd-2018/how-social-media-is-leading-millennials-to-rome/#.WpiQtn2kTBg.twitter>

1 Mar 2018 Dan Hitchens

In a sense, both Byrd and Reezay followed the same path that has been trodden by innumerable others over the past 20 centuries: someone hears the Gospel from a persuasive preacher or a Catholic apologist, or comes to know Catholics personally and is able to explore the faith. But now those things take place over the internet. Andrew Sullivan urged religious leaders to realise that "the greatest threat to faith today is not hedonism but distraction" – the endless updates which prevent us from focusing on the one thing necessary.

<https://catholicherald.co.uk/commentandblogs/2018/04/06/i-first-read-humanae-vitae-as-a-protestant-its-truthfulness-made-me-weep/> 6 Apr 2018 Luma Simms

"When I read it for the first time, while I was still a Protestant... I was moved to tears."

"It was Humanae Vitae that succinctly described my dignity as a human being, that as a woman I was not a second-class citizen to man."

<https://churchpop.com/2018/05/25/the-amazing-humanities-dept-that-got-shut-down-after-too-many-students-converted-to-catholicism/> 25 May 2018 ChurchPop Editor

Three professors, Dr. Dennis Quinn, Dr. John Senior, and Dr. Frank Nelick, ran a program called the [Integrated Humanities Program at the University of Kansas](#) from 1970 to 1979. A "great books" program that started with the ancient Greeks and led students on a journey up to the present, the motto was *Nascantur in Admirazione*, translated "Let Them Be Born in Wonder." "Students weren't allowed to take notes, although the professors didn't mind if they knitted," Dana Lorelle [wrote](#) about the program. "They taught students the state song of Kansas, took them star gazing, spoke Latin out loud and introduced the freshmen and sophomores to classic literature and poetry. [...] "The professors, noticing that the students had no skill in formal ballroom dancing, organized an annual waltz. They took students to Ireland and Greece. They told stories, required the students to memorize poems and spoke of callings rather than careers." The program [grew super fast](#), from 20 students in 1970 to 140 in 1971, and 186 in 1972. **But then the conversions started happening.** By one estimate, over the 10 year course of the program, **more than 100 students decided to join the Catholic Church...**As to why the program led so many young people to the Church, Archbishop Coakley has [said](#), "**You put people in touch with the true, the beautiful and the good and let the Holy Spirit work.**"

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/july-web-only/how-to-witness-to-distracted-world-disruptive-witness-noble.html> 17 Jul 2018 Alan Noble

How do we bear witness to our faith to people whose default is to avoid reflection and contemplation, the very things that are important to recognize our sin and need for Christ?

Tweet: @MrsSasser 28 Aug 2018

Two years ago, I was saying "do you have any questions?". Last year I switched to "what questions do you have?" It made a difference. Today I tried "ask me two questions". And they did! And those ?s led to more ?s. It amazes me that the littlest things have such a big impact!

<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/01/22/want-keep-your-kids-catholic-make-your-home-church>

22 Jan 2019 Katie Prejean McGrady

Pope Francis recently told a group of parents, "The important thing is to transmit the faith with your life of faith: that they see the love of the spouses, that they see the peace of the house, that they see that Jesus is there."

The domestic church is not constructed in a day but built up over time, growing with the family through the witness of the parents, the things filling the house and the conversations encouraged and shared. The faith is not simply learned and memorized. It is transmitted. It

is experienced. It is witnessed and then loved and then lived. It is in those homes, where faith is visibly lived and loved, that the church becomes a home one would never leave.

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/from-a-dumpster-to-the-head-of-a-procession-the-story-of-broken-mary-86289>

7 Jun 2019 Mary Farrow

Matthews first spotted what is now known as 'Broken Mary' outside of a dumpster at a flower shop, covered in trash and cracked in half. Mortified, he picked up the heavy concrete statue, brought her home and cleaned her up. He had her restored to one piece again, but asked that her chips and scratches be left as they were: "No, she is broken, just like me. We all are broken and in need of repair. She represents the broken," he told the repairman. After finding Mary, Matthews experienced a profound new devotion to the Mother of God. Matthews connected with Fr. Joshua Caswell, S.J.C., an associate pastor at St. John Cantius in Chicago, because of 'Broken Mary', they decided to start organizing a Chicago procession with 'Broken Mary' in February.

When Fr. Joshua applied for the permit, a city official saw the title of the event, "Hope for the Broken," and said: "Oh, I really hope so Father, because we could really use some hope around here in this city," Eisenberg recalled. Two days later, the permit came through. Eisenberg said that she thinks 'Broken Mary' appeals to so many people because brokenness is something to which nearly everyone can relate. "I think that people really resonate with brokenness, there isn't anyone who can say, 'Oh well, I've reached perfection, I'm not broken, this doesn't apply to me'," she said. It also makes holiness seem "attainable," she added.

Throughout his ministry, Matthews said he has witnessed many people come back to their faith through 'Broken Mary.' "It's just a concrete statue, but where that statue is, Mary is, and where Mary is there's Christ, and where there's Christ, there's God," Matthews said, "and I've seen a lot of people literally cry and empty themselves in front of Mary."

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-oceania/2019/07/04/bagpipe-playing-australian-bishop-faces-challenges-with-a-joke-and-a-smile/> 4 Jul 2019 Ines San Martin

When the issue of the abuse scandals comes up, Bishop Macbeth-Green's demeanour changes completely. The laughter is gone from his eyes, and he says the response to what needs to be done when a victim comes forward is clear: "You have to shut up and listen, talk with them, spend time with them. But you have to be genuine in doing that. You have to do so because you want to, not because you have to or because the judge ordered you to do so." "When someone is in pain, sometimes, nothing is going to work. But you take on their pain, you're there, sometimes cry with them," he said.

"I was a trauma chaplain, and I was called in to talk to victims who've suffered the worst people can do to other people, like murder their children," he said. "But even then, in the right place and at the right time, you have to be able to maintain your sense of humour, because it's a coping mechanism. Why do you think people in the force sometimes have some of the darkest sense of humour?"

You have to sit with them for however long they need, he said, going back to survivors of clerical sexual abuse: "You sit with them, but you don't bring your lawyers, you find out what they need and react appropriately."

"If someone is pastorally sensitive and aware, you know what to say and when to say it, if

we allow the Holy Spirit to inspire us,” he said. “There are people you just can’t reach, but you have to give them the privilege of trying to. The difficulty is not passing on their tragedy on another person. Yet seeing what I have seen, if I didn’t have a sense of humour, I’d be in the loony bin or just lying on the floor in a foetal position.”

Broken Bay diocese has released a new program on family called 'At the Heart of the Home', as mentioned on page 25 in the June 2019 issue of Broken Bay News.

https://issuu.com/bbcatholic/docs/june_2019_broken_bay_news

It would be worthwhile following up to see who uses it and what the fruit of it is like.

<https://www.imb.org/2019/07/04/church-planting-in-australia/>

Matt Sparks, a protestant pastor shares his specific game plan for reaching the souls of Sydney-siders. This is worth a follow-up interview to see how that game plan is going, and whether it has evolved since the article was written.

Blog of a city priest

<https://blogofacitypriest.com/2019/03/14/how-to-pray/>

We pray because we love God. We have heard a lot about what God is asking of us for the Plenary Council. You know the first question I think God is asking us at this time: do you love Me? Not programs and revolutions and regulations but first of all: do you love Me?

Laurie Maher, former mayor of Gosford, Catholic, and impetus behind Coast Shelter, would be well worth an interview for his insights on what messages resonate with Central Coast of NSW residents and with those doing life tough.

<https://www.amazon.com/You-Found-Millennials-Irreligious-Surprisingly/dp/0830841547>

by Rick Richardson

A study of 2000 unchurched people across America reveals that the unchurched are still remarkably open to faith conversations and the church. Even unchurched "nones" and millennials are quite receptive if they are approached in particular ways. In this book you will also find best practices from further research into the top ten percent of churches that most effectively reach the unchurched. People who were previously unchurched share what actually moved them to faith and Christian commitment. And the research shows that churches and organizations can be transformed to become places where conversion growth becomes the new normal.

Open to Renewal: Corporate/parish conversion, movements of grace

<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/this-rare-successful-australian-manufacturing-company-has-a-daily-monastic-prayer-hour/news-story/7023d67f59d00cf0cca001ce17f05e88>

18 May 2016 BAC Systems, Glendenning NSW.

Chapel, daily 'monastic break' for workers

Mr Walter Bachmann: Well worthy of follow up visit and interview

<http://www.uscatholic.org/articles/201402/five-habits-highly-effective-parishes-28521>

also March 2014 issue of U.S. Catholic Vol 79 no. 3 p12-17

Making a good first impression

Metrics matter

Faith formation is a family affair

Plucking people from the pews

Communicate the right message

"Change is never easy, but done in small doses and in baby steps, it can be done," Fr Tom Sweetser S.J. of Milwaukee adds. "Every parish can do it. We now have permission from the Pope to think big and then carry changes out in small, creative ways. The little details will keep adding up until suddenly, the entire parish operation has a new focus."

<https://canadiancatholic.net/why-urgent-imperfect-evangelization-best-kind>

17 June 2016 Josh Canning

Powerful parable about doing something now rather than taking a long time trying to perfect it first: 'Soup kitchens don't wait for the best ingredients, they just feed people. Field hospitals don't wait for the best medical supplies, they just treat people!'

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/catholics-who-actually-read-the-bible-one-womans-online-ministry-43848?platform=hootsuite> 21 Dec 2016 Mary Farrow

About Jenna Guizar, creative director of 'Blessed is She', an online ministry of accompaniment to women based on shared Scripture reflections.

This collaborative ministry is still thriving, visit @blessedishe_ on Instagram.

<https://www.abc.net.au/religion/the-new-normal-pentecostalism-overtakes-anglicanism-in-sydney/10096616> 26 Aug 2016 Paul Oslington

Reflection upon why Pentecostals are now more numerous than Anglicans, by attendance, in Australia:

An important difference is that Pentecostal ministers are also taught the leadership skills needed to grow churches. The commitment to further develop their skills is a marker of the contemporary Pentecostal ministry... The Sydney Anglican commitment to evangelism seems to me to be often undermined by an excessive and unhealthy need for church authorities to control the whole process... The thing that has struck me most about Pentecostal church meetings is that they are designed for attenders (including the leaders) to "do business with God." By contrast Sydney Anglican meetings are designed to transfer knowledge about God, which attendees will act upon later, perhaps in their daily quiet

times... Pentecostal churches are full of wounded people, and churches are seen as hospitals for sinners.

<https://www.amazon.com/Great-Catholic-Parishes-Essential-Practices/dp/1594714177>

In 2012 and 2013, Bill Simon and his team studied 244 Catholic parishes to determine what made them exceptional. The study found that all of the parishes shared four foundational practices that led to a profound sense of belonging within their parish communities and a deepening commitment to discipleship:

- *Share leadership* by using clergy and lay staff with the best talents and skills to direct the community
- *Foster spiritual maturity and plan for discipleship* by offering a variety of formation programs and ministry opportunities to reach parishioners at differing points in their lives
- *Excel on Sundays* by dedicating significant time, energy, and money to liturgical celebrations that parishioners and visitors find welcoming
- *Intentionally evangelize* by challenging insiders to look outward and providing service programs, social events, global mission opportunities, and pastoral care at key sacramental moments that focus on inviting outsiders to deeper relationship with Christ and the Church.

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/a-priests-stunning-theory-on-why-juarez-is-less-dangerous-now-71916?platform=hootsuite>

22 Nov 2016 Barbara Bustamante

“When a parish adores God day and night, the city is transformed,” Fr. Patricio Hileman said, a priest responsible for establishing Perpetual Adoration chapels in Latin America.

https://tonymorganlive.com/2017/03/28/large-church-letting-staff-lead/?utm_campaign=The%20Unstuck%20Church&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=50539746&hsenc=p2ANqtz-8jJtHFetkEBDeTdVDR_e_Yz72PUbCwPpZvEzbHiMzWscgxXWNRZNB7xl-JkZCgM5Z_vioskn762j74OWFmHD6vQjB30Kg&hsmi=50939794

28 Mar 2017 Tony Morgan

The challenge is this: **control is the enemy of growth**. Healthy, growing churches have a framework of accountability that empowers the pastor and paid staff to engage ministry unhindered. In other churches, holding on to a structure of many boards and committees is connected to a desire for lay people to be involved in the ministry. **Particularly in traditional denominations, the level of engagement by lay people is measured by the number of people serving on boards and committees.** The reality is rarely are any of those boards and committees engaging in actual ministry. Instead, their sole purpose is to govern the activity of staff and ministry teams. I’m a strong proponent of engaging lay people. I’d much rather that happen by equipping volunteers to do ministry rather than to attend committee meetings to talk about ministry.

https://careynieuwhof.com/9-signs-your-church-is-ready-to-reach-unchurched-people/?utm_content=bufferf9fef&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer

approx. Aug 2017 Carey Nieuwhof

- Your main services engage teenagers
- People who attend your church actually know unchurched people
- Your attenders are prepared to be non-judgmental
- You're good with questions
- You're honest about your struggles
- You have easy, obvious, strategic and helpful steps for new people
- You've dumped all your assumptions
- Your 'outreach' isn't just a program
- You are flexible and adaptable

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2016/documents/papa-francesco_20160319_pont-comm-america-latina.html

19 Mar 2016 Pope Francis

Often we have given in to the temptation of thinking that committed lay people are those dedicated to the works of the Church and/or the matters of the parish or the diocese, and we have reflected little on how to accompany baptized people in their public and daily life; on how in their daily activities, with the responsibilities they have, they are committed as Christians in public life. Without realizing it, we have generated a lay elite, believing that committed lay people are only those who work in the matters “of priests”, and we have forgotten, overlooked, the believers who very often burn out their hope in the daily struggle to live the faith. These are the situations that clericalism fails to notice, because it is more concerned with dominating spaces than with generating initiatives. Therefore we must recognize that lay people — through their reality, through their identity, for they are immersed in the heart of social, public and political life, participate in cultural forms that are constantly generated — need new forms of organization and of celebration of the faith. The current pace is so different (I do not say better or worse) than what we were living 30 years ago! “This challenges us to imagine innovative spaces and possibilities for prayer and communion which are more attractive and meaningful for city dwellers” (Evangeliu Gaudium, n. 73). It is illogical and therefore impossible to think that we as pastors should have the monopoly on solutions for the multitude of challenges that contemporary life presents us. On the contrary, we must be on the side of our people, accompanying them in their search and encouraging the imagination capable of responding to the current set of problems. We must do this by discerning with our people and never for our people or without our people.

Ed. This is a major point. Consider how frequently we hold up as an ideal anyone who dedicates their whole life to ministry: priest, pastor, preacher, evangelist, religious. Just how often do we hold up the example of holy lay people taking God with them as they go about their daily work? <https://www.thykingdomcome.global/resources/day-3-thanks-faith-frontline-emergency-service-workers-power-prayer-work>

<https://careynieuwhof.com/9-fresh-approaches-to-innovation-that-could-blow-your-mind/>

Nov 2017 Carey Nieuwhof

If there's one thing the church needs today, it's more innovation in our methods.

The mission never changes, but frankly, the methods have to.

- Build your future around a product, not a person
- 100x thinking
- Fly by instruments, ie you need to trust the data
- Crowd source ideas
- Identify your real competitor
- Create your own opposition before someone else does
- Test voraciously
- Rethink motivation
- Embrace failure

<https://www.visionroom.com/4-must-haves-weekly-staff-meetings/>

Nov 2017 Sam Rainer III

Prayer: Scripture for the upcoming week:

Ministry stories from the previous week:

Thank you cards to write

<https://careynieuwhof.com/how-to-a-lose-first-time-guest-in-10-minutes-or-less/>

Jun 2018 Carey Nieuwhof

- Have a bad online presence
- Make parking frustrating
- Under-greet guests
- Over-greet guests
- Make kids check-in complicated
- Keep your facility tired and dirty
- Confuse them

<https://careynieuwhof.com/7-ways-to-build-teams-of-great-leaders-when-you-feel-like-you-have-no-awesome-people/> July 2018 Carey Nieuwhof

Start where you are

Look for the best leaders you can find

Look beyond your official structure

Resist the temptation to buy leaders

Cast a clear and compelling vision

Embrace excellence more than inclusion

Pray for more leaders

Inspiring Tweet from @frpatrickop 23 Dec 2018

About 20 years ago, my home parish, St. Clement of Rome, in suburban St. Louis started a Eucharistic Adoration chapel. It's clearly been a fruitful chapel. (Image with 20 vocations, a mix of priestly and religious, all from the same parish in those years).

<https://catholicherald.co.uk/dailyherald/2019/04/25/the-west-can-learn-a-lot-from-hungarys-pro-family-policies/>

25 Apr 2019 C.C. Pecknold

"After we won the election in 2010 with a two-thirds majority, we decided to build a family-friendly country and to strengthen families raising children. We thought the opposition would be a partner in this, but since then there have been very few decisions in the field of family policy that they've supported. So if we had always taken the opposition's opinion into account, Hungary would now be on the brink of collapse. There wouldn't be such a comprehensive family-support system, a family-friendly tax system, a housing program, 800,000 new jobs, and many opportunities to create a balance between life and work. The socialists have driven our country into deep crisis before, and they would do it again."

National Day of Prayer and Fasting, page on Australian revivals

<https://www.nationaldayofprayer.org.au/revival/>

Each of these events is worth studying.

There was a short lived Facebook report of a north-west NSW town that did the National Day of Prayer and Fasting as an inter-denominational event, and all of the participating churches reported a big upswing in attendances of new people afterwards.

This organisation may be able to recall which town it was, and which year it was (2017, 2018 or 2019)

In Patti Gallagher Mansfield's golden jubilee edition of 'As By A New Pentecost', in pages 23-25 she talks about a small parish in Czechoslovakia that had experienced the full spectrum of charismatic gifts as recorded in 1 Cor 12-14 for several centuries, and which St John XXIII visited while he was still a bishop. This parish inspired him, and as a consequence also inspired Vatican II. It is worthy of much greater study, even though the place was almost wiped out by the Nazis in 1938.

<https://www.amazon.com/New-Pentecost-Patti-Gallagher-Mansfield/dp/1619565110>

Instagram post @romawaterman around 7 Aug 2019

A week ago I had a strange dream that I feel was from the Lord. In the dream I had been asked to take a workshop to preach on something at a gathering. I could choose the topic. All the workshops running were packed. When it came to my turn it was also packed. The Lord put it on my heart to talk about the importance of family.

I began to share how I felt the Lord was highlighting that we needed to get back to the focus of investing in to our families. That all our preaching, travelling the world, our church meetings, and mandates... if our families were not integral to our call, the main focus of our lives, the most important part of our ministry – we were not truly fulfilling the call of God on our lives. I shared that we needed to get back to ministering to our kids first – before anything else!

At the end of the session, everyone had quietly left the room. No one was interested in knowing about that. Some people said 'Oh we already know that', and they were looking for another workshop where they could learn about receiving signs and wonders in their ministries.

I woke in the middle of the night and my heart was pounding. It was an awful feeling to share what's on your heart but no one wanted to hear it, but the fact that people did not

find this topic as important as the miraculous and mystical made my heart physically hurt!
Even if you think you know it. How are your kids doing? Do they need you around more? Is it time for a shift?

Learn your rhythm- what God has called you to doesn't have to look the same as everyone else. Travelling slower doesn't mean less productivity. We are in this for the long haul, this is not a sprint – do now what will reveal a blessing later, whether you are 65 or 25.

Open to Reform: Changes in structure and paradigm, at parish, diocese, national and world-wide levels

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/be-open-to-the-surprises-of-the-holy-spirit-pope-francis-advises-78992?platform=hootsuite> 28 Apr 2016

Francis asked Mass-goers at the Santa Marta chapel April 28 how the Church responds when faced with something new, and perhaps never done before, clarifying that this is “not worldly newness, like fashions and clothes, but the newness and surprises of the Spirit, because the Spirit always surprises us.”

The answer, he said, is “by meeting, listening, discussing and praying before the final decision.” This is the same method the Church has used since the beginning, and is how she answers resistance based on assertions such as “it was never done this way,” or “you must do it like this.”

This process of gathering to speak and pray about an issue is “the so-called synodality of the Church, in which the communion of the Church is expressed,” Francis observed, noting that it is the Holy Spirit who creates this communion.

“What does the Lord ask of us? Docility to the Spirit. What does the Lord ask us? Not to be afraid, when we see that it’s the Spirit who calls us,” he said.

Tweet from @DisabilityJ (Disability&Jesus) 10 July 2016

<https://twitter.com/DisabilityJ/status/752028684559720448/photo/1>

The biggest lesson that I learned on the journey is that all of us are created in His image, that is all of us, equally without exception or qualification. There is a huge movement of the Holy Spirit through the wider Church right now, at the heart of which is the message of inclusion.

<https://www.hprweb.com/2016/08/the-church-just-did-for-movements-what-she-did-for-religious-in-1978-only-better/>

1 Aug 2016 Fr Matthew Schneider LC

An introduction to [luvenescit Ecclesia](#)

The deeper theology in *luvenescit Ecclesia* gives it a much higher starting point than *Mutae Relationes* when it gets to the practical elements. Charisms are not just seen as useful for the Church, but seen as something fundamental to our nature and something which cannot be independent from the hierarchy by nature, rather than do something which, for practical reasons, cannot separate itself.

The gist of the Welcome to Country address at Proclaim 2016:

Uncle Neil Evers a direct descendant of the Guringai clan that lived in this area (Chatswood) gave the Welcome to Country address.

I draw upon and acknowledge the strength and courage of the traditional custodians of this land. The word that we use for 'Welcome to Country' means 'Come Together'. Welcome to Country is a rite of showing respect to the custodians of country, whether you were going through their land or to their land. Otherwise it would be like going into someone's house uninvited. If you have seen a map of the Aboriginal language groups of Australia, you would know that there were at least 350 language groups. Each one represented a different

country. Everyone knew the boundaries of each country, because they were clearly marked. You only went in with permission and with respect to the rules of the country you were in. This wasn't political correctness, but age old tradition. Imagine how it was before European colonisation, with everything crystal clear, an abundance of wildlife, with designated hunting, gathering and hunting grounds. They didn't own the land, they were custodians of it. When we 'come together' we can be strong, we can make a difference. The more we learn, the more we understand. On behalf of them, elders and custodians past and present, I welcome you to this beautiful country.

<https://catholicmissionarydisciples.com/news/without-accountability-we-will-not-grow>

Approx Feb 2018

'Having worked in the Catholic Church for many years now, I know many of the dysfunctions which are part of the internal culture of Catholic parishes, dioceses, and ministries. It is no secret that many are not healthy places. There is mistrust, lack of clarity in mission, church politics, infighting, fighting for power, etc. In other words, sinners run the Church!

Furthermore, there is a culture of management - not mission. There is little vision for growth, but maintenance of decline. There is little transformation and a lot of status quo. Even with all of this, we see a lack of leaders, who know what to do about it and want to change. There are numerous reasons, some of which I will lay out here:

- Seminaries (and grad schools) aren't forming leaders for the modern parish
- Pastoral training rarely helps our leaders understand real evangelisation and discipleship
- Change is hard, and all of us like comfort
- Lack of openness to 'experimentation' and new movements
- Culture of teaching (good), but with little evangelising (bad)
- Stopping after we make converts – so we fail to raise up missionary disciples
- We don't change, because to do so means we have to admit we haven't always operated the right way'

Tweets about content from DR18 (Divine Renovation Conference 2018, and @FJMallon Three advice to Bishops: 1) Period of Christendom has long been over. We need to change the model of running a parish; 2) Find and invest in the 16% of priests who are on fire for the mission; 3) Change the structure of the diocese to support the mission.

Fr. James Mallon on the question of moving priests every 4-6 years: 'if the diocese were to hire a consulting group to come up with a plan to ensure that the organisation would never reach their goals, this would be the strategy they would come up with.'

Some slide decks from presentations on Communications and Groups at DR18

<https://app.box.com/s/268r9zlbhqqpifxmz7ckm30g4fwon9qx>

<https://app.box.com/s/heudqq8w4vlpnerc88i7ekgmc4zn93p4>

<https://careynieuwhof.com/some-thoughts-on-why-megachurch-pastors-keep-falling/>

Feb 2019 Carey Nieuwhof

Billy Graham was certainly a leader who finished well. Most people in church leadership are aware of the Billy Graham rule: never meet alone with a member of the opposite sex...The Billy Graham rule actually had four aspects. Billy and a few of his colleagues got together in 1948 in Modesto California after seeing other evangelists become entangled in affairs, greed and running down local churches.

- Financial integrity...so that Billy Graham and his team would not raise money themselves at crusades.
- Sexual integrity...so they wouldn't fall victim to affairs or impropriety.
- Respect for local churches...so they would build up local churches, rather than compete with them.
- A commitment to accuracy in reporting...so they would not exaggerate how many people attended or how 'successful' their ministry was.

You can read [Billy Graham's own description of the Modesto Manifesto here](#).

Gideon Goosen

<https://www.booktopia.com.au/saving-catholics-gideon-goosen/prod9780648232469.html>

This is an interactive workbook bringing together historical, theological, sociological, and experiential insights to illuminate the main issues surrounding reform. Taking a measured approach by looking at both the positives and the negatives arising from the experience of Catholics, Goosen examines such things as what reform actually is; the need for reform, and psychological attitudes and resistance towards reform. He tackles thorny subjects like clericalism head-on and addresses the abuse of power in the church. He also seeks out signs of hope--following the example of Pope Francis--and explores possible strategies for the future.

'The family is the basis in the Lord's plan, and all the forces of evil aim to demolish it. Uphold your families and guard them against the grudges of the Evil One by the presence of God'
St Charbel

'Dare to do something completely different', Sr Margaret Purcell sm

Ken Fish, speaking at Servants of Jesus (video and audio), on 'The Anatomy of an Awakening' on 22 Jul 2019 speaking about the prophet Daniel's links to the return of the exiles and the rise of the prophet Haggai, and how a radical turn around can take place in a short amount of time. An awakening is more than a revival, more like God pressing the reset button. Unless there is preparation and follow-up, a revival can fade very quickly, like a flash in the pan.

<https://movies.toxicwap.com.ng/watch?v=ReO92EfwSEg>

Submission of the Australian Council of Catholic Clergy to the Plenary Council

<https://www.clergy.asn.au/the-chairmans-word/submission-to-plenary-council/>

This is well worth reading and considering.

Part of the script, transcribed and edited from 'Brexit: the uncivil war', telemovie

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brexit:_The_Uncivil_War

The vision wasn't flawed.....it's people that are flawed.
and they ruined it.

I said the entire Downing Street There is a systems failure
operating system needed overhauling.

in this country and across the West.

You were pushed out, once again.

You reset. And that's all I did.
We're languishing, we're drifting without a vision or a purpose.
when there's a systems failure?
And what do you do usually.....I reset.
And what did they do?
What did all of you do? You rebooted
the same operating system,
the same tired, old politics
and self-serving, small-thinking
of short-termism, the virus, it infects.
Yes, yes, don't think that I don't
but that's what the system does,
know I'm as bad as the rest of them,
But I was hoping, just praying,
..to actually happen, for someone
that someone, anyone,
with a minimalist amount of... of imagination or vision
could see that there was the
opportunity for something to...
to step in and do something...
..to just.....to make a change to...

When the nation ceases to put the highest value on the home, it will not be long before it ceases to put a value on a person. Soon a man will begin to be valued because of what he can do for a revolutionary class, and then comes communism.

When men and women reach appoint where they are no longer interested in watching a seed they planted grow, or caring for its flower; when they are more concerned about increasing dollars in their bank accounts than obeying the primitive impulse to increase and multiply then know ye that a night has dawned when a thing is more important than a person and *Hic facet* (Here lies) must be inscribed on the tombstone of democracy. Beyond and behind all the schemes and blueprints of politics and economics there is nothing more fundamental to the revival of true democracy than the restoration of the family. Venerable Fulton J Sheen 1948

Topics of Controversy

<https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/celebrity-isnt-the-cause-of-sexual-abuse-20160725-gqd7g4.html>

25 July 2016 Jack Green

This is a very useful article for developing responses to the requests for married clergy as an antidote to child sexual abuse.

<https://www.mercatornet.com/above/view/clerical-sex-abuse-in-australia-can-you-believe-the-statistics/19332>

9 Feb 2017 Michael Cook

A rare and detailed look at the Royal Commission's statistics on child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, showing that it was a much wider problem than priests only. It is actually a family problem, and priests come from families.

<https://thembeforeus.com/marriage-isnt-about-god/>

12 Jun 2017 Katy Faust

Therefore, every community throughout history has wrestled with the same problem:

How do you require of men what biology makes optional?

Interestingly, nearly every religion has come up with the same answer: society-wide expectations that a man commit to a woman prior to sex and remain committed to her, and only her, throughout his life. And up until the last ten minutes of history, we have all called this “marriage.”

['12 Rules For Life'](#) by Jordan B. Peterson, Rule 11, pages 298-299

'Girls will play boys' games, but boys are much more reluctant to play girls' games. This is in part because it is admirable for a girl to win when competing with a boy. It is also OK for her to lose to a boy. For a boy to beat a girl, however, it is often not OK – and just as often, it is even less OK for him to lose. Imagine that a boy and a girl, aged nine, get into a fight. Just for engaging, the boy is highly suspect. If he wins, he's pathetic. If he loses – well, his life might as well be over. Beat up by a girl.

Girls can win by winning in their own hierarchy – by being good at what girls value, as girls. They can add to this victory by winning in the boys' hierarchy. Boys, however, can only win by winning in the male hierarchy. They will lose status, among girls and boys, by being good at what girls value. It costs them in reputation among the boys, and in attractiveness among the girls. Girls aren't attracted to boys who are their friends, even though they might like them, whatever that means. They are attracted to boys who win status contests with other boys. If you're male, however, you just can't hammer a female as hard as you would a male. Boys can't (won't) play truly competitive games with girls. It isn't clear how they can win. As the game turns into a girls' game, therefore, the boys leave.'

Ed. Have we not seen this in action when female altar servers are permitted to serve?

Could this be one of the many reasons why Israel, Jesus and Catholicism have restricted priesthood to men?

<https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/other-topics/cultural-climate-change.html>

Sep 2017 Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

This is an acutely perceptive analysis of modern culture, including the following gem: 'Having children or raising them involves enormous sacrifice of time, money, effort and energy. Religious people understand the concept of sacrifice. We live by it. It's part of our lives. But people in a secular, consumerist, individualist culture find it much harder to live by sacrifice. Nothing in the culture says sacrifice, and throughout history that is the reason why when a culture begins to lose its faith, its birth rate starts to decline. This is not just happening now. It has happened throughout history. It happened in Ancient Greece in the second century BCE. It happened in Ancient Rome. It happened in Renaissance Italy. The people who've done the research say there is no case on record in which a secular society has been able to maintain its birth rates. Within a century, every society, when it becomes secularised, starts to decline demographically. So the 21st century is going to be more religious than the 20th century even if not one person changes his or her mind from being non-religious to religious. It will happen for a simple reason: throughout the world today the more religious you are, the more children you have.'

<https://noplaceforsheep.com/2017/12/17/notes-from-an-expert-survivor/>

17 Dec 2017 @noplaceforsheep

The claim that celibacy is an indicator of paedophilia comes about as a result of the Catholic church winning hands down in the numbers of sexual abusers in institutions. People are, quite reasonably, searching for explanations and the most glaring difference between the Catholic church and other institutions is its demand that its priests are celibate. This demand, it is argued, leads to priests sexually abusing children because they have no other outlet for their needs. However, hundreds of thousands of children are sexually abused in non-institutional settings, and by members of their families and family friends. The overwhelming majority of the male abusers in such situations have access to adult sexual partners, and they are not celibate. It is gravely misleading to peddle the suggestion that celibacy is an indicator of or a precursor to the sexual abuse of children. The Catholic church and its celibacy protocols *enable* paedophiles to enact their fantasies, however, they do not *cause* paedophilia.

Likewise, the notion that more women in positions of authority in churches will somehow prevent child sexual abuse is not borne out by the experience of victims in non-institutional and familial settings. There are women aplenty in these settings, mothers, sisters, aunts, cousins, friends, grandmothers, the majority of whom are unable or unwilling, for very many complex reasons, to prevent a child being sexually abused. The notion that parachuting women into middle management in the churches will stop any paedophile in his tracks is insultingly ludicrous. It will not.

<https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2018/04/from-the-heart-of-a-young-father>

18 Apr 2018 Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, excerpt from letter by a young father:

'We crave the truth, no matter how blunt or difficult it is for us to swallow or for the shepherds of our flock to teach. Our culture is roiled in confusion concerning the basic tenets of human nature: From a very young age, we're deluged with propaganda that distorts basic scientific truths about gender, paints virtue and chivalry as "toxic masculinity,"

denigrates the family, and desecrates the nature of sex and its fruits, especially the unborn child. We urgently need the Church's clarity and authoritative guidance on issues like abortion, homosexuality, gender dysphoria, the indissolubility of matrimony, the four last things, and the consequences of contraception (moral, anthropological, and abortifacient). My generation has never, or rarely, heard these truths winsomely taught in the parishes. Instead, we hear most forcefully and frequently from our bishops' conference and our dioceses regarding the federal budget, border policy, net neutrality, gun control, and the environment.'

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/throughcatholiclenses/2018/12/hiding-priestly-misconduct-makes-problems-worse-2-anonymous-priests-share-their-experience/>

18 Dec 2018 Fr Matthew L Schneider LC

Excellent analysis on why serious priestly misconduct gets covered up:

'Some time ago, I was in a similar situation and discussed it with a friend who had also found himself tied into an abusive situation in his place of employment. He laughed and said, "You know what? You've got only three choices: 1. Tell them exactly what's wrong. Shout it from the rooftops and demand change and prepare to be crucified 2. Smile, resign and walk away. 3. Accept your lot. Put up and shut up.'"

https://www.pbc2019.org/fileadmin/user_upload/presentations/23feb/23_Feb_3_Valentina_Alazraki_PBC_ING.pdf

23 Feb 2019 Valentina Alazraki

Her extraordinary analysis:

As a journalist, as a woman and mother, I would like to tell you that we think abusing a minor is as contemptible as is covering up the abuse. And you know better than I that abuses have been covered up systematically, from the ground up. I think you should be aware that the more you cover up, the more you play ostrich, fail to inform the mass media and thus, the faithful and public opinion, the greater the scandal will be. If someone has a tumour, it is not cured by hiding it from one's family or friends; silence will not make it heal; in the end it will be the most highly recommended treatments that will prevent metastasis and lead to healing. Communicating is a fundamental duty because, if you fail to do so you automatically become complicit with the abusers. By not providing the information that could prevent these people from committing further abuse, you are not giving the children, young people and their families the tools to defend themselves against new crimes.

I think it would be healthier, more positive and more helpful if the Church were the first to provide information, in a proactive and not reactive way, as normally happens. You should not wait to respond to legitimate questions from the press (or from the people, your people) when a journalistic investigation uncovers a case. In the age we live in, it is very difficult to hide a secret.... Report things when you know them. Of course, it will not be pleasant, but it is the only way, if you want us to believe you when you say "from now on we will no longer tolerate cover-ups".

If the accusation is shown to be credible, you must provide information about the ongoing processes, about what you are doing; you must say that you have removed the guilty party from his parish or from where he was practicing; you must report it yourselves, both in the dioceses and in the Vatican. At times, the Bulletin of the Holy See Press Office provides information about a resignation without explaining the reasons. There are priests who have gone immediately to inform the faithful that they were ill and not that they were leaving

because they had committed abuse. I think that the news about the resignation of a priest who has committed abuse should be released with clarity, in an explicit way.

Excerpt from Instagram post from @jenny-uebbing around 25 Jul 2019

'I actually think it is up to us, the laity, to rise up to meet the biggest challenge facing the Church today: a deep and real understanding of God's plan for our sexuality, and a radical turning away from the toxic sexuality embraced by our culture'.

New book, 'Into the Deep: An unlikely Catholic conversion' by Abigail Rine Favale

<https://www.amazon.com/Into-Deep-Unlikely-Catholic-Conversion/dp/1532605013>

And an interview with her about her conversion:

<https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2019/07/18/from-evangelicalism-to-feminism-to-catholicism-a-conversation-with-abigail-favale/>

Now let me address the second accusation: that Catholicism is patriarchal. I grew up in a patriarchal religious setting, as mentioned above, where the feminine elements of Christianity were more or less blotted out. Feminist Christianity, in many ways, is the inverse twin of this approach; it seeks to root out and upend what is masculine, reading it as marked by domination. The Catholic cosmos, in contrast to both of these, is cosmos of harmonious synergy—masculine and feminine entwined together in fruitful spiritual union. When feminists look at Catholicism from outside, they look through the lens of temporal power, and all they see is a male priesthood and hierarchy, mistakenly thinking that *is* the Church. They see Mary as a passive, docile symbol, rather than the Mother of God, the representative human being and first Christian, who crushes the serpent underfoot. They see the male priest at the altar and overlook the gathered women who are living icons of Christ's body and bride, a counterpart to the priestly iconography of the bridegroom. They misinterpret courageous female saints like Hildegard of Bingen and Catherine of Siena as rebels, rather than faithful daughters (and Doctors) of the Church. They disregard completely the profound insights on the question of gender from twentieth-century Catholic writers. I completed a doctorate in contemporary feminist theory and women's writing and yet *never* encountered writers like Edith Stein, Prudence Allen, Adrienne von Speyr, Gertrud von le Fort, and John Paul II, because their contributions are completely ignored in the discipline of women's studies. There, only one kind of conversation is allowed, and it happens in an echo chamber.

I first became a feminist because I was seeking an answer to this question: what is the sacred meaning of womanhood? Ironically, what I found within feminism was deep ambivalence toward the very concept of womanhood. I found a much more compelling answer in Catholicism. I have never had my dignity and purpose as a woman so celebrated and affirmed than under the mantle of Holy Mother Church.

Example of ministry of lay woman, formerly a prisoner in China

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/people/once-imprisoned-chinese-woman-now-guides-others-catholic-faith>

<https://www.amazon.com/Women-Rise-Up-Fierce-Generation-ebook/dp/B07F3BH55L>

This book by Cindy Jacobs is about pathways for women gifted with charisms from God on more-than-ordinary levels and what light scripture gives to those pathways. Not everyone is called on that path, and it comes at a high cost. The method of exegesis used, 'interpret obscure scripture passages in the light of clear scripture passages', is of concern because very few people will agree on what is clear and what is obscure, so treat the conclusions with caution especially conclusions based on the interpretation on the meaning of a single word or name. The safeguarding measures she recommends are very good and of benefit to any woman who travels for speaking engagements.

An edited account of Fr Finet's first visit in Feb 1936 to Venerable Marthe Robin from page 76 of *Marthe Robin: The Cross and the Joy* by Fr Raymond Peyret

<https://www.amazon.com/Marthe-Robin-Cross-Raymond-Peyret/dp/081890464X>

'She told me about the great events that were going to take place, some of which would be very bad, others very good. In particular she said there would be a New Pentecost of Love, that the Church would be renewed by an apostolate of the laity, even saying that the laity were going to play a very important role in the Church, many would be called to be Apostles. She said that the Church was going to be totally rejuvenated, and that there would be many methods for formation of the laity, but outstanding among them would be Foyers of Light, Charity and Love. <https://www.lesfoyersdecharite.com/en/>

Edited from the Introduction to *'The Way Home: Beyond Feminism Back to Reality'* by Mary Pride <https://www.amazon.com/Way-Home-Beyond-Feminism-Reality/dp/1453699309>

'Feminism is self-consistent; the Christianity of the 1950s wasn't. Feminists had a plan for women; Christians didn't. Motherhood in the 1950s had been reduced to a five or ten year span, lasting until the youngest of the two or three 'planned' children was in kindergarten. With an empty house full of labour-saving devices and a family which no longer seemed to need her, it was understandable that a woman felt trapped at home. All the action seemed to be out there in the men's world, while she felt bored and useless. The sad truth is that the 'traditional' role which feminists attacked had already lost its scriptural fullness. Christian women were staying home out of habit, not out of conviction. The Christian churches had actually paved the way for feminism to succeed. Denominations endorsed family planning and 'therapeutic' abortion. Church meetings were scheduled for every night of the week, giving out a clear message that family life was unimportant. Ministry was considered more worthwhile than motherhood, as missionaries were expected to leave their children in boarding schools as a matter of course. Church life centred on the church building, not the home. Even in the church building, children were whisked out of sight into the nursery, children's church, and their own Sunday school program. At every turn Christian women found that their biological, economic and social roles were considered worthless. Role obliteration is the coming thing in evangelical, and even fundamentalist, circles. All because two or more generations have grown up and married without ever hearing that the Bible teaches a distinct role for women which is different from that of a man and just as important. We are not called by God to stay home, or to sit at home, but to work at home! Homeworking is a way to take back control of education health care, agriculture, social welfare, business, housing, morality, and evangelism from the faceless institutions to which we have surrendered them. Homeworking, like feminism, is a total

lifestyle. The difference is that homeworking produces stable homes, growing churches, and children who are Christian leaders. Every great fire starts with one spark. It is my hope and prayer that this book will be the 'spark' which leads Christian women to fall in love with their families again and to determine to be working wives – in the home!

And a short excerpt from Chapter 1 of *'The Way Home'*: The Great Con Game

'What else do the 'biblical' feminists want? Ordination for women, of course – which oddly enough is coupled in their minds with careers for wives. 'If a woman has been called and gifted by God to be a pastor or a priest,' writes Virginia Mollenkott in 'Women, men and the Bible', 'it is a fearful thing for the organised church to block her from that ministry. And if a Christian woman has been called and gifted for some career outside the home, and her husband blocks her by refusing to assist with the care of their mutual home and their mutual children, isn't he frustrating the work of the Holy Spirit?' Mollenkott elsewhere makes it clear that if a husband refuses staunchly to become Mommy's little helper, the wife has a right to make the 'difficult decision' to 'abandon the relationship in search of a more affirming lifestyle.' So careerism justifies divorce of an uncooperative husband. Children, sex roles, biblical church government, and now marriage itself are all targets of the 'harmless' evangelical feminist movement. Stop and think calmly about this for a minute. We are being asked to embrace a lifestyle which unbelievers would have considered perverted only forty years ago. We are being asked to kill our babies, endorse homosexuality, nag our husbands to do our job so we can do theirs – under threat of divorce – and all in the name of Christ!

An excerpt from *'What's Wrong With The World'* by G.K.Chesterton, Chapter 3 of Part 3: The Emancipation of Domesticity

<https://www.amazon.com/Whats-Wrong-World-G-Chesterton/dp/1533696632>

'Supposing it to be conceded that humanity has acted at least not unnaturally in dividing itself into two halves, respectively typifying the ideals of special talent and general sanity (since they are genuinely difficult to combine completely in one mind), it is not difficult to see why the line of cleavage has followed the line of sex, or why the female became the emblem of the universal and the male of the special and superior. Two gigantic facts of nature fixed it thus: first, that the woman who frequently fulfilled her functions literally could not be specially prominent in experiment and adventure; and second, that the same natural operation surrounded her with very young children, who require to be taught not so much anything as everything. Babies need not to be taught a trade, but to be introduced to a world. To put the matter shortly, woman is generally shut up in a house with a human being at a time when he asks all the questions that there are, and some that there aren't. It would be odd if she retained any of the narrowness of a specialist. Now if anyone says that this duty of general enlightenment is in itself too exacting and oppressive, I can understand the view. I can only answer that our race has thought it worthwhile to cast this burden on women in order to keep common-sense in the world. But when people begin to talk about this domestic duty as not merely difficult but trivial and dreary, I simply give up the question. For I cannot with the utmost energy of imagination conceive what they mean. When domesticity is called drudgery, all the difficulty arises from a double meaning in the word. If drudgery only means dreadfully hard work, I admit the woman drudges in the home, as a man might drudge at the Cathedral of Amiens or drudge behind a gun at Trafalgar. But if it means that the hard work is more heavy because it is trifling, colourless and of small import to the soul, then as I say, I give it up; I do not know what the words

mean. To be Queen Elizabeth within a definite area, deciding sales, banquets, labours and holidays; to be Whiteley within a certain area, providing toys, boots, sheets, cakes and books, to be Aristotle within a certain area, teaching morals, manners, theology, and hygiene; I can understand how this might exhaust the mind, but I cannot imagine how it could narrow it. How can it be a large career to tell other people's children about the Rule of Three, and a small career to tell one's own children about the universe? How can it be broad to be the same thing to everyone, and narrow to be everything to someone? No; a woman's function is laborious, but because it is gigantic, not because it is minute. I will pity Mrs. Jones for the hugeness of her task; I will never pity her for its smallness.'

Example of a written response to a Plenary Council Theme 6 submission (1)

Excerpt from a parishioner in Parramatta Diocese:

"We can no longer have women as second or third class citizens in our church. They could become priests in our church and minister to the community."

Women by virtue of the gift of baptism are as much children of God and heirs to the promise of eternal life as baptised men are. Women are called to holiness and mission through baptism as much as men are. For the times we have not proclaimed this truth, as a church we beg forgiveness.

Through baptism and confirmation the charisms of the Holy Spirit are poured out upon the children of God for the building up of the kingdom of God. It is the responsibility of leadership in the church to notice, encourage, develop and co-ordinate the people upon whom the Holy Spirit has given charisms. For the times we have failed to this, as a church we beg forgiveness.

The vast majority of the miracles of Jesus, and the use of the charisms of the Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles (for the latter: 39/40), did not take place in the synagogue or temple but in the market squares, in homes, and while travelling. For the times that we have placed pre-eminence on what takes place inside church buildings, and neglected to celebrate how God is using His sons and daughters outside the church buildings in works of mercy, works of evangelism, works of healing, works of teaching, works of deliverance, works of intercession etc, as a church we beg forgiveness.

Family is important to God. The vocation of father and the vocation of mother have eternal consequences in the lives of their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The ministry of father and mother in the life of a child has a far greater impact than any priest will ever have. For the times that we have not balanced the kudos we give to those to go into full time church ministry with the kudos given to the full time ministry of mother and father, as a church we beg forgiveness.

(The 2011 National Faith Life Survey reported that for Catholic newcomers the most significant people in their lives to show them what faith is about were mothers 77% fathers 48% followed by grandparents/spouses/other family all at 16% and teachers, friends, clergy, chaplains at lower levels.)

Secular life is important to God. The good a holy politician, a holy detective, a holy surgeon, a holy football coach, a holy artist, a holy novelist, a holy retailer, a holy hairdresser can do is incalculable, and can often have a longer positive impact than 40 years of priestly preaching can have. For the times that we have not balanced the kudos we give to those who go into full time ministry with the kudos given to those called to holiness in secular vocations, as a church we beg forgiveness.

<https://www.thykingdomcome.global/resources/day-3-thanks-faith-frontline-emergency-service-workers-power-prayer-work>

Whether male or female, you are important to God, and the calling He has placed upon your life cannot be filled by anyone else. Your value does not depend upon how visible your ministry is to others. Your value does not depend on how much decision making power and influence you have. Your value depends upon the quality of your 'Yes' in responding to God's call and your fidelity to that call through both good times and bad times. For the times we have not proclaimed this truth, as a church we beg forgiveness.

Parents know that at times the most loving thing to do is to set boundaries and to say 'no' to their children for the greater good of the whole family. To love like this is not an easy thing to do. More than once the Church has given this loving 'no' to the request for women priests. You can read the official documents *Ordinatio Sacerdotis* and *Inter Insigniores* below.

The argument goes something like this: despite surrounding cultures in Old and New Testament times having women priests, the priests of the Temple were male, and the apostles Jesus conferred ordination as priests upon were male. Jesus had extraordinary women in His life, His mother Mary, Martha, Mary Magdalene and others who never betrayed Him and who stood faithfully at His Cross, and yet He did not ordain them as priests. We see in this the will of God, and we must accept it as being an important element in His salvific plan.

http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19940522_ordinatio-sacerdotalis.html

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19761015_inter-insigniores_en.html

In the end what matters is helping each other get to heaven. If you compare the numbers of people converted through Mary, the mother of Jesus, to the numbers of people converted through the apostles, Mary is way out in front and she was never ordained a priest.

Caroline Chisholm, St Mary of the Cross McKillop, Eileen O'Connor, Dorothy Day, Mother Angelica of EWTN, Flannery O'Connor, St Edith Stein, Edel Quinn, Pauline Jaricot, St Mother Teresa of Calcutta, St Gianna Beretta Molla, St Therese of Lisieux, Gabrielle Bossis, Bl Susanna Caboie are women with whom God has done great things, as lay women and as religious. In their lives much inspiration can be found.

Others are not household names, but the mother of St John XXIII, the mother of Archbishop Fulton Sheen, the mother of Archbishop Polding, the mother of Frederic Ozanam lived extraordinarily fruitful lives for God.

A loving parent will understand that the child who asks for lollies is actually hungry, and will steer the child away from the lollies towards food with high nutrition, and will ride out the protests until the child eventually develops a taste and hunger for what is beneficial. In the Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* by St John Paul II is an uplifting vision of the role of women in God's plan of salvation. No woman who reads it will ever feel like a second or third class citizen again.

http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_ip-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html

From time to time movements spring up, and it takes careful discernment to work out whether they are movements of the Holy Spirit, movements of the Holy Spirit that got hijacked by the enemy, movements of the enemy or movements of the enemy that got hijacked by the Holy Spirit.

For example in hindsight and with the benefit of *Humanae Vitae* we can see that the push for oral contraceptives was not of God and of great detriment to humanity.

The dissatisfaction with the first English translation of the Mass has eventually given us a much better translation that is slowly bearing good fruit.

The #MeToo movement has brought a lot of necessary things into the light, but it has been hijacked whenever false accusations have been made.

http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html

The movement of women into more visible arenas of ministry may be a work of God, but it is still too jumbled up with various ideologies for definitive discernment to be made.

We can hope and pray that the Holy Spirit hijacks this one.

G. K. Chesterton argued that there were four things wrong with the world to the detriment of family: big business, big government, public education and feminism.

For a modern analysis of feminism Mary Pride's *'The Way Home: Beyond Feminism Back to Reality'* is recommended reading:

<https://www.amazon.com/Way-Home-Beyond-Feminism-Reality/dp/1453699309>

The push for equal pay for equal work had positives, but it did stop employers being able to pay the fathers of families more than single women, the net result of which is both parents needing to be in the workforce to provide for a family.

The push for voting rights for women had positives, but it has ended up with us voting as individuals, whereas in former times a man voted with the understanding that he was voting as the representative of his family and for the welfare of his family.

We currently see a push for women to be directly included in the decision making processes of the Church.

One reason given is that it would prevent further child abuse. @noplacforsheep has this response: 'The notion that more women in positions of authority in churches will somehow prevent child sexual abuse is not borne out by the experience of victims in non-institutional and familial settings. There are women aplenty in these settings, mothers, sisters, aunts, cousins, friends, grandmothers, the majority of whom are unable or unwilling, for very many complex reasons, to prevent a child being sexually abused. The notion that parachuting women into middle management in the churches will stop any paedophile in his tracks is insultingly ludicrous. It will not.'

Interviews to obtain the input of mothers of the victims of child sexual abuse will be needed, as by and large their stories have not yet been told.

To understand the next counter argument, reading '*Dressing with Dignity*' by Colleen Hammond is necessary:

<https://www.amazon.com/Dressing-Dignity-Colleen-Hammond/dp/0895558009>

In it she makes the valid point that women are unaware of how frequently a man's thoughts are occupied by sex. One of her conclusions is that if women decide to dress modestly then there will be more space in the thought lives of men to think of God and to receive the grace of conversion. By and large women have a blind-spot about this, and need to talk to a man they trust who can verify the truth of this argument to them.

When you introduce the presence of a woman into the deliberations of a group of men, two things happen. The presence of the woman is distracting: those pesky thoughts of sex arise. The men enter into riskier and more competitive behaviour to attract her attention and approval. Neither assists the deliberations of a group of men on weighty matters.

The Church is a theocracy, and not a democracy. Our popular world view of 'no regulation without representation' does not apply. In biblical Israel decisions were made with an anointed leader and the heads of tribes and clans, and elders of the people. Each one represented and made decisions on behalf of his whole tribe, clan or family or village as the situation required.

<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/elder>

When Jesus comes along we have the new Israel of God, with the Apostles symbolically representing the 12 tribes as heads of those tribes. With the bishops as successors to the Apostles, they represent each diocese and speak for each diocese just like the heads of tribes and clans did. There is a biblical basis for this.

Even a Mother Superior or Abbess does not represent as many people as a bishop does.

But only a fool does not consult with his people before he goes to represent them in decision making, the ones he trusts are close to God and have experience and insight into the situations under discussion. In the history of the Church whenever God raises up men and women of outstanding wisdom and holiness, you see bishops making their way to consult them. St Hilda of Whitby, Marthe Robin, Blessed Anna Maria Taigi, St Hildegard of Bingen are some of the women in those ranks, St Bernard of Clairvaux, St Martin de Porres, St Nicholas of Flue, St Charles of Sezze are some of the men in those ranks.

If we took this whole idea that family is important to God, and that God's preferred method is for leaders to seek counsel from elders, then that has ramifications for parish councils and similar bodies. Currently when it comes to parish councils there is an emphasis on people volunteering and seeking a demographic microcosm of the parish in the resulting parish council. What if, instead, membership was for those whom the community recognised as elders because they were men with long standing roots in the community, whose children had all kept the faith, and due to grandchildren were now leaders of a considerable tribe. It would keep to the biblical principle, that if you are faithful in smaller things (family) then

God will trust you with greater things (community) and would provide motivation for men of all ages to take a more active interest in the formation of their children. The beauty of such a model is that it makes someone qualified to be an elder, and potential elders of the future, easy to spot.

Studies have shown that the highest predictor for the faith outcomes for a child is the faith level of the father. If the father takes the things of God seriously, so will his children. If the father is ambivalent about the things of God, then his children will be so too.

<https://www.christianpost.com/news/fathers-key-to-their-childrens-faith.html>

Which is better, to be a hero, or to be a hero maker?

[Hero Maker](#) by Dave Ferguson explores this question.

'Everyone wants to be a hero. Yet only a few understand the power in being a hero maker.' 'A hero maker is a leader who shifts from being the hero to making others the hero in God's unfolding story.'

Every woman, through physical maternity and/or spiritual maternity, has the raw material to be a hero maker. That is where her gifts and talents can really shine, even if they may not bear visible fruit in her children and spiritual children until those children and spiritual children are much older. Any woman like Priscilla who sees the increased potential a preacher like Apollo could have, and sets about investing the time and energy and prayers of her family to making that happen, is a hero maker (Acts 18:26). Likewise, who can measure the impact of St Hilda of Whitby into whose care God entrusted the formation of five future bishops?

'Vive la difference!' God has created us uniquely as men and women, with distinct inbuilt differences designed for our mutual enrichment. It is only our differences that we have to offer in our relationships. It is our differences that make teamwork worthwhile, because tasks can be assigned to the relative strengths of the team members. If a team needs to accomplish task A and task B, and both team members are only good at task A, they will have a lesser outcome than if one team member is good at task A and the other is good at task B. The gifts proper to masculinity and femininity matter. A man acting like a woman and a woman acting like a man is beneficial to no one.

We are naturally attracted to differences not to similarities. It can be easier to see why differences are attractive from a tutorial in what makes art more visually interesting, exemplified in the work of Nicholas Wilson and his Art2Life video tutorials eg

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAGhJZ70JSY>

In March 2019 Bishop Barron and Jordan B. Petersen had a wide ranging conversation that was recorded: <https://www.wordonfire.org/peterson/>

Of the many things they spoke of, two of them stand out:

The first is Bishop Barron talking about the necessity of right order for right worship, and when there is right worship the blessing of God flows. It means that getting the whole priesthood-laity, leadership-decision making, male-female, family relationship stuff right, and getting it right God's way, really matters.

The second is Jordan B. Petersen speaking about the antipathy his daughter is facing on

many fronts because she has a desire to become a wife and mother. This is a huge eye-opener to how far we have fallen from the command of God 'to be fruitful and multiply' and to how anti-family our western world has become. This is the real battlefield.

The following is not an easy article to read due to the events it describes, but it is an accurate description of what many women have lived through and are living through:

<https://www.mamamia.com.au/losing-virginity-at-14/>

It is women like this that we as a Church need to reach with the Gospel. Seeking God's wisdom in how to do this will be crucial, but one thing is clear; only other women will be able to get through to them, and only women will be able to accompany them through the healing and forgiveness process. This is another aspect of the real battlefield.

The flip-side is that there are many men that we need to reach with a radical call to repentance.

The final word belongs to St John Paul II:

'The personal resources of femininity are certainly no less than the resources of masculinity: they are merely different. Hence a woman, as well as a man, must understand her "fulfilment" as a person, her dignity and vocation, on the basis of these resources, according to the richness of the femininity which she received on the day of creation and which she inherits as an expression of the "image and likeness of God" that is specifically hers.'

Mulieris Dignitatem 10e

Example of a written response to a Plenary Council Theme 6 submission (2)

Excerpt from a parishioner in Parramatta Diocese:

"The exclusion of women from ministry and leadership roles cannot be supported theologically and should be one of the first changes introduced."

Women by virtue of the gift of baptism are as much children of God and heirs to the promise of eternal life as baptised men are, and upon them the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit applies, 'In the days to come-it is the Lord who speaks-I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind. Their sons and daughters shall prophecy, your young men shall see visions your old men shall dream dreams. Even on the slaves, men and women, in those days, I will pour out My Spirit.' Joel 3:1-2, Acts 2:17-18

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit has a double impact upon us; to make us grow in holiness that we may love God with all of our hearts, minds, soul and strength; and to make us grow in missionary service that we may love our neighbour as ourselves. The purpose of the diversity of charisms that the Holy Spirit gives for missionary service are 'so that the saints together make a unity in the work of service, building up the body of Christ' Eph 4:12

The forms that missionary service takes are full of variety, catechists, healers, hospitality, preaching, teaching, evangelising, intercession, administration, musicianship, works of mercy, service to the poor, service to the sick, discipleship, prophecy, deliverance, miracles, and many others. Of those many forms service in ordained ministry is only one, one that holds the others in unity, but only one out of a vast multiplicity.

If you walk into an average parish you are likely to see women in the music ministry as organists, cantors and choir members; women doing much of the behind the scenes sacristy work (preparing for and cleaning up after Masses, baptisms, funerals etc, ironing vestments and altar linens, flower arranging, making sure the place has enough altar wine, altar breads, charcoal, incense, toilet paper etc), women doing the 1st reading or 2nd reading at Mass, women as part of the welcoming teams, women in the piety stalls, women involved with children's liturgy of the word ;women taking Holy Communion to the sick and house-bound. In an average parish if all the women went on strike things would be very dire indeed. This doesn't even take into account all the 'non-visible-at-Mass' ways that women serve, for example in baptismal preparation classes and sacramental programs for confirmation, penance and first Holy Communion, in RCIA teams (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) and RCIC teams (Rite of Christian Initiation for Children), on parish councils, in church cleaning teams, as catechists in schools, in counting the collection teams, in folding the parish bulletin teams, in praying the Rosary in common before or after Mass, and in providing food for all the 'bring a plate to share' social events, and in various fund raising events for the upkeep of parish buses and sending the youngsters off to World Youth Day. And that is only some of the 'non-visible-at-Mass' ways that women are serving God and neighbour through their parish communities.

Is this ministry, if you define ministry as service? Yes.

Is it ordained ministry? No.

Are women leading some of these non-ordained ministries? Yes.

Have they stepped up to these roles because the blokes didn't? Probably.

Do they get any real recognition for what they do? Maybe if they have served a long time and then retire (or die) there might be a small token of appreciation given, but otherwise they only get recognition (the negative kind) when they stuff up.

Above and beyond ministry to parish, is the calling of women to minister service in families, as daughters, wives, mothers, grandmothers and aunties. The majority of this is service hidden from public view, for which the fruits take a very long time to manifest. It is as slow and imperceptible as seeds turning into plants. It is full of work that is essential, because it invests in people, but there's nothing outwardly to show for it except that those under your care are still alive, more or less clean, more or less sane, clothed and fed; which is vastly different to men who can point to objective things as the fruits of their labour (houses built, contracts exchanged, machines repaired, holes dug etc). It is as Chesterton says, the call of women to be everything to someone, which balances the call of men to be the same thing (plumber, architect, banker, telescope maker) to everyone.

We do have to ask ourselves sincerely whether our homes are the domestic churches they are called by God to be, or have they become domestic airports where travellers flit in and out on their way to other destinations? If the latter, how do we get back on God's track? How do we stop the devaluation of ministry service in the home, and start publicly valuing it and honouring the self-sacrifice that it requires again?

What did the early Church do with regard to leadership, as defined by decision making? According to Acts 15:5-6 the apostles and elders met together to determine whether it was God's will that the pagan men who became Christians were required to be circumcised. This is the same book of the Bible that specifically mentions that women disciples and the Mother of Jesus were in the upper room praying with the apostles for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This means that their non-mention in Acts 15:5-6 is significant because the writer of Acts goes to great lengths to name women as often as possible (for example Lydia, Sapphira, Tabitha/Dorcas, Mary the mother of John Mark, Rhoda, Damaris, Priscilla, Phillip's four daughters, Drusilla, Bernice). At the time of Acts 15:5-6 many of those women of the upper room would have still been alive and active in the Jerusalem community. What are we to conclude from this? That either Peter and the apostles based their leadership decision making model on the Jewish model – which was itself biblical, or Jesus had given specific post-Resurrection pre-Ascension instructions to the apostles about this, or both.

Thus the subsequent conclusion is that there is no theological basis for leadership (decision making) in the church for including women. It may offend our modern democratic sympathies, but when it comes to the kingdom of God, the will of God is supreme. We don't have to like it or understand it, but we do have to trust in it and accept it.

A very good resource for the scriptural basis of gender roles is Stephen B. Clark's *'Man and Woman in Christ: An examination of the roles of men and women in the light of Scripture and the Social Sciences'*. It is expensive, but comprehensive and worth every penny

<https://www.amazon.com/Man-Woman-Christ-Examination-Scripture/dp/0892830840>

One of the points he makes is that charisms are given to all, but the size of the arena for the use of those charisms are different between men and women. For women it is more likely to be one on one, or one on few; for men it is likely to be much larger.

What matters is that we are available to God for however He wants to work through us. A story, the origins of which I have been as yet unable to remember, may make this clearer. It goes something like this: A youth minister was doing preparation for a talk he was going to give at the next youth group meeting. He was really feeling the impetus of the Holy Spirit behind the preparation. But when it came time for the youth group meeting, only one person showed up. Not wanting to waste this great material on one person, he decided to shelve the talk until next time when there should be more youngsters to give it to. However a few days later he heard from other sources a bit of the background to the life of that one person who showed up, and realised that God had prepared that talk specifically for the one youngster that had shown up. This led the youth minister into a time of repentance, and a resolution to always give the talk God had given him to give, no matter if it was only for one. He concluded, sometimes God wants to do everything just to reach the one, and none of us should stand in the way of God's plans, and that the value of what we do in His name doesn't depend on the size of the audience we see but on our obedience to His promptings.

We read in the account of the garden of Eden (Gen 3:1-7) that God had given all the fruit of the trees in the garden for Adam and Eve to eat, all except one of them, and that eating of this forbidden tree would have very bad consequences. You could see in this account an analogy, where the trees are the various ministries of service that are possible, all except the tree of ordained ministry which the woman is instructed not to eat from. As in Eden, this is still a test of trust, love and obedience, and the temptations are many to eat of the forbidden tree. Just as in Eden we have two choices, we can focus on the forbidden tree and sit and mope and complain about the forbidden tree, or we can turn around and look at all the other trees, rejoice and thank God for their goodness and His providence, and perhaps while exploring them find some amazing gifts from God among those other trees that He has hidden for us to seek and find.

St Paul tells us in 1 Cor 12:22 that it is precisely the parts of the body of Christ that seem to be the weakest which are the indispensable ones. You could make the case that the external parts of the body mirror the ministry of men, and that the internal parts of the body mirror the ministry of women, because so much of the ministry of women takes place in hiddenness; cooking, cleaning, nurturing, listening, praying, offering up suffering, consoling etc. A body can still live if it is blind, lame, dumb, hard of hearing, unable to speak or smell, taste, feel or move. But a body cannot live if any of the heart, lungs, stomach, kidneys and intestines fail. So it stands to reason that if you want to destroy the body of Christ, then you work on the women and tempt them away from living out God's plan for them (Feminism). Conversely, if you want the body of Christ to return to health, getting the internal organs to

function better is the essential first step. Do this and the rest of the body will get stronger and healthier.

However lest we glorify leadership too much, let us be reminded of Jotham's fable in Judges Chapter 9 of the trees meeting together to elect a king. In that fable the olive tree, the fig tree and the grape vine all refuse the kingship when they realise that to accept leadership they will have to give up the useful things they are actually good at. In the end the thorn bush accepts leadership because it wasn't positively productive for anything else. Even in our own day we experience that to lead means to surrender the front line work to others, in order to serve the workers in the front lines. If you love the front line work, then you resist 'promotion' to leadership. If God wants to keep His women at the front lines, in hands on personal ministry to others, because that is where they are most effective, who are we to argue?

The only leadership that matters is the leadership of saying our personal Yes to whatever God wills for us. Doing that gives others permission to say their own tentative Yes to God.

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