

EVANGELISATION

Towards a transformed parish

Paddy Monaghan

Five years ago, I was bowled over when I read "Rebuilt" by Fr. Mike White and Tom Corcoran. "Rebuilt" tells the account of how the Church of the Nativity Parish in Baltimore, USA was transformed from being a dead parish, with no young adults and few children to being a vibrant fully renewed RC parish. How did they do it? The Holy Spirit guided them to go and learn from the successful Pentecostal and Protestant churches in the US and bring what they learned back to their parish around the Eucharist.

This led to the introduction of Sunday School at each Mass, Coffee after each Mass, welcome committee, Prayer Ministry, Small Groups etc. and it transformed their parish. (www.churchnativity.tv).

As a result of "Rebuilt", we started a Hospitality Ministry (with a rotating Team of 16) on Sundays after the 10am Mass in our Parish of Johnstown/Killiney in south Dublin. Between home bakes and a Kids' Zone, it has become a very successful ministry in our parish bringing together young and old and fostering a real sense of belonging and community.

This in turn led first to a Men's Breakfast and more recently a Women's breakfast held 7 times a year on Sat. mornings. As well as a delicious breakfast, there is always a guest speaker who shares about their faith journey and how it impacts their life. Many Catholics are not used to hearing lay people share personally about their faith and are very encouraged by these sharings.

Another book "Divine Renovation" by Fr. James Mallon shows how his Parish in Nova Scotia Canada (www.saint-benedict.ca) moved from maintenance to mission in a relatively short period of 5/6 years, mainly through running the Alpha Course. He has had over 2,000 parishioners through Alpha and regularly has 150/200 on their 11-week long Alpha, of which a third would be non-church goers.

This Renewal/Evangelisation has transformed the way they run Sunday Mass. They initiated a Prayer Ministry after Mass: Fr. James says

that "Trained teams of lay people offer prayer ministry at the end of each Mass ... 60 to 70 people each week receive prayer ministry that impacts their lives. Some years ago, I promised God that when someone asked me to pray for them, I would pause and do it on the spot. These moments have led to profound encounters, often with tears... relief, peace and healing."

A number of parishioners had been greatly inspired by Fr. James Mallon when he spoke at the Transformed



"Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:5-7

Parish Conference in Maynooth, just over a year ago. Accordingly, a team of 14 have since last September offered this Prayer Ministry after our 10am Mass. We were formally commissioned on a Sunday during Mass in December. Each Sunday we have two Prayer Teams (a man and a woman in each). Christian Prayer is powerful and effective and Jesus is our model. When approached for help, Jesus said "What would you like me to do for you?". So the Prayer Teams ask the

person who comes for prayer - "What would you like us to pray for you today?" People ask for prayer for personal needs, job interviews, illness, anxiety etc.

We emphasise that all requests shared are confidential to the Prayer Ministry team and they always include a blessing on the individual and their family. Prayer time is short just 2/3 minutes. Each Sunday, parishioners approach us for prayer after our 10am Mass and we are so encouraged to see them come back in gratitude shar-

ing about the wonderful answers to prayer they have experienced.

It says in Scripture that without a vision the people perish. So, go buy both books and read them and ask the Lord to show you His vision for your parish.

If your parish is interested in learning more details about these initiatives in our parish, please don't hesitate to contact us at johnstownparish@gmail.com



Sacraments

We believe

Dr Fáinche Ryan

Last week focused on the breaking of the Word. Next, we move onto the Liturgy of the Eucharist, but on Sundays and holy days before we do this we recite together the great profession of our faith, the Creed. The Creed contains the essential truths of Christian faith. Nicholas Lash, a great English Theologian and author of many books, insightfully wrote, 'what the Scriptures say at length, the creed says briefly.' The essentials, or essence of Christian faith, are indeed short: God is Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father, the Creator, sent the Son to dwell among us; crucified and raised up from the dead, he breathed the Holy Spirit, the sanctifier, upon us. The Son, who has known our



human condition, will judge us in a Godly way when our life on earth is ended. We also profess belief in the Catholic Church, the communion of saints, and again in the forgiveness of sins, and in life everlasting. These amazing truths were put together into this great prayer very early on in our story. They were developed

from the practice at baptisms of asking the people being baptised to affirm their faith in the teachings of the Catholic Church, not unlike the process followed when we renew our baptismal vows. This reminding and repeating is an important part of the Catholic practice.

The eucharistic celebration is essen-

tially a constant reminding of what God has done for 'us', the People of God in the past, so that our security, our trust in God grows. The God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead, the one we will later address as Our Father, is to be trusted. God's Word is always effective; what God says, God does. In a sense as we remember the great works of God in the past, we also seek to remind God of what has been done for us. We thank God for this, and we do this as we plead with God, pray to God, to do again these great things in our days. The next part of the liturgy is where this concretely happens, in faith we believe that just as God's Word was effective in creating the whole world, and just as God's power was able to raise someone from the dead, now too, today, here in this gathering, God will change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of His Son. This is what we believe happens in the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

