



EVANGELICAL CATHOLIC INITIATIVE

KEY QUOTES FROM

REBUILT

The revitalisation of the Church of the Nativity in Baltimore, USA, led by Fr. Michael White PP and Lay Minister Tom Corcoran, married with 5 children. This Parish was dying 17 years ago and has been totally transformed, growing by 700 last year, many of them young adults.

It has a full time staff of 22, including two Worship Leaders.



BY FR. MICHAEL WHITE & TOM CORCORAN

Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York wrote in his Forward:
“Rebuilt takes the New Evangelisation seriously and points the way forward for others to do the same. The approach you’ll discover is rooted in Scripture. It is also completely Catholic...
If you love your parish, read this book”

1. Learning

Fr. Michael & Tom decided to learn from vibrant Protestant churches. “Why should our Catholicism preclude us from learning/adapting the successful methods of other churches?”

2. Mission

We have a mission statement: Make disciples. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. The church was dying because we weren't focused on this mission. We needed to repent and return to the purpose given to us by Jesus. The purpose of Nativity now is to reach lost people to help them become disciples, and then ... growing disciples.

3. From Maintenance to Mission

You'll never be criticised for not doing evangelisation... [but] when you introduce it, people invested in the status quo will complain. Organising a parish for evangelisation - moving it from maintenance to mission - requires systemic change in the way the parish functions, both a leadership challenge and a management one. Nearly everyone who complained left.

4. Weekend Mass Experience

- **Worship:** We had a music programme; what we needed was a worship programme. Music must be all about attracting the lost and growing disciples through worship. Coming to church and not singing is like going to the gym and not working out. You've gotta sing.
- **Volunteer Ministers:** It is essential to mobilise committed Parishioners to serve. We now have the Parking Team, the Host Team, the Information Team, the Café Team (we grew a culture where people are willing to hang around after Mass) and a Prayer Team. These teams ensure that visitors will be well received, which brings more visitors. Last Easter morning we had 600 members in t-shirts hosting our services for about 6,000 parishioners.
- **Mobilise the Next Generation:** We are convinced that weekend programmes for children, standing alongside of, or in addition to, Mass, are critically important.

Children's programmes:

Kidzone (6mths to 3yrs). It's not babysitting. From their first visit they hear scripture, sing worship songs, and listen to puppets tell Bible stories. Open at every Mass. (For staffing, give Mums a break - talk to empty nesters and high school students).

All Stars (3 to 6 yrs). A play/worship/learn environment. Play leads to worship, then small groups.

Time Travellers: (6 to 9yrs) Bible readings, based on Lectionary. Message is told by costumed characters from the Bible story. Includes high energy worship led by a worship leader.

Student Programme: (4 groups: 9-12/12- 14/14-16/16-18). Programmes include fun, with lots of adult ministers available to interact; then worship led by student bands, and a message, based on the lectionary, given by our Youth Minister. The astonishing thing to us about churches we studied was their successful youth ministry. Not rocket science, just some basic steps instead of games or guilt.

5. Make the Homily Relevant

Next to the sacraments, preaching the Word of God is one of the most important things you can do to grow disciples, and even more important when it comes to reaching the lost.... God's word has God's power. Preaching what God says about money breathed new life into our financial situation. My weekend homily is about 20 minutes long.

6. Build from below - Start small groups

Without Christ-centered friendships, our faith-walk will most certainly be a slower, less steady one, far more likely to fail. We started with a small group experience for Lent, based on Rick Warren's 40 Days of Purpose campaign. Once a year... we have a church-wide small group launch for new groups, leaders and members. We have small groups for students and kids. Connecting, supporting, training and equipping the leaders as ministers and shepherds of the group are the keys... Authentic relationships rooted in a growing relationship with Jesus Christ is what small groups are about. And we're convinced it's the way forward for the whole Catholic Church.

7. Teach Tithing

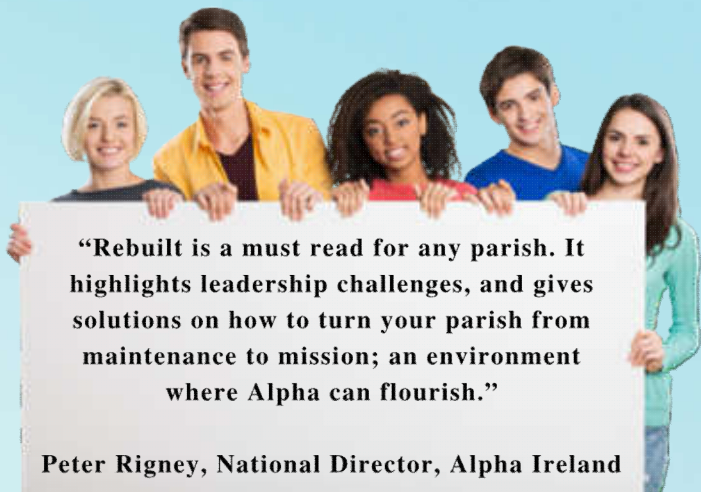
Giving is incredibly important when it comes to growing a healthy parish - for adequately paid staff and for discipleship. The tithe is the gift of 10% of what we have or earn, given to honour God. Included are our gifts to the poor as well as our offerings in our place of worship. We started with ourselves (Tom and Michael) and both of us can honestly say that as we started tithing, we found ourselves eliminating debt and building savings. We enthusiastically encourage members of our church to tithe. We got rid of all fund raising events. While percentage giving is the key change in thinking, electronic giving is the key change in practice. One Sunday a year we have a financial appeal - no nagging, no guilt, just a reminder of a simple fact: this is your church, they're your staff and it's your responsibility to pay them. Today, despite the worst economy since the Depression, our income has grown substantially. We've eliminated all our debt.

First key step: As Parish leaders, start obeying God's word re your personal finances, beginning with the tithe. Give God your first 10%. Always teach your congregations to give as an act of worship. The wisest thing we can do with our money is to fund the work of God's kingdom.

8. Get the Parish out of the Pews

Pastors should be preparing parishioners for the works of ministry, not pampering them (Eph.4:1-12). Christians who don't serve in their church family are, at best, baby disciples. Our goal is that every member will be a minister. The initial commitment we request is usually 2 hours, twice a month. Many of our weekend ministers wear some identifiable uniform, mostly t-shirts, as well as name badges. Key first step: Have a host team to greet guests at your front door or a hospitality team to serve coffee in the lobby after Mass... When you launch, don't make a big deal out of it with the larger congregation... This is about under-promising and over-delivering.

To learn more visit www.rebuiltparish.com and www.churchnativity.tv



Rebuilt Conference Maynooth: Alpha Ireland hosted the authors of Rebuilt in Maynooth College (Sept. 2014), attended by 400 people. View talks at: <http://ireland.alpha.org/blog/2014/9/22/rebuilt-talks-now-online>

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