



GENESIS

C O M P A S S



Missional Prayer
Facilitator's Manual





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Number of participants

At most 6 parish team members (1 priest and 5 leaders)

Location

Ideally in-person. Meeting remotely has some challenges associated with group interaction and engagement.

Length of each session

Session 1: 90 minutes

Sessions 2-5: 120 minutes

Start and end on time

It could be tempting to start or end a bit late when conversations are going so well. However, over time, unpredictable start and end times can put a strain on peoples' schedules and discourage them from future participation. Ideally, on the rare occasion that more time is needed, everyone present should agree to the change in advance.

Pre-session meal

Some groups choose to meet beforehand over a meal for informal conversation. Group bonding is a critical part of this journey and breaking bread together with the parish team can help encourage this. Instead of beforehand, some parishes have chosen to eat during or after the meeting, while others don't eat at all.

Chapel

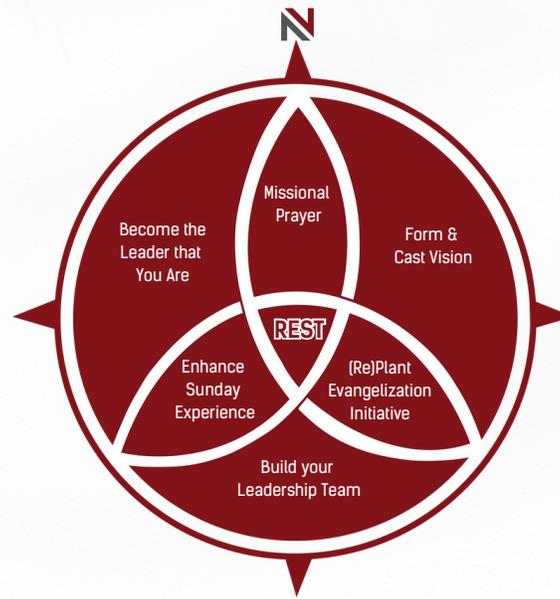
Prayer in the chapel at the start of session 2 can be a nice way to integrate communal prayer into your meetings and help the parish team cast aside insecurities and obstacles that might hinder the journey ahead. Some have added the highs and lows activity to kick off their chapel time, while others have included Eucharistic Adoration at the beginning or end of each of the five sessions.

Your prayer experiences

Individuals and teams will have varying experience with different prayer methods, so cater the experience to the team. For some teams, singing and praying together might be normal and expected, for others that might be new. Some teams might spend time in the chapel before, during or after gatherings, while others might have never done something like that. We encourage you to look for opportunities throughout the sessions to help teams grow in their communal prayer. You can consider how to include time in the chapel, music, or other times of prayer based on the team's experience.

The Compass Portal

Take time during session one to walk them through The Compass Portal. Genesis Compass material and activities are in the portal, and some will need to view the material beforehand or after the in-person session to properly process the information.



Day One Module: [Missional Prayer](#)

2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.

Day Two Module: [Form & Cast Vision](#)

3 And God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

Day Three Module: [\(Re\)Plant Evangelization Initiative](#)

11 And God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth.” And it was so.

Day Four Module: [Build Your Leadership Team](#)

14 And God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so.

Day Five Module: [Enhance Sunday Experience](#)

20 And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens.” ... 22 And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” 23 And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

Day Six Module: [Become the Leader That You Are](#)

26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness... 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Day Seven Module: [Rest](#)

2 And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation

SESSION 1
INTRODUCTION TO MISSIONAL PRAYER



Pre-meeting Prep

- Send a welcome email out one week prior to the first session.
- Perhaps schedule in a shared meal together before the session.
- Ensure technology for video presentation is ready to go.
- Ensure the meeting space is appropriate for silent reflection and prayer.
- Familiarize yourself with Missional Prayer content.
- Read and watch Session 1 content.
- Pray daily.

Opening Segment (25 minutes)

LOCATION: Meeting room (entire session)

- **Welcome to our first Genesis Compass module on missional prayer!**
- **Introduce yourself**

□ **Opening Prayer FACILITATOR: If possible, model for them unscripted prayer. If not, here's a script:**

We gather before Your presence today, recognizing You as the Master Artist of our existence. As we embark on this journey of missional prayer for parish renewal, we draw inspiration from the magnificent narrative of creation unfolded over seven days. Lord Jesus, you are the source of our mission and the foundation of our faith. As we open this session, we ask for Your Holy Spirit to permeate every aspect of our gathering. May our hearts be open to receive your wisdom and understanding. Illuminate our minds with the light of Your truth. We acknowledge that true renewal comes from You alone. Bless our time together, that it may be a fertile ground for growth and community. We entrust this session, and everyone gathered here, into Your loving care. May it be a journey of profound spiritual renewal, equipping us to be effective instruments of Your peace and love in our parish and beyond. Amen.

□ **Introductions:**

1. How long have you been at this parish?
2. Who was responsible for this gathering? Why was it important for that person?
3. What inspired you each to be here?
4. What are you hoping to get out of these sessions?

□ **Building and Maintaining our Relationship:**

- As your parish renewal guide, I am here as a facilitator to guide you along your renewal journey.
- I have access to helpful resources to help with your next steps.
- Your efforts, through the Holy Spirit, will be part of a growing movement in the global Church.

□ **Review of the Day:** "We'll watch videos, discuss, reflect, and pray; we should wrap up by X O'clock."

□ **Optional Icebreaker Activity:**

FACILITATOR: Come up with one of your own or use one of these reliable icebreakers:

Two-word introduction chain - Ask participants to introduce themselves using only two words that start with the same letter as their name (e.g., "Joyful Jennifer" or "Creative Carlos"). The next person repeats your introduction and adds their own. Continue the chain, with each person reciting the introduction of the previous participants. It's a memory-building and engaging activity.

□ **What You Can Expect Out of These Sessions:**

- You will be able to demonstrate a familiarity with the Genesis Compass.
- You will develop greater openness in exploring missional prayer for parish renewal.
- You will have an introductory experience of missional prayer, modelled by the Parish Renewal Guide.
- You will begin to develop a relationship both within the group and with your Parish Renewal Guide.

Introduction to The Genesis Compass (30 minutes)

Watch (5 minutes)

“Genesis Compass Overview” (6:35)

Group Discussion (15 minutes)

1. What struck you from the video?
2. Tell me about why you are undertaking renewal in your parish. What motivates you?
3. What do you already understand about the journey ahead, guided by the Genesis Compass? What questions do you have?

FACILITATOR: If time permits:

4. What are your fears?
5. What are your hopes as you start on this journey?

Compass Portal (5 minutes)

FACILITATOR: Take a moment to explain what is available in the [Compass Portal](#)

- Pre-reading material for each session.
- In-session videos can be watched before and after at your own pace.
- Feedback surveys to help us improve the experience for others.
- A glimpse into all compass modules.
- Additional resources to help you on your journeys.

Introduction to “Missional Prayer” (5 minutes)

Program Outline for Day One Module: Missional Prayer (5 minutes)

Sessions 1-4

- Pre-session content to read each week.
- In-session videos each week.
- Group Discussion/Activity
- Personal Reflection

One month break

- Introduce missional prayer into your parish.

Session 5

- Debrief and evaluate fruitfulness of previous month.

Any questions up to this point?

Missional Prayer (20 minutes)

Guided by Scripture (5 minutes)

The following passage from Genesis is the inspiration for this module on Missional Prayer. It will become a familiar passage over the coming sessions.

‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.’ Genesis 1:1-2, ESV-CE

Here, we see the Holy Spirit hovering over the formless void before bringing life, possibility, and beauty into creation.

Many priests and leaders describe that they feel stuck in their ministry and that their efforts are not bearing fruit. Yet we know the Holy Spirit is present and trust that just as he can bring life, possibility, and beauty from the formless void, he can bring a new vision and reality into the circumstances priests and leaders find themselves.

Watch (5 minutes)

“Introduction to Missional Prayer” (6:33)

Group Discussion (10 minutes)

1. What struck you from the video?
2. As we begin the journey of missional prayer, what questions do you have? What are you most curious about? Are you expecting to be surprised about anything?
3. If you could ask the Lord anything at the outset of this journey, what would you ask?

Wrap up – Closure (10 minutes)

Group Discussion (5 minutes)

- Next week: *Current Parish Experience*. Our meeting begins in the chapel.
- Required reading: *Current Parish Experience*

Prayer for the Renewal of the Parish (5 minutes)

FACILITATOR: Model for the participants prayer for parish renewal.

Give participants encouragement and time to settle their hearts.

“Come Holy Spirit.”

“Just as the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters at creation, hover over us and our parishes.”

“Help us to see the creative work of renewal already taking place in our parish”.

“Come Holy Spirit. Illuminate our paths.”

“We surrender to you, Lord, so that we might be used for the mission.”

“Transform our parish so that, as a community, we grow to trust your guidance in our renewal efforts.”

Post-meeting Email

- Send a thank you email out to participants following Session One.
 - o Remind them to read Session Two content, “Current Parish Experience”, before next week’s meeting.

SESSION 2
CURRENT PARISH EXPERIENCE



Pre-meeting Prep

- Feel free to send out an email reminder 24 hours prior to Session Two.
 - o Remind participants that the meeting will begin with prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament.
- Review the Session 2 content, “Current Parish Context” .
- Familiarize yourself with the opening segment (different from Session 1)

Opening Segment (25 minutes)

LOCATION: Chapel (near the tabernacle, not intended to be a period of adoration)

□ Opening Prayer

FACILITATOR:

1. Model for them a very brief (~ 1 minute) unscripted prayer of thanks, petition, and/or adoration.
2. Invite each person to do the same (~ 1 minute each).
3. After everyone has prayed: ~ 10 seconds of closing prayer.
4. Ask for the intercession of any saint associated with this parish’s renewal efforts.

Examples:

- St. Michael the Archangel, pray for us.
- St. Benedict, pray for us.
- Holy Spirit, enlighten us.

LOCATION: Move to a meeting room

Highs and Lows

We begin by now opening the floor for each of us to share our highs and lows of the past week.

FACILITATOR: Lead the way with a brief (~ 1 minute) high and low from your week. Model sharing that is authentic and vulnerable. Give time for each person to share.

Opening comments

□ Simple review of day: “Today we’ll dive into discussions and reflections around your current parish experience; we should wrap up by X O’clock.”

What You Can Expect out of today’s Session

- You will reflect on your current personal and parish experience of prayer.
- You will deepen your awareness of the Holy Spirit’s already active role in parish renewal.

Introduction to “Current Parish Experience” (25 minutes)

Group Discussion (5 minutes)

How did it feel to begin today’s session in the chapel?

What you just experienced in the chapel may have been an unfamiliar situation. It’s ok if you experienced uneasiness or discomfort because this is common when experiencing new things or change. That sense of uneasiness is similar to what we may feel as we begin to tackle the reality of parish renewal.

Personal Reflection (20 minutes)

Before understanding missional prayer, it is important to first take stock of your personal prayer life. The following private reflection is meant to help you reflect prayerfully on your communication with God. After each question, pause in silence, inviting God’s presence.

FACILITATOR: Give the group some personal reflection time. If possible, they could also move into a different space. This activity is meant to be personal, and participants are not expected to share their reflections with the large group.

1. How would I describe my personal prayer life?
2. How does Jesus sustain me personally each day?
3. How does my life of prayer uphold my leadership or ministry life?
4. How do I express trust that the Holy Spirit can bring life, possibility, and beauty both to my own personal journey of faith and to the life of my parish?
5. If you could express anything to God about your deepest longing in your relationship with him, what would you say?

Current Parish Experience (60 minutes)

Watch (15 minutes)

Current Parish Experience (12:53)

Group Discussion (15 minutes)

1. What struck you from the video?
2. How would you describe ‘missional prayer’? In what ways is this a new understanding of prayer for you?
3. Are there any ways ‘missional prayer’ is currently at work in the parish?

FACILITATOR: If time permits:

4. Imagine your parish had a deep culture of missional prayer. Describe what that would look like.

Current Parish Reality (10 minutes)

Now let’s take stock of your parish reality. Contemplating on your context can draw you closer to God and help identify areas that need prayer and attention. This exercise is intended to surface a holy discontent. We don’t want this to be a complaining session on “the good old days”, but to press in on what areas of your parish the Holy Spirit is calling us to pray for missionally.

Definition of complaint

A complaint is an expression of grief, pain, or dissatisfaction.

Example of a complaint

“People just throw their leftover coins in the collection basket. They need to give more.”

Definition of holy discontent

Holy discontent elicits an uneasy spirit about something that is broken and needs to change. It is the sense that our lived reality does not correspond to how we understand God’s plan for us. It’s the deeper issue behind the complaint. It changes our orientation from what we want from people to what we want for people.

Example of holy discontent

“People don’t feel a sense of personal ownership or investment. How can we help create an environment where they realize that this parish is their spiritual home?”

SESSION 3
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON
GENESIS 1



Pre-meeting Prep

- Feel free to send out an email reminder 24 hours prior to Session Two.
 - Remind participants to read, “Theological Reflection on Genesis 1”.
 - Remind participants that the meeting will begin in prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament.
- Review the Session 3 content.

Opening Segment in Chapel (30 minutes)

LOCATION: Chapel (near the tabernacle, not intended to be a period of adoration)

□ Opening Prayer

FACILITATOR: See Session 2 instructions

□ Lectio Divina (20 minutes)

Here, we will pray using the passage from Genesis 1 that inspired this module on Missional Prayer. Lectio Divina is a form of prayer that enables us to listen to the Holy Spirit’s promptings. Let’s use this time to listen to God’s inspiration for us and the parish in our efforts for renewal. We begin by settling our hearts and asking the Holy Spirit to join us. “Come Holy Spirit. Guide us now as we enter into prayer.”

Lectio (Read): I will read Genesis 1: 1-2 slowly. Listen for a particular word or phrase. Allow the words to wash over you. Wait patiently for God to give gentle guidance.

‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.’ Genesis 1:1-2, ESV-CE

Meditatio (Reflect): I’ll now read the passage a second time. Reflect on what the Holy Spirit has shown you. This is not a time to study the passage but to allow the Holy Spirit to communicate to you more deeply. Allow the Holy Spirit to further guide your thoughts.

FACILITATOR: Read passage again.

Oratio (Respond): I’ll read the passage a third time. Respond to it by making sense of what you have heard the Holy Spirit say. Some might take this time to journal their thoughts. This is where you communicate to God your understanding. You can also use this time to express gratitude, ask for further guidance, or simply be present with God in the moment.

FACILITATOR: Read passage again.

Contemplatio (Rest): After my fourth and final reading of the passage, enter into a contemplative silence. Rest in the presence of God, allowing the words to deepen your connection with God. Be open to any insights or feelings that may arise.

FACILITATOR: Read passage again.

Conclusion: This concludes our prayer. This was a very formal outline of Lectio Divina. Remember when praying Lectio Divina, you don’t have to limit yourself to this structure or reading the passage only four times. Allow yourself to be carried by the promptings of the Spirit.

LOCATION: Move to the Meeting Room

Opening Segment in Meeting Room (15 minutes)

- Large Group Sharing (5 minutes)

Would anyone like to share how their prayer went? Any insights?

- Highs and Lows (10 minutes)

FACILITATOR: See Session 2 instructions

We will now open the floor for each of us to share our highs and lows of the past week.

Introduction to “Theological Reflection on Genesis 1” (15 minutes)

What You Can Expect out of Today’s Session (5 minutes)

- You will discover the importance of patiently awaiting the Holy Spirit’s illumination for your parish.
- You will deepen your understanding of what missional prayer entails.
- You will cultivate a desire for missional prayer within your parish community.

Shared Experience (10 minutes)

Share a time when you saw extraordinary faith in action – where something that seemed impossible to change was transformed through faith and prayer.

FACILITATOR: Allow time for sharing

We will need to lean into this experience many times on our parish renewal journey. Through prayer, God is going to do amazing things here and we need to trust that.

What is Missional Prayer? (50 minutes)

Watch (20 minutes)

Why Prayer? (19:09)

Group Discussion (15 minutes)

1. What struck you from the video?
2. Consider the reality that ‘Christ’s victory is assured’. What helps to convince you of this victory? What holds you back from believing in his victory?
3. “*This is the quickest shortcut to ‘smart working’: to see what God is already doing, to come into agreement with it, to align our desires with it, and to intercede for it.*” How does this change or challenge your approach to the renewal of your parish?
4. What is your natural reaction to the idea that, ‘contemplation precedes action’?

Features of Missional Prayer (15 minutes)

Missional Prayer Faces Outward

As we grow in discipleship, our hearts turn increasingly outwards towards others.

If you had to name the most important intention for prayer in our community or neighbourhood right now, what would it be? Write it down.

Missional Prayer Flows from Love

When our love for others is strong, it enables us to take lengths we would not normally take for someone we do not love.

What is the one intention for prayer that would take you to Adoration at 3am? Write it down.

Missional Prayer is Directional

When we discern the direction in which the Holy Spirit is leading our parish, prayer also has a direction. Intercession is taken to a whole new level. The strength of prayer is determined by the strength of desire. When we as a team come into agreement with the Holy Spirit's transformation of our parish, there is power in approaching our intercession strategically.

Name one of the areas in our parish where we need the biggest breakthrough. How would you employ some of the tactics used by Joshua and his army around Jericho to this issue (see appendix)? Write it down.

Missional Prayer Is Apostolic Labouring

Entering "labouring prayer" means entering this Paschal Mystery with Christ, to say 'yes' to being a co-redeemer and allowing ourselves to be "weighed down" spiritually by the burden of those who have not yet accepted Christ.

Think of those who are coming to faith in your parish, perhaps those in RCIA, Alpha, or those you may personally know. How specifically can you pray for them to be born into new life in Christ?

Missional Prayer is Authoritative

Our authority as his sons and daughters is to carry out not our own plans and ideas in his name, but rather, to discern what he is doing, to come into agreement with it, align our desires with it, and purposefully intercede for it. Authority is needed amid chaos.

Share a time in your life when you have taken authority over a chaotic or negative situation and brought order and peace. What would it look like to take authority in prayer over one of the issues already named in the discussion so far?

Wrap up – Closure (10 minutes)

Group Discussion (5 minutes)

- What is your biggest takeaway from this session?
- Required reading: "Practical Parish Application"

Prayer for the Renewal of the Parish (5 minutes)

FACILITATOR: Model for the participants prayer for parish renewal.

Give participants encouragement and time to settle their hearts.

"Come Holy Spirit."

"Just as the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters at creation, hover over us and our parishes."

"Help us to see the creative work of renewal already taking place in our parish".

"Come Holy Spirit. Illuminate our paths."

"We surrender to you, Lord, so that we might be used for the mission."

"Transform our parish so that, as a community, we grow to trust your guidance in our renewal efforts."

SESSION 4
PRACTICAL PARISH APPLICATION



Pre-meeting Prep

- Feel free to send out an email reminder 24 hours prior to Session Four.
 - Remind participants to read, “Practical Parish Application”.
- Familiarize yourself with the Session 4 content.

Opening Segment (35 minutes)

LOCATION: Chapel

- Opening Prayer

FACILITATOR: See Session 2 instructions

LOCATION: Meeting Room

- Highs and Lows

FACILITATOR: See Session 2 instructions

We will now open the floor for each of us to share our highs and lows of the past week.

- Review

Welcome to our fourth session on Missional Prayer: Practical Parish Application.

Recap: S1 Introduction to Missional Prayer (Genesis Compass & intro to missional prayer)

S2 Current Parish Experience (we looked at your parish reality)

S3 Theological Reflection on Genesis 1 (the creation story reflects early renewal)

- Group Share

How has your own personal life of prayer changed since Session 1?

Introduction to “Practical Parish Application” (5 minutes)

What You Can Expect out of Today’s Session

- You will develop practical means for incorporating missional prayer into the life of their parish.
- You will commit to three steps to be actioned in the next month.

Practical Parish Application (75 minutes)

Watch (15 minutes)

Purposefully Intercede (13:04)

Group Activity (40 minutes)

FACILITATOR: Participants have access to this table. Together as a team (not individually), have them input the numbers corresponding to the statuses listed below. See Appendix for definitions.

	Prayer Ministry		Fasting		Spontaneous Prayer		Intercessory Prayer
	Adoration		Praise & Worship		Stop to Pray		Other_____
	Prayer-walking		Prayer at Meetings		Training for Prayer		Other_____

1. Of the ten examples of missional prayer practices, categorize their status in the following ways (20 min):

- #1 - This exists already in the parish, and it is fully missional.
- #2 - This exists already in the parish but without a missional focus.
- #3 - This does not exist yet, but we feel called to it.
- #4 - This does not exist yet and we don't yet feel called to it right now.

2. Discuss the following items (20 min):

- 1. Choose one specific missional prayer practice and focus on that chosen practice throughout the month.
- 2. Outline three next steps to make progress in that practice over the next month. **Ensure there is a clear plan of action: 'Who does what by when?'**

Personal Reflection (10 minutes)

FACILITATOR: For this activity, invite participants to spread out and find a quiet space.

It is important to end on personal commitment to prayer. The clear message should be that everyone makes a new commitment to personal and missional prayer. **Take some personal reflection time** on the following question:

What personal commitment is the Lord inviting me to make to grow in both personal and missional prayer over the next month?

Reflection Debrief (10 minutes)

Would anyone like to share how their reflection went? Any insights?

Wrap up – Closure (10 minutes)

Group Discussion (5 minutes)

1. What is your greatest hope as you start taking steps towards missional prayer in your parish?
2. Our next meeting will be in one month. Between now and then, your task is to choose one practice of missional prayer and three next steps to implement.

Prayer for the Renewal of the Parish (5 minutes)

FACILITATOR: Model for the participants prayer for parish renewal.

Give participants encouragement and time to settle their hearts.

“Come Holy Spirit.”

“Just as the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters at creation, hover over us and our parishes.”

“Help us to see the creative work of renewal already taking place in our parish”.

“Come Holy Spirit. Illuminate our paths.”

“We surrender to you, Lord, so that we might be used for the mission.”

“Transform our parish so that, as a community, we grow to trust your guidance in our renewal efforts.”

Post-meeting Email

- Send a thank you email out to participants following Session Four.
 - Remind them that our next meeting will be in one month to complete the tasks prior to the last session.
 - *Invite them to consider the following:*

To make each practice of missional prayer “fully missional” in the parish, you can’t do this alone. Discuss the following:

1. Based on the description of the missional prayer team (see Appendix), what qualities or charisms might you be looking for in a prayer team?
2. Brainstorm a list of people who would be passionate about such a mission. Don’t edit yet, just capture all the names whether they are already serving or leading in any capacity or not.
3. Of these, thinking about the qualities needed, who from your list might be a good fit and why?
4. Discuss timing. Is forming the missional prayer team a priority for the next month? Why or why not? If not, when would the group prioritise this?

Final Notes

SESSION 5
DEBRIEF



Pre-meeting Prep

- Perhaps schedule in a shared meal together prior to the session.
- Send an email reminder out one week prior to the fifth session.
 - Ask participants to read, “Debrief and Evaluation”.
 - Instruct all participants to come with scratch paper, and pens, markers, or pencils for a drawing exercise.
- Read and watch Session 5 content.

Opening Segment (35 minutes)

LOCATION: Chapel

- Opening Prayer

FACILITATOR: See Session 2 instructions

LOCATION: Meeting Room

- Highs and Lows

FACILITATOR: See Session 2 instructions

We will now open the floor for each of us to share our highs and lows of the past week.

- Group Sharing

How has your own personal life of prayer changed since beginning this work on missional prayer’?

- What You Can Expect out of today’s Session

You will be able to evaluate the fruitfulness of the steps towards missional prayer you have taken so far.

Debrief (45 minutes)

Group Activity (25 minutes)

FACILITATOR: Divide the group into two.

Time to get creative! You may not have an artistic bone in your body, but this is just for fun. When we draw, it helps us use a different part of our brain and may even reveal insights we hadn't considered before. Each group draws a picture that shows their parish as it is, right now. Draw the Holy Spirit in a way that expresses how they see his role, right now, in the renewal of the parish. Invite each group to share their picture. This can be a powerful way to express visually their new understanding of the Holy Spirit’s role in the parish.

Watch (5 minutes)

Victory is Assured (4:31)

Group Discussion (15 minutes)

- What struck you from the video?
- What are your hopes as you come towards the end of Genesis Compass’ day 1 module?
- What are your fears?

Evaluation (25 minutes)

Group Discussions

Discussion #1 (10 min):

Let's recap the one practice of missional prayer and the three next steps the group committed to at the end of session 4.

- Name all the fruits you have seen from focussing on missional prayer over the last month.
- Share a story about what you have seen changing over the past month.
- What challenges were there, if any, in implementing the three next steps?

Discussion # 2 (10 min):

This is just the very early stages of working as a team and learning each other's approaches to a project.

- What did you learn about each other through implementing the one practice of missional prayer?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- Was it clear who was accountable for what?
- How would you approach it differently next time?

Discussion # 3 (5 min):

What most excites you as you move into the renewal of your parish?

Wrap up – Closure (15 minutes)

Next Steps 10 minutes

FACILITATOR: They may need some time to reflect on this and you may want to catch up later with the pastor separately. Make sure there is a clear follow-up plan as you leave today.

- Continue to implement the missional prayer team.
- Adopt another practice of missional prayer.
- Use the Missional Waypoint Tool.
- Move into Day 2 Module of the Genesis Compass (Form and Cast Vision)
- Move into Day 3 Module of the Genesis Compass ((Re-)Plant Evangelisation Initiative)
- Ensure there is a clear follow-up plan as you leave today.

Prayer for the Renewal of the Parish (5 minutes)

FACILITATOR: Model for the participants prayer for parish renewal.

Give participants encouragement and time to settle their hearts.

“Come Holy Spirit.”

“Just as the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters at creation, hover over us and our parishes.”

“Help us to see the creative work of renewal already taking place in our parish”.

“Come Holy Spirit. Illuminate our paths.”

“We surrender to you, Lord, so that we might be used for the mission.”

“Transform our parish so that, as a community, we grow to trust your guidance in our renewal efforts.”

APPENDIX



The Divine Renovation Guide to Missional Prayer Current Parish Experience

Parish Reality

In the earliest days of moving a parish onto a missional footing, it might feel like facing a parish reality “without form and void.” Yet, what do we mean by this? There may be plenty of life and activity already in the parish (unlike God, we are not creating ex nihilo!). But the “formlessness” may be felt in two main ways.

Disorientation

Priests and parish leaders, having been conditioned for and by the ‘Christendom parish’, increasingly perceive that, while Western culture has drastically changed, the parish has not adapted well to proclaiming the Gospel in this new culture. Therefore, the needs, expectations and milieu of the secular culture present a disorienting experience. What needs to be accomplished feels like a formidable voyage to set out on. This realisation is a little like moving to a completely new neighbourhood. In a new locality, you don’t know the routes to reach stores and services you need; the local community is unfamiliar; all the daily tasks that were once second-nature now require intentional thought and planning. In a new milieu, we need new ‘maps’.

Discontent

It is likely ‘holy discontent’ that motivated a priest’s desire to embark on this journey. But starting the journey does not mean that the ‘holy discontent’ is pacified. Rather, it may even grow! Imagine, in the example of moving to a new neighbourhood, you arrive in your new house. In the first couple of days, you are surrounded by chaos. Boxes everywhere, a thousand things need to be done at once. In the old house, you knew how everything worked, rooms were ordered, you knew where everything was.

As we embark on the journey of parish renewal, things tend to get messy before they get reordered. In the Creation account, earth is without form – depicted in Jewish consciousness as an amorphous mass of land submerged in water. Jews were not a seafaring people, the seas were dangerous and to be avoided. In Semitic cosmology, the cosmic ocean that forms the seas was thought to lie beneath the earth (see Exodus 20:4). Before dry land emerges, the seas seem to engulf the earth (Psalm 103:6). On day one of creation, there is no dry land.

Our parish may even feel like such a mass – plenty of raw material which needs form and shape. It may feel like there is no ‘dry land’ on which to stand. The emergence of ‘dry land’ happens over time. As we grow in leadership, we develop new capacities to tolerate the countless realities that are not where we want them to be. In the early days, we don’t have enough hands to do all that needs to be done. It can feel a daunting journey that one has set out on. We may even experience moments of regret.

If we don’t begin this voyage with prayer, we will undertake a great work of God in our own strength...and will not even leave the harbour!

Prayer Reality

We turn to explore our current prayer reality. Prayer is the reality of God’s life in us. In the midst of chaos, he wants to be the One who re-creates, shapes, and brings life. But he can only do that through the intimate life he shares with you in prayer.

The Divine Renovation Guide to Missional Prayer

Current Parish Experience

Personal Prayer

For each of us, our lived experience of relationship with God is unique and unrepeatable. Maybe this is a vivid daily experience for you. Maybe this is the first time you have even considered that it is possible. Either is fine: what matters is that we are real with ourselves and with God.

In what ways does your lived, daily experience of relationship with God sustain your leadership and ministry life? In what ways do you wish it were a stronger reality in your life? In our highly technologized culture, we are frenetically distracted – pulled in multiple different directions at once, our hearts and minds scattered. How do you find silence, stillness, and solitude in your daily life currently? What is your current experience (if any) of allowing the Holy Spirit to “hover” over the waters of your life, making you new? What is your deepest longing in terms of your relationship with God?

How would you describe the culture of ‘personal prayer’ in your parish? How you answer this question will likely depend on the ‘temperature’ of discipleship in your parish. If you have a high proportion of intentional disciples, who desire daily intimacy with Jesus, you will likely already have a strong culture of personal prayer. When people are living the life of discipleship, it doesn’t matter too much the form that their prayer takes (whether it’s Adoration in the parish, devotions, the Liturgy of the Hours, or Lectio Divina). But what you will notice is the quality of a culture of prayer: maybe deep silence and stillness at different moments during the liturgy, for example. But please know that, for the majority of Catholic parishes, this would be an exception, not a rule!

Missional Prayer

In the book, *From Christendom to Apostolic Mission*, co-authored by Mgr. James Shea, he writes about the culture of Christendom:

‘As the Christian ideal gets into the soil of the society, remarkable cultural fertility results. Such a society will develop its institutions and expressions almost unconsciously, with a characteristic strength and unanimity that seems mysterious. ... There is something mysterious in the way Gothic cathedrals were raised in city after city, or hospitals and orphanages and other charitable ventures sprouted like a natural growth, or villages grew as almost organic things out of the living rock, with a ruling spirit ever in evidence but often not explicit.’ (p. 21)

In our apostolic age, however, the Christian ‘soil’ has become acidic and has lost its fertility. In the past, we might have relied on Christian ‘soil’ in our parishes to ‘birth’ new initiatives and expressions in the faith. It happened organically with little struggle. But, as the soil we are rooted in no longer gives life, we find ourselves in arid ground. We need to turn, in a new way, to the ‘Giver of Life’ – the Holy Spirit – to make the soil healthy again. This is where we turn to missional prayer in a way that was not necessarily needed in a Christendom context.

Missional Prayer is **aligning our desires with, coming into communal agreement with, and purposefully interceding for, the Holy Spirit’s work in transforming the hearts of people in our parish and neighbourhood.**

The Divine Renovation Guide to Missional Prayer Current Parish Experience

What is your current experience of prayer for the mission of your parish? Amid chaos or void, we can react in different ways. Some people will move immediately into frantic, anxiety-driven work, desperate to bring order. Others will fall into paralysis, overwhelmed at the immensity of the task and unable to take a first step. It is worth observing where you tend to lean on this spectrum. Of course, neither response is aligned to how God creates out of chaos and void. He creates differently: his Spirit hovers over the water. What is my experience of beholding, in prayer, the Holy Spirit hovering over the chaos of our parish? His creative work precedes my own, even if we glimpse no signs of this.

Based on the definition above, how would you describe the culture of missional prayer in your parish? It is very powerful when we ‘come into agreement’ with what the Holy Spirit is already doing, and what we long to see, and pray for it to become reality. Here are a few signs that a missional prayer culture might be developing in our parish:

- a “quick prayer” at the start of meetings is no longer enough,
- we drop the mentality of “outsourcing” prayer, e.g. to an intercessory prayer team, a contemplative community, the sick and housebound,
- we grow in expectancy of hearing God’s voice, that he will show us the way ahead,
- a relaxed culture develops where people are comfortable praying aloud in their own words,
- we offer to pray for people in the moment when they ask for prayer,
- we practice the early Church custom of laying hands on one another in prayer.

Once again, few Catholic parishes will experience this kind of culture right now! But it is good to form a picture of what a powerful prayer culture would look like. It helps us take stock of where we are now and stirs a desire in us for more.

Whatever your current parish reality, prayer is never a rival to the work, mission and ministry that need to happen in your parish: rather, it goes first. *It is the engine behind the mission of your parish.* Renewing your parish with no prayer is like trying to drive a car with no engine.

The Divine Renovation Guide to Missional Prayer Theological Reflection

Theological Reflection on Genesis 1:1-2

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.’ Genesis 1:1-2
We are using the Creation account in Genesis 1: God’s own approach to Creation reveals how he wishes to undertake the work of ‘re-creation’ of our parish.

God’s presence precedes his work

Lectio Divina on these two verses from Genesis 1 reveals a profound theological truth: God’s presence precedes his work. We have reflected on the experience of formlessness and void, but Genesis 1:2 reveals deep truth: God is present in the chaos.

It is fundamental to the ‘re-creation’ of our parish to root ourselves in this truth before we ‘get to work’. Especially in the west, we are wired to ‘get to work’, but Genesis 1:2 should stop us in our tracks: contemplation precedes action.

Getting things in the right order is critical because we discover that the Holy Spirit is already at work in our parish and neighbourhood. We want to cultivate in ourselves an ability to see and enter into his work. We hear about working ‘smarter’. This is the quickest shortcut to ‘smart working’: to see what God is already doing: to come into agreement with it, to align our desires with it, and to intercede for it.

Victory is Assured

Feeling we are consumed by the waters of chaos and void can leave us discouraged. But the reality that ‘the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters’ is the greatest encouragement we can receive. The seemingly engulfing seas, the darkness and chaos we experience in our parish, have been overcome by Christ’s victory. Not only does he cause ‘dry land’ to emerge where we might find a place to stand. Jesus also transforms the waters themselves. No longer do they hold fear for us. They are now baptismal waters of new life.

*‘Lord our God,
... for us who recall the wondrous work of our creation
and the still greater work of our redemption,
graciously bless this water. ... through water, which Christ made holy in the Jordan,
you have renewed our corrupted nature in the bath of regeneration.
Therefore, may this water be for us
a memorial of the Baptism we have received...’*
Blessing of Water, Easter Vigil

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Cooperating with the Holy Spirit on the work of our parish is to cooperate with his ‘re-creation’. Lumen Gentium 48 tells us,

“...the promised restoration which we are awaiting has already begun in Christ, is carried forward in the mission of the Holy Spirit and through Him continues in the Church ... we perform with hope in the future the work committed to us in this world by the Father, and thus work out our salvation (cf. Phil. 2:12). Already the final age of the world has come upon us (cf. 1 Cor. 10:11) and the renovation of the world is irrevocably decreed and is already anticipated in some kind of a real way; for the Church already on this earth is signed with a sanctity which is real although imperfect.”

“We perform with hope in the future” the work of the renewal of our parish. We stand in faith that the “renovation of the world is irrevocably decreed and is already anticipated in some kind of a real way”. How does it feel to know that, despite whatever chaos and void might be around some of you, your parish “already ... is signed with a sanctity which is real although imperfect”?

Missional prayer for the renewal of our parish is rooted in faith in this future reality. We can proceed with 100% certainty of God’s work. Missional prayer and personal prayer are inextricably linked. But missional prayer as we have defined it is not possible without a life of personal prayer. So, this is where we will start.

Jesus’ Victory Transforms our Personal Prayer

If you are ordained, the importance of your prayer life will have been impressed on you throughout seminary formation. Likewise, as an active lay leader, you likely have some form of prayer life (or know that you should have!). But how does our personal prayer change when the costs of the mission are high? If you’ve experienced formlessness and void in your parish, it may have brought you to knees. Missional prayer is costly and isn’t something we can switch on or off. That would be like having a high stake, intimate and intense conversation with someone with whom we barely have a relationship. Rather, ‘high stakes prayer’ is underpinned by a daily, personal, intimate, and growing relationship with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

This is a relationship of a son or daughter with his or her loving Father. It is the relationship of one whose identity in God is secure: their identity as loved, seen, and known by God is prior to and not dependent on their performance or achievement in ministry. It is the relationship of abiding in the Father’s gaze and being transformed in his presence. Under his gaze, we allow him to change us. We allow him to see the dark places in our hearts – the wounds, the fears, the unredeemed places of pain.

It is a relationship in which healing takes place, in which our hearts are reformed through experiencing immense and unconditional love, and in which ego, self-seeking and self-protection are increasingly burned away. It is the prayer of transformation as the image of Christ the Son is formed in us. As the presence of Christ increasingly fills our faculties, our personality, our desires, he imperceptibly and beautifully becomes the agent of our lives, including all our missional activity.

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Finally, it is a relationship of fellowship with the Holy Spirit. As we begin the journey of leading our parishes in renewal, it cannot be done without getting to know and working with the Holy Spirit. Fellowship with the Holy Spirit means talking with him and allowing him to talk to me. It means praying, ‘Come, Holy Spirit’ numerous times every day and experiencing his sweet freshness.

This is the life of holiness, and holiness and mission are inextricably connected. Just as they are one in the Person of Jesus, so they will be one in us as we grow in union with him.

This is an extraordinary beginning to the journey of parish renewal because we discover that it involves nothing less than our complete, personal transformation! Is this what you were expecting?!

As the Holy Spirit ‘hovers over the waters’ of your parish, he first of all hovers over you.

He is creating; we are cooperating. How do I ‘come into agreement’ with the Holy Spirit’s creating work? Scripture gives us examples of how people interacted with the Holy Spirit while in darkness.

a) Enquiry: Nicodemus “came to Jesus by night” because he feared the unbelieving leaders of Israel (John 3: 1-21). Darkness is symbolic of a spiritual darkness, and in the early days of the renewal of our parish, we too may face confusion and doubt. Following Nicodemus, we can ‘interrogate’ Jesus. Maybe we understand intellectually what we are doing – our ‘why’ – but now we want to enquire of the Holy Spirit: how can this be done? What steps should I take? Where do I start? A dependence on the Holy Spirit’s promptings from the outset is a vital habit to cultivate if we will go far on this journey.

b) Wrestling: In a mysterious contest by night, Jacob wrestles with a nameless angel (Genesis 32: 22-32). Jacob outwrestles him, petitioning, “I will not let you go unless you bless me” (v27). Our journey with God as he renews our parishes will at times feel like a wrestling match. The Church teaches us, “From this account [of Jacob’s wrestling], the spiritual tradition of the Church has retained the symbol of prayer as a battle of faith and as the triumph of perseverance” (CCC 2573). From the very beginning, we will need close contact with the Holy Spirit, with our hearts and our time dedicated to the battle of faith and prayer.

c) ‘You must be born from above’: The routes that God takes to renew our parish might not be the routes we had in mind. Time and again, we will find ourselves adjusting ourselves to the ways he is taking. As Jesus told Nicodemus, we have to be “born from above” – letting go of previous ideas and experiences in preference for something “new” God is doing.

*‘Do not be surprised when I say:
You must be born from above.
The wind blows wherever it pleases;
You hear its sound,
But you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.
That is how it is with all who are born of the Spirit.’ John 3: 7-8*

Our personal postures of prayer in the Holy Spirit make possible communal, missional prayer.

The Divine Renovation Guide to Missional Prayer Theological Reflection

Jesus' Victory Makes Possible Missional Prayer

The assurance that God's presence precedes his work, that the Holy Spirit is already at work in the renewal of our parish, and that Jesus' final victory is assured, is the faith basis from which we can pray.

Missional Prayer is **aligning our desires with, coming into communal agreement with, and purposefully interceding for, the Holy Spirit's work in transforming the hearts of people in our parish and neighbourhood.**

Features of Missional Prayer

Missional Prayer Faces Outward

As we grow in discipleship, our hearts turn increasingly outwards towards others. We desire others to know Christ and to experience the transformation we've experienced. We want for others transformational encounter in the Holy Spirit. As trusting sons and daughters of the Father, it is the most natural thing in the world to turn to him asking on behalf of our brothers and sisters. We long for the same things for them we ourselves have tasted.

Missional Prayer Flows from Love

When our love for others is strong, it enables us to take lengths we would not normally take for someone we do not love. We pay a cost we don't even experience as cost. It is nothing in the face of love. Strong love compels strong prayer. It is the prayer of Jesus to his Father at night, forgoing sleep in order to dialogue with the One who loved him and who loved the ones he loves. This relationship sees its culmination in the Garden of Gethsemane where he stays awake to pray for those he will redeem. The strength of his love is ultimately seen on the Cross, his Sacrifice being the ultimate prayer.

Missional Prayer is Directional

Missional prayer involves intentional intercession. As Catholics we are used to intercessory prayer. We offer the Prayers of the Faithful at Mass, we offer intercessions in the Liturgy of the Hours, we pray for people's intentions when they share them with us.

But a parish embarking on a missional identity begins to have direction it did not have before. It is a direction inspired by God, a vision for the future that drives our present. And this is no less true for prayer in the parish. When we discern the direction in which the Holy Spirit is leading our parish, prayer also has a direction. Intercession is taken to a whole new level.

The strength of prayer is determined by the strength of desire. When we as a team come into agreement with the Holy Spirit's transformation of our parish, there is power in approaching our intercession strategically.

When Joshua followed God's direction to take the city of Jericho (Joshua 6:1-27), they approached it strategically and with discipline.

First, they knew God had given it to them: "I have given into your hand Jericho" (Joshua 6:2). Reaching confirmation and conviction in God's vision for our parish results in greater authority in our prayer.

The Divine Renovation Guide to Missional Prayer

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Secondly, they were disciplined. They undertook God’s instructions to march around the city every day for six days, and they only shouted when Joshua commanded. Consistency, faithfulness, and obedience in our prayer shows God the strength of our desires.

Thirdly, they worshipped, “blowing the trumpets continually” (Joshua 6:13). Praise is a powerful prayer because it acclaims God for who he is in himself. It declares that he is good and victorious, in spite of apparent setbacks and struggles. It enables us to live already in the reality God is preparing for our parish in the future.

Fourthly, they declared aloud what God had given to them. “Shout; for the Lord has given you the city” (Joshua 6:16). They knew victory was already theirs and declared what they knew to be true with a shout. When we are convicted by the vision God has given us for our parish, there is power in declaration: declaring what we know to be true, even if it is not reality yet. The context might seem dark, and nothing further from the truth, but there is power in words, and we declare the truth of God’s vision over our parish.

The results are astounding: “So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people raised a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city” (Joshua 6:20). Imagine the breakthrough in your parish. Imagine the spiritual “wall falling down flat” and your parish “advancing” by making new disciples, by new people coming to your church, and by people’s lives being changed. This is all possible through missional prayer in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Missional Prayer Is Apostolic Labouring

In Galatians 4:19, St Paul describes labouring, contending prayer. Entering “labouring prayer” means entering this Paschal Mystery with Christ, to say ‘yes’ to being a co-redeemer. It is allowing ourselves to be “weighed down” spiritually by the burden of those who have not yet accepted Christ and interceding that his victory will become real in their lives, that they will come into relationship with him. This is the spiritual work that takes place prior to a person being born into new life in Christ. It truly is the “labour pains” of birthing new disciples.

Australian Christian pastor and cultural commentator, Mark Sayer, remarks that, “The future belongs to the contenders, not the comfortable.” We have begun to glimpse how embarking on the journey of renewing our parishes is ultimately to co-redeem with Christ. It is to spiritually “labour” and “contend” for the birth of new disciples in Christ.

As you lead your parish as a team, you will discover that you will “spiritually contend” for the advance of the Kingdom. It is an experience of stepping into the arena to contend with formlessness, chaos, and darkness. And yet, the reality of our contending is light and even joyful because we are children – sons and daughters trustingly asking for good things from our Father.

The Divine Renovation Guide to Missional Prayer

Theological Reflection

Missional Prayer is Authoritative

“For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God” (Romans 13:1). Did you know you share in God’s authority? As the Father’s son or daughter, if you stand in right relationship to him, he has given you the gift of standing in his own authority. Authority is the right to act on someone’s behalf. We exercise authentic authority on the Father’s behalf to the extent that we submit to his will. Our authority as his sons and daughters is to carry out not our own plans and ideas in his name, but rather, to discern what he is doing, to *come into agreement with it, align our desires with it, and purposefully intercede for it.*

Why do we need to exercise authority? Authority is needed in the midst of chaos. Think of any schoolteacher who walks into a raucous, chaotic classroom, or a police officer who walks into a crime scene. Someone needs to take authority and restore order. The ‘chaos’ that you experience in the parish is likely one of fruitlessness.

Our long experience of our Catholic parish probably tells us that new disciples are unlikely. We struggle to visualise our parishes as thriving places brimming with new disciples because we have never seen this. We are conditioned to expect and even hope for meagre fruits, or permanently to be ‘planting seeds’ and never to reap. But this situation is not the Father’s will for our parish! His desire is to bring our parish to health and make it teem with life. When we come into agreement with his desire, we can stand in his authority in our prayer. We can pray with different stances. One stance is that of a beggar or orphan, pleading before a miserly tyrant, extremely doubtful of his willingness to give. Another stance is the prayer of the sons and daughters of the Father: confident and full of trust that the Father gives good things. And yet, he does not bestow this abundance without the cooperation of our faith. God’s gifts are not automatic; he needs us to align our desires, he needs the substance of our faith.

Faith is our supernatural weapon. As a baptised son or daughter of the Father, your soul has received a tremendous muscle of supernatural faith that works in cooperation with all that God wants to give. Like operating a muscle that has not been frequently or strenuously used, it may feel unfamiliar or uncomfortable at first – like reaching for something that is just outside our comfort zone. We might feel presumptuous (“Who am I to think that God would do this for our parish?!”) or audacious (“Surely it is more ‘holy’ not to expect or ask for so much?!”) or reckless (“I’m just setting myself up for disappointment when this doesn’t materialise”) but this is the faith God calls for, and the faith needed to activate radical change in our parish. Abram accepted the rename ‘Abraham’ (father of many) before there was any sign of a son. Are you ready to ‘rename’ your parish as the home of many new disciples – even before there is one? This is the kind of faith that pleases God.

Practising our belief in “things unseen” (Hebrews 11:1) means ‘taking authority’ over spiritual fruitlessness. We don’t need to plead with God for different results. We ask with confidence that we are heard, and that God will change things.

The deeper we grow in union with the Father’s will, the more in tune we will be to how the Holy Spirit is working, and the more we will be able to pray in a way that advances the Kingdom.

The Divine Renovation Guide to Missional Prayer Theological Reflection

The Bible is full of examples of protagonists who pray with authority on behalf of God’s people. Daniel is one who prays authoritatively in Daniel 9. As Daniel humbles himself in prayer, God reveals that the Devil has opposed Daniel’s prayer (“the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days” Daniel 10:13) and yet Daniel’s three weeks of sustained prayer, fasting and humility lead to breakthrough.

“For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). As baptised children of God, we can forget the power that resides in us. Helplessness and powerlessness are lies of the evil one. We have supernatural armour at our disposal as Ephesians 6 outlines: victory is assured, and we just need to put the armour on.

The Divine Renovation Guide to Missional Prayer Practical Parish Application

Practical Parish Application

“Your first duty as Pastors is not projects and organizations but to lead your people to a deep intimacy with the Trinity.” John Paul II to the Austrian Bishops

“Yes... our Christian communities must become genuine "schools" of prayer, where the meeting with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help but also in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening and ardent devotion, until the heart truly "falls in love". Intense prayer, yes, but it does not distract us from our commitment to history: by opening our heart to the love of God it also opens it to the love of our brothers and sisters, and makes us capable of shaping history according to God's plan.” (Novo Millennio Ineunte, 33)

Now we have had time to consider the features of missional prayer, we will consider what this looks like concretely in the parish. Here are ten practices from parishes that are embedding a culture of missional prayer.

Model Prayer

Use every opportunity to normalise prayer. Some parishes host Worship Nights, opportunities for people to encounter Christ outside the liturgy. These are brilliant times to normalise lay people exercising their baptism by leading others in prayer.

Prayer Ministry

Alpha effectively introduces people to simple ways to pray for the Holy Spirit with one another. You will want to look for opportunities outside Alpha, too, to offer prayer ministry. This can be very simple: it is important to demonstrate that anyone can pray simply with another person, “Come Holy Spirit.” By the virtue of your baptism, you have authority to ask the Holy Spirit to touch someone and you can be certain he will respond. Some Catholic parishes will offer prayer ministry at the end of Sunday Masses, and have found that long queues materialise as so many people want prayer! There is also deeper prayer ministry where prayer ministers may share prophetic words of knowledge with the recipient or pray for physical or emotional healing. This is the extraordinary authority invested in us as sons and daughters: he will speak through us and even heal through us. Training is recommended here, as in most Catholic parishes this is very unfamiliar territory.

Eucharistic Adoration

Eucharistic adoration is the ‘rocket-fuel’ of parish renewal. As Jesus gazes on us in Adoration and we gaze on him, we take on his likeness and get filled with his love. Adoration forms us in union with Jesus. Adoration is not just for the regular adorers or those with an intercessory prayer charism. It is for every disciple who is serious about mission. As we grow in union with Jesus, we increasingly enter into his Paschal Mystery on behalf of others, and Adoration is the privileged context in which our “labouring”, missional prayer can take place.

The Divine Renovation Guide to Missional Prayer Practical Parish Application

When the parish is oriented towards a vision – when it has a direction – Adoration in the parish takes on a deeper importance. Now the need for it is greater, for the sake of mission. And now it has a direction. We are praying towards a vision. We are cooperating with the Holy Spirit by interceding and longing with him for that vision to come into reality.

If your parish has regular adorers, as they increasingly grow in their understanding of the new direction of the parish, missional prayer intentions can be shared with them. Maybe your parish will have longer periods of prayer: a full 24 hours of Adoration, or 40 hours like the traditional devotion. These become not just for the sake of individuals' prayer lives, but rather, for the corporate advancing of the Kingdom in the parish.

Prayer-Walking

As you begin to set your parish on a missional footing, there are spiritual ways to start “taking ground” and advancing the kingdom of light. Your team together with any intercessors or prayer warriors could trace the geographical boundaries of the parish and gradually walk the whole parish boundary interceding for all those who live in the territory. This prayer-walking can take the form of praying the rosary, or of spontaneous interceding as we pray in the Spirit – noticing what is around us, what the Holy Spirit highlights for us, noting what he prompts us to pray for. Even if you don't have a team yet, don't know any prayer warriors, and know no one to invite you on this venture, as a pastor, there is great spiritual power in prayer-walking the boundaries and streets of your parish, and you will likely see spiritual shifts in your parish.

Fasting

Prayer is about desire. When we have a great spiritual need that requires breakthrough, we can increase the intensity of our desire and therefore the power of our prayer through fasting. Desire for food and drink are among our most primal experiences as human beings. So basic are these natural desires that they are intense desires when we experience hunger and thirst. There is great power, then, when we combine these intense natural desires with our intense spiritual desires. We don't see our forgoing of food as punishment but rather as an opportunity for deeper communion with our loving and all-providing Father, allowing him to meet us even in the need for physical food. We bring our spiritual desire below his gaze, just as he sees our physical desire. Fasting often has the effect of weakening our body. We humble ourselves physically before God and accept the limitations of our body for the duration of our fasting. Yet in the humbling of our body, there is often a clarifying of our mind. People often experience greater freedom in prayer. The Holy Spirit's power is unleashed when we confess through our fasting that we have relied too greatly on our own strength and power.

Fasting together as a team is even more powerful than fasting individually. When there is unity and communion among a team who have come into agreement around an intention they are praying for, powerful results may follow. Teams may decide to fast for one day for a particular intention. Or, over a longer period of time, for a big spiritual breakthrough, they might undertake an additional fast every Friday, for example.

The Divine Renovation Guide to Missional Prayer Practical Parish Application

Praise & Worship

Through singing, prayer, and expressions of gratitude, we lift our hearts and voices to celebrate God's attributes and actions. Worship goes beyond praise, entering a deeper realm of reverence and adoration for God's holiness and majesty. These practices create a space for experiencing God's presence and responding to His love. Special worship nights, retreats, and spontaneous praise during Mass can foster a culture of worship within the parish. When we give time to praise and worship, we're offering our prayer. We're offering intercession before God the Father, and it's a powerful way to pray for the whole parish.

Prayer at Meetings

Everything you have read so far will hopefully have you convicted that there is no place at the beginning of a meeting for a "quick prayer". As we meet, we want God's vision, God's values, and God's way to emerge as we speak. Therefore, we need to show him our open hearts and desire to know his will. Three words are indispensable at the beginning of a meeting: "Come Holy Spirit" (see CCC 2670). Pray these words aloud and in expectation that he will act. Give silence and space to him and allow people to share words or images that seem to come from him. Become accustomed to praying spontaneously at the beginning of meetings. Even for those for whom this is new or unfamiliar, normalise and make it safe, as everyone is expected to lead prayer: this is not just for the 'professionals' – we are all sons and daughters of the Father.

Spontaneous Prayer

This can be very unfamiliar for Catholics at the beginning. We can be uncomfortable even with just praying naturally in our own words, and we're much more comfortable with using rote prayers. But as we grow in a culture of missional prayer and especially through alpha, we can encourage people who feel uncomfortable just to try it, just to speak very simply in their own words. And we can do this in every type of meeting in the parish to really normalize it and to make it a part of the culture. And very soon it becomes a normal part of how we operate as a parish.

Stop to Pray

As we increasingly become attuned to the Holy Spirit, we will grow in perception when opposing spiritual forces are at work. The evil one knows what is at stake in your parish becoming missional and wants to do all he can to keep it in mediocrity, lack of health and fruitlessness. Sometimes in a team meeting, we become aware of opposing spirits, disunity or even arguments. Often these result from our human wounds rubbing against each other. Or maybe we're facing a very challenging decision and every way forward seems closed to us. At moments like these, the best course of action is often to stop and pray. We can pause, take a breath, and pray 'Come Holy Spirit'. Then wait. At these moments, we can be amazed at how he will enable us to see things in a whole new light, a spiritual atmosphere will shift, we will glimpse ways forward we didn't see before.

In the prayer of contending, we may not even know for what we pray at times. This is where we can truly partner with the Holy Spirit "because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:27). *'Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.'* Romans 8:26. We "groan inwardly" with the

The Divine Renovation Guide to Missional Prayer Practical Parish Application

“whole creation”, waiting “with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God” (Romans 8:19, 23).

Enable the Ten Examples of Missional Prayer: Build a Team

To develop a culture of missional prayer, you will need a team in the parish who champion prayer, keep it at the forefront of the parish’s agenda, and lead the implementation of the prayer practices named above which will change culture. A culture does not become tangible and lived out without taking very practical steps.

What would be the features of such a team?

- It is led by someone with a conviction about prayer, a desire for the renewal of the parish, and a gift for intercession.
- It is led by the Holy Spirit, as the team listens to and perceives how their intercession can cooperate with the Holy Spirit’s transformation of the parish.
- It meets regularly (weekly or monthly) to pray.
- It prays for the power of the Holy Spirit to transform hearts. It prays Acts 1:8 for every parishioner: “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses.”
- It receives strategic insight about what to pray for from the leaders of the parish: what are the greatest breakthroughs required and high-level needs that will most advance the mission, according to the pastor and leadership team members?
- It focuses on outward issues: the groups in the neighbourhood God is calling us to connect with, those we will invite to Alpha over the next few weeks, the strategic preaching series that is coming up, for a new boldness in invitation among the parishioners.
- It prays for unity and protection among parish leaders, priests, ministries in the parish.
- It prays during the significant evangelistic events of the parish, e.g. Alpha.
- It engages the whole parish to pray corporately for specific needs.

The Divine Renovation Guide to Missional Prayer Debrief and Evaluation

Debrief and Evaluation

In the early sessions of Missional Prayer, we focussed on the experience of chaos, void and formlessness that are characteristic of the early days of parish renewal. We asked ourselves what we needed to be able to believe that the Holy Spirit is more powerful than the chaos or void in our parish.

Now is an opportunity to reflect back on what has changed. What has changed in you? What has changed in the approach of your group towards parish renewal? Most importantly, what has changed about the place of the Holy Spirit in the renewal of your parish?

We are only at the beginning, but the power of the Holy Spirit can transform your parish. There is no reason why people should not have powerful encounters with the Holy Spirit in your parish. There is no reason why miracles should not take place in your parish. There is no reason why the Holy Spirit's power should not bring people to conversion when they hear the Gospel message preached in your parish.

God has all the resources of Heaven ready to transform hearts in your parish. What he needs from you is the 'substance' of your faith and desire.

To finish, we share a story of missional prayer in action. These kinds of fruits can be seen, too, among young people in your parish.

Joannes Hartl, Catholic German evangelist who founded the *Gebetshaus* in Augsburg, tells the story of a mission event he led for young people. In the first day of the event, the young people do not respond to the evangelistic talks – they are despondent. So Johannes and his friend pray ahead of the Holy Spirit event that evening. Johannes describes the experience as they both begin to pray:

'...a very heavy blanket is coming down on top of us, as if we could feel that there was some heavy, dark fog there keeping God's light from reaching these young people. As if pushed down by a load, I kneel on my thermal mat. Soon my head is also on the floor. I struggle. Or to put it differently: something has seized me. I am no longer praying, I am being prayed. Tom, next to me, appears to feel exactly the same. He is on the floor, too, weighed down by a burden of his own.'

This is labouring, contending prayer like we described in session 3.

'Labour pains are not something you do, they're something that come over you. And in his moment such pain, such struggle for the souls of these young people hits me, it knocks me to the floor. It breaks out of us a sigh, a lament, a cry to God. It does not feel pleasant at all. It's like being in a fight. And yet it is the only thing we can do right now. And it doesn't stop. For over an hour it does not stop.'

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Johannes and his friend keep praying beyond the time the evening event is due to begin. They won't stop praying until they experience breakthrough.

'Suddenly, in an instant, as abruptly as it came, it vanishes. I realize that I have stopped praying. I notice that I have become calm. All at once a peace and a sense of ease fill the room. A glance to my left shows me that Tom has also stopped praying and is just sitting there quite serenely. With a quick exchange of conspiratorial glances, we agree at once: now we can start!'

They begin the event and Johannes preaches the Gospel – 'pure, direct, radical' – no jokes, just the message that 'you must be born again.' And the impact is staggering.

'The teenagers ... are now sitting there as stunned as if they have been struck by lightning. I invite everyone who wants to make this decision right here to come forward, now, in front of the watching eyes of their friends. These aloof young people -... all of them, yes all of them, jump out of their seats and rush forward. I lead them in a simple prayer: 'Father, I thank you that you love me, and that Jesus died for me. Jesus, I repent of my evil ways, please forgive me. I want to give you my life today and accept the gift of your cross. I want to follow you. Amen.' Before we are even done praying, some of them begin to sob heavily, and one begins to shake. Bear this in mind: this is not a charismatic setting. The opposite, in fact. These young people don't even know there is such a thing. We start to sing a simple song to the Holy Spirit, and to pray for each one individually.

It's as if our hands were charged with high-voltage electricity. When we touch the first kid, he drops to the floor as if struck by lightning. The same thing happens to the second, the third ... many begin to weep loudly, to sob, to scream. Another begins to laugh and repeat, "Thank you, Jesus!" over and over again. Holy chaos, all over again.

When the local priest pops into the semi-darkened room for an unannounced visit - entering a room where young people are all lying on the floor weeping, laughing or just sitting there full of joy - I can't explain everything that's happening here, not quickly anyway. All I can think of is to make a suggestion: I ask him to make himself available for confession and pastoral care in an adjoining room. He glances around at the unusual scene one more time and then goes into the room. Tomorrow, I'll explain to him what's happening. But when he comes back the next day, he says, 'What that was last night, I can't really say. But what I can say is that every one of those young people came to confession, and I haven't often heard confessions like that.'

Do you want to see changed lives in your parish? Let's start cooperating in prayer with the work of the Holy Spirit and praying for the reality of Acts 1:8 to start breaking into people's lives. Come, Holy Spirit!



 **DIVINE**
RENOVATION



Launch Point

WELCOME!

This study guide will help you and other leaders in your parish prayerfully reflect on how you can begin or continue to help your parish come alive.

We suggest the parish priest and key leaders gather for three sessions. Each session will focus on one of the three keys of parish renewal.

Focusing on these keys has unlocked the missionary potential in parishes all over the world – and your parish is next!

What will the sessions look like?

Each session will involve three parts:

- 1 Welcome and an outline of each Key, including a short video (15 min).
- 2 Personal reflecting and small group discussion (35 min).
- 3 A time of personal and group prayer (10 min).

Divine Renovation regularly host events for priests and parish leaders. You can keep the conversation going by joining us at divinerenovation.org.

Ready? Let's start!



GENESIS

C O M P A S S

Missional Prayer
Facilitator's Manual

SUGGESTED FORMAT

