

# GENESIS

COMPASS



The Fourth Theme

**Build Your Leadership Team**

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# Build Your Leadership Team

## 1. Current Parish Reality

### Introduction

*<sup>14</sup>And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons,<sup>[a]</sup> and for days and years, <sup>15</sup>and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup>And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. <sup>17</sup>And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup>to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day. Genesis 1:14-19*

On day four of the creation of the universe, God establishes lights in the heavens to ‘rule’ the day and the night. As we consider the ‘re-creation’ or renewal of your parish, we will use this day of creation to explore the theme of your parish leadership team.

In Day Four, we will consider,

- the current parish experience of leadership,
- a theological reflection on this reality, based on Genesis 1,
- practical application suggestions as your parish takes concrete steps.

## Day Four – Build Your Leadership Team

### 1. Current Parish Reality

#### Introduction

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## **Reality Check: Parish Leadership**

At this stage of your journey leading your parish to mission, you are likely convinced of the need for the third key of parish renewal, the ‘best of leadership’. Fr James Mallon remarks that, ‘If the primary crisis of the Church of our time is one of identity, then a second crisis is one of leadership.’<sup>1</sup>

When you experience healthy and courageous leadership – either in the Church or in the world – it is unmistakable. It makes us feel motivated, inspired, and safe. And yet, sadly, every one of us has likely been affected in some way by poor leadership. Whatever your experience of, or place within, the Church, it is unimaginable that you have not experienced the Church’s crisis of leadership. From terrible scandals that reveal the darker side of a Church comprised of sinners, through to day-to-day low-level dysfunctionality, this crisis can be experienced both as negligent leadership and as dysfunctional leadership.

Negligent leadership is experienced when we glimpse the urgency of change required, and the vacuum of courageous leadership to tackle it. Instead, it seems the deckchairs on the Titanic are adjusted as the vessel sinks. For all believers, and especially for those who have laid down their lives for the mission of the Church, such a reality can result in real pain and disillusionment.

Dysfunctional leadership is experienced when those in positions of leadership are not naturally gifted or have not been equipped to lead people in a healthy and effective way. Frequently we experience ‘unconscious incompetence’ – otherwise well-intentioned people who have never experienced bold or healthy leadership themselves and so are blissfully unaware that their own default way of leading may be lacking, or even harm others.

The reality is that, for those who are immersed within Catholic culture, without enough exposure to healthy forms of leadership in other spheres, it is like the fable of a frog that, put into a pot of tepid water, does not notice as the temperature rises and boils it to death. The lack of leadership culture in our Catholic parishes and dioceses is gradually devastating our parishes and has a direct impact on our ability to evangelise.

Certainly, it is possible to get so used to a ‘crisis’ that we stop seeing it as one. Human beings need to survive and cannot live perpetually in a crisis. We learn to downplay the

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<sup>1</sup> Divine Renovation, p. 233.

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‘itch’ we feel that we could do a lot better. Fr James writes, ‘Too often, those in leadership positions ignore the itch or seek to medicate it. They seek to live peaceably within their reality.’<sup>2</sup> It is too unbearable to live in a constant dissonance between our recognition of the Church’s ineffectiveness, and our lack of ability to do much about it. Sometimes we opt for selective blindness, just to preserve sanity!

A vast cultural upheaval around leadership is required in the Catholic Church, today no less than when Fr James’ words in his book *Divine Renovation: Bringing Your Parish from Maintenance to Mission* resonated so powerfully with people around the world. In the Day 3 module, we define culture as, “*The patterns of behaviour that reflect our deeply held assumptions about what we create, allow, celebrate, and tolerate.*” Culture, as we saw when we considered evangelisation, is incredibly powerful. Perceiving the lack of leadership culture in our Church is tough because every single person who lives in a culture is affected by it: even the agents of change. If you recognise the need to build leadership culture within the Church, it means that you are a change agent. But even change agents are easily sucked into the powerful vortex of culture that draws us back into default patterns of behaviour.

## **Our Parishes Need New Leadership ‘DNA’**

Other the last 100 years, the Church has lived through a ‘change of epoch’. We know from evolutionary biology that to thrive, a species must discard the DNA that no longer serves its needs and develop new DNA that will enable it to flourish in the new challenging environment. The same is true in the social world. Communities adapt their cultural DNA to enable them to survive and thrive in new surroundings. We know from the theory of evolution what happens when a species does not adapt adequately to thrive in its new external environment, and given the eye-watering decline we see in the Church in the west, it would seem we have done a pretty poor job of adapting.

Think of it another way: A century ago, Catholic parishes existed in an environment which was supportive of and enabling their flourishing. Christendom culture was strong in western countries and Catholic parishes existed in environments where Christian belief and practice could generally be assumed. This wider environment served Catholic parishes well. Think of a freshwater fish swimming in freshwater. Catholic parishes could exist fairly peacefully in the culture.

But especially since the 1960s, the freshwater has become salty. Secularisation has contaminated the freshwater of Christendom culture. What happens to a freshwater fish that finds itself in saltwater? The water inside its body flows out of its cells, and it dies of dehydration. A similar thing is happening to our Catholic parishes. Those that have not

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<sup>2</sup> *Divine Renovation*, p. 248.

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adapted to respond to the secular culture around them have found it more and more difficult to exist, their life ‘flowing’ from their bodies. Countless people are falling away from these parishes into the ‘saltwater’ of the culture. The parish has not adapted and still functions as if it existed in ‘freshwater’, in Christendom. In Fr James Mallon’s words, to use an analogy from the Old Testament when Israel was sent into exile, pastors were trained for ‘Jerusalem’ and yet they find themselves leading in ‘Babylon’: an environment – like ‘saltwater’ – for which they were never prepared.

The failure of Catholic parishes to adapt in order to flourish within the new environment points to a dearth of leadership. As any business leader will tell you, when the external environment changes, strong leadership to adapt is required. But Christendom did not foster leadership culture within the Church, and so parishes have been tragically ill-prepared.

## **Naming the Reality: 10 Parish Leadership Blind Spots**

The first step towards initiating cultural change is to name the reality. We need to know what we are up against. In this first part of Day 4, we identify 10 common leadership blind spots in our parishes – areas where we have been blind to the fact that the environment has changed and that we need to change too.

Parish leaders...

- #1: ...are trained to be authority figures, not leaders
- #2: ...are wired to be system-managers
- #3: ...do not lead according to vision
- #4: ...avoid conflict at all costs
- #5: ...lead alone
- #6: ...do everything themselves
- #7: ...lead according to a consensus-based approach
- #8: ...see no need to train themselves in leadership principles
- #9: ...are afraid to be seen as too bold
- #10: ...are unaware of their blind spots

Let’s consider each one in turn.

### **Leadership Blind Spot #1: Parish leaders are trained to be authority figures, not leaders**

Within such a moment of crisis, a species must adapt its DNA in order to survive, strong leadership is needed. Yet here is the paradox. The leadership DNA we need in the Church to learn how to adapt to the new environment does not exist (yet)! We find ourselves in a vicious circle, where the missing leadership DNA that is causing the Church’s decline is

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precisely what would help us to adapt and get out of the downward spiral. Leadership DNA has not been wired into the members of the Church for centuries and centuries. Ask any Catholic priest how much leadership training he had in his seminary formation. Chances are, it was none.

When we think of culture as what we ‘create, allow, celebrate and tolerate’, Catholic culture for centuries has created and allowed a leadership vacuum, has celebrated maintenance of the status quo (the opposite of leadership), and has tolerated negligent and dysfunctional leadership. That is how we have found ourselves in a situation where we seem helpless to respond to the external threats in our new environment. We may feel like dehydrating freshwater fish, with little hope.

This all sounds pretty bleak, but it’s important that we name the reality. If clergy have not been trained for leadership, what have they been trained for?

For centuries, Catholics have looked to clergy as authority figures, rather than as leaders. What is the difference? Authority is power entrusted to someone for the sake of service. There is an implicit agreement between bishops and pastors, and between pastors and laity. The agreement is that the pastor will serve the set of goals they commonly hold dear. Pastors will provide sacramental functions, will be theological experts, will serve as dedicated shepherds. The scope of the pastor’s authority comes from these expectations implicitly held by their bishop and by their people. It defines the limits of what they are expected to do. If you do what you are expected to do well, you will keep everyone happy. If you do it really well, you will be rewarded (maybe with a more prestigious parish).

Another way of putting this is that an authority figure is someone who leads from their position, relying on their power to get things done. They might try to control behaviour through reward and punishment, and if that is the case, then they lead from their position, maybe as the only model of leadership they have ever known.

A leader is different from someone who holds a position of authority. Being a leader actually means dancing on the edges of the circle of your authority. You necessarily go beyond what people have authorised you to do or expect you to do, precisely because as a leader, you *should* challenge these expectations if they no longer serve the parish’s ability to flourish in its new environment. Furthermore, authentic leaders lead from character, rather than positional, leadership. They use relational authority, in other words, they have authority based on their relationship with you, rather than on the position they hold.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The distinction between authority and leadership is drawn from Harvard professor Ron Heifetz’ book, *Adaptive Leadership*.

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We define leadership as, “the practice of influencing and mobilising people to tackle tough challenges and empower other leaders in pursuit of the parish vision.”

When the external environment has changed, leaders should be *challenging* rather than meeting expectations. Harvard business scholar, Ron Heifetz, comments that, “Leadership is disappointing your own people at a rate they can absorb.” To thrive, the Church needs leaders today more than she needs authority figures. She needs leaders who lead with relational authority which is rooted in trust rather than in fear. Catholic parishes need to develop new leadership DNA that will enable them to thrive in a new environment.<sup>4</sup>

## **Leadership Blind Spot #2: Parish leaders are wired to be system-managers**

Now, you might be thinking, ‘if only our parish had some good system-managers!’ Sometimes we find that even basic maintenance is lacking, and some system-managing would actually be a good thing! And yet, system-managing alone is not enough – and can be harmful overall to the parish prioritizing mission.

When considering the three ‘munera’ of the ministry of a priest, the priestly function (sacraments) and the prophetic function (teaching and preaching) may need to adapt somewhat to the new environment. However, the function that will require most adaptation is the governance or shepherding function.<sup>5</sup> This is where the ‘old’ DNA of Christendom starts to fail in a parish.

Let’s explore exactly what this ‘old’ DNA looks like and how it has come about. The phenomenal success of Christendom across the western world was that the life of Christianity was programmed into the institutions and cultural achievements within society. Mgr. Shea writes about this at length in his book, *From Christendom to Apostolic Mission*. Christian faith was in the ‘soil’. Therefore, the role and motivation of Christians was simply to maintain society, to fill their role, and do their duty. When you have a gloriously functioning institutionalisation of Christianity, where grace is mediated through the structures, your life’s purpose as a devout Christian is to uphold these structures and achievements.

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<sup>4</sup> Read Fr James Mallon, *Divine Renovation: Beyond the Parish*, pp. 143-146, for more on the difference between positional and character relationship.

<sup>5</sup> In *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Pope St John Paul II comments on this function: ‘This *munus regendi* [governance] represents a very delicate and complex duty which, in addition to the attention which must be given to a variety of persons and their vocations, also involves the ability to coordinate all the gifts and charisms which the Spirit inspires in the community, to discern them and to put them to good use for the upbuilding of the Church in constant union with the bishops’ (§26). We will consider further the role of the priest in enabling the flourishing of gifts and charisms in part 3.

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Over centuries, therefore, Christians were programmed and conditioned to uphold the already existing Christian values of society. The parish is the place from which grace flows, so they retreat there to be fed and nourished. The pastor of the parish is the one who provides spiritual, pastoral care, while the laity are the recipients of this care. To keep the structures of the Church well-oiled and maintained, bishops and priests in their governance function are first and foremost system-managers. To maintain structures and systems, we have decades of tried-and-tested best practice to lean on. Our entire purpose is to keep the show on the road.

Any hint of dancing on the edges of your sphere of authority (as described above), of challenging people's expectations, or of rocking the status quo, is therefore perceived as a threat to the prevailing order.

Is it any wonder, then, that in recruitment and training of priests, we still lean towards 'Shepherds' and 'Teachers'?<sup>6</sup> That we are institutionally wary of 'Apostles', 'Prophets' and 'Evangelists'? Everything in our deeply-held assumptions as Catholics tells us that those who challenge the status quo threaten the ordered, peaceful, grace-channelling structures of our Church.

And yet, the maintenance of the status quo is – today – precisely *the greatest threat* to our existence in the new environments we find ourselves in.

On the contrary, the greatest hope for our Catholic parishes to thrive is to identify 'Apostles', 'Prophets' and 'Evangelists' and empower them to lead. It is a time for a bit more boat-rocking!

### **Leadership Blind Spot #3: Parish leaders do not lead according to vision**

In Christendom mode, a parish does not need a vision. After all, it is simply there to provide a sacramental savannah for Catholics to come and be refreshed. But in the new, secular environment, a parish will flounder without vision. A vision defines the parish's direction of travel, how the parish will influence and evangelise the surrounding neighbourhoods. (We explored this in greater depth in the Day 2 module.)

Vision is something definite and particular. It is the God-given picture of the future of the parish that produces passion in the pastor's heart. Communicating it to parishioners involves putting the 'sign on the bus'. It is difficult for 'Christendom-wired' pastors to lead parishes with a particular destination in mind. What if parishioners don't like the sound of the destination? What if they want everything to stay as it was? Of course, this is the

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<sup>6</sup> Here, we refer to the spiritual gifts referred to in Saint Paul's letter to the Ephesians (ch 4). The APEST coaching tool, first introduced in the Day 3 module, is useful to identify one's ministry style. See more [here](#).

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whole purpose of putting the sign on the bus! Parishioners must decide whether this is the bus they want to be on, or if they will jump onto a different one.

But this reality can be hard for a pastor trained as an authority figure to fulfil others' expectations. Communicating vision moves you squarely into the realm of leader – where you will likely challenge or disappoint people's expectations.

It is a tremendous shift to make. The pastor has been wired to see meeting people's needs and expectations as *virtuous*. This is his purpose and fulfilment as a pastor. As chaplain to the Catholic community, he has been ministering in a predominantly therapeutic way.

To lead from vision, he must train himself to see what is virtuous in a new light. Now, mobilising his parishioners towards mission is virtuous, while fostering spiritual immaturity is not. Activating and releasing parishioners in their own charisms is virtuous, while enabling passive receptivity is not.

Allowing someone to step off the bus might even be the best thing that a pastor can do for them. Rosalynn Carter, wife of the US President Jimmy Carter, said, 'A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but ought to be.'

This new DNA takes time to programme into our mindset and behaviours, and we frequently default to old behaviour. But to adapt our deeply-held assumptions is essential in the new apostolic context.

## **Leadership Blind Spot #4: Parish leaders avoid conflict at all costs**

By now it will be clear that leading a parish towards mission involves leading people outside of their comfort zones. This is not what they have grown to expect of their leaders so it can be unsettling both for them and for their pastor and parish leader.

Parish leaders have been trained to provide diligent, predictable management, to maintain an equilibrium in the life of the parish. Once we start leading towards a vision of how we will evangelise our local neighbourhoods, this equilibrium quickly becomes destabilized. Resources are no longer allocated as they were in the past; parish rooms are required for new evangelistic activities; the pastor is not available for spiritual care in the way we've been accustomed to expect.

Undoubtedly, parishioners will experience tension or dissonance, and this new state of affairs might even generate conflict. To the diligent system-manager and therapeutic chaplain, this can be a challenging personal experience. Everything within us is wired to

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keep people happy and peaceful, not unsettled! Conflict in meetings is not a good sign. Harmony is always preferable – even if it is what Patrick Lencioni calls ‘artificial harmony’ - where the peace on the surface belies numerous tensions beneath!

What is more, as we experiment with new methods and approaches to evangelisation, we might cause some chaos, mess...even failure. (Perhaps the naysayers consider themselves vindicated!) And yet, mess and failure are in fact *positive* signs that new missional DNA is being wired into a Catholic parish. Without some mess and failure, we are unable to innovate with new methods for fulfilling our missional identity.

It becomes clear that, in the new external environment, leaders need constantly to rewire their expectations and assumptions. Some mess, failure, and conflict are all good signs. Among those who are united around vision, conflict is important: we need to disagree about how we will reach our vision in order to land on the right strategies. Conflict exposes ideological differences: it allows people to decide whether or not they want to be a part of the mission of the parish, or if God is calling them elsewhere. Without conflict, much is assumed, leaving unspoken tensions beneath the surface.

As well as managing the disappointments of those you lead, Catholic parish leaders find themselves managing their own disappointments, too. There may be a certain sense of loss as you realise that roles you used to enjoy in a maintenance-mode parish now no longer make sense. Maybe you enjoyed the spiritual chaplain role as pastor. Perhaps you are wired to struggle with the unpredictability of the new environment.

But the truth is that you are engaging with the world and with your parish in a way that faces the reality of the situation: and in doing so, the new approach will bear abundantly more fruit.

## **Leadership Blind Spot #5: Parish leaders lead alone**

Maintaining a Christendom-mode parish might keep you busy, but it is comparatively simple and straightforward. We fulfil the function expected of us, managing the systems required to deliver essential services. Decades of received wisdom and proven techniques may be drawn upon to deliver services to a high standard. Everyone knows what their role is and how to fulfil it.

The environment is far more complex in the secular milieu. The pastor does not have all that he needs, alone, to lead in this reality. Complexity requires different perspectives, allowing others to spot things we might have missed. Leading people well (rather than just holding an authority position) depends upon the varied approaches and strengths of other people. This is why we propose (and unpack in more detail below) *leading out of a team*. When a pastor leads out of a team of lay people gathered around him, he will find

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in these people the resources and strengths he needs to move the parish into mission, that he does not have when he tries to lead alone. (We define the parish leadership team as *the small group of leaders who share in the pastor's leadership to bring to life the parish vision*. We unpack this in part 3 below.)

It is a shift, though, that can be deeply challenging. Perhaps the pastor has been used to developing warm and cordial relationships with those with whom he works but has never thought about gathering a team. In the past, decisions were simple and had been made countless times before. A team would just complicate things. They wouldn't understand all the accumulated history and experience. After all, he is the one with the theological, pastoral and canonical training to administer the parish diligently. Surely involving lay people would inevitably slow everything down as they would not share his depth of understanding.

Such a position, while understandable, has been experienced negatively as 'clericalism'. Pope Francis describes it this way in his Address for the Opening of the Synod on Synodality:

Sometimes there can be a certain elitism in the presbyteral order that detaches it from the laity; the priest ultimately becomes more a "landlord" than a pastor of a whole community as it moves forward. This will require changing certain overly vertical, distorted and partial visions of the Church, the priestly ministry, the role of the laity, ecclesial responsibilities, roles of governance and so forth.<sup>7</sup>

Such an 'overly vertical' approach is not only experienced in the leadership of pastors: it can equally be experienced in the leadership of lay professionals in the Church as well, given that they, too, have been formed by the (lack of) leadership culture in the Church. Leading out of a team is likely to be challenging to any lay leader who has grown accustomed to leading alone. After all, it is natural that each of us builds up his or her unique ways of operating, leading, and of seeing the world, which are disrupted when we involve others.

Like all the other shifts required for leadership in the apostolic age, this too is deeply rewarding once we discover how dramatically more effective we can be as leaders.

## **Leadership Blind Spot #6: Parish leaders do everything themselves**

Closely linked to leading alone is the reality that parish leaders act more as 'doers' than 'leaders'. There are four possible reasons for this.

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<sup>7</sup> See: <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2021/october/documents/20211009-apertura-camminosinodale.html>

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First, when a job needs to be done, it is often quicker to do it yourself. You know how it should be done, and you can ensure it is done properly. Showing someone else not only takes longer, but it is also not guaranteed that the person will complete the task as it should be done.

Second, leaders can be wired with a sense of (false) humility that suggests that doing the task oneself is the way of the ‘servant-leader’: equipping others to get involved feels like we are not fulfilling our role of humble service. (We consider this mindset in #9 below.)

Third, we miss the reality that raising up others (‘leading’ rather than ‘doing’) scores huge wins: people feel engaged and empowered in the mission where they are given responsibility, and even authority, over areas of the parish. The parish is far more effective in its mission the more people are empowered.

And finally, and perhaps most importantly, we overlook the fact that inviting others into leadership in the parish, empowering them with authority, activates them to discover their unique charisms and God-given vocation. When we keep people stuck in a spiritual childishness, we are in fact thwarting the flourishing of their baptismal graces. We feel like we are serving them in our humble efforts to deliver everything single-handedly. But in fact, we are stunting their growth as Christians.

## **Leadership Blind Spot #7: Parish leaders lead according to a consensus-based approach**

To evangelize in the post-Christian west, horizontal, consensus-based leadership is just as perilous as an authoritarian approach. Here, understanding that they do not have a complete picture of reality, parish leaders invite others to share insights and perspectives. Perhaps a wider group is gathered to give representation to different areas of the parish.

While both these aims are well-intentioned, they can result practically in directionless, passive, paralyzed, or ultimately negligent leadership. Teams and ministries work in non-collaborative silos, sometimes competing for time and resources. Leadership needs to be driven by vision, and vision cannot be created by a committee. Have you ever read or heard a committee-crafted vision? Did it inspire you? Chances are it did not produce passion in you and felt bland or vanilla. In scripture and throughout the history of the Church, God plants vision in the hearts of *individuals*, not committees. The document, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, by the International Theological

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Commission, makes clear that the ‘authority of Pastors is a specific gift of the Spirit of Christ’ and ‘not a delegated and representative function of the people’ (§67).<sup>8</sup>

## **Leadership Blind Spot #8: Parish leaders see no need to train themselves in leadership principles**

As the external environment has become more complex, the Church has understandably and necessarily drawn more on social and professional sciences to govern certain areas of her life. Think, for example, of the financial, legal, health and safety, or child protection aspects in the life of the Church. In certain circumstances, this can unfortunately lead to heavy diocesan bureaucracy, which may result in a reaction against using secular professional expertise in the life of the Church. There can be a view that leadership principles stem from the business world, and are therefore innately secular, not capable of informing leadership within the Church which is divinely instituted. The Apostles, Church Fathers and Saints of the Church have not needed secular leadership principles, so why should we?

A slightly different perspective stems from the ‘unconscious incompetence’ to which we referred above. Here, a certain naivete about leadership is adopted. Parish leaders do not see themselves as leaders and are blind to the impact that their (lack of) leadership has on others. In this perspective, a lack of awareness of leadership principles, coupled with a lowly self-perception of oneself as a leader, contribute to their ignorance of how they might grow as a leader.

The best Catholic theological answer always involves a ‘both/and’. We recall the principle of St Thomas Aquinas that grace perfects nature. In other words, nature is created with its own laws and integrity. Abiding by natural law allows human beings to flourish on the human level, creating a strong foundation and seedbed in which the life of grace can take root. Human sciences allow us to discover and live the fullness of human reality, so that grace, the life of God, might flourish in that reality. Think of the human realities we have considered so far. People leading alone or in relationship with others. People discerning the external environment and how best the parish might evangelise it. People engaging with or disengaging from conflict. All these involve human realities on which human science and psychology shed light and genuine expertise. Learning from these sciences, we aim to live these human realities to the full, so that grace might bear maximum fruit.

## **Leadership Blind Spot #9: Parish leaders are afraid to be seen as too bold**

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<sup>8</sup> See:

[https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_cti\\_20180302\\_sinodalita\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html)

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Finally, we consider a pervasive reality in the hearts and minds of Catholics that we will consider more deeply in the Day 6 module of the Genesis Compass on self-leadership. This is a fear of getting above ourselves. We explain in Day 6 how this is rooted in a faulty theological mindset called Jansenism. Deep cultural conditioning causes us to think that having a ‘vision’ for our parish or desiring change is breaking from the status quo and elevating ourselves above our station. For some, even using the word ‘leader’ is problematic. (Maybe we are reacting to an overly authoritarian tendency in the Church in the past. Or maybe we instinctively believe that while it is acceptable to be given an authority position, to call ourselves a ‘leader’ sounds like we are too big for our boots.)

This fear engenders a false humility. Perhaps we emphasise the term ‘servant-leadership’ as more comfortable than leadership. Of course, this is true: ‘was the ultimate Servant Leader, shown most clearly as he washed the Apostles’ feet and later died on the Cross for the redemption of the world. But, beneath the term ‘servant-leadership’ may also be a timidity about leading.

Timidity in leadership likely seeks the consensus-based approaches discussed above. It can result in passivity: refusing to act when decisive action is required, over-deliberation about decisions to be made, over-consultation, avoidance techniques, and putting one’s head in the sand. Ultimately this can lead to negligent leadership as described in the opening of this section. Negligent leadership involves the sin of omission and has done untold damage in the lives of people throughout the Church. Fear of putting our head above the parapet, or of taking unpopular decisions, reveals a lack of the virtue of fortitude. Going deeper into our own hearts to reveal the source of our fears and to address these is one of the most courageous acts we can take as a leader. We will explore this more deeply in the Day 6 module.

### **Leadership Blind Spot #10: Parish leaders are unaware of their blind spots**

Finally, we consider a pervasive reality in the hearts and minds of Catholics who have in effect been de-formed by a lack of leadership culture in our parishes. A failure to lead out of teams where there is deep trust, vulnerability and accountability, and an inability to enter healthy conflict, results in sadly avoidable scenarios where many parish leaders stay ‘unconsciously incompetent’ over many decades in their roles in Catholic parishes.

Imagine the cantor who never fails to sing slightly off-key who has been singing the Psalm at Mass weekly, year after year. Or imagine the cantankerous catechist whose bad moods everyone has learned to manage through moderating their own behaviour. Or imagine the volunteer who handles the parish hall bookings who has not joined the 21<sup>st</sup> century and operates only through snail mail and payment by check.

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None of these examples, sadly, will seem rare, and each of them perpetuate themselves thanks to a lack of leadership culture. We 'tolerate' unconscious incompetence because the alternative is too threatening: it takes us into the realm of unsettling the status quo, potentially upsetting people, or of jeopardising the peaceful but artificial harmony.

But think about the cost. There is a cost to the individual involved: imagine if they could experience that they are loved and accepted enough that someone would sensitively share this blind spot with them and give them an opportunity to grow? There is a cost to the leaders involved: imagine how much they would grow if they discerned with the Lord how to tackle this challenge, and then stepped out with courage? And, most tragically, there is a cost to the whole parish. Think of the evangelistic opportunities that are wasted or harmed because of our timid tolerance of unwelcoming or off-putting behaviour.

## What's at stake?

Let's conclude the first part of this module by considering what is at stake. Reflecting on these ten parish leadership blind spots may make you feel dismal about your parish and determined to make a change. Of course, you can start to build new leadership DNA in your parish even because healthy leadership is a good end in itself. After all, many secular organisations realise that healthy leadership is a game-changer for their productivity and effectiveness. But for the renewal of our parishes, there is an even better reason to pursue healthy leadership. *Leadership culture in our parishes mutually reinforces the other two keys of parish renewal: the power of the Holy Spirit and the primacy of evangelisation.*

Healthy leadership orders the natural, human reality in your parish to allow the power of the Holy Spirit to flow more freely. And, when there is more space and freedom for the Holy Spirit to move in your parish, the more lives you will see changed. This is what is at stake: the transformation of lives and conversion of hearts for Jesus.

Can there be anything more worthwhile, therefore, than developing new leadership DNA in your parish? Are you ready to make the shifts required – however challenging?

In scripture, God speaks into the current parish reality. Let's turn first to see what light this reveals on your situation.

## 2. Theological Reflection Based on Genesis 1

Here, we read Genesis 1:14-19 to allow God to shed light onto the leadership reality in the Catholic parish. We encourage you to do your own *lectio divina* knowing that God will speak into your context.

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*<sup>14</sup>And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons,<sup>[a]</sup> and for days and years, <sup>15</sup>and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup>And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. <sup>17</sup>And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup>to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.*

We use God’s creation of the lights in the heavens ‘ruling’ the day and the night as a metaphor for leadership, and specifically, the parish leadership team. The lights have various roles according to the Creation account: to ‘give light on the earth... rule over the day and over the night, ... separate the light from the darkness’ (vv17-18) and mark ‘signs and seasons’, ‘days and years’ (v14).

## 1. Jesus – the Sun of Righteousness

*‘You are invited to look always to the east: it is there that the sun of righteousness rises for you, it is there that the light is always being born for you.’ – Origen*

In the Day 2 module, Form and Cast Vision, we refer to the strange anomaly that somehow there was a light source in days 1-3 of Creation, even before the sun, moon, and stars were created on day 4. (Read back in the Day 2 notes to see some possible explanations for this.) A ‘greater light’, a ‘lesser light’ and ‘stars’ are established in the heavens on the fourth day. They give light upon the earth, so there must be a difference between how light is experienced between day one and day four.

The authors of the book of Genesis were among the Israelites held in Babylonian captivity. They lived in an alien land among those who worshipped the sun, moon, and stars as gods. The Israelites, by contrast, who were forbidden to worship celestial bodies,<sup>9</sup> knew that God was not a created being, but rather the one true God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The opening chapters of Genesis were written to express their understanding that their God created the lights in the heavens.

And yet, 100 years after they were freed from exile, the prophet Malachi uses the imagery of the sun to express the coming of the Messiah:

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<sup>9</sup> ‘And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven’ (Deuteronomy 4:19).

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‘For behold, the day is coming,  
Burning like an oven,  
And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble.  
And the day which is coming shall burn them up,”  
Says the Lord of hosts,  
“That will leave them neither root nor branch.  
<sup>2</sup> But to you who fear My name  
***The Sun of Righteousness*** shall arise  
With healing in His wings;  
And you shall go out  
And grow fat like stall-fed calves.  
<sup>3</sup> You shall trample the wicked,  
For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet  
On the day that I do this,”  
Says the Lord of hosts.’  
(Malachi 4:1-3)

The Lord, like the sun, will burn and turn to ashes their enemies, and yet to the people of Israel, will appear ‘with healing in his wings’ (v2).

By the earliest chapters of the New Testament, Zechariah is announcing the coming of the Messiah in the words of his Benedictus,

‘because of the tender mercy of our God,  
whereby the sunrise shall visit us<sup>[1]</sup> from on high  
<sup>79</sup> to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death’ (Luke  
1:78-79).

In Greek, the word ‘sunrise’ is also translated as, ‘the East’ (verse 78 could be translated, ‘whereby the East shall visit us from on high’), and in Latin, it is the ‘Oriens.’ This is the ‘O’ antiphon title for Christ that we sing in the liturgy on 21 December, the shortest day of the year in the northern hemisphere.<sup>10</sup> We look to Christ, the rising sun, in the east in the middle of winter, longing for him to come. Christ is identified as the Dawn or the ‘Dayspring’; he is the Alpha, or the Beginning (cf. Revelation 1:8; St Paul calls Christ ‘the beginning, the firstborn from the dead...’ in Colossians 1:18). Jesus says of himself in the Book of Revelation, ‘I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for

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<sup>10</sup> The ancient tradition of the ‘O’ antiphons is a custom of praying seven great antiphons on the seven days leading up to the birth of the Lord, Christmas day. Each one prays for him to come, expressing a different aspect of his nature through seven titles. The English translation for the antiphon on 21 December is: ‘O Dayspring, splendour of light eternal and sun of righteousness: come and enlighten those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.’

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the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the *bright morning star*' (Revelation 22:16).<sup>11</sup>

There is much in the Christian tradition that indicates that not only the physical sun, first prophesied by Malachi, is a sign foreshadowing Jesus, but that he is also the rising sun, the dawn, and the day itself. What does this sign reveal of Jesus as 'Leader'? We recall from Genesis 1 that the sun (and other lights) 'give light... rule... separate the light from the darkness...' and 'mark signs and seasons.' Jesus as the Dawn is one who goes first, he is '*head of the body, the Church*' (Colossians 1:18), and 'where the Head has gone before in glory, the Body is called to follow in hope' (Collect for the Solemnity of the Ascension).

But how does this help us understand leadership in our parish?

## 2. The Solar System of Your Parish

*'For the Lord God is a sun and shield'* (Psalm 84:11)

In the mid-1500s, Nicolaus Copernicus, a Renaissance Polish polymath, proposed the revolutionary theory that the earth revolved around the sun, not the other way around. His theory became widely adopted in science and became known as the Copernican Revolution. The French Cardinal de Bérulle, who lived a short time later, proposed that Copernicus' discovery had deep implications for the spiritual life.

'An excellent mind of this century has wished to maintain that the sun is at the centre of the world and not the Earth; that the sun is immobile and that the Earth, proportional to its round shape, is moving relative to the sun: by this contrary position, satisfying all the appearances which obliged our senses to believe that the sun is in continual movement around the earth. This novel opinion, very little followed in the science of the stars, is useful and ought to be followed in the science of salvation. For Jesus is the sun, immobile in his grandeur and moving all things. Jesus is like his Father, and being seated at God's right hand is immobile just as God and the cause of the movement of all things.'

Cardinal de Bérulle's insights are profound when we consider our parishes. What does it feel like is at the centre of your parish, immobile and moving all things? The programs, the Pastoral Council, the liturgies, maybe even the pastor?! The true central point around which *everything* orbits, is Jesus. He remains at a fixed point, towards whom each

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<sup>11</sup> Our Christian journey is one of moving steadily closer towards Christ, the Dawn. We age physically, but spiritually we are called to grow ever younger. There are many themes along these lines in CS Lewis' Narnia book, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*.

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parishioner, every ministry, every program is called to move, and around whom every activity of the parish orients its existence.

We might say, then, that if Jesus is the ‘sun’ of the parish, providing the ‘ruling’ or leading function, what need is there for a leadership team? After all, every parish has Jesus – eucharistically present in the tabernacle – present at its heart.

And yet – part 1 of this module made clear how much leadership is experienced as absent in the parish. Of course, Jesus is eucharistically present in every parish, but for the renewal of the parish, he intends to lead through human leaders.

When leadership is experienced as absent, it is like the sun is not fulfilling its role at the centre of the orbit. Biblical prophecies speak of the eclipsing of the sun: such signs will indicate times of great tribulation.

‘The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.’ (Joel 2:31)

In Jesus’ own words,

‘Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.’ (Matthew 24:29)

The failure of the sun and moon to give light can be seen as symbolic of absent leadership: the experience of vacuum, darkness, and confusion. Similarities with the experience explored in part 1 abound: leaders not acting as leaders, but as authority figures or system-managers, avoiding conflict, leading timidly in an isolated or consensus-based approach. When parish leadership is ineffective, there is much that is shrouded in darkness and the light of the Gospel does not shine brightly. In St Paul’s words to the Corinthians: ‘the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God’ (2 Corinthians 4:3). Your parish is called to allow the light of Gospel to shine brightly – not to compound the effects of the darkness through an absence of leadership.

The synoptic Gospels all reveal that, in the three hours when Jesus hung upon the cross, an eclipse of the sun was experienced:

‘It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour,<sup>45</sup> while the sun’s light failed.’ (Luke 23:44-45)

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The 'head' of the body, the 'firstborn' died in the flesh, and the sun no longer gave its light. Is there not a similar experience in our parishes when leadership is not experienced?

### 3. Jesus Leads Through his Leaders with Light and Warmth

*'Just as the sun shines simultaneously on the tall cedars and on each little flower as though it were alone on the earth, so Our Lord is occupied particularly with each soul as though there were no others like it.'* - St. Therese of Lisieux

In the time leading up to his crucifixion, Jesus wanted the disciples to have an unmistakable experience of his sonship (or 'sunship'?! ) to lessen the scandalising effects of the crucifixion. On Mount Tabor, he was transfigured in their presence, and they had an unforgettable experience of the brightness of his glory:

'...he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.' (Matthew 17:2)

Peter later writes:

'...we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup>For when he received honour and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased", <sup>18</sup>we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. <sup>19</sup>And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts...' (2 Peter 1:16-19)

The memory of Jesus' bright divinity serves 'until the day dawns and the morning star rises.'

What if leadership in our parishes served to give people an experience of the brightness of Jesus' leadership? How might parish leaders allow the 'healing rays' of Jesus' leadership to shine through them?

*Jesus gives light through his leaders.* Think back to the Day 2 module on vision. Leaders bestow light in the form of a vision. In the Gospels, people followed Jesus thanks to his stirring vision of the future Kingdom of God. The gift that leadership brings is vision, clarity, a direction of travel, and a plan for how to get there. Sharing vision both shines light on current reality and on the future ahead of us. (Remember Max De Pree's words, 'The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality'.) Sharing vision is a way of 'separating the light from the darkness' (Genesis 1:18).

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‘When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but have the light of life.’” (John 8:12)

Jesus alone is the Leader who can say that not only does he shed light on reality, but that he *is* the Light of the world. In other words, he is at the same time the Vision of the future, the Leader who points towards it, and the Light by which we see it.

Another role of leadership through ‘giving light’ is to mark the seasons, days and years (Genesis 1:14). This light-giving role establishes rhythms through the year. For the Israelite calendar, the solar and lunar cycles determine agricultural and liturgical seasons (see CCC 347). Likewise, spiritual leadership in a parish is discerning of the signs, conscious that the Holy Spirit is constantly at work. What is the Holy Spirit doing right now? What is the current spiritual ‘season’? What are the rhythms we are called to live, to best reflect and honour all that God is doing in and through us?

*Jesus gives warmth through his leaders.* There must have been a deep personal attractiveness in the humanity of Jesus that drew people to him. His message together with his personality made him magnetic: people would follow him for days, sometimes going without food.

Jesus leads your parish – with light and warmth – through *you* and your leadership team.

Leadership writer and coach, John Maxwell, says: ‘People buy into the leader before they buy into the vision.’ People follow you thanks to a contagious vision that stirs passion in them. But primarily they follow you because of the personal qualities and attractiveness they experience in you. Both go together. The vision (light) and the person of the leader (warmth) are inextricable.

The brighter Jesus can shine through your leadership, the more people experience the warmth and light of the sun/Son, rather than the cold, dark, confusing experience of absent leadership.

And think of the impact! Remember the ‘seed-bearing plants’ that began to grow upon the earth in day three? It is only the sun, created on the fourth day, that stimulates processes like photosynthesis that allow plants to survive on the earth. No sun, no growth, and no life.

Likewise, new disciples cannot grow strong unless under the light and warmth of leadership: light to show the way, warmth to strengthen and encourage.

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In 1920s Chicago, an experiment was run at the Hawthorne Works, a Western Electric factory. The goal of the study was to explore how to increase worker productivity. The factory workers were divided into two groups. The control group in one room didn't know they were being studied and went on with their work as usual. The other group were told that they were participating in a study about productivity. Then, the researchers increased the brightness of the factory floor just a little.

The productivity of those who knew they were being studied increased a lot. But the researchers concluded that it was not the extra light that boosted productivity, but rather, the attention being paid to the workers. The employees worked harder because they felt seen.

Interestingly, as soon as the researchers stopped observing, productivity went back to normal. What is now called the Hawthorne Effect links observation to an improvement in behaviour.

Positive attention is a tremendous gift leadership can bestow. How do we help people know that they are seen, that someone is paying attention, that someone cares? As soon as leaders stop paying attention, people feel it, and it causes them to stop caring or paying attention too. Making people feel valued, recognised, praised and proud of themselves is part of the role of 'warmth' in leadership.

The power of relational authority in leadership is when we experience, in Fr James Mallon's words, 'that we are not just nameless cogs in a giant wheel or objects to be used. We are cherished and respected.'<sup>12</sup> He goes onto write:

'Character leadership is trust based rather than fear based. When people experience love and respect, it creates trust—and trust goes both ways. The person in leadership trusts the employees or other staff members, and the team members trust the person in leadership. Rather than releasing cortisol into our bodies, as the fear-based positional leadership approach does, character leadership evokes the release of oxytocin and dopamine, the bonding and pleasure hormones in our bodies. We sometimes describe the experience of these hormones as "the warm fuzzies"!'

It allows them to experience that the sun is shining! This approach to leadership evokes the famous Maya Angelou quotation: 'People will forget what you said, they'll forget what you did, but they'll never forget how you made them feel.'

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<sup>12</sup> *Divine Renovation: Beyond the Parish*, p. 145.

# Build Your Leadership Team

## 4. How Do We Share in Jesus' Light?

*'If we get in front of the sun, we get sun tans ... but when we get in front of Jesus in the Eucharist, we become saints.'* – Bl. Carlo Acutis

Perhaps it feels very presumptuous to say that your parish leadership team stands in the place of the sun, the centre of your parish solar system. Is there a risk of being authoritarian, or of eclipsing the light of others in the parish?

Another insight from the French Cardinal de Bérulle might help. In the 1500s when he lived, recent claims by mathematicians had suggested that, not only was the sun at the centre of the solar system, but that stars surrounded this sun which was their centre. In the moon, the cardinal saw a figure representing Mary.

Jesus 'is a sun and the Virgin is a planet that revolves around Jesus, around this glorious sun. She revolves around him. He is her centre. He is her circumference. It seems that she encloses and brings to perfection his greatness and his power. He looks at her unceasingly from every angle. She is directed only toward him.'<sup>13</sup>

Centuries later, Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen shared a similar insight:

'God who made the sun, also made the moon. The moon does not take away from the brilliance of the sun. All its light is reflected from the sun. The Blessed Mother reflects her Divine Son; without him, she is nothing. With him, she is the Mother of men.'

Sheen's words are crucial to understanding how we transmit Jesus' light and warmth: like Mary, we do not 'take away from' his brilliance; we only reflect what is his, because without him, we are nothing. Without him, our leadership is just our own human weakness.

We can go deeper into these concepts with the help of St Paul. In his Letters to the Corinthians and to the Colossians, he seems to say two different things about leadership simultaneously.

To the Corinthians he writes: '...we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake' (2 Corinthians 4:5). It is similar to the idea that we simply 'reflect' Christ's own light. He goes on to say: 'For it is the God

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<sup>13</sup> The insight also draws our minds to John's vision in the Book of Revelation: 'a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars' (Revelation 12:1).

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who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (v6). When our leadership reflects Christ's light it dispels darkness and brings order to chaos.

At the same time, to the Colossians, in the same letter where Paul describes Jesus as the 'firstborn', he writes something astounding: that the Father 'has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son...' (Colossians 1:12-13). Jesus is the firstborn, not the 'only born'. We are among millions of adopted sons and daughters invited to share in Christ's inheritance, including his leadership.

Let that word sink in: '*qualified you.*' God the Father himself has qualified you to share in the leadership of his Son. Not because of anything you have done or because you are worthy, but because he has unfathomably chosen you to reign with him.

Both of these are equally true: that we reflect Jesus not proclaiming ourselves; and that, even so, we are *qualified* to reign with him from the heavenly places (see also Ephesians 2:6).

We cannot overlook that *all* the baptised are 'qualified'. Leadership is not the preserve of the few: all Christians are called to lead, to influence, to hold dominion in their spheres. The parish leadership team is a unique instance of this and team members have a responsibility to reflect how each baptised person is called to lead, by raising others up, enabling them to discover their unique callings, as younger brothers and sisters of the 'firstborn Son'.

Undeniably, our leadership becomes more effective the more radiantly we reflect Christ, like Mary being 'directed only toward him', and transformed more and more into the image of her Son:

'And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit' (2 Corinthians 3:18).

You are called to be transformed 'from one degree of glory to another.' As you are transformed, your light grows brighter, and your leadership grows stronger. Those you lead can see even more clearly as Jesus in you unveils the Gospel and opens eyes to see. Those you lead experience more 'dry land' as Jesus in you brings order to chaotic darkness.

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This is the extraordinary, almost unbelievable, calling of Christian leadership into which you are invited.

## 5. Complementarity in Leadership

*‘Christ is the light of humanity; ...by proclaiming his Gospel to every creature, it may bring to all men that light of Christ which shines out visibly from the Church.’*

(Lumen Gentium 1)

Just as the earth is ‘ruled’ by multiple light sources, and as Jesus chooses to lead his Church through the apostles, so is the pastor called in the parish to lead alongside and through others. In the expanse of the heavens, there are multiple ‘lights’, not just one light source. The greater light rules the day, while the lesser light rules the night (Genesis 1:16). There is a span of time in each 24-hour period when the ‘greater light’ is not visible. This is according to natural design (unlike the failure of the sun we considered earlier). There is something ‘good’ in God’s design that the ‘greater light’ yields to the ‘lesser light’ at certain times and then reappears. The day and the night do not compete with, but complement, each other.

Complementarity in leadership is written into creation, and it makes for the most effective leadership. To unpack this idea in the light of scripture a little further, we turn later in the Book of Genesis, to Joseph’s dream:

‘Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.’<sup>10</sup> But when Joseph told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, ‘What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?’ (Genesis 37:9-10)

Inadvertently, Jacob gives the explanation of the dream: the sun is Joseph’s father, the moon is his mother Rachel, and the eleven stars are his brothers. Interestingly, the moon is assigned to the only woman, making us think back to the connection between Mary and the moon, and the sign of her dominion in John’s vision where the moon is ‘under her feet’ (Revelation 1:12).

Joseph’s dream emphasises the important complementarity of male and female in Christian leadership, neither eclipsing nor competing with the other. The parish needs different styles of leadership from leaders in union with one another, each reflecting the light and warmth of Jesus in unique ways.

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Sharing in the leadership of the ‘firstborn son’, you also share his mother. Just as the moon is symbolic of Rachel in Joseph’s dream, there is evidence in the New Testament that Mary is a ‘New Rachel’ (e.g., Matthew 2:13-18 with Jeremiah 31:15-17 in the background). Rachel is the mother of two sons: Joseph and Benjamin. Joseph is the ‘firstborn’ and seen as a ‘type’ of Jesus. Mary is the mother of Jesus, her first and only Son. But on the Cross, Jesus makes her mother of a second son, John (the new Benjamin) and, by extension, of all disciples – all those who will follow the ‘firstborn’:

‘When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!”<sup>27</sup> Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.’ (John 19:26-27)<sup>14</sup>

The subsequent brothers and sisters of the ‘firstborn son’ share not only in his leadership but also his mother. Mary likewise reveals her own style of ruling that complements her Son’s.

## 6. Conclusion

The physical light created at the beginning of the universe allegorically foreshadows the spiritual light that enters the world when God becomes man. This is a new beginning for humanity, and John in a certain sense ‘re-writes’ Genesis in his Prologue:

‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.’ John 1:1-5

In part 2, we have explored how Jesus is the true sun at the centre of the solar system of your parish, but that he calls leaders to share in his leadership by transmitting and reflecting his own light and warmth. Mary reveals how to do this, also demonstrating how complementarity in leadership is written not only into the created world but also into the biblical tradition. Sharing in Jesus’ leadership, leaders separate the light from the darkness by casting vision, giving a direction of travel, and discerning the ‘signs and the seasons’ of how the Holy Spirit is working in the parish. Without leadership, people experience darkness and confusion (like an eclipse) and spiritual life struggles to grow. Finally, leaders demonstrate that all the baptised are ‘qualified’ to share in the ‘inheritance of the saints in light’. All are called to be,

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<sup>14</sup> For more on Mary as the New Rachel, see Brant Pitre’s book: *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary*.

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‘...children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world.’ (Philippians 2:15)

## 3. Practical Parish Application

The scriptures have cast light on our experience of leadership considered in part 1. The word of God reveals the true design of the universe and of human life, that have been obscured by the world’s darkness and human sinfulness. We have seen that true leadership reflects and shares in Jesus’ leadership, and it is always shared with others. In part 3, we turn to get practical: How do we build a leadership team? And how does leadership culture become embedded in the parish?

### 1. Why Leadership?

*‘O give thanks to the Lord...  
who made the great lights,  
for his steadfast love endures forever;  
    <sup>8</sup> the sun to rule over the day,  
for his steadfast love endures forever;  
    <sup>9</sup> the moon and stars to rule over the night,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.’ (Psalm 136: 7-9)*

First of all, why leadership at all? You’d be stretched to find any sections in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* dedicated to leadership.

Since the beginning of Divine Renovation, the best of leadership has been considered essential to parish renewal, without which the others (power of the Holy Spirit and the primacy of evangelisation) do not flourish as they could.

While different ages in the history of the Church require different emphases, we believe that, for this 21<sup>st</sup> century apostolic age in the Church, the renewal of parishes is extremely difficult (we would say impossible) without leadership.

As a reference point, here is our definition of leadership: ‘Leadership is the practice of influencing and mobilising people to tackle tough challenges and empower other leaders in pursuit of the parish vision.’

#### a. Without leadership, people struggle to thrive in tough environments

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We've explored in part 1 how different and how potentially damaging to Christian faith is the secular, western environment most of us live in. Without leaders giving light and warmth, countless parishioners will continue falling away from our parishes, and those who are seeking will have no idea that our parish exists.

Leadership is a staggeringly high calling because it serves people where they need it most. Let's consider the nature of this high calling.

The word, 'leadership' comes from the Indo-European root word *leit*. This literally means 'to go forth, to die'. It has been the word used for the person who carried the flag in front of an army going into battle who usually died in the first enemy attack. This person's sacrifice alerts the army to the location of danger ahead.

This might not seem what you bought into when you agreed to be on your parish leadership team! But written into the very nature of Christian leadership is a willingness to sacrifice oneself for the sake of others, even to lose one's life.

'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.' (John 12:24)

Leadership author Simon Sinek comments, 'It is a luxury to put our interests first. It is an honour to put the interests of others before our own.' Relying on system-managing when leadership is required can be seen as 'putting our interests first'. It is preferable to keep swimming than to take bold leadership decisions. The members of Christ's Body the Church suffer when tough challenges, crises or even scandals are not tackled with leadership, but rather with system-managing.

Jim Collins has blunt words for leaders: 'You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality.'

This is a good point to ask: what is the difference between *leadership* and *management*? It would be wrong to reach a simplistic 'leadership good – management bad' conclusion. Both are needed. In Peter Drucker's words, 'Managing is doing the right thing, leadership is doing things right.' John P. Kotter writes, 'Management is about coping with complexity. ... Leadership, by contrast, is about coping with change.'<sup>15</sup>

Here are some helpful distinctions from Kotter:

'*Management* involves planning and budgeting. *Leadership* involves setting direction.'

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<sup>15</sup> John P. Kotter, 'What Leaders Really Do.'

# Build Your Leadership Team

*Management* involves organizing and staffing. *Leadership* involves aligning people. *Management* provides control and solves problems. *Leadership* provides motivation.'

When we try to solve problems with management solutions when they need leadership solutions, we get stuck. And if you are a leader who spends more time on managing, those you lead are going to feel it. Carey Nieuwhof writes: 'If you're cleaning up dropped balls, chasing missed goals, and second-guessing whether things will get done, you're spending too much time managing and not enough time leading.'

When your parish is experiencing change, you need leaders who can set direction, align people, and provide motivation more than you need managers who can plan and organize. (Although of course you need managers too.)

We have used the term 'system-manager' a little pejoratively to refer to someone who should be leading and instead doubles-down into management.

Leading often involves moving out of the status quo, necessitating some heroism.

The leader has put the good of the flock above his own good. The leader is willing personally to suffer for the sake of goodness and truth. The leader is spurred on by a God-given picture of the future, and, like 'Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, ...for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame' (Hebrews 12:2). When things go well, leaders share the credit with their team, but when things go badly, they take the responsibility on themselves.

If this is what leadership is, are you ready to say yes to the high calling of leadership?

## **b. Without leadership, people do not realize their full potential**

When pastors act as system-managers, or as authority figures rather than leaders, two great tragedies occur: the lay faithful do not realize their full potential, and neither does the pastor himself realize the full potential of his own priesthood in its role of unleashing the baptismal grace of the baptized.

Time and again, priests will have encountered this simple line from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

'The ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians' (CCC 1547).

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In practice, the ministerial priesthood has tended to serve the common priesthood by *doing everything for them*: leading every meeting, teaching every class, being involved in every decision. But this is not ‘service’ of the common priesthood: it is enabling a kind of spiritual childishness and passivity which we considered in blind spot #3 in part 1 above.

Think about it: if you are a priest or lay professional pastoral worker, every time you lead, speak, teach or decide – without considering who you could be apprenticing to lead, speak, teach or decide – you are perpetuating an ecclesial sickness of passivity through which the Church is not fit enough to fulfil her mission.

This is certainly not new in the life of the Church! It is over 60 years since the Second Vatican Council, and yet we are still at the beginning of implementing some of its teaching. The decree, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, for example, clearly indicates that the laity are called to share not only in the prophetic (teaching and evangelizing) role of Christ, but also in the kingly (leadership) role. It is worth reading the paragraph in full:

‘As sharers in the role of Christ as priest, prophet, and king, the laity have their work cut out for them in the life and activity of the Church. Their activity is so necessary within the Church communities that without it the apostolate of the pastors is often unable to achieve its full effectiveness. In the manner of the men and women who helped Paul in spreading the Gospel (cf. Acts 18:18, 26; Rom. 16:3) the laity with the right apostolic attitude supply what is lacking to their brethren and refresh the spirit of pastors and of the rest of the faithful (cf. 1 Cor. 16:17-18). Strengthened by active participation in the liturgical life of their community, they are eager to do their share of the apostolic works of that community. They bring to the Church people who perhaps are far removed from it, earnestly cooperate in presenting the word of God especially by means of catechetical instruction, and offer their special skills to make *the care of souls and the administration of the temporalities of the Church more efficient and effective.*’ (§10, emphasis added)

Pope Benedict XVI in 2009 again called for, ‘a change in mindset... concerning lay people.’ He stated clearly that the laity ‘must no longer be viewed as "collaborators" of the clergy but truly recognized as "co-responsible," for the Church's being and action’, assuring pastors that this ‘in no way diminishes the responsibility of parish priests.’ Rather, ‘It is precisely your task, dear parish priests, to nurture the spiritual and apostolic growth of those who are already committed to working hard in the parishes. They form the core of the community that will act as a leaven for the others.’<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Opening of the Pastoral Convention of the Diocese of Rome on the theme: ‘Church Membership and Pastoral Co-Responsibility,’ May 26, 2009.

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In *Divine Renovation: Beyond the Parish*, Fr James Mallon refers to a FedEx commercial based on the Tom Hanks *Castaway* movie from the 2003 Super Bowl.<sup>17</sup>

‘The video opens with a Tom Hanks-like figure-complete with wild hair, scraggly beard, and a dishevelled FedEx uniform-holding a rather battered FedEx box as he stands in front of a house. ... When the owner opens the door, he explains to her that he was marooned on a desert island for five years with only this piece of mail but that, as a FedEx employee, he wanted to make sure he delivered it.

‘The woman, for her part, is astonished and thanks the man for his dedication. The FedEx employee begins to turn away but then asks the woman what was in the box. She opens it and says, "Nothing really. Just a satellite phone, GPS locator, fishing rod, water purifier, and some seeds. Silly stuff!"’<sup>18</sup>

Just as the FedEx employee had everything he needed to thrive on the island, so does every parish have all the ingredients needed – *already in its pews* – to experience renewal. You do not need to helicopter missionaries or talented leaders into your parish. The Holy Spirit has seen to it that all the charisms needed for the upbuilding of your parish and the evangelization of your neighbourhood exist already: in the pews of your church.

## **c. Without leadership, even a parish on mission becomes chaotic**

Your parish could conceivably make great progress in becoming missional without any reference to leadership principles at all. Imagine an evangelistic tool flourishing at the heart of the parish, a flourishing culture of hospitality and invitation, disciples being apprenticed through small groups, people discovering their God-given charisms and beginning to use them. New ministries, groups and outreach initiatives are begun.

This is what happened in the early years of the renewal of St Benedict Parish led by Fr James Mallon. He realized he’d reached a point in leading a parish to mission that he’d never experienced before. New disciples were waking up everywhere, the rooms in the parish were maxed out, no one was keeping track of all the new ministries and groups springing up. The environment was becoming somewhat chaotic!

This is a beautiful problem to have and one that most parishes cannot even imagine. It is a demonstration of how the charismatic and the hierarchical dimensions of the Church are interdependent (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, §4). As the charismatic gifts blossom in the lives of the faithful, the role of the hierarchical dimension of the parish is to bring order and

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<sup>17</sup> You can watch the commercial here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1dtrc04g8g>

<sup>18</sup> *Divine Renovation: Beyond the Parish*, p. 139.

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discipline.<sup>19</sup> This is what we call *structure*. Imagine a trellis on which a vine grows. The trellis does not hamper the growth of the vine; in fact, it allows it to grow even more abundantly.

If your parish has been prioritizing the primacy of evangelisation and the power of the Holy Spirit, this is great news. Before long, you will experience abundant new life in your parish. And before long, you will realize you need to learn about the best of leadership in order for that new life to bear even more fruit.

***Before we call out a Leadership team, we will talk about “Shared Leadership” as the core principle knowing that the Leadership Team is a structure for shared leadership***

## 2. Why a Leadership Team?

*‘Let us all be the leaders we wish we had.’ – Simon Sinek*

The Leadership Team is the small group of leaders who share in the pastor’s leadership to bring to life the parish vision.<sup>20</sup>

Pastors who have built a leadership team around them – to share leadership of the parish and to realise their God-given picture of the parish’s future – give witness time and again how transformational this has been to their priesthood.

We often refer to the pastor ‘leading out of’ a team, rather than ‘leading’ a team. ‘Leading out of’ suggests that the team is not there just to do the pastor’s bidding, but rather, he is dependent on them for his leadership.<sup>21</sup> Leading a team might be summarized in what Fr. James Mallon has called the Braveheart model of leadership: ‘gather the troops, tell

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<sup>19</sup> The 2016 Letter, *‘Iuvenescit Ecclesia’*, from the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, gives excellent teaching on the relation between the two: ‘The relationship between them appears close and well-articulated. They have the same origin and the same purpose. They are gifts of God, of the Holy Spirit, of Christ, given to contribute, in diverse ways, to the edification of the Church. He who has received the gift to lead in the Church has also the responsibility of keeping watch over the good exercise of the other charisms, in such a manner that all contribute to the good of the Church and to its evangelizing mission, knowing well that the Holy Spirit distributes the charismatic gifts to whomever he desires (cf. *1 Cor* 12:11). The same Spirit gives to the hierarchy of the Church the capacity to discern the authenticity of the charisms, to welcome them with joy and gratitude, to promote them generously, and to accompany them with vigilant paternity’ (§8).

<sup>20</sup> To be precise, the phrase ‘share in’ we recognize that this co-responsibility is dependent upon the pastor’s delegation. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* notes that ‘by virtue of this mission, the laity are fully subject to higher ecclesiastical control in the performance of this work’ (§24). In other words, while the pastor retains ultimate responsibility for the activities of the parish (Code of Canon Law, 528-529), he also ultimately retains full responsibility for the outcome of his team members’ leadership in the parish.

<sup>21</sup> Read Chapter 12 in *Divine Renovation: Beyond the Parish* by Fr James Mallon for a fuller unpacking of what this means.

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them where we are going, get them cheering, and then charge ahead!’<sup>22</sup> Maybe you can see something of this in your own leadership style, but it is not what is meant by ‘leading out of a team.’

Here, we share three main reasons why as a pastor you should lead out of a leadership team:

## **a. Leading out of a team empowers others to live out their God-given charisms**

Already we have seen that the priest fulfils his purpose only when he enables the charisms in the lives of the laity to be unlocked and unleashed. He soon realizes that some of those charisms are gifts from God to his own ministry in leading the parish.

In 1987, Pope St John Paul II gave a homily where he stated:

‘The Spirit of the Lord gives a vast variety of charisms, inviting people to assume different ministries and forms of service and reminding them, as he reminds all people in their relationship in the Church, that what distinguishes persons is *not an increase in dignity, but a special and complementary capacity for service...* Thus, the charisms, the ministries, the different forms of service exercised by the lay faithful exist in communion and on behalf of communion. They are treasures that complement one another for the good of all and are under the wise guidance of their Pastors.’<sup>23</sup>

Like the sun, moon, and stars shining distinctly and brilliantly, not competing or taking away from the brightness of each other, sharing in the pastor’s leadership does not bestow on some ‘an increase in dignity’ but rather, ‘a special and complementary capacity for service.’ Think of the leader going ahead and, if necessary, laying down his or her life for the mission: that is the type of service we mean.

Magisterial teaching such as this has been an uncovering of what has been in the tradition of Christianity from the outset. St. Paul taught the church in Ephesus that God,

‘...gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ’ (Ephesians 4:11-12).

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<sup>22</sup> *Divine Renovation: Beyond the Parish*, p. 176.

<sup>23</sup> John Paul II, Homily at the Solemn Eucharistic Concelebration for the close of the Seventh Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (Oct. 30, 1987): AAS 80 (1988), 600.

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We have referred to these five charisms before as you explored APEST in the Day 3 module. Your leadership team is a tremendous gift because it means that God has precisely given the charisms you do not have to lay people he has called to lead alongside you. Are you weak in apostolic or evangelistic charism and worry you do not have what it takes to lead into mission? God already has you covered! There is someone with a strong apostolic or evangelistic charism in your pews who God is calling to use this charism for the good of the parish.

John Paul II also writes that the Body of Christ comprises,

*'...a diversity and a complementarity of vocations and states in life, of ministries, of charisms and responsibilities. Because of this diversity and complementarity every member of the lay faithful is seen in relation to the whole body and offers a totally unique contribution on behalf of the whole body.'*<sup>24</sup>

If the gifts of a lay person contribute to the pastor's leadership of the parish, this is a gift that is a 'unique contribution' in service to 'the whole body'.

### **b. Leading out of a team frees you up to do what you were ordained (priests) or baptized (laity) to do**

One pastor coached by Divine Renovation tells the following story:

'One time, my Divine Renovation coach challenged me to write out an organisational chart. I wrote out who's directly reporting to me. It took up a paper this big. I saw about 30 different arrows of people needing my direct assistance and guidance. So on the one hand, I felt like crying. On the other hand, I felt so free. I started to understand, this is why my time is scattered in so many different directions. Finances, facilities, all these things. I don't know how to repair a pipe. And nobody told me that this was my vocation, right? My vocation is to go out, to evangelise, to visit the people, to knock doors, to announce the good news. That's what makes me excited, right? There are three things I learned from that exercise. First, I'm going to only focus on what I can do. Second, I'm only going to focus on those ministries that are really bearing fruit. And third, I'm going to look at my schedule very intentionally.'

If this sounds familiar to you as a pastor, maybe undertaking a similar task of drawing a chart of the roles in the parish you directly oversee would be helpful. We would also encourage you to consider what only you can do and what that means for your schedule.

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<sup>24</sup> *Christifidelis Laici*, §20.

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*What are the things only you can do?* As the life in your parish becomes more fruitful, the demand for sacraments such as Confession is only going to grow. Sacramental ministries can only be done by you. Likewise, preaching at Mass is a role that belongs uniquely to you.

*What does this mean for your schedule?* Leading in an apostolic age means your schedule is likely going to look radically different from what it looked like when you were first ordained, or what you imagined it would look like while you were in seminary. This might involve some re-imagining of your ministry, and even grieving over the things you must let go, but this is ultimately healthy and required by the circumstances of history in which we live. Pope Francis indicates the kind of flexibility we need to be ready for when he writes in *Evangelii Gaudium*:

‘Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: “We have always done it this way”. I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities.’ (§33)

Every priest needs to discern individually what this means for his schedule. One pastor, Fr Justin Huang, shares his own approach:

‘Basically, I look at my schedule and I have what's called an ideal week. Every day has a different theme. And I always start with the easiest one, Monday, the day of rest. I don't book anything there. What is Tuesday? I call it my leadership day. So, I meet with every senior leadership team member. We have a two-hour meeting, and that's my focus. If I can help them, they can help many people. On Wednesday, we call it the Day of the 72. Jesus also had 72 disciples. That's a day when I meet certain wonderful leaders who are in charge of ministries, and I meet them not every week, but about once a month. On Thursday, I basically block out the whole day for writing my Sunday homily. And that's allowed me to get four weeks in advance of my Sunday homily. So I have four homilies written, in advance, and we have a better idea of where the parish is going and we can adjust, so that we're more strategic in listening to God's call. Friday is the miscellaneous day, a day that allows for what God might allow for interruptions. And then Saturday and Sunday are my sacraments days. I'm putting a lot of time and effort into confessions, those possible weddings on Saturday, the evening Mass, all the Masses on Sunday. And I started realising that the time given there, it's not just, I'd say regular time, but it's intentional time.’

The *Divine Renovation Guidebook*, pages 38-46, has very helpful exercises to help a pastor, supported by his team, discern how he best spends his time.

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## c. Leading out of a team brings about the parish vision faster

Finally, if nothing else has convinced you to lead out of a team, we encourage you to think about the vision you have for your parish – the God-given picture of the future that produces passion in you. Recalling the Day 2 module on vision, this picture of the future is hopefully burning in your bones and getting you out of bed every day! Leadership author Jim Collins writes, ‘Great vision without great people is irrelevant.’ Without a team, your vision is destined to stay just that: a vision (or maybe an hallucination).

An oft-quoted leadership proverb states, ‘If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.’ Some days the urgency you feel about realizing the vision in your parish will make you want to do it all yourself. Drawing others into your vision, exciting them and galvanising them, seems to slow everything down. But the truth is that, while leading out of a team is slower to begin with, once your team shares the passion you have for the vision, your workforce in bringing it about is multiplied.

When Jesus began his work of ministry, he did not move straight into preaching to the crowds. Rather, he selected the twelve apostles whom he apprenticed and through whom the Kingdom of God would advance after his Ascension. Leading out of a team is truly the ‘Jesus model’ of leadership that alone enables your vision to be realized.

Not only is your workforce multiplied through your team, but your team members will be able to achieve results you could never imagine achieving alone. Maybe you have one or two strong executors who action tasks which, left in your inbox, would languish for days or weeks! Or maybe you have strong influencers, who are able to galvanise and mobilise other parishioners in a way you could never dream of.

Leadership author Warren Bennis writes, ‘Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.’ This is exactly how God has designed us: to work together in collaboration, bringing about a new reality together, that could never be accomplished by one person alone.

### 3. What a Leadership Team Is and What It Is Not

We’ve defined the parish leadership team as *the small group of leaders who share in the pastor’s leadership to bring to life the parish vision.*

Let’s get more specific.

There are *three purposes* of the leadership team:

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- Support the pastor in being the best leader he can be and in making the best decisions for the parish
- Raise up leaders in the parish (see section 7 below), rather than doing everything themselves
- Bring to life the parish's vision.

There are *three features* of a leadership team:

- It is made up of between four and six people, including the pastor
- Its focus is primarily tactical, though there will be some strategic planning
- It meets weekly (or every other week), normally for between one-and-a-half to two hours.

*The leadership team is not a pastoral council.* Pastoral councils have been a common means of co-responsibility between clergy and laity within parish since they were referenced at the Second Vatican Council (see e.g., *Apostolicam Actuositatem* §26, and the 1973 letter, *Omnes Christifideles*). While a pastoral council can be an important body in the life of the parish, it does not fill the leadership team function that the pastor will need to lead his parish into mission. For this, the pastor needs a **small** team that can be nimble and act swiftly without lengthy deliberation. He needs a team focused on day-to-day **tactics** who will share responsibility for tasks and leadership rather than overseeing or providing long-term strategic thinking. He needs a team that can meet several hours **weekly**, to ensure that momentum is maintained in leading the parish to mission.<sup>25</sup> As a parish makes progress towards mission, the need for a pastoral council to complement the leadership team will become greater. A pastoral council will be larger and include more diverse experiences of the parish. It can include more strategic thinkers who will provide insight into a lengthier time horizon, maybe looking five years ahead, in contrast to the one-year time horizon of the leadership team. For a deeper dive into the difference between a leadership team and a pastoral council, [see Divine Renovation's self-paced course here](#).

*The leadership team is not a representative body.* A pastoral council will often include representatives from different sectors of the parish – perhaps someone from the Catholic Women's League, or another representing the Filipino population. While this can be useful on a pastoral council (although the advantages and disadvantages would need to be weighed), it is not what you need on a leadership team. However hard the representatives try to think of the good of the whole body, their default focus will be to the group that they represent and to whom they feel answerable. 'What about us?' This approach therefore can foster di-vision rather than unanimity of vision.

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<sup>25</sup> Read *Divine Renovation*, pp. 258-264 to learn how St Benedict Parish organised the Pastoral Council in the earlier days of renewal there.

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*The leadership team is not a staff reporting body.* If you have a staff team, you may be used to staff meetings that are focused on reporting, sharing information with an emphasis on ‘how is it going?’ Your leadership team meetings should avoid reporting (more on this below). You will also be thinking about how your leadership team relates to the rest of the staff team. Should staff in certain positions automatically be on the leadership team? As will become clear as we unpack how to discern your team, the essential answer would be, No. Leadership teams are invited primarily thanks to unanimity of vision with the pastor and the balance of strengths they bring to the team, rather than their staffing position. This applies even to other clergy including deacons. Having said this, it would be strange if, for example, your Director of Evangelization were not on your leadership team. If this were the case, you might want to question whether you have the right person in the seat on the bus. Certain staffing roles will be critical if the parish vision is going to be brought to life. There may be tough decisions to make. Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great*, comments, ‘People are not your most important asset. The right people are.’

## 4. Discerning Your Team

*‘In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. <sup>13</sup>And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles.’ (Luke 6:12-13)*

So, who is God calling to share your (the pastor’s) leadership in realising the parish vision? By now, you the pastor likely have a small group of lay people working together with you. You probably find yourself in one of three scenarios:

*Scenario #1:* Perhaps you have a ‘launch or interim team’ of sorts: lay people who have been exploring with you what renewal and mission will mean for your parish, they have worked with you discerning vision, maybe getting Alpha going, or working on the Sunday experience. Maybe you have wisely taken time to discern who will be on your more stable or permanent leadership team and gathered an interim team for six or 12 months. This module is designed to help you have a fledgling leadership team by the end of it.

*Scenario #2:* Maybe you have a formed leadership team which is working well already, and you feel committed to it. In this case, why not read through this section to see how these principles are at work in your team to make sure there are no adjustments needed?

*Scenario #3:* Maybe you have established a group of lay people as a leadership team, but it is not working out too well. Maybe you don’t have quite the right mix of personalities or gifts. Maybe you misjudged a particular person’s strengths, or maybe there is a poor fit

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or chemistry among the team. Whatever the case, do not worry. This can often be the case when a pastor begins the renewal of his parish. He needs a second opportunity to build a new team after the first one didn't work out. While this Day 4 module does not cover re-building a team, we encourage you to reach out to a Divine Renovation coach for a 'deep dive' on how to do this well.

## a. FACT<sup>26</sup>

The F-A-C-T acronym will be a helpful guide to identifying any leaders in your parish, not just leadership team members. Before inviting anyone into a leadership role in your parish, discern the person's fit for the role through this checklist.

*Faithful:* Is the person faithful to the Lord and to his Church? Are they seeking holiness through prayer and the sacraments, and committed to growth in their spiritual journey? Do they embrace Jesus' call to evangelize? A person does not need to be the most catechized or seasoned Catholic. Maybe they have been a disciple of Jesus for a short space of time. What matters is that they are on the journey and committed to growing.

*Available:* Is the person available in terms of time, capacity, and commitment to serve? Perhaps they are already busy, but sometimes the busiest leaders have greatest capacity. Your best leaders will be those who sometimes make heroic sacrifices of their time and energy for the sake of the parish. If they are already busy, can you trust that they are reliable, and do what they say they will do?

*Contagious:* Is their faith and personality catching?! Do they have great people skills and make a positive influence on people? Do people feel welcomed and affirmed in their presence? Do they witness to a joyful and authentically lived relationship with Jesus? Would you trust your best, unchurched friend with this person?!

*Teachable:* Are they hungry to learn, or do they already have all the right answers? Pastor Craig Groeschel says, 'People would rather follow a leader that is real than one that is always right.' Is the person you are considering humble and open to receiving feedback and constructive criticism? Are they willing to learn more and grow?

If you have doubts that any of the four qualities are present in the person you are considering, move forward with great caution.

## b. Four Non-Negotiables of the Leadership Team - #1 and #2

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<sup>26</sup> Also see *Divine Renovation Guidebook*, p. 181.

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Since the earliest beginnings of Divine Renovation, we have coached parishes in the *four non-negotiables* of the leadership team.



Our Director of Coaching, Matt Regitz, often says that the first two are the factors that get you onto the team in the first place, while the second two keep you on the team. If F-A-C-T qualities are present in the person you are considering, you will next want to consider the first two non-negotiables of the leadership team. consider the first two non-negotiables of the leadership team.

## Non-Negotiable #1: Unanimity of Vision

*“If we don’t have shared vision, we have di-vision.”*

By the end of the Day 2 module, you were hopefully very close to having a vision dream statement that set your heart on fire when you thought about it! You would have had lay collaborators working with you on that vision, and if they, too, are moved with passion for this vision – if it is motivating them to sacrifice time and energy for the sake of the parish – they likely fulfil your first ‘non-negotiable’.

In the *Divine Renovation Guidebook*, Fr James writes:

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‘Imagine four people in a canoe in the middle of a lake. Each person is paddling frantically towards a different shore. You know what is going to happen: nothing - or at best, they will go round and round in circles, getting exhausted and going nowhere.’<sup>27</sup>

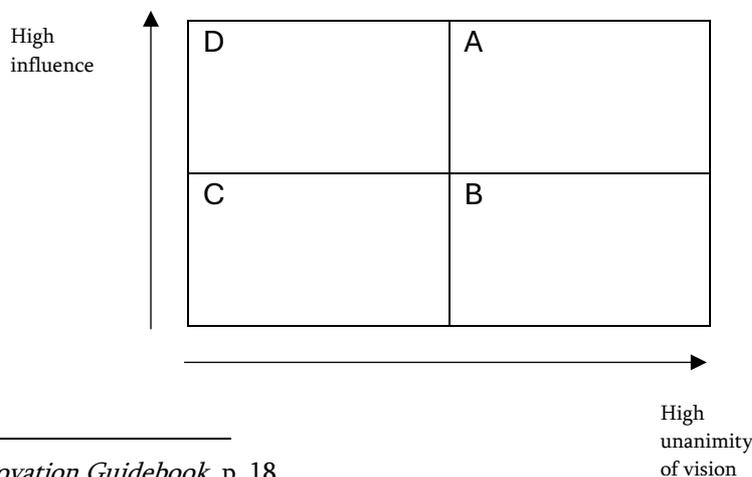
Genesis 1 revealed to us that leaders ‘give light’, that is, they share vision. If you have leaders on your leadership team that do not share your commonly held vision, you will have ‘di-vision’, which literally means, ‘two visions’. Within your team, you will want to disagree on *how* the vision is achieved, but not on *what* the vision is. ‘Two visions’ on the other hand can cause disastrous division through the parish, and you’ll find different teams rowing in different directions.

It becomes clearer why it is not advisable to bring people onto your leadership team just because of the staff position they hold in the parish, or because they are ordained (maybe an associate pastor or a deacon). If they do not share the vision, it is a recipe for problems ahead.

Share vision with potential leaders and hear how they respond, what stirs within them, and whether it produces a similar passion in them. This will help you discern who should be the members of your leadership team.

Your leadership team members do not need to be restricted to those who have directly contributed towards the renewal efforts of the parish so far. It is likely at this stage that many other possible people are emerging. Maybe people who have been on Alpha team, or who have even had powerful experiences at Alpha. Maybe someone who has demonstrated an extraordinary gift for hospitality or has connections with all kinds of people in your parish. Think outside the box, beyond the usual suspects.

You might write a list the most influential people in your parish. Now, plot them onto a grid indicating their passion for the vision.



<sup>27</sup> *Divine Renovation Guidebook*, p. 18.

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Ideally, you want your leadership team to be filled with ‘A’ people. It is better to have a ‘B’ person on the team than a ‘D’ person.

Identifying a list of ‘A’ people is an incredibly exciting moment for you as a pastor. In the words of Howard Schultz, former CEO of Starbucks, ‘When you’re surrounded by people who share a passionate commitment around a common purpose, anything is possible.’

## **Non-Negotiable #2: Balance of Strengths**

*“There is no such thing as a well-rounded person, but there can be a well-rounded team.”*

The image of the variety of lights created by God – sun, moon, and stars – together with magisterial teaching on the ‘diversity and complementarity’ of gifts and charisms required for the mission of your parish should be convicting you of the need to have a balance of strengths on your team.

Our natural human tendency, when we start to think about a leadership team, is to consider people who are very similar to ourselves, who think and behave in the same ways we do. These are people with whom we experience connaturality. Of course, there must be good chemistry on your team, and you should enjoy being together. But if you are all wired in the same way, you will have the same blind spots, and your team will sadly be an example of the blind leading the blind. While people who think differently from you challenge you, they also help you become the best leader you can be. Furthermore, a balance of strengths enables your team to reach the best decisions and outcomes.

Since the early days of renewal led by Fr James Mallon at St Benedict Parish in Halifax, the role of CliftonStrengths, developed by Gallup, has been of central importance in team-building. You can read about this in *Divine Renovation*, pages 166-168, in addition to *Divine Renovation Apprenticeship* by Fr Simon Lobo, pages 156-159. Using strengths has continued to be central in Divine Renovation’s coaching of pastors around the world to build their leadership teams.

CliftonStrengths is a personal assessment tool that identifies an individual’s top five strengths from a list of 34 ‘talent themes’. It analyses the person’s natural patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving, and orients a person towards focusing on developing and utilizing their strengths rather than fixing weaknesses. This is incredibly freeing, because we can accept the fact that we will never be, for example, a genius strategic thinker, and instead, invite someone onto our team who can think strategically without even trying!

## Build Your Leadership Team

Where APEST considers a person's predominant spiritual gifts, or charisms, CliftonStrengths considers a person's natural strengths. As grace perfects our human nature, both are needed and helpful in discerning your team members.<sup>28</sup>

The 34 strengths are categorised into four domains: Influencing, Relationship Building, Strategic Thinking, and Executing. We encourage you to take the online assessment to identify your top 5 themes. Now, how about asking some of those who have worked closely with you to this point to take the assessment? Map their results onto a chart breaking down the strengths into the four domains. What do you notice? Who has strengths that round out yours? What combination of strengths would work well on your team?

Finally, there are three things you should avoid as you use strengths to build your team:

*Avoid using CliftonStrengths to make decisions about what role a person should do.* Rather, the assessment will give you insight about *how* a person will fill that role. We especially need to be careful of this distinction if we use strengths as part of a hiring process. For example, imagine two people applying for a Director of Evangelization role. One of them leads with influencing strengths. The other leads with executing strengths. The first will likely do well at galvanizing others to join the mission. The second will be solidly reliable in ensuring things get done. Strengths tell you how a person will accomplish a role, how they will contribute to the overall dynamics of a team, and what extra supports or helps they might need around them. (Perhaps a Director of Evangelization low in executing strengths needs the help of a strong administrative team member, or one low in influencing needs some coaching on how to best maximise their strengths to mobilise people.)

*Avoid 'pigeon-holing' a person too rigidly by their strengths.* Bear a couple of things in mind. Each person needs to grow in an awareness of and mature use of their strengths: this is not automatic. And, as a person, they are much more than the sum total of their strengths. Experience, character and spiritual capacities all go into shaping a whole personality. Certain themes will show up differently in different people. Furthermore, we need to consider the whole 'constellation' of a person's strength themes working together. Strengths work in conjunction with one another, so 'Achiever' will operate differently in someone who also has 'Activator' in their top five, compared to someone who has 'Deliberative' in their top five.

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<sup>28</sup> Many other helpful assessments exist, and it is important to choose one that is right for your team. Fr James Mallon outlines more fully some of the main options on pages 185-193 of *Divine Renovation: Beyond the Parish*.

# Build Your Leadership Team

*Avoid having people take Strengths assessments never to refer to them again!* CliftonStrengths work best when we embed them into the culture of how we work. There are many layers of understanding we can uncover about ourselves and about the people we work with. Take steps to build regular strengths reflection into your time together as a team. Gallup has abundant material to help, from podcasts to books.

## **c. Making the Ask**

At this stage, you may have a fair idea of the three to five people you want to be on your leadership team. You have likely spent much time in prayer concerning this decision. The people you have in mind all tick the F-A-C-T boxes. They all share a passion for the parish vision. And among this group of people would be a healthy balance of strengths.

On top of this, you hopefully have in mind people that you love the thought of meeting with two to three hours every week. Your leadership team meetings should be some of the most enjoyable time you spend all week! There should be fun and chemistry. If the thought of spending this amount of time with the person concerned does not fill you with delight, you may need to go back to the drawing board. But hopefully you are close to having in mind your ‘dream team’.

Do spend some final time in prayer before moving into invitations. The Holy Spirit may surprise you with an unexpected curve-ball that turns out to make a lot of sense.

But once you’re as sure as you can be, it’s time to invite potential team members to join you on the wild adventure of bringing to life the parish vision!

These are some of the most transformational conversations you could ever have, so approach them thoughtfully. It will be transformational for you if the person agrees to come alongside you and share in your leadership. It will be transformational for them to discover a new call of God in their lives.

## **Five Steps to Inviting Leadership Team Members**

- i) *Always ask in person.* Never do this by email or text – the ‘ask’ is too significant! Consider meeting for coffee or lunch. Ensure you have enough time for a good conversation and will not be interrupted.
- ii) *Use I-C-N-U.* Dave Ferguson, author of *Exponential*, comments that, ‘These are four of the most important letters in the leadership alphabet.’ Imagine the power of someone saying to you, ‘I see in you the characteristics, qualities, and strengths of someone who could really help this parish become

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missional’, or, ‘I’ve witnessed your strengths in humbly leading others and I see in you someone who could be central to bringing to life the parish vision’, or, ‘I’ve experienced how we’ve worked together and I see in you someone who helps me be the best pastor I can be.’ The more specific you are in naming what you have seen in someone, the more meaningful it will be to them.

- iii) *Know the potential power of your invitation.* Jesus’ call of Peter gives a great example of invitation: ‘I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it’ (Matthew 16:18). He is saying, ‘I see in you someone solid, like a rock’, and in this, he is casting a vision for Peter’s life. This conversation is at its heart an envisioning conversation, when the person may see themselves in a new way. Von Balthasar remarks on the power of this conversation for Peter’s self-understanding: ‘Simon the fisherman could have explored every region of his ego prior to his encounter with Christ, but he would not have found ‘Peter’ there.’ Jesus called into being something new in Peter, and he may do the same through the conversations you have with potential team members.
- iv) *Be specific.* As far as you are able, share your vision for this team and how you hope it will help bring to life the parish vision. Personalities are different: some will want to know as many logistical details as possible (when will the team meet, how often, how long?), and others will not be interested in detail, but they will want to hear (again) your vision for the parish and whether it stirs fire in their hearts. Be prepared for the types of things the person will be looking for.
- v) *Give time for discernment.* For some, it may be an easy, immediate, Yes! This is a very exciting response and should give you tremendous encouragement. Most will likely need time to discern, perhaps to discuss with their spouse, and consider realistically how it might fit in their life. Others may be hesitant or cautious but encourage them to spend time in prayer. Agree on a mutually convenient time for a final decision (no more than one month from the conversation would seem sensible).

## 5. Building Your Team

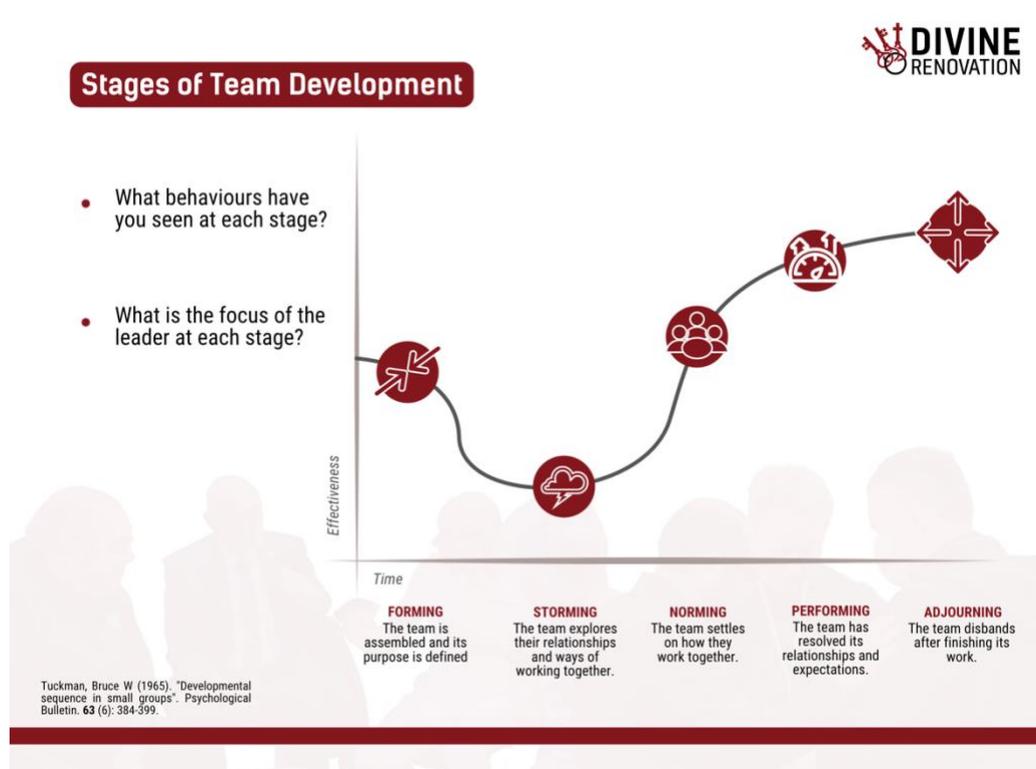
*‘Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.’*  
(1 Corinthians 12:27)

Now you have between three and five people who have – maybe somewhat tentatively! – accepted the invitation to share in your leadership to bring to life the parish vision. What next? Now is the time to start building your team!

# Build Your Leadership Team

## a. Stages of Team Formation

In 1965, psychologist Bruce Tuckman identified four stages that a team would commonly experience through its life-cycle, to which Mary Ann Jensena later added a fifth stage. In the Genesis Compass, we will explore only the first two stages which will be most relevant to the stages your team will move through initially. But it is good to be aware of the whole life-cycle. It is important to note that, when one person leaves the team, or when one person joins the team, the life-cycle starts right at the beginning of formation again. A diagram of these stages can be seen below:



Your team is in the earliest stages of forming. People will likely be excited, have high expectations, and maybe some anxiety. They will have countless questions.

### Three Principles for Success in Forming Your Team

- i. *Manage your expectations.* In the early days, do not expect too much in terms of task accomplishment. This may feel difficult as you are aware of the manifold issues that need to be attended to. But don't overwhelm your team at the outset. Rather, accept that in the beginning you will need to go slow in order to move more quickly later. Building a solid foundation of team formation is more important than getting lots of tasks done.

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- ii. *Prioritize relationships.* Depending on how you're wired, this can feel like a waste of time when so much needs to be done, but it is indispensable to a solid foundation. What would it look like if the first meeting of the new leadership team was dinner together in the rectory? Or drinks at a local pub? What if you over-invested in getting to know and understand one another? This does not have to be purely social (everyone is busy, and you want your meetings to feel intentional and productive). Spend time familiarizing yourselves on each other's strengths profiles. Give a whole evening to hearing each person's story of conversion and relationship with Jesus. If this group of people has not worked together yet on vision (Day 2 module), take some of the activities from that module to work through together – sharing your hopes and dreams for the parish. Just as Jesus prioritized much fellowship time with his apostles, we are called to do the same.
  
- iii. *Gain clarity over how you will work together.* It's important to over-communicate clarity at these early stages. Simon Sinek has a great line: 'Communication is not about saying what we think. Communication is about ensuring others hear what we mean.' Outline the purpose of the leadership team to share in the pastor's leadership to bring to life the parish vision. Explain that it is primarily focused on tactics – though some strategic planning will be involved. Decide which day you will meet each week and for how long. Give everyone time to share about and gain clarity on one another's roles and ministries in the parish. Check for any misunderstandings or assumptions that have not been addressed. For example, are there certain areas not in the team's scope that should be named up front? Discuss how the rest of the staff team will hear about this team. Decide whether now is the right time to communicate it to the rest of the parish, or whether it is preferable to wait.

In the early weeks and months of weekly meetings, you will be finding your feet. You will get into patterns of how meetings work and who takes responsibility for what. You will be learning a lot about one another. You will make your first big decisions together as a leadership team and you will tackle some tough issues. You will celebrate the wins of fruit you are already seeing in the parish. Maybe you will have some successes together: a fruitful Alpha or an anointed praise and worship night.

Before long, if you are a healthy and normal team, you will hit the second stage of team formation: *storming*.

### **b. Four Non-Negotiables of the Leadership Team - #3 and #4**

#### ***Non-Negotiable #3: Vulnerability-based Trust***

# Build Your Leadership Team

*“Trust is the foundation of a highly effective team. An organization moves at the speed of trust.”*

Let’s be real. The thought of being vulnerable with your team members might cause you to shudder. If you are a priest, you were not trained to be vulnerable with your parishioners or staff. You were trained to be an authority figure, someone who is an expert, someone who can solve problems. You were probably implicitly trained to stay emotionally distant. Being friends with your team members?! Definitely not.

The word ‘vulnerability’ comes from the Latin *vulnerare*, meaning ‘to wound.’ We experience this emotion like a ‘wound’ during a time of uncertainty, risk, or emotional exposure. We may react to it by speaking or acting to shut down the potential risk or exposure. We instinctively feel that experiencing vulnerability is a sign of weakness and we need to demonstrate our strength.

But research shows that being able to embrace vulnerability is a sign of courageous leadership. A leader who is willing to handle uncertainty or risk exposure is someone who is courageous and willing to lead. It is the bravery of, in Theodore Roosevelt’s famous quotation, ‘the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly... and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly.’

Even noting your reactions to the idea of being vulnerable is itself vulnerability! Vulnerability means precisely allowing your real emotions to surface: to be authentic, your true self. To be vulnerable is to move beyond performing a particular role you are comfortable with, and being able to say, ‘I don’t know how to do this’, or, ‘I need help.’

What an extraordinarily powerful thing for a pastor to say to his leadership team members, ‘I need you.’ A statement like this displays enormous trust in his team. Charles Feltman defines trust as, ‘Choosing to risk making something you value vulnerable to another person’s actions.’ As soon as a pastor is vulnerable with his team, he shows profound trust.

Simon Sinek says that, ‘Leaders take the risk to trust first.’ Without a doubt, when the pastor shows vulnerability-based trust, it immediately makes it safe for his team members to do the same.

We will see that the highest performing teams with the greatest results are those where there is a deep foundation of vulnerability-based trust. The leader goes first. If you want great trust in your team, start with vulnerability.

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## **Non-Negotiable #4: Healthy Conflict**

*“People need to weigh-in to buy-in.”*

How do you react to the word, ‘conflict’? Not many of us enjoy conflict, although all of us generally are wired to ‘fight’ or ‘flight’ whenever conflict seems to be brewing.

The reality is, if you are truly passionate about bringing your parish vision to life, you will not get there without some conflict! Why? Because conflict ensures you reach the right answers. Your team are all sold-out on the vision (the destination), but there is much to work out on the strategy and the tactics. There are many different ways you could get there (many possible strategies) and healthy conflict is needed to ensure that you will choose the best options.

Imagine someone on your team proposes a strategic path forward towards inviting more young families into your parish. He or she explains what this would look like, but of course, one person will never have a complete picture. Other team members chime in considering other angles or approaches. The proponent of the plan might defend their position or modify aspects of it. To get to the very best strategy, conflict is indispensable.

If you find that little conflict is occurring on your team, maybe ask yourselves some questions: Are we succumbing to ‘groupthink’? Is our team balanced enough or do we have the same blind spots? Are people sharing what they really think? Are people willing to disagree with the pastor?

The leader’s role in these meetings is always to ‘mine’ for conflict. On the surface, it might seem that everyone agrees. But beware of artificial harmony. The leader should become adept at reading body language and signs that indicate disagreement. They can then invite and encourage disagreement. They demonstrate that it is safe and even valued to disagree! You don’t want just to tolerate conflict, but to draw it to the surface.

Conflict can be passionate and intense, and still healthy. Remember that this kind of conflict is only possible on a foundation of vulnerability-based trust. Keep the conflict ideological, not interpersonal. Your team might even be engaged in a row about particular tactics, but this can be a good sign: you care deeply about the issues involved and you care enough about each other that you are able to argue about it! Beneath the surface is a deep love and respect for one another. At the end of the meeting, you will go and enjoy a drink together!

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You will pick up when your conflict crosses the line from ‘healthy’ into ‘toxic’. Maybe the discourse becomes disrespectful, heated, or even personal. Maybe certain team members shut down and stop engaging. Or maybe a frosty silence or passive aggressive behaviour take over. At this stage, you will need to navigate your way back through to health. An incredibly helpful book in this regard is *Crucial Conversations*, by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler. It offers a guide to having productive conversations when the stakes are high and emotions running strong. We need to opt for a relationship-based approach to achieving the best outcomes for our parish. Deal with unhealthy conflict swiftly and do not allow it to linger. After all, as Patrick Lencioni remarks, ‘Conflict without trust is politics.’<sup>29</sup>

## 6. Working as a Team

*‘Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup> if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; <sup>8</sup> the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.’ (Romans 12: 6-8)*

Much of what we share here and in the four non-negotiables of a team relies on Patrick Lencioni’s books which are a goldmine for any parish beginning their renewal journey. We recommend starting with *Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, *The Advantage*, and *Death by Meeting*.

### a. Building Healthy Team Culture

In his book, *Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, Patrick Lencioni paints a picture of what healthy team culture looks like – by drawing attention to how a team behaves when it is dysfunctional. He lists the five dysfunctions in a pyramid, because the bottom levels are more foundational and impact the ones above.

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<sup>29</sup> St Ignatius has helpful insight in the Spiritual Exercises which is a good basis for healthy conflict. His presupposition states that one should always interpret the other’s statement in its best possible light until there is no other way to see it.

*“To assure better cooperation between one who is giving the Exercises and the exercitant, and more beneficial results for both, it is necessary to suppose that every good Christian is more ready to put a good interpretation on another’s statement than to condemn it as false. If an orthodox construction cannot be put on a proposition, the one who made it should be asked how he understands it. If he is in error, he should be corrected with all kindness. If this doesn’t suffice, all appropriate means should be used to bring him to a correct interpretation, and so defend the proposition from error.” (Spiritual Exercises, #22)*

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In the early stages of the life cycle of your team, it is unlikely that you will have developed many dysfunctional behaviors, but how might your team intentionally build healthy culture from the very beginning?

- i. *Trust:* We have already seen how foundational trust is, and how it begins with the leader modelling it. Spending quality relational time with each other is central here, as well as making time to pray and worship together. Begin meetings with a personal check-in: invite each person to share a ‘high’ and a ‘low’ from their past week. Affirm each other when you take risks by sharing your fears and asking for help.
- ii. *Healthy conflict:* We’ve seen that the leader’s role is to mine for conflict and, when it arises, affirm healthy conflict in the moment. Lencioni advocates a two-thirds inquiry and one-third advocacy approach to meetings, in other words, seek to listen to and understand more than advocate one’s own ideas. Assume positive intent of one another and be courageous in tackling issues one-to-one prior to a meeting.
- iii. *Commitment:* Clarity is needed for people to give their maximum commitment. Driving for clarity and closure on decisions ultimately falls to the leader. Get into a practice of recording throughout the meeting any decisions that are made, actions that will be taken, by whom, and by when. Practice making decisions when there is not 100% certainty, so that the team grows in confidence that rarely do we have all the data we need to make decisions in practice.
- iv. *Accountability:* Each team member is intentional about doing what they said they would do and hitting deadlines agreed. Individuals can give permission to others to hold them to account, and you can have regular patterns in your

# Build Your Leadership Team

meetings to check in on progress. Ensure transparency on goals, having them written down in accessible locations, so that everyone know what has been agreed to.

- v. *Results:* Have regular patterns in meetings of sharing results and outcomes. How did a particular event go? Is a particular program delivering what we imagined it would? Sharing good and bad news is important so that we can normalize and celebrate failure too.

## b. Meetings

You have likely experienced your fair share of terrible meetings – and in response, people often think that it is best to have as few meetings as possible. But when executed well, meetings should be the most productive and enjoyable time you spend all week.

What follows here is a very brief introduction. We recommend using *Death by Meeting* by Patrick Lencioni to learn how to develop great meetings. Much of Divine Renovation’s learnings about meetings originate here.

What will your meetings look like in your new leadership team? Part of creating leadership culture across the parish will eventually involve building a culture of great meetings. But to begin with, you can work on ensuring your leadership team meetings are some of the best hours you spend each week!

To start, here’s a quick checklist with a handy acronym P-O-S-T. For any meeting you are in, the answers to these questions should be clear.

- *Purpose:* what is the aim of the meeting?
- *Outcomes:* what are the outcomes that are expected to be achieved from it?
- *Structure:* how is the meeting going to be structured and who needs to be involved? What preparation is required?
- *Timing:* what are the meeting timings?

As a leadership team, there will be three main types of meetings you will likely focus on and build rhythms for: 1:1 Meetings, Strategic Meetings, and Tactical Meetings.

*1:1 Meetings* – Your weekly 1:1 with each member of your leadership team will prove some of the most valuable time you will ever spend. At the outset, you might feel uneasy about dedicating so much time to your key leaders. What about all the other one-to-one requests that come into your inbox? We sometimes think that to be ‘fair’ we need to equally distribute our time and attention across people. But Jesus did not lead in his way.

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He invested disproportionately into Peter, James, and John, and beyond them, the rest of the Twelve, before he focused on the other disciples. You had a powerful, envisioning conversation with your team member when you invited them onto the team; now it's time to work together to bring to life something extraordinary.

There are different approaches to the regular 1:1 meeting, but you might find these six 1:1 questions a helpful guide:<sup>30</sup>

- *How are you?* At the heart of your work together is a relational investment. What's going on in their life? How are they really doing?
- *What are you celebrating?* Our natural wiring is to go straight away to what is broken and needs fixing, so intentionally celebrating the wins and what we see God doing is an important next step.
- *What challenges are you facing?* This is the opportunity for the leader to speak openly about what needs development in his or her ministry or team.
- *How will you tackle those challenges?* This is an empowering question. You may want to go straight into fix-it mode but remember the principle of 'two-thirds inquiry, one-third advocacy'. God has bestowed this leader with the strengths and insight they need to tackle the problems they are facing, so here it is good to take a coaching role and help them to draw out solutions.
- *How can I help you?* In an ideal situation, the question above will have led to a clear action plan for the leader, and they will need little more of your help! But sometimes as a leader, you do need to step in and help unstick a problem or take steps to show that you have their back.
- *How can I pray for you?* A great way to end the 1:1 is to spend a short time praying for each other. This demonstrates the mutual benefit of the relationship.

Before we get into tactical and strategic meetings, it is worth defining each.

*Strategy* is the plan for how priorities and processes will be implemented to make the vision a reality. *Tactics* are the action steps you will take to deliver the plan.

*Strategic meetings* are longer (2-3 hours), take one big issue to solve, and involve blank space for prayer, idea generation, and big-picture thinking to reach a broad-brush-stroke plan. Strategic questions might be: How do we launch small groups at our parish? How do we reach a new neighbourhood that is being built? How do we increase the number of families reached by our kids' ministry? How do we solve the problem of one Sunday Mass that is overflowing? How do we build a discipleship pathway.

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<sup>30</sup> These questions are adapted from the six coaching questions in Dave Ferguson: *Exponential*.

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At the beginning, you are likely to need more strategic meetings than tactical meetings. Eventually you may get into a pattern of a monthly strategic meeting with weekly tacticals.

*Tactical meetings* tend to be shorter, but many parishes find that they run over one hour, sometimes to two. Fr James Mallon comments that, when he led St Benedict Parish in Halifax, they would often run to three hours! However long they run, it is the purpose that is important. These are regular weekly meetings that deal with tactical issues of immediate concern. Running tactical meetings with discipline and structural consistency is key to keeping them as productive as possible. Normally, a tactical meeting will have four components:

- *Lightning round:* Here, each team member takes no more than 60 seconds (yes, only 60!) to indicate their top two to three priorities of the week. This gives everyone a sense of what is on each person's plate.
- *Progress review:* What are the metrics you are tracking? Maybe Alpha attendance, or a significant program you are running? What significant events have taken place where updates should be shared? Spend no more than five or ten minutes on this.
- *Real-time agenda:* This is where the agenda of the meeting is built in the meeting (it is what Patrick Lencioni calls 'disciplined spontaneity' – not needing to send an agenda around beforehand). The lightning round and progress review may have thrown up agenda items. Add them to the list. If you are meeting in person, have a visible list maybe on a whiteboard. Prioritise the most important tactical issues. Strategic issues will undoubtedly arise. Consciously 'park' them – list them on a separate list to be returned to at a strategic meeting.
- *Cascading messages:* What do we need to communicate, to whom, and how? The most effective meetings have an intentional practice of cascading key messages to ensure clear flow of communication throughout the ministry teams.

## 7. Building Leadership Culture

*'An organization has integrity – is healthy – when it is whole, consistent, and complete, that is, when its management, operations, strategy, and culture fit together and make sense.'* – Patrick Lencioni

In the Day 3 module, (Re)Plant Your Evangelization Initiative, we explored how evangelistic culture would be gradually embedded into the parish through evangelistic practices. In reality, this takes many years, but over time, the impact of the evangelisation initiative together with the practices have a cumulative effect, and the 'soil' of the parish becomes more evangelistic.

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This is true, too, of building leadership culture in your parish. In part 1, we referred to this as ‘leadership DNA’. This is the work of many years through the Genesis Compass and beyond, but to get started, here are five shifts you can make to building leadership culture.

Rick Warren famously says, ‘Use your church to build your people, not your people to build your church’, and this is at the heart of building leadership culture.

Ever seen a parish bulletin notice reading, ‘We need 10 volunteers...’?!

Building leadership culture means committing to a new principle: we want to ask what we want *for* people, before we ask what we need *from* people. When we are in the mode of system-managing, we see gaps that need to be filled, and people are cogs to keep the machinery working smoothly.

But as leaders, we start to see each person as a potential apostle with a specific call from God. This is a shift towards seeing a person as God sees them, with their extraordinary unique giftedness and potential. The philosopher Alice von Hildebrand called this having ‘Tabor vision’ of another person: just as the disciples were granted a vision of who Jesus really was on Mount Tabor, the mountain of Transfiguration, so can we have a glimpse into how God sees another person. Alice von Hildebrand says, ‘One falls in love with someone when one is granted the privilege of seeing the beauty that God placed in them at the moment of their creation. I call it the ‘Tabor vision.’ This vision touches one's heart, and we must always seek to keep it alive.’

## **a. Inspire People with Vision**

Already you have had envisioning conversations with your leadership team members and have shared the vision for the future of the parish that burns in your heart. Any invitation into leadership should be rooted in vision.

Imagine someone asked you: ‘We have a huge need for extra helpers at the Children’s Liturgy of the Word! No experience needed, just show up to ensure we have enough adults present.’

Now imagine this: ‘More families are attending the 10am Sunday Mass and we’re seeing more children attend the Children’s Liturgy than ever before! There is a huge opportunity here to connect with and engage families returning back to church. You have such a warm presence and make families feel so welcomed. Would you consider the

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opportunity of how we might make this liturgy even more vibrant and welcoming to these families?’

Which are you likely to respond to? Here’s a helpful equation to remember:

Need + Vision = Inspiration

Need – Vision = Desperation

## **b. Honour People by Asking Big**

This is closely connected to inspiring people with vision. Leadership is the practice of empowering other people. There is nothing much more disempowering than the plea for ‘extra helpers’ we considered above. This is the ‘mini-ask.’ We think we are doing people a favour because we make the request as light-lifting as possible. No experience, no training, minimal time needed! This is not how Jesus asked!

*‘After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. <sup>2</sup>And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. <sup>3</sup>Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. <sup>4</sup>Carry no money bag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road.’ (Luke 10:1-4)*

He told them he was sending them like lambs among wolves...with no provisions!

The reality is that when we make mini-asks we short-change a person: we do not honour the greatness that God has called them to. We are focussed on our desired outcome, above the dream God has for their life. We minimise the vision for our parish – we make it seem insignificant and only worth a tiny amount of their time. Big asks honour people and God’s call to our parish. In Pope Benedict XVI’s words, ‘you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness.’

## **c. Apprentice People through Pipelines**

Leaders are not born, they are apprenticed. Apprenticeship is the model Jesus used when he spent time with Peter, James and John, the Twelve, and the 72 disciples. In a leadership culture, every leader has an apprentice; every Paul has a Timothy. The necessity of apprenticeship rests on a conviction that, ‘Leadership can only be developed through practice. Those who have a talent for leadership must develop their

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abilities by practicing in the real world and converting that experience into improved skill and judgment. That conversion does not take place in a classroom'.<sup>31</sup>

There are five steps to apprenticing someone in a leadership role:

1. I do. You watch. We talk.
2. I do. You help. We talk.
3. You do. I help. We talk.
4. You do. I watch. We talk.
5. You do. Someone else watches.

Think about a role you currently do, and someone who might be called into that role. What would these five steps look like if you were to apprentice them?

You won't apprentice someone straight away into the leader of your Alpha. You will want to allow them to grow through stages of increasing experience and responsibility. This is where we build leadership pipelines in the parish, to foster healthy and ongoing growth. Someone begins at an entry level of low responsibility and influence, growing to increasing levels of responsibility and influence. At the lower levels of the pipeline, more direction will be needed, and you may have a high turnover of people. At the higher levels, less direction will be required, and turnover should be low as you maintain stable leaders.

An example of a leadership pipeline could be your Alpha. There may be five stages to your pipeline:

- Alpha helper
- Alpha co-host
- Alpha host
- Alpha leader or speaker
- Post-Alpha Connect / Small Group leader

Choose a ministry of the parish and break down the roles into five levels of increasing responsibility and influence. Think about what excellence looks like at each level – how will you know someone is bearing fruit in this role?

## **d. Empower People with Authority**

Do you really want people to discover the call of God in their lives? Do we want them to discover their full potential? Then, we have to empower them from being 'doers' to 'leaders'. Simon Sinek says, 'We can only truly be in charge when we are willing to let

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<sup>31</sup> Ram Charan, *Leaders at all Levels*.

# Build Your Leadership Team

others take charge.’ This is the power of the apprenticeship model and of leadership pipelines. The goal is for people to become leaders, empowered to make decisions, shape direction, be creative, and increase the ministry’s impact. Is that what you long for in your parish? Then, learning to let go of control is the key!

Evangelical pastor, Craig Groeschel, says, ‘When you delegate tasks, you create followers. When you delegate authority, you create leaders. You can have control, or you can have growth, but you cannot have both.’

How willing are you to delegate authority to your leaders?

## e. Gather People at Summits

A great culture-building tool in your parish will be the leadership summit. These are regular gatherings (maybe three times a year) of all the ministry leaders in the parish. It is a time to envision everyone again with the parish vision, to celebrate wins, to worship and pray together, and to invest in leadership formation. Events such as these serve to indicate to your leaders how valued they are, how grateful you are to them, and how deeply you believe in and want to invest in them.

## 8. Spirit-Powered Leadership

*‘The previous season of human-powered leadership is done, it’s over! Now is the time for Spirit-powered leadership.’ – Mark Sayers*

Finally, we must never lose sight that, in our parishes, we are called to the best of leadership *in the power of the Holy Spirit!* Missional leadership within the parish context is a unique reality. It is a good time to remember that the Lord does not call the equipped but equips the called. As we learn more about leadership, we need to beware of tipping into ‘human-powered leadership’: using the best experts and techniques to get our parishes running smoothly. The most important thing is the Lord’s call – on our parish and on our individual lives. Leadership principles serve that call, not the other way around. We will not be judged on the proficiency of our leadership techniques! ‘Spirit-powered leadership’ means growing into our own God-given style of learned leadership principles, while staying attuned to the never-ceasing promptings of the Holy Spirit.

*‘And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.’ (Revelation 22:5)*

This verse from Revelation reminds us that our leadership of others is simply standing in the place of Jesus for people until our ultimate end when we will see him face to face.

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The sun will be no more, and there will be no leaders in Heaven: just thousands upon thousands gazing upon the Lamb!