GENESIS
COMPASS

The Second Day

PARTICIPANT'S WORKBOOK

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SESSION 1

Introduction to Vision

Thank you for joining your parish on the journey of renewal. Your efforts, through the Holy Spirit, will be part of a growing movement in the global Church!

What You Can Expect out of these Sessions

1. You will appreciate the foundational importance of vision in the parish context.
2. You will develop a working vision that inspires hope and passion.
3. You will recognize how your God-inspired conviction is reflected in the parish vision.
4. Build and start a strategy to communicate and grow the parish's vision.
5. You will reflect on and adjust the vision to ensure it is aligned with God's will.

Introduction to "Form & Cast Vision"

Program Outline

- Pre-session content to read each week.
- In-session videos each week.
- Group Discussion/Activity
- Team Meeting between sessions (without the PRG)
- Personal Reflection

Sessions 1-4, 6-7: 90 minutes
Session 5: Day Away 8 am – 3 pm

My Session Dates and Times

Session 1	
Session 2	
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Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the chance to gather around you. We ask you to send your Holy Spirit to be with us and open our minds and our hearts, to speak your vision into our minds. We want to hear from you. We want to respond to your promptings and to your direction and to your vision that you placed in our minds and our hearts. Give us this vision, Lord, we ask, and even expect, audaciously that you might inspire us here today. Amen.

Scripture

"Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good." Genesis 1:3-10

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Pre Session Reading

"Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good." *Genesis 1:3-10*

We have spent time immersed in the reality that the Spirit hovers over the waters of our parish and that he goes before us in the work of renewal.
In God's blueprint for the 're-creation' of the parish, he first creates light. To move our parishes into a missionary identity, we need God's light to see a picture of what a different future could possibly look like.

In Day Two, we will consider,

- the current parish experience facing a priest and lay leaders as they decide to form and cast vision,
- a theological reflection on this reality, based on Genesis 1,
- practical application suggestions as your parish takes concrete steps.

Reality Check: Vision

At Divine Renovation, we define vision as "the God-inspired picture of the future that produces hope and passion". If developing a parish vision is foreign to you, imagine asking an average parishioner what your parish's "God-inspired picture of the future" is. What would they say?

Chances are they would not have a clue how to respond. Why is this? There are many reasons Catholic parishes do not develop or articulate their "God-inspired picture of the future". Here, we list some of these reasons. You might recognise your own current parish reality in these scenarios and mentalities.
But we also challenge each of these reasons. We believe that when a 21st Century Catholic parish does not have a vision, it cannot fulfil the full potential of what the Holy Spirit wants to do through it.

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A. Catholic parishes don't need to be future-oriented.

While new communities, start-ups or organisations are understandably motivated by a passionate dream of a better future that they simply cannot shake off, Catholic parishes are not new. They have existed in some form since the earliest days of the Church, the best part of 2000 years. Why would a community of people need a vision for the future, when their existence has been assured for nearly two millennia? I think of my Catholic parish as an established and fixed institution – it existed before I was born and will exist long after I've gone. It is bigger than I am and can happily exist without me. Who am I to have a "vision" for my parish?! The Catholic parish is not the kind of organisation that needs a "picture of the future" in the same way an entrepreneurial start-up does.

But…

While Jesus promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church, he did not promise that your parish would still be open at the end of time. Plenty of parishes have closed their doors or have been amalgamated with another because of dwindling numbers. Your parish has a sociological as well as a theological dimension, and sociologically, many parish communities that were embedded in neighbourhoods 20 years ago are nowhere to be seen today. We live in a new, apostolic age where a new mentality is needed. We have seen benefits to Catholic parishes when they think of themselves as a "start-up": it forces you to get specific about who you are reaching, how you are using your resources, and how you can be most effective.

B. Catholic parishes all have the same "vision" – it is given to us by Jesus in the Great Commission in Matthew 28![1] The vision is obvious; there is no need to name and share it.

A Catholic parish is a small "part" of the local diocesan church:[2] all geographical territory in the world has been divided so that literally any given address is covered by a Catholic parish. It is therefore a small component in a vast behemoth of an institution. Jesus gave this entire Church its mandate right before he ascended into Heaven, at the Great Commission. Therefore, the Catholic parish's "vision" should be clear! What is more, as well as a biblical mandate, Catholic parishes are driven by magisterial teaching. Recent popes and magisterial writings give clear "vision" for the Catholic parish.

But…

If the Great Commission is the "obvious" vision of every Catholic parish, how well are parishes getting on in realising it?! There seems to be a vast gap between our theology about mission

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[1] And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **[19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.** And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:18-20) The words in bold are known as the "Great Commission."

[2] Canon 374§1 refers to the parish as *part* of the diocese: "Every diocese or other particular church is to be divided into distinct parts or parishes."

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based on Matthew 28, and our lived, concrete reality. This is where a concrete "picture of the future" – or vision – is needed.

The Great Commission and magisterial teaching give the Catholic parish's identity (who we are) and mission (what we do) rather than this concrete "picture of the future" – 'North Star – or vision, that guides us.

A parish's vision will differ from place to place, because it is determined by local geography, neighbourhoods, and needs. A parish with no vision for how it is called to impact the local community with the Gospel message is directionless. Its focus is dissipated and vague. Without a unifying vision, different groups pull in different directions. Vision is not given to us in the Bible, by Tradition, or through the magisterium. Vision is developed locally.[3]

C. The pastor is an authority figure, not a leader: he has not been mandated to develop vision.

If you are a priest, it is likely you do not remember the classes in seminary that helped you develop vision. This is because vision belongs to leaders, and we tend to treat the pastor as an authority figure, not as a leader. What is the difference?

Ron Heifitz, a business professor who has taught leadership at Harvard Business School for decades, explains that any authority relationship involves a social contract, whether formal or informal. The contract gives authority to a person who in turn fulfils a particular service. In the case of a pastor, he is 'authorised' both by his superiors (the bishop) and those he serves (his

[3] Presbyterian minister Tim Keller has helpful insights here. As leader of a church in Manhattan, New York that was enormously successful in reaching unchurched young adults, he recognised the need for a church to have a vision for how to bring the Gospel to its particular locality. He said,

> '…if you think of your doctrinal foundation as 'hardware' and of ministry programs as 'software', it is important to understand the existence of something called 'middleware.' I am no computer expert (to say the least), but my computer-savvy friends tell me that middleware is a software layer that lies between the hardware and operating system itself and the various software applications being deployed by the computer's user. In the same way, between one's doctrinal beliefs and ministry practices should be a well-conceived vision for how to bring the gospel to bear on the particular cultural setting and historical moment. This is something more practical than 'how-to steps' for carrying out a particular ministry. Once this vision is in place, with its emphases and values, it leads church leaders to make good decisions on how to worship, disciple, evangelise, serve and engage culture in their field of ministry…' (Keller, T. (2012). *Center Church*. Michigan: Zondervan, p. 17).

If hardware is 'doctrinal foundation' ('what to believe'), and software is 'ministry expression' ('what to do') – our Catholic parishes are pretty strong in both. We have clear doctrine, and we have practices and customs that make up everyday parish life. But, in a new apostolic age, we also need middleware – or in Keller's terms, 'theological vision' ('how to see') (Keller, p. 20). The Holy Spirit wants to give us new sight – 'how to see' our locality and the opportunities that face us for proclaiming the Gospel.

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parishioners). Both stakeholders license his authority in an implicit contract: "I look to you to serve a set of goals I hold dear."[4]

Someone who is in an authority role, like a pastor, is expected to provide a service, to be an expert, to be a doer, to provide solutions to problems within the scope, and according to the terms, that the authorisers (bishop and parishioners) understand the situation. "As long as you do what is expected of you, your authorisers are happy. If you do what you are supposed to do really well, you will be rewarded in the coin of the realm, whatever it is…"[5] In the case of a pastor – maybe a plum parish, or a title, or a senior role in the diocese.

In this context, there is no expectation from any authoriser – bishop or parishioners – that the pastor would develop vision. This would go outside the scope of his authority.
But…
Leadership is different from authority, and leadership is what is most needed in an apostolic age. While authority figures rely on already-existing solutions to familiar problems, leadership recognises the tough challenges that need to be faced – that might not have any obvious solutions. Leadership is the practice of mobilising people to tackle these tough challenges and thrive. Authority is about meeting or exceeding your authorisers' expectations, but leadership is about challenging some of those expectations. In the apostolic age, where innovation and experimentation are needed, leadership requires us to go outside or beyond the scope of what our 'authorisers' (bishop and parishioners) might have expected of us in the past. It means trying new approaches, occasionally failing, but all with a determination to learn new and effective methods for sharing the Gospel in the apostolic age.

Mobilising people through the tough challenge of sharing Good News of Jesus in the apostolic age is hard work – and vision is indispensable. Vision is the "picture of the future" that mobilises people through the inevitably hard moments of change. If we accept that a pastor needs primarily to be a leader in the apostolic age, we also accept that he cannot be a leader without vision.

D. It is a waste of time to articulate and cast vision when all our resources are needed for the maintenance of our parish.

In the average parish, there is a "whirlwind" of activity that makes up day-to-day life. McChesney and Covey describe the whirlwind as "the day job" in their book, The 4 Disciplines of Execution. The whirlwind is everything that is urgent and that acts on you. (By contrast, your goals (where

[4] Leifetz, R. et al. (2009). *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership.* Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Publishing, p. 24.
[5] Leifetz, p. 25.

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you want to get to) are important and you act on them.) The whirlwind has the power to kill everything by a "slow suffocation."[6]

Of course, the activity of the whirlwind is not bad. Parishes are faithfully fulfilling the functions of their identity and mission: celebrating sacraments, teaching classes, maintaining buildings, servicing a plethora of groups and ministries. These functions are all true to the parish and the activity is good. What is more, these functions consume the pastor's waking moments and absorb all the volunteer hours offered by laity. There is no time or headspace for anything else and besides, the parish is fulfilling (part of) its purpose. These functions operate with no need for vision, and forming vision would take time away from fulfilling the day-to-day needs. And we don't have the luxury of this extra time.
But…
In the midst of the whirlwind of these basic functions, the parish forgets the very reason for its existence. The parish is one of the only communities that exist for the sake of those who do not yet belong. The time and resources of pastor and laity are sacrificed at the altar of the urgent, while all the meanwhile, the important is slowly suffocated. Reaching those outside our parish is the most important function of our parish in the apostolic age. It will never happen until we are courageous enough to pause the whirlwind.

E. Our parish is incredibly busy, and our pews are full. We are clearly doing something right – why would we develop vision?

If our pews are full on a Sunday, why should we be concerned?
But…
Just because your pews are full does not mean your parish is living the Great Commission. Forget about your 'seating capacity' – what about your 'sending capacity'? Many factors could cause your full pews: perhaps cultural Catholicism is still strong in your area; perhaps your neighbourhood has benefitted from immigration from traditionally Catholic countries.

Duncan Campbell, a Scottish leader in the mid-20th Century Hebridean revival said, "Revival is not churches filled with people, but people filled with God." The real question therefore is, how many disciples feel commissioned at the end of Sunday Mass to invite their neighbours, colleagues, and friends to come to know Jesus?

The missional health of our parish is better measured by the number of parishioners who feel a personal responsibility and authority to invite people into a living relationship with Jesus Christ, and to disciple them to maturity, where they themselves are making disciples. This is an enormous (almost impossible) challenge for the lay Catholic, unless surrounded and supported by a parish with a common vision, mobilising all to pull together in the same, missional direction. This is where vision is needed.

[6] Read more in McChesney, Covey and Huling. (2012). *The 4 Disciplines of Execution*, pp. 6-7.

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F. I am not a natural visionary, but a problem-solver.

Many priests for whom the idea of "vision" is new can feel paralysed at the thought of developing one for their parish. Their entire training and conditioning have been to reach solutions, provide expertise, and deal with pastoral issues. There has never been a need for them to think about vision, and it feels foreign, like using an unexercised muscle.
But…
If you have authority as pastor in a parish, and if your parish is called to be on mission to those in the surrounding area who don't know the Gospel, you can count on the fact that the Holy Spirit will work with your unique personality and strengths to form vision. If you allow him, he will form vision in you. If you go seeking, he will inspire you through other parishes that are already bearing missionary fruit. He will speak to you through the fruitfulness of other Christian churches. He will stir dreams in you through the inspiration and longings of lay parishioners around you. You can (and should) delegate a lot of things. But you cannot delegate vision: as leader, it has to flow from your heart.

The Parable of the Canoe…

In his book, From Christendom to Apostolic Mission, Monsignor James Shea uses the analogy of a canoe. If the parish (or family or other Catholic institution) is the canoe, then in Christendom it was navigating downstream. If nobody paddled or steered, the canoe would still generally head in the right direction. But today, the culture no longer supports Christian faith: we now need to paddle in a different direction from that which the water is flowing. If no one in our parishes steers or paddles the canoe upstream, it will by default move downstream, with the culture.

In the case of vision, paddling upstream looks like:

- a pastor growing in his own identity as a leader – as one authorized to form and cast vision,
- carving out time to form and cast vision – and putting other activity on hold,
- mobilizing people to channel their activity towards the realization of the vision.

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What you can expect in today's session?

1. Learn to navigate the Compass Portal and understand its key features
2. Understand the format and purpose of the Form & Cast Vision module.
3. Analyze your current parish context in relation to its vision.
4. Review and evaluate examples of written visions

5 characteristics of vision

1. Vision is missional.
    - Every parish's vision is a local realization of the Great Commission. It is an expression of what the Great Commission looks like in this place, at this time, to these people. We need to reach those who do not know Jesus
2. Vision is concrete.
    - Vision involves a picture we can visualize. Vision needs to be real to people, expressing God's dream for our parish and community.
3. Vision gets you excited for the future.
    - The picture must be better than reality. When the vision is shared with people, do people respond with hope and enthusiasm?
4. Vision is destined to fail without the Holy Spirit.
    - Be honest, is this God's will or yours? Does this vision depend on our power or God's power?
5. Vision is discerned.
    - Pope Francis teaches us that discernment "is an interior attitude tooted in an act of faith." As we develop and share our vision, do we routinely discern whether this is God's will?

In-Session Discussion Questions

1. Does your parish have a vision? How is it similar/different from what was described in the video?

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2. What is the state of your parish's vision? Are any of the realities listed familiar to your parish context?

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3. How do you feel about the five characteristics of vision? Which one do you identify with the most? Which one do you identify with the least? Why?

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4. How will vision help us reclaim our identity?

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Five Characteristics at St. Willibrord's (next page)

Read/listen to St. Willibrord's vison and note in the margins where you see each of the Five Characteristics of a Vision (listed at top of p. 14).

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MISSIONAL – CONCRETE – EXCITING – HOLY SPIRIT INSPIRED – DISCERNED

Vision Examples

St. Willibrord Parish – Fr. Michael Leclerc

Everyone seems to find the burdens of the week being lifted off of them as they walk up the steps of St. Willibrord or take the elevator up to join in the mass. In the pews, visitors can feel the Holy Spirit is at work in the uplifting music, the proclamation of the Word, and the profound homily, bringing people to a place of encounter with Jesus Christ, who calls them to the fullness of life. At times it almost seems like the congregation is leading the music ministry, as the voices joined in praise race out to the streets through the open doors and windows. Today a blessing will be given, once again, to the new missionaries who are preparing to begin a year with the latest Missionary Partnership.

Afterwards, the joy of the celebration spills into Coffee Hour where parishioners are eager to connect with visitors, without thought or hesitation. St. Willibrord grows and thrives because of the missionary impulse to make God's love concrete and tangible throughout the community. It has become central to the revitalization of Verdun. While Sundays are the highlight of everyone's week, they are not the only way the community comes together at St Willibrord. Our ministries, all run by servant leaders, are known outside the church walls, helping God's presence be felt in the community. St. Willibrord has become the place in Verdun where local businesses and leaders can find a willing partner in reaching those who find themselves on the margins and too often forgotten. The result is more and more leaders who are being raised up from all our ministries, leaders who build others up and help them recognize the hopes and dreams that God has for them.

The transformation of St. Willibrord has been spirit-led and borne out of connection, and the stories of our missionaries being sent out to another parish lay witness to this connection. Regardless of how they first came to us - Alpha, Mass, kids' ministries, volunteering to serve the poor, community events we hosted - they inevitably experienced something transformative at St Willibrord which led them to discern that God is asking them to go transform another parish in order to have more lives transformed by the Lord.

Even for those who felt like their lives were full, at St Will's they encountered - many for the first time - the love of God. They came to the realization that life is greater than what they had come to know, and their hearts were opened to living faith that inspired them to share the Good News without delay or hesitation. Encountering God's love here reveals His constant presence in daily life, with parishioners joyfully following the Holy Spirit's call towards greater purpose. Hope is not lost - it is ignited at St Will's and spread throughout the community.

The most exciting part of St. Willibrord is not knowing where the next connection, or the next encounter with the Living God will happen. It still happens at Alpha without exception and now the mildly curious have been raised up to servant leadership in dozens of small groups, each with

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their own point of entry for wherever someone is in ntheir journey. The altar servers from a few years ago lead a youth group that works with the city to find new ways to serve the community and positively impact young people by instilling hope for a better tomorrow. The connections young people have made through youth ministries and small groups have given them the confidence they need to say yes to God's calling for them.

The encounters also continue to happen among the volunteers who came to help with Christmas Baskets, many of whom not only discover God's love, but that they can find joy in being the face of Christ to those they serve all year round in our outreach ministries. Parents too encounter God through seeing their children come alive and find true joy in our kids ministries and they want to grow and serve at St. Willibrord. It has become the focal point in their family life and many of them have now been sent out as missionaries to help other parishes support families in new and life giving ways.

St. Willibrord has become much more than a church running a single Mass each week. It is a spiritual home with its doors wide open, and there's always room for more. It is a beacon of true hope in Verdun, serving not just those who already participate in the faith but also those who have yet to discover it. It is where ordinary people experience life-changing joy through the transformative power of the Holy Spirit, as it breaks through the doors of ordinary life and guides them to everlasting life along the road of missionary discipleship

"I Have a Dream" - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
So even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day down in Alabama with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, one day right down in Alabama little Black boys and Black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers. I have a dream today.

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I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning: My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrims' pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. And so let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania. Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado. Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California. But not only that, let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia. Let freedom ring from Lookout

Mountain of Tennessee. Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, and when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, Black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: Free at last. Free at last. Thank God almighty, we are free at last.

Saddleback Church Vision – Rev. Rick Warren
It is the dream of a place where the hurting, the depressed, the frustrated, and the confused can find love, acceptance, help, hope, forgiveness, guidance, and encouragement.

It is the dream of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with the hundreds of thousands of residents in South Orange County.

It is the dream of welcoming 20,000 members into the fellowship of our church family-loving, learning, laughing, and living in harmony together.

It is the dream of developing people to spiritual maturity through Bible studies, small groups, seminars, retreats, and a Bible school for our members.

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It is the dream of equipping every believer for a significant ministry by helping them to discover the gifts and talents God gave them.

It is the dream of sending out hundreds of career missionaries and church workers all around the world, and empowering every member for a personal life mission in the world.

It is the dream of sending our members, by the thousands, on short-term mission projects to every continent.

It is the dream of starting at least one new daughter church every year.

It is the dream of at least 50 acres of land, on which will be built a regional church for South Orange County-with beautiful, yet simple, facilities including a worship center seating thousands, a counseling and prayer center, classrooms for Bible studies and training lay ministers, and a recreation area.

All of this will be designed to minister to the local person-spiritually, emotionally physically, and socially-and set in a peaceful, inspiring garden landscape.

I stand before you today and state in confident assurance that these dreams will become reality. Why? Because they are inspired by God.

Wrap Up

Homework

Read the pre-session reading for Heart of the Pastor

Prayer for the Renewal of the Parish

Pray for renewal often, with your team, and on your own:

1. Take time to settle your heart.
2. Recognize the presence and invite the participation of the Holy Spirit..."Come Holy Spirit."
3. Pray a prayer for renewal with these words or similar, from your heart:

Just as the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters, hover over the chaos of our parish.
Help us to believe that you are already creatively at work in the renewal of our parish.
Come Holy Spirit. Illuminate our paths.
We surrender to you, Lord, so that we might be used for the mission of renewal.
Transform this parish so that, as a community, we grow to trust your guidance in our renewal efforts.

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Notes

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Session 2

Heart of the Pastor

Pre Session Reading
Practical Parish Application

"Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18)
"Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions" (Joel 2:28)

A. The Heart of the Pastor

"The heart is the dwelling-place where I am, where I live; according to the Semitic or Biblical expression, the heart is the place 'to which I withdraw.' The heart is our hidden center, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others; only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart and know it fully. The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives. It is the place of truth, where we choose life or death. It is the place of encounter, because as image of God we live in relation: it is the place of covenant." – Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2563

Much of our formation as Catholics is in our minds. But leadership must come from the heart – and even, as we will discover, the gut.

In Dickens' acclaimed novel, Hard Times, the main protagonist Mr Gradgrind famously raises his children according to, "Facts … Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else." They are raised without emotion, sentiment, or imagination.

When his adult daughter unsurprisingly experiences crisis, Gradgrind comes to a shocking realisation of the damage he has caused. Humbly begging her forgiveness, he says, "Some persons hold…that there is a wisdom of the Head, and that there is a wisdom of the Heart. I have not supposed so; but, as I have said, I mistrust myself now. I have supposed the Head to be all-sufficient. … I have a misgiving that some change may have been slowly working about in me … that what the Head had left undone and could not do, the Heart may have been doing silently."

We have focussed so far on the role of the "eyes" in spiritual sight. Now we move to the "hidden centre" of the human person – the "heart" – the place of spiritual sight:
"with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints" (Ephesians 1:18)

As we take the very first steps of building a missional parish, we turn to the place where it all begins: in the heart of the pastor.

If you were expecting to learn technical leadership skills during this parish renewal journey, these will certainly come, but of infinitely greater importance are the dreams, desires, and vision of your heart.

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Leading change starts from the 'inside out'. This is about far more than getting the parish well-organised. It is about discovering the dream for the future of your parish that God has planted in your heart. Your leadership flows from your heart. It begins with the inspired conviction that change is necessary, possible, and worth the suffering.

"As Image of God We Live in Relation": No Such Thing as Passionless Leadership
This is a topic we will dive deeper into in the Day 6 module: Become the Leader that You Are. But there are many interconnections with developing vision, so we introduce it here.

We recognise that leadership from the heart is not something you were likely trained in at seminary. It is likely that you were trained and conditioned in countless unspoken ways to embody an impersonal – rather than personal – leadership style. You were trained to be a system-manager, to keep the cogs moving, to maintain a well-oiled service. You were trained to be an authority figure, one with the answers and expertise in theological, canonical, and pastoral matters. You were trained to manage people and projects, buildings and administration. You were trained (most likely) to relate to lay parishioners as shepherd and teacher, not as fellow apostle and evangelist.
You were likely not trained to enter the depths of your own heart, discover your unique dreams and wiring, and discern where God wants you to lead the parish entrusted to you.

You were likely not trained to gather lay disciples around you to dream, articulate, refine, and cast this vision for the parish's future with you.

Just as the apostolic age requires a relational approach to evangelisation, it requires a relational approach to leadership. Relational within yourself: getting in touch with your deepest desires and dreams. Relational with others: risking relationship (and even friendship!) with lay collaborators for the sake of the mission.

"Holy Desire"

"The whole life of a good Christian is a holy desire. What you desire you cannot see yet. But the desire gives you the capacity, so that when it does happen that you see, you may be fulfilled." – St. Augustine

It may feel dangerous to get in touch with your desires for your parish. Maybe the desires that first motivated your vocational journey to priesthood have not been fully realised, disappointed even. We have to find a way to function every day – to keep the cogs of the parish turning – so we find strategies to bury these desires, spiritualise them away, 'medicalise' or placate them, or compensate for them.

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Or maybe the desires that motivated our journey to priesthood are pretty well fulfilled. This is a different kind of problem because if we are satisfied with where our parish is right now, it is likely our desires are too small and constricted for the magnificence God would want to do if only we knew it.

Anyone leading an organisation leads it in the direction of the things about which he or she is passionate. It is critical to get in touch with our passions. If you're not feeling it, you're not going to be able to lead it.

Author Kenneth Hildebrand describes the poorest man as being "the fellow without a dream." He "resembles a great ship made for the mighty ocean but trying to navigate in a millpond. He has no far port to reach, no lifting horizon, no precious cargo to carry. His hours are absorbed in routine and petty tyrannies. Small wonder if he gets dissatisfied, quarrelsome, and 'fed up.' One of life's greatest tragedies is a person with 10-by-12 capacity and a two-by-four soul."[11]

The good news is that, if you recognise yourself as one who has been satisfied with a "millpond", God has created you for much more! And, in the light of Christ, it can be found within: in the "dwelling-place" and "hidden centre", the "place of truth…and encounter", in the words of the Catechism.

As leaders, the heart illuminated by Christ is where our greatest resources are found, because they provide a key to "the picture of the future" that God wants for the parish. While it may be uncomfortable, our deepest desires and longings are where we need to "mine for gold" because God wires us with them deep within, precisely because he intends to fulfil them.

Author James Allen writes, "Only by much searching and mining are gold and diamonds obtained, and man can find every truth connected with his being if he will dig deep into the mine of his soul."[712]

It Starts with the Gut: Splank-na

Many recent scientific studies have shown the relationship between three information centres in our bodies: mind, heart, and gut.[813] We tend to be trained as leaders to lead with our minds – assimilating information and making decisions. We have seen how the desires discovered in our hearts are critical resources for leadership. But, our gut is also a centre of intelligence, and this is where it all begins. In fact, ignoring or downplaying instincts or feelings in our gut is perilous to our leadership!

[12] Allen, J. 2017. *As a Man Thinketh*. Shandon Press.
[13] Just one example: https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/09/180920161011.htm

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In Luke 7:13, Jesus encounters the widow from Nain whose son had just died. He experiences deep distress for her sorrow. Verse 13 tells us, "he had compassion for her." The Greek verb for "had compassion" is splagchnizomai, and is pronounced splank-niz-o-mai. This verb is derived from the noun splagchna, pronounced splank-na, or "internal organs, innards, or bowels." In other words, "the guts." How striking that, while we often locate deep feelings in the heart, Luke's Hellenistic sensibility placed these feelings in the guts. Science about the gut as a centre for information certainly supports his approach!

Our discontent or distress at the current reality is felt in our "guts". It is that reality that causes us to release a long and heavy sigh or deep groan of pain. It might move us to tears.

Fr James Mallon has written and spoken about how, in order to form the vision for the future that produces passion and hope, we need to scratch the itch of this discontent – this deep groan of pain – not placate or bury it.[914]We experience (sometimes crushing) discontent when we see how far the reality of our parish is from what we dream for it. But, far from running scared from this potentially overwhelming discontent, we actually need it. The deep sigh of frustration and pain is precisely the passion and energy we need to drive change.

St Gregory the Great wrote, "When our desires are not satisfied, they grow stronger, and becoming stronger they take hold of their object. Holy desires likewise grow with anticipation, and if they do not grow, they are not really desires. Anyone who succeeds in attaining the truth has burned with such a love."

Do you "burn" with your discontent, your passion for change? If not, maybe scratch the itch a bit more! Fr James points to the Greek verb used in the line from the prophet Jeremiah remembered by Jesus' disciples after he had cleansed the Temple: "Zeal for your house will consume me" (John 2:17) - kataphagetai.[1015] The word literally means "will eat me up." Are you ready to "burn" with and be "eaten up" by your passion for your vision?

While it is painful to go deep into our heart and guts to feel our discontent, there are no shortcuts. It is precisely this route – the only way – that will lead to the "God-inspired picture of the future" of our parish. James Allen wrote, "The dreamers are the saviours of the world." In your discontent is the seed of your "dream", and it may even save your parish.

"Ascending" and "Descending" Love

Before moving on, we should make a final comment on the role of "passion" in forming vision. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that, "In themselves passions are neither good nor evil. … Strong feelings are not decisive for the morality or the holiness of persons; they are simply

[14] See Mallon, J. (2014). *Divine Renovation*, pp. 247-50.
[15] Mallon, p. 248.

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the inexhaustible reservoir of images and affections in which the moral life is expressed. Passions are morally good when they contribute to a good action, evil in the opposite case" (§1767, 1768). It's doubtful that you burn with passion for a picture of the future of your parish that is not entirely good. But, what is certain is that your vision for your parish will need to be continually discerned and refined by other sources around you. We explore the role of discernment below, and the necessity of refinement in step 3 of forming your vision.

Pope Benedict XVI's explanation of "ascending" and "descending" love in Deus Caritas Est can help here. "Ascending" love is eros – passionate and aflame. You need to feel some of this fire about your vision. "Descending" love is agape – self-sacrificing and oblative. Pope Benedict writes,

> "…eros and agape—ascending love and descending love—can never be completely separated. … Even if eros is at first mainly covetous and ascending, a
>
> fascination for the great promise of happiness, in drawing near to the other, it is less and less concerned with itself, increasingly seeks the happiness of the other, is concerned more and more with the beloved, bestows itself and wants to "be there for" the other. The element of agape thus enters into this love, for otherwise eros is impoverished and even loses its own nature. On the other hand, man cannot live by oblative, descending love alone. He cannot always give, he must also receive" (§7).

In the process of discerning and refining vision, there are other sources that provide the agape purification to your fire and passion.

What You Can Expect from this Session

1. You will be able to describe how God inspires you in your ministry.
2. You will identify the core values and passions that drive you.

Discussion Questions

<u>Your Original Calling</u>

1. How were you called to the priesthood?

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2. What were your hopes and dreams starting out?

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3. Where did you feel God was calling you?

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4. Describe a non-vocational moment where you felt God's conviction in your heart.

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Personal Reflection

1. What drives you nuts about your parish?

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2. What do you love about your parish?

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3. What do you want to see? What is your hope for the future? Be ambitious!

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For Discussion

1. What are your sources of discontent?

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2. Why do these bother you? What are people missing because it is the way it is?

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3. What do you want people to be experiencing instead?

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Prayer Walk

Prayer-walking can be done in many ways. For this activity, we ask that you take 20 minutes on your own to walk the grounds of your church or parish and pray for words or images that might inspire vision. Notice what is around you, what the Holy Spirit highlights for you, noting what he prompts in your heart for His parish. Also consider that part of this reflection should include an awareness that "the pastor discerns with his people. While vision begins in the pastor's heart, he dreams and desires in a certain way on behalf of his parish".

Any insights from your prayer walk?

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What is your biggest take away from this session?

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Wrap Up

Homework

1. Invite leaders to next week's session and have them log in (password: Lastname-2025).
2. Invite leaders to watch video 1 (The Value of Vision) and read pre-reading materials from sessions 1 and 2.
3. Prepare to share "your original calling" answers with your leaders next week.
4. Read pre-session pages from the Core Content.

Prayer for the Renewal of the Parish

Pray for renewal often, with your team, and on your own:

1. Take time to settle your heart.
2. Recognize the presence and invite the participation of the Holy Spirit..."Come Holy Spirit."
3. Pray a prayer for renewal with these words or similar, from your heart.

Notes

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Session 3

Dream

Pre Session Reading

Theological Reflection based on Genesis 1

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Having considered our current parish reality, we turn to scripture to cast supernatural light on it. Our Scripture passage for the Day 2 module leads us into a profound meditation on the role of light in the creation of heaven and earth, and in the 're-creation' of our parish. In your own lectio divina God will reveal insights to you, but what follows here is our own meditation.

In Day 1, we reflected on how the Spirit hovered over the waters of chaos and void. The "darkness upon the face of the deep" became a symbol for the formlessness we might have experienced in our parish, and the discontent in our own hearts. This discontent is an important passion: it supplies the energy needed to lead change. But in its raw form, without the illumination brought by light, it remains directionless and frustrated.
"Then God said…" (Genesis 1:3)

Uniquely in Jewish and Christian tradition, God creates by divine utterance.

> "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,
> and by the breath of his mouth all their host.
> 7 He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap;
> he puts the deeps in storehouses.
> 8 Let all the earth fear the Lord;
> let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!
> 9 For he spoke, and it came to be;
> he commanded, and it stood firm." Psalm 33:6-9

In other creation myths, the world emerges from conflict between rival powers, but in the Book of Genesis, God's word is utterly unchallenged and unrivalled. "And there was light." This is God's power to bring things into being. In our parishes, too, God has complete authority over every reality. "Then God said…" is all that is needed and reality changes.

Light from the New Testament reveals that the Word uttered by God is not simply a creative power, but a Person (John 1:1-3). St Ambrose notes that at the beginning, all Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity are present: the Father creates heaven and earth; the Son separates the light from darkness; the Holy Spirit hovers over the waters.[117]

[7] St Ambrose, *The Holy Spirit*, Book II, 1.

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Creation of Physical Light as an Allegory for Spiritual Light

There are theories from countless believers – from early Church Fathers like Tertullian right down to modern day scientists and theologians – about what the light source was for days 1-3 of Creation, when the sun, moon and stars were created on day 4. Was the source of light from another heavenly source (St Augustine), was it the essence of the sun but not yet its substance (St Basil of Caesarea), was it the pillar of fire from Exodus (St Ephrem the Syrian), or was it light from Christ the Word himself (Tertullian)?

Whatever might be the truth of this mystery, what is certain is that the physical light created by God can be seen allegorically as the spiritual light coming in Christ's Incarnation: "The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world" (John 1:9).

The physical light, when God creates it, is described as "good": it corresponds perfectly to the divine purpose for which it was made. How much more "good", then, is the spiritual light that comes to us from Christ?
Christ's light illuminates our human experience; it comes from outside ourselves and without it, we would remain in darkness.

Pope St John Paul II said during an Angelus address,

> "Yes, Christ is the light because, in his divine identity, he reveals the Father's face. But he is so too because, being a man like us and in solidarity with us in everything except sin, he reveals man to himself. Unfortunately sin has obscured our capacity to know and follow the light of truth, and indeed, as the Apostle Paul realized, it has exchanged 'the truth about God for a lie' (Rom 1:25). By the Incarnation, the Word of God came to bring full light to man. In this regard the Second Vatican Council says that it is 'only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear' (Gaudium et spes, n. 22)."[128]

We speak of our vision for the parish as "God-inspired" because without Christ's light we only see partially or very little at all. We are reliant on him to "bring full light to man."
When it comes to the renewal of your parish, you may have had a moment of illumination – when Christ, "the true light" – revealed to you something new you had not seen before. Perhaps a light shed to help you glimpse a new horizon you had not realised existed. Perhaps you saw reality in a new way that was convicting, transformative and maybe even unsettling. Perhaps that new sight is coming slowly, as your eyes adjust to the light. Light enables us to see.

[8] John Paul II, Angelus address, 15 December 1996.

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"Do you see anything?" (Mark 8:23)

In Bethsaida, Jesus takes a blind man aside, out of the village, and away from onlookers, to heal his sight. He spits on the man's eyes and asks if he sees anything.

When God creates light, we do not automatically see. Our eyes need to be open, and we need them to function correctly: light hits the retina in our eyes, it turns into electrical signals, our brains form images. Just as physical light gives the conditions for our bodies to have sight, so spiritual light gives the condition for our minds and hearts to "see" a new vision. But the ability to see comes from within us.

What are the swirling discontents in our hearts, the "darkness upon the face of the deep"? And what light is Christ shedding upon them to transform them into "vision"?

Initially, when Jesus touches the blind man's eyes at Bethsaida, his sight is not completely restored. He says, "I see people; they look like trees walking around" (Mark 8:24). Jesus puts his hands on the man's eyes a second time: "Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly" (v25).

Jesus is the both the Healer and the Giver of Light.
He is the Healer, the One who heals our eyes both physically and spiritually. Satan's original deception to the first humans concerned their sight: "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened" (Genesis 3:5). We know, on the contrary, that this original sin caused the spiritual eyes of our first parents to be closed. But Jesus is the Healer, restoring our spiritual sight. He heals the eyes of our heart (Ephesians 1:18) so that we can take full advantage of the light and "see everything clearly" – a "God-given picture of the future that produces hope and passion."

He is the Giver of Light, or in the words of the priest Ezra, "our God has enlightened our eyes" (Ezra 9:8). At World Youth Day in Lisbon in 2023, Pope Francis commented to the young people gathered that, "today we too need…this burst of light. [Jesus] is the light that never sets, the light that shines even in the dead of night. …Our God illumines: he illumines our vision, our hearts, our minds, our desire to do something with our lives. The Lord's light always shines."[9]

Jesus heals us so his light can shine through us, gradually forming in our hearts a clear vision for the future of our parish.

[9] See https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2023/documents/20230806-portogallo-omelia-gmg.html#:~:text=Our%20God%20illumines%3A%20he%20illumines,type%20of%20light%20is%20blinding.

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Light Exposes Darkness for What It Is

When God creates light from nothing, a separation happens. Immediately the darkness is named for what it is – "Night" – and the light is named, "Day". To name a reality is powerful: it is to acknowledge its identity. Before light was created, it was impossible to name darkness, because it could not be seen in contrast to light. Day two in the creation narrative continues to see other forms of separation: waters are separated from waters by the firmament that is created (verse 7), and then the waters are gathered in one place so dry land appears (verse 9). Separating, organising, gathering, sorting, and categorising: all of these are the tasks of leadership as the work of renewal unfolds in the parish.

Max De Pree said, "The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality." So far in this module, we have already been naming some of the realities which cause parishes to be dysfunctional in the apostolic age. Running sacramental programmes the same way we have for decades. Pouring the majority of our resources into "feeding the sheep" instead of "catching fish." Christ's light allows us to see these and name them for what they are. The "light" can come from different sources.

When you witness another parish living a missional identity, it can shed "light" on the dismal reality of your own parish's lack of missional identity.

When you encounter disciples on fire for mission, it sheds "light" on parishioners who live out a consumer identity with little fire in their hearts. Light is a gift because it exposes darkness.

One of the key roles of a pastor or lay leader will be to "cast light" in the many ways of communication open to us: preaching, conversations, testimonies, online communications, meetings. We have many opportunities to name those things that belong to redundant forms of parish life, and to call people into the new apostolic age.

Just as we ourselves might be slow to see the "God-inspired vision" for our parish, our parishioners too might take time to "see" the new vision (in Matthew 13:13, Jesus speaks of those, who, "seeing they do not see"). Maybe, like the blind man at Bethsaida, Jesus will need to touch their eyes repeatedly to give them sight. There's a chance some will never get there, and they will always struggle with seeing the new horizon of which everyone else speaks. Leadership author John Maxwell writes, "I believe there are four kinds of people that leaders encounter: People who never see it – they are wanderers. People who see it but never pursue it on their own – they are followers. People who see it and pursue it – they are achievers. People who see it, pursue it, and help others see and pursue it – they are leaders." We will likely have all types of people in our parish.

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From "Word" to "Flesh", From "Idea" to "Speech"

Light and speech seem to go hand in hand in the Creation account. As light illuminates, so does the word. A meditation on Psalm 19 helps to reveal more about these profound connections. Here are the first few verses:

> "The heavens are telling the glory of God;
> and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
> 2 Day to day pours forth speech,
> and night to night declares knowledge.
> 3 There is no speech, nor are there words;
> their voice is not heard;
> 4 yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
> and their words to the end of the world…"

The brightness of the sun illuminates the natural world, revealing that everything created "speaks": without audible sound, each created being tells of God's glory (see Wisdom 13:5, Romans 1:20).

Pope St John Paul II notes that while the first half of Psalm 19 is a hymn to the created brilliance of the sun, the second half of the psalm is "a sapiential hymn to the Torah, the Law of God." It is not a mistake that the word of God is described with "solar" features: "the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes" (Psalm 19:8).

John Paul II's commentary on this Psalm is insightful: "God lights the world with the brilliance of the sun and illuminates humanity with the splendour of his word contained in biblical Revelation. It is almost like a double sun: the first is a cosmic epiphany of the Creator; the second is a free and historical manifestation of God our Saviour."

In Creation, every created thing "speaks" silently of its Maker. In the Incarnation, the Word of God takes on flesh. In the words of St John of the Cross, "In giving us his Son, his only Word (for he possesses no other), he spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word - and he has no more to say…"[1310]

What does this have to do with vision in our parish? The Trinitarian analogy here is helpful. In one of St Augustine's analogies for understanding the Trinitarian nature of God, he uses the functions of the mind. God's self-understanding takes expression in speech: the Son – the Second Person of the Trinity – is the Father's spoken expression of himself. In St John of the Cross' words, he is his "sole Word – he has no more to say." The Word that expresses the Father is so real it is itself a Person, the Son.

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[10] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* 2,22,3-5 in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross.*

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When developing vision, we begin by conceiving a "God-inspired picture of the future that produces hope and passion" in our heart and mind. It is an idea, a picture, a dream that is contained within us until it "takes on flesh" in speech. There is something that is incomplete about the vision until it takes its form in words that are spoken, until it is expressed in words that are received, heard, and understood by another.

Verses 4-6 of Psalm 19 give a powerful image for this movement from "idea" to "speech".

> "In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun,
> 5 which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,
> and like a strong man runs its course with joy.
> 6 Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
> and its circuit to the end of them;
> and nothing is hid from its heat."

The last image that would have come to your mind as you thought about sharing your vision in words with someone is "a bridegroom coming from his wedding canopy"! But let's stay with this image for a moment.

The bridegroom emerging from the heavens like an athlete is an image of the Word springing forth from the eternal Father and becoming flesh in his own creation. It brings to mind Wisdom 18:14-15 ("For while gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was now half gone, your all-powerful word leaped from heaven, from the royal throne") and Isaiah 55:10-11 ("For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it").

When you speak the words of your vision to others, and eventually your whole parish, these words will contain power. There will even be a performative dimension to these words, as the "ideas" and "dreams" take root in others' hearts and are conceived there. When you start "casting" your vision, there is a theological reality that "it shall not return to you empty" – impregnated with God's own desires and dreams, it will start achieving the picture it proclaims.

Finally, for your own meditation, here are words from Pope St John Paul II on the role of this Psalm in the Easter liturgy. You might want to take time, too, praying with the image of your spoken vision as the bursting of Christ from the tomb!

> "The solar imagery of the Psalm is taken up by the Christian liturgy of Easter to describe Christ's triumphant exodus from the dark tomb and his entry into the fullness of the new life of the Resurrection. At Matins for Holy Saturday, the Byzantine liturgy sings: 'As the sun rises after the night in the dazzling brightness

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> of renewed light, so you also, O Word, will shine with new brightness, when after death, you leave your nuptial bed'. An Ode (the first) for Matins of Easter links the cosmic revelation with the Easter event of Christ: 'Let the heavens rejoice and the earth exult with them because the whole universe, visible and invisible, takes part in the feast: Christ, our everlasting joy, is risen'. And another Ode (the third) adds: 'Today the whole universe, heaven, earth, and abyss, is full of light and the entire creation sings the resurrection of Christ our strength and our joy'. Finally, another (the fourth), concludes: 'Christ our Passover is risen from the tomb like a sun of justice shining upon all of us with the splendour of his charity'."

Your own lectio divina of the scriptures in the Day 2 module will undoubtedly give you endless insight into the role Christ's light and words play in forming the parish's vision. Next, we apply our God-given insights into practical application in the parish.

The Four Steps of Vision

"And the Lord answered me: 'Write the vision; make it plain upon tablets, so he may run who reads it.'" (Habakkuk 2:2)

We often hear of parish "vision statements". A good parish vision statement can be excellent if it is memorable, captures people's imaginations, and encapsulates in just a few words the "God-given picture of the future". But more important than a vision statement is vision itself. Here, we outline the four steps towards a vision for your parish: this is far more important than crafting a vision statement, which can come later.

Step 1: Dream

There is a remarkable story about how Martin Luther King Jr's famous, "I have a dream" speech. King had prepared to deliver a different speech to the crowd, but as he was delivering it, a friend in the crowd shouted, "Tell them about your dream Martin!" Recently, he'd been sharing his dream with people that were close to him, and, when the time was right, they encouraged him that it was time for everyone to hear the dream.[22]

What about you? You are preaching a homily one week and a member of your congregation shouts out, "Father, tell them about your dream!" What is your dream? What would you share?

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Are you a natural dreamer?

In scripture, Joseph certainly is, but it gets him into trouble with his brothers! Knowing your wiring is helpful before you go into vision-forming. You might be more naturally a problem-solver than a dreamer. When the problem-solver sees that the number of people attending Mass on a Sunday is declining, he asks "how can we fix this?" The dreamer, or visionary, on the other hand, asks, "Why do we want people to come to Mass?" and, "What do we want most for the people who have stopped coming?" Both approaches are needed, but the vision approach comes first. Imagine a friend invited you on a trip. Your first question would not be, "How do we get there?" but, "Where are you going?" If the destination was a place you had never been or heard of, you would want your friend to paint a picture of the place, to help you decide if you wanted to go or not.

If you are not a natural visionary, you will need to gather people around you who are: people who can paint a picture of "where are we going?" so that people want to come on board. If you are not a natural visionary, you are more likely to assume that people know and understand the destination, and just want to understand "how to get there." This is a tendency to beware of and is a good example of the need for growing self-awareness of our leadership leanings.

"Listen to this dream I had!" (Genesis 37:6)

We know that there is a great deal going on in the parish that is already inspiring and life-giving. You might already have dreams of how these could grow and flourish. Highlighting the existing strengths of the parish, the things you love, and emphasizing them can inform your vision.

There are also the personal dreams, hopes and desires that are on your heart as a pastor. They may have started coming to the surface as we explored "holy desires" above. What was it that first brought you in relationship with

Jesus? That first made you want to lay down your life in the priesthood? What have you received from the Lord and from the Church, and what does this tell you about the things you long for for others? Perhaps the friendships you had in church growing up, a profound liturgical experience, your own conversion, a priest who really helped you to understand how much God loves you, or parishioners that made you feel welcomed. Whatever those sources of inspiration might be, let them help you imagine the future of the parish.

Picture someone you genuinely care about and picture them coming to your church. What do you want them to see in your parish, what do you want them to experience there?

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The following questions might guide you:

1. What about your faith inspires you?
2. What is your hope within the walls of your parish?
3. What is your hope outside the walls of your parish?
4. Do you know someone who does not share the same level of faith as you who you long to bring into this experience?

The "via negativa" of vision

In theology, we say that, given that the nature of God cannot be expressed in human language, we can most accurately refer to him according to the "via negativa", or saying what is God is not, rather than what he is.

If you don't find it easy to dream about what might be in your parish in 10 years' time, another place to start might be taking the "via negativa": naming what you definitely don't want to be true about your parish in 10 years!

Above, we explored the idea of 'holy discontent', of what you feel in your gut, or 'splankna', and the need to 'scratch the itch'. Maybe it is families engaging in sacramental preparation never to be seen again after the celebration of the sacrament. Maybe it is looking out at the bored faces of the Saturday evening Mass and wondering if you are at a zombie convention. Whatever it is, we shouldn't ignore these discontents. Indeed, they are important material through which the Holy Spirit is speaking to us. This might just be the thing that drives us mad enough to do something about it!

Imagine that a miracle took place while you slept and when you open your eyes all the sources of holy discontent miraculously disappeared. How do you know that they are gone? Describe what you see and hear instead. The description of what you see after the miracle is a good indication of what your dream for the parish might be.

Of course, we want to keep the emphasis on holy discontent. We keep our discontent holy by allowing ourselves to experience the frustration and distress in Christ. In fact, it is his own discontent, and he experiences it in our humanity. Self-knowledge helps me know when my emotions are tipping over into resentment, blame, cynicism, or hopelessness – and therefore I am experiencing them alone, not with Jesus.

There is another risk with the "via negativa". We describe the parish as a place where all the things that irritate us now are gone, but it is not done in the light of what we want for people but rather what we want from them. "More people in the pews are volunteering in the church and clean up after events is not left to a few." "Families keep coming to Mass after the kids have received their sacraments and we have a full church." Remember, vision is about "why?" Do you

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want these things so that your current volunteers are less stretched? So that your church is full? Certainly, these are answers to the "why?" question but measure them against the five realities of vision we explored above: they are not missional; not very exciting; and they could be achieved without the power of the Holy Spirit.

Rather, what do you want for the people who now fill your pews? "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11). Describing how, in the sacramental journey the family encounters a loving and supportive community that helps them to grow in their relationship with God and with each other, explains how your vision is to give them "a future and a hope."

Here are four questions that could help you dream according to the "via negativa":

1. What are your sources of discontent?
2. Why do these bother you?
3. What are people missing because it is the way it is?
4. What do you want people to be experiencing instead?

Whether you start dreaming through your already existing hopes or through the "via negativa", make sure that what you dream really moves you in your gut. This can be a significant journey – to move from what my brain tells me to dream to what my gut tells me – and it is a journey you will be glad you've made. You have to feel it to lead it.

Four Steps to a Vision to be continued in next pre-session reading…
Step 2: Articulate (session 4)
Step 3: Refine (session 6)
Step 4: Cast (session 6)

What you can expect in today's session

1. You will identify the pastor's dream for ministry and his parish
2. You will understand the responsibility to steward a God-inspired vision for the parish.

Discussion Questions

1. What about your faith inspires you?

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2. What is your hope within the walls of this parish?

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3. What is your hope outside the walls of this parish?

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4. Do you know someone who is not share the same level of faith as you who you long to bring into this experience?

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Prayer walking and guided questions

Prayer-walking can be done in many ways. For this activity, we ask that you take 20 minutes as a group to walk the grounds of your church or parish in prayer, asking for the Holy Spirit for words or images that might inspire vision. Notice what is around you, what the Holy Spirit highlights for you, noting what He prompts in your heart for His parish. Part of this reflection should include an awareness that you are discerning this vision with an open heart for others. "While vision begins in the pastor's heart, he dreams and desires in a certain way on behalf of his parish".

Guiding Questions

1. What are your sources of discontent?

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2. Why do these bother you? What are people missing because it is the way it is?

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3. What do you want people to be experiencing instead?

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Steps of Lectio Divina

Here, we will pray using the passage from Genesis 1-2 that inspired this module on Form & Cast Vision. Lectio Divina is a form of prayer that enables us to listen to the Holy Spirit's promptings. Let's use this time to listen to God's inspiration for us and the parish in our efforts for renewal. We begin by settling our hearts and asking the Holy Spirit to join us. "Come Holy Spirit. Guide us now as we enter into prayer."

Lectio (Read): Read Genesis 1: 3-10 slowly. Listen for a particular word or phrase. Allow the words to wash over you. Wait patiently for God to give gentle guidance.

> "Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good." Genesis 1:3-10, ESV-CE

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

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

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

Wrap Up

Journal Reflection
What is your biggest takeaway from this session?

Homework:

- Continue to pray for parish renewal.
- Read the pre-session reading for "Articulate".

Notes

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Session 4

Articulate

Pre Session Reading

Practical Parish Application

Why Vision?

Why can't we as leaders simply speak inspirationally about our mission as Catholics? Why do we need vision?

Vision Gives us our 'why'.

In his book, Start with Why, Simon Sinek comments that most companies will easily be able to tell you "what" they do, and even "how" they do it, but few would be able to state their "why". The same is true for our parishes. Many would be able to reel off a list of all the activities that happen in the parish (the "what"). Many others could tell you "how" all this happens, the systems and procedures. But how many could tell you "why"?

The reality about human nature is that the "what" and the "how" are not enough to keep us getting out of bed every morning. We need to know more than "what" we need to do and "how" we need to do it: we need to know why. This is where vision is needed. Pastor and leadership author, Carey Neiuwhof, says, "why is the first thing to die in a visionless organization."

Renowned Spanish architect Antoni Gaudi is the genius visionary behind the magnificent Sagrada Familia cathedral in Barcelona. Today it has been in construction for 140 years and is due to be completed by 2026. Behind such a masterpiece was a glorious vision. Gaudi's biographer, Gijs van Hensbergen, said, "I mean, he wanted to write the history of the whole of the Catholic faith in one building. I mean, how crazy and how extraordinary and how ambitious and how, in a sense, megalomaniac that idea is."

Gaudi's vision – "the history of the whole of the Catholic faith in one building" – inspired his own devoutly ascetic life: he spent the last 12 years of his life living in a cot in his partially built church focused on building 3D models to illustrate his vision. His vision also inspired future generations of artists who continue to create his masterpiece to completion today.

The size of Gaudi's vision – "how crazy and how extraordinary and how ambitious" – is in one sense preposterous (or even as his biographer put it, "megalomaniac"!). But a preposterous vision is a good indicator of a "God-inspired" vision. Andrew van der Bijl said, "If your vision doesn't scare you, then both your vision and your God are too small." Pastor of Saddleback Church and author of Purpose-Driven Church, Rick Warren, said, "God used me to do big things because I believed he would."

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Vision – if it is inspirational enough – will motivate whole communities of people to get up early, to be the last to leave, to serve on weekends and holidays, to give sacrificially and heroically, for the sake of the "why". That is the power of vision.

Vision inspires Hope

"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (Hebrews 6:19)
Vision for the future brings hope. Pope Benedict XVI wrote in the encyclical Spe Salvi, "the present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey" (§1). In a similar vein, Jurgen Moltmann in his Theology of Hope said, "Christianity is completely and entirely and utterly Hope. It is a looking forward and a forward direction; Hope is not just an appendix. Christianity inevitably means a new setting forth and a transformation of the present."

We need a future orientation in order to have hope. This future orientation – "a picture of the future" – is essential for a leader if they are going to inspire hope. Napoleon famously said, "A leader is a dealer in hope." With hope, we see differently the present circumstances we are in. With hope, we live in joyful anticipation of change and breakthrough.

In the words of Andy Stanley, "Vision gives significance to the otherwise meaningless details of our lives… Too many times the routines of life begin to feel like shoveling dirt. But take those same routines, those same responsibilities, and view them through the lens of vision and everything looks different. Vision brings your world into focus. Vision brings order to chaos. A clear vision enables you to see everything differently."[1416]

The story is told of three bricklayers who, after the great fire of 1666 that destroyed much of London, were at work rebuilding St Paul's Cathedral. The famous architect, Christopher Wren, had been commissioned to rebuild it. One day in 1671, Wren observed the three bricklayers on a scaffold: one crouched, one half-standing and one standing tall, working very hard and fast. He asked them the question, "What are you doing?" The first bricklayer replied, "I'm a bricklayer. I'm working hard laying bricks to feed my family." The second bricklayer, responded, "I'm a builder. I'm building a wall." But the third brick layer, the most productive of the three and the future leader of the group, when asked the question, "What are you doing?" replied with a gleam in his eye, "I'm a cathedral builder. I'm building a great cathedral to The Almighty."

Imagine what it would look like if parishioners continued to do many of the same tasks – making coffee, leading meetings, welcoming, setting out tables and chairs, leading small groups, reading at Mass – but with a completely new sense of the significance of what they were doing. No longer are they making coffee to quench people's thirst after Mass. They are making coffee in the

[16] Stanley, A. (1999). *Visioneering: God's Blueprint for Developing and Maintaining Vision*. (Colorado Springs: Multnomah), p. 9.

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Father's House to show the outsider that this is where they belong. No longer are they setting out chairs so that a class can be taught. They are setting out chairs so that people can hear the saving message of Jesus that has power to change their lives. How would things change in your parish if people saw their tasks in light of how they were contributing towards the "God-inspired picture of the future"?

What is Vision?

Often, we can use many words interchangeably without clarifying our definitions. We have identified five realities of vision, but before diving into these, it is important to state what vision is not.

Vision is not a dream (but it involves dreaming). A dream is broader than a vision. To dream is the important first step of developing your vision, and we explain this more below.

Vision is not a mission (but it makes mission concrete). Mission tells us "what" we do, while vision tells us "why" we do it. The essential mission of every Catholic parish is the same, to "go and make disciples". Mission is general and universal, while vision is particular and individual. The "why" for an individual parish is unique to that geographic location, to the needs, dreams, and gifting of the community. It may inspire the vision of other parishes, but it cannot be replicated or copied into another context.

Vision is not a strategy (but it needs one). Vision describes a picture of the destination; strategy defines the roadmap to get there.

Vision is not goals or objectives (but they help you get there). While travelling to a destination, you need milestones along the way to break up the journey. Goals and objectives give you the milestones you need towards your vision being realised. For example, what are your goals in the first year, in order for you to stay on track for this vision to be realised in 10 years?

Now we have a clearer idea about what vision is not, let's explore what it is. Having coached parishes to develop their vision over the last decade, we have learned the following five characteristics of vision, "the God-inspired picture of the future that produces hope and passion".

i. Vision is missional.
ii. Vision is concrete.
iii. Vision gets you excited for the future.
iv. Vision is destined to fail without the Holy Spirit.
v. Vision is discerned.

Let's go deeper into each one in turn.

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Vision is Missional

It is important to specify the parameters of vision. Every parish's vision is a local realisation of the Great Commission: it is an expression of what the Great Commission looks like in this place, at this time, to these people.
"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20)

If the vision does not include reaching out to those who do not know Jesus, it misses the heart of the parish's identity. If it dreams about the amazing hospitality, the vibrant teaching, social outreach, and reverent liturgy, but does not dream of the lost experiencing life-saving encounter with Jesus – it misses the entire point. The way to know how fit your parish is for the apostolic age: how much are we doing (or prepared to do) to reach and rescue the lost?

Vision is Concrete

Vision is about seeing; it involves a mental picture we can visualise. John RW Stott says, "It is an act of seeing – an imaginative perception of things."[15][17] This means it has concrete details to it. Imagine driving through your parish today. You see houses, apartments, shopping malls, transport hubs, schools, local businesses, and all kinds of people. Now imagine driving through your parish with a "God-inspired picture of the future" virtual reality headset. It transports you 10 years into the future to a point in time when your parish has been wildly fruitful. What do you see now as you make this drive? You see future ministries serving families who today do not even know your parish exists. You see possible sites for evangelistic events that will involve the local community. You see thriving ministries led by local people serving those who are homeless. You see local business owners who have encountered the Lord through your parish. You see people walking around who had been riddled with loneliness and anxiety but now have found a place of belonging in your church.

When Moses shares with the people of Israel his "God-inspired picture of the future", he paints a picture of what God has revealed to him:

> "For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper" (Deuteronomy 8:7-9).

[17] "What Makes Leadership Christian?" *Christianity Today*, August 1985, 24.

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The people can see, smell, even taste this land! This is the kind of picture of the future you will want to be able to share with your parishioners.

Vision Gets You Excited for the Future

Vision paints a picture of the future of your parish that is radically and attractively better than the reality that exists today. That is not to say that everything in your parish today is currently terrible. Certainly, many good things are happening – enough to keep a sizeable community of people dedicate much of their time to your parish. But you would not be undertaking the journey of parish renewal if you did not want an even better future for your parish. If it is already pretty good – what more could be possible? Who else might God want to reach? St Teresa of Avila said, "You pay God a compliment by asking great things of him."

The picture of the future needs to be attractive enough to get everyone excited. Divine Renovation Coach Matt Regitz tells the story of a parish team he coached who wanted to clarify their vision before sharing it with others in the parish. For several months they prayed, dreamed, brainstormed, wordsmithed, and refined. The time came for them to officially launch their vision to the wider parish. One member of the team was nominated to share the vision at an online coaching session with Matt. Matt shares,
"As they shared their statement I could tell the amount of care they took in each word and how much they had wrestled with what was essential and non-essential in this short statement. But something was missing. It was vanilla (sorry vanilla ice cream lovers): it was present focused; it was safe and uninspiring."

Waiting for their coach's feedback, Matt asked them a two-part question. "How inspired are you by this statement and how inspired do you feel the people in the pews will be when they hear it?" He asked each of the eight team members to rank the question from 1 to 10, with 1 being uninspired and 10 being totally inspired. You might want to guess the average rating this team gave to rank both their personal inspiration level and the perceived inspiration of their people…

A 6! A 6 out of the box. Is a 6/10 enough to get you excited about the future?! Enough to get you up in the morning, motivate you through the hard days, and keep you awake dreaming at night?!

By the end of that coaching session, what this team was clear on was that they were not done yet: they had not articulated a God-given picture of the future that produces passion. They realized that in spending time including everyone's contribution they had lost boldness and passion.

You'll be pleased to hear they collectively ranked their vision a 9 by the time they started casting this God-given picture of the future to their community.

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If you do not want your vision to end up forgotten on a document in your laptop, it needs to get people (and first of all, you!) excited. Catholics in your parish have been hearing the Church's magisterial teaching on evangelisation for decades and it has not excited them enough to do anything about it. But the power you have is to translate this into a concrete mental picture that they can see, hear, taste, smell and feel… and it will excite them enough to do something about it.

Professor of leadership and pastoral ministry, Aubrey Malphurs, uses a vision barometer to help indicate where you are in terms of the excitement needed to generate action in your people.[16][18]

No excitement Some excitement Growing excitement Most excited

If your and your people's excitement falls towards the left of the barometer, there will not be enough excitement to generate and sustain the vision.
Vision is Destined to Fail without the Holy Spirit
20th Century Christian pastor, AW Tozer, famously preached a sermon in which he challenged his listeners:

> "We want still to be in charge, guiding the chariot through the religious sky in the direction we want it to go, shouting 'Glory to God,' but modestly accepting a share of the glory for ourselves in a nice inoffensive sort of way. We are calling on God to send fire on our altars, completely ignoring the fact that they are our altars and not God's."

These are challenging words to the pastor forming vision. In the Day 1 module on missional prayer, we explored how intercession longs to know God's dream for our parish. The reality is that, if we form vision of our own making – "calling on God to send fire on our altars" – it is likely we are asking his blessing on our "millpond" vision, rather than entering into his "mighty ocean" vision.

When God reveals Israel's mission through the prophet Isaiah, he lets them know that what they had previously understood as their mission was now too small: "it is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel" (Isaiah 49: 6). This sounds pretty large in Israel's understanding, but to God, this is a "millpond" vision. Now he shares his own vision which can only draw Israel to its knees in awe: "I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49: 6). This is so incomprehensibly vast that Israel can be in no doubt that this is God's vision, not theirs.

When God allows us to glimpse the "mighty ocean" vision that is on his heart, it will likely take our breath away, make our eyes water, draw us to our knees… We know that this vision is utterly

[18] Aubrey Malphurs. (2015). *Developing a Vision for Ministry*, p. 37.

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unachievable – audacious! – in our own strength. This is the only way to know it comes from God.

Author, Mark Batterson, expresses the need to pursue a God-sized dream in the follow words:

> Quit living as if the purpose of life is to arrive safely at death.
> Run to the roar.
> Set God-sized goals.
> Pursue God-given passions.
> Go after a dream that is destined to fail without divine intervention.
> Stop pointing out problems. Become part of the solution.
> Stop repeating the past. Start creating the future.
> Face your fears. Fight for your dreams.
> Grab opportunity by the mane and don't let go!
> Live like today is the first day and last day of your life.
> Burn sinful bridges. Blaze new trails.
> Live for the applause of nail-scarred hands.
> Don't let what's wrong with you keep you from worshipping what's right with God.
> Dare to fail. Dare to be different. Quit holding out. Quit holding back. Quit running away.
> Chase the lion.[17][19]

Vision is Discerned

We have already considered how our passions (or "ascending love") need to be purified and refined by self-forgetfulness (or "descending love"). This is where discernment comes in.

At the Youth Synod in October 2018, Pope Francis remarked that, "Discernment is not an advertising slogan; it is not an organizational technique or a fad of this pontificate, but an interior attitude rooted in an act of faith." This "interior attitude rooted in an act of faith" is like a muscle of perception to be developed: growing in our ability to recognise what God is revealing to us through distinguishing light from darkness. At the Council of Jerusalem, the Apostles announce the decision they have reached by saying, "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us…" (Acts 15:28) They have listened to the Holy Spirit speaking in numerous different ways, individually and communally, in events and circumstances.

There are three principles to discerning a "God-inspired picture of the future":

i. God speaks in manifold ways.
ii. The pastor discerns with his people.
iii. Discernment must lead to decision.

We'll consider each in turn.

[19] Mark Batterson, *Chase the Lion*.

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God speaks in manifold ways.
"The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Corinthians 1:25).

Rev Fr Arturo Sosa SJ, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, remarks that, "Apostolic planning born of discernment in common becomes an instrument of our apostolic effectiveness, and we avoid the dangers of a trendy type of planning that makes use of only the techniques of corporate development."[20] [18][20]In discerning vision, we avoid an overly human-centred, secular approach to forming vision, knowing that God speaks outside of the processes we construct.

Parishes have certainly experienced God speaking to them within vision-forming processes learned from the business world. We also need to be attentive to how he speaks outside these processes. A vision-forming workshop can certainly help crystallise a vision; but vision is often formed in the heart over months, and often years. God reveals vision through our unique past experiences (positive and negative), our times of prayer, reflection and reading of scripture, our encounters with churches and communities that inspire us, experiences of local community realities that are desperate for the Gospel, the inspiration and insights of parishioners, friends, and collaborators, experiences of conferences or large inspirational events, Spirit-inspired conversations, times of retreat or pilgrimage.

One thing is for sure: if we long God to form his vision in us, we need to get out of our box. To avoid what Fr James Mallon jokingly labels IDD ('Imagination Deficit Disorder') we can intentionally place ourselves in places where we ask God to speak to us. Go and immerse ourselves in the local community to see what needs there are; go to visit churches that are making large Kingdom impact; put ourselves in places such as conferences, events, pilgrimages or retreats where we seek his heart for our parish; intentionally expect to glimpse God's vision in prayer and in the scriptures; ask people to pray with us for new vision and insight. Be prepared to be surprised at the way God speaks to us.

The pastor discerns with his people.
"The thing is too heavy for you; you are not able to perform it alone" (Exodus 18:17).

We live in a culture that is deeply individualistic, and in a Church deeply conditioned by isolated leadership. We need to resist all forms of isolated discernment as we form vision for our parish. Vatican II's Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes, reminds us that, "God did not create men and women as solitary beings"; rather, "by their innermost nature men and women are social beings; and if they do not enter into relationships with others they can neither live nor develop their gifts" (GS 12). Just as the Church receives revelation in Scripture, Tradition, and magisterium communally, we receive God's vision for our parish communally.

[20] Rev Fr Arturo Sosa SJ, *Letter to the Whole Society on Discernment in Common*, 2017/11.

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In Evangelii Gaudium, Pope Francis speaks of how it would be wrong to see mission as "a heroic individual undertaking, for it is first and foremost the Lord's work, surpassing anything which we can see and understand" (EG 12).

There is an important tension for pastors to balance here. While vision begins in the pastor's heart and involves (as we described above) his personal history, heartfelt dreams, and intimate desires, he dreams and desires in a certain way on behalf of his parish, his Bride. His dreams and desires ("ascending love") are purified and even healed by his love and attentiveness for the other ("descending love"). His office as pastor is not a private function focussed on pet projects or passions. Rather, his office is both personal (involving his own unrepeatable humanity) and public (exercised on behalf of the local Church).[21]

In his role as Bridegroom, he longs to hear the dreams and desires of his Bride and allow them to mould and shape his own. He consults with and deeply listens to his people. To use another ecclesiological image, the vision originates in the Head, and is refined, shaped and takes flesh in the Body. We will explore what his looks like practically below.

Discernment must lead to decision.
"Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans" (Proverbs 16:3)

Discernment cannot paralyse us in months and months of consultation. The need to evangelise facing our parish is too urgent. Vision is a direction of travel, and it will never satisfy everyone. In fact, if no one is critical of your vision, it is likely too 'vanilla'! Here, it is helpful as a leader to know your own personality type. If you are someone who is highly decisive and moves quickly into execution, you will likely benefit from pausing longer and listening to more viewpoints. If you are someone who finds it hard to move into action, trust those with a more executing gifting around you, and move forward sooner than you are naturally comfortable.

The Four Steps of Vision

Step 2: Articulate *(for Step 1: Dream, see session 2 pre session reading)*

In the theological reflection from session 3 (p. 36), it became clear that, as the Word is eternally "spoken" by the Father, our dreams need to come forth in speech, they need to be expressed in words. Our lived experience as well as our theology confirm to us that words are significant. There is always risk when we speak, especially when we express something important to us. Have you ever expressed a deep sentiment or treasured idea to someone? Uttering these words out loud gives us a certain vulnerability. We cannot re-capture what we have spoken. Perhaps, rather than

[21] See, for example, *Pastores dabo vobis* §72: "pastoral charity… impels the priest and stimulates him to become ever better acquainted with the real situation of the men and women to whom he is sent, to discern the call of the Spirit in the historical circumstances in which he finds himself…"

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expose ourselves to this level of vulnerability, we are tempted to keep our dream locked in our own hearts, where it cannot be criticised or disappointed.

In CS Lewis's words, "If you want to make sure of keeping [your heart] intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal." The same applies to your vision. This is the incarnational reality of step 2: "He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him" (John 1:11). As your dream issues forth in speech and lands in the hearts of others, it will not remain "intact." Certainly, it will be moulded, take on different forms in the hearts of others, it will even be despised or hated by some. (Maybe, like Joseph, it will land us in a pit and find us sold off in slavery (Genesis 37:19-28)!)

And yet, with others, it will set their hearts on fire. When our words resonate in the heart of another, the impact is powerful. The joy produced in our own heart by "our dream of the future" doubles when the vision produces passion in the heart of another. Joy and passion multiply as the vision lights sparks in multiple hearts. This is the diffusiveness of joy in the heart of God, and we taste it as our words start to "give flesh" to the dream of our heart. The risk of releasing our dream in words is worth it. Again, to quote CS Lewis, "To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken."

Write it down…

The Lord instructed the prophet Habakkuk to make his vision "plain upon tablets". Take a day away at a favourite spiritual place – in a chapel with the Blessed Sacrament or in a place of natural beauty. Give yourself freedom to write as many pages as it takes to get your dream written down. Not all of it will end up in your final vision, but it is important to start with the raw material of a first draft.

"Let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet" (Song of Songs 2:14)
Next, articulate your vision to one or two trusted friends. They don't even have to be in your parish. Notice how your vision lands. Which words and phrases resonate with them? Which ones set alight sparks in their hearts? How do they echo what they hear back to you, and how does this add to or refine the vision?

Increase the number of people you share with, including a small number of trusted parishioners. This can your leadership team or other select parish leaders whose insight you value. Take the same steps with these people, allowing their responses to shape and hone the vision.

As you speak, don't let the exact words paralyse you. The words we choose to reveal what is in our hearts are vessels and can almost have a sacramental quality, and yet, it is the Holy Spirit who fills the words. St Paul makes clear we do not need talents of eloquence or oratory:

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"When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God." (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

Our weak dependence on the Holy Spirit is the measure to which our words are filled with power.

Four Steps to a Vision to be continued in next pre-session reading…
Step 1: Dream (session 2)
Step 3: Refine (session 6)
Step 4: Cast (session 6)

What you can expect

1. I will begin to formulate a clear and inspiring vision that encapsulates the heart of the pastor.
2. I will begin to assess how the vision reflects the collective needs of all parish stakeholders.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the evident passion that keeps surfacing for you around the parish's future?

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2. There are five systems that make up a missional parish. When these systems work well together it promotes a fruitful parish community. Now consider the 5 systems of your parish. Imagine the future of:
    a. Ministry: Youth programs, hospitality, outreach
    b. Fellowship: Connect groups, movie nights, picnics, coffee and snacks after Mass
    c. Evangelization: Alpha, outreach, social media
    d. Discipleship: Bible study, catechesis, leadership training
    e. Worship: Sunday Mass, worship nights, prayer meetings

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Write down "I dream of" statements for each of the frameworks. What do you want to see? What is your hope for the future? Be ambitious! Avoid tactical statements like "x number of ppl at sacramental prep" and lean into visionary statements like "where hearts are transformed and lives changed".

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Drawing Exercise

Draw a picture that shows your parish as it is right now. Draw the Holy Spirit in a way that expresses how they see His role, right now, in the renewal of the parish. When done, share your picture with the group.

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Newspaper headline

Write a newspaper headline for 10 years from now, describing the state of the parish. When done, share your headline with the group.

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Wrap Up

Homework:

- Continue to pray for parish renewal.
- Our next meeting will be the Day Away.
- Review I dream statements.
- Review Sample Visions
- Pray for the renewal of your parish.

Notes

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Session 5

Day Away

Pre Session Reading

Review Sample Visions from pages 13-16.

What You Can Expect out of today's Session

1. I will integrate feedback and refine the vision during an extended day away session.
2. I will prepare the vision so it synthesizes my hopes for the parish so it can be shared with others for feedback.

Notes As Team Members Share Dream Statements

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Individual Work Synthesizing "I Dream" Statements

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Notes As Team Members Share Synthesized Dream Statements

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Reflection Questions

1. What are the scary elements of your vision?

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2. What parts of your vision are impossible without God?

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3. Name the parts of your vision that excites you the most.

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4. What parts of your vision need to get bigger?

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5. How will your vision change not only your parish but your city or even the world?

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Combine individual visions into one parish vision

As a whole group take this time to combine your parish visions into one (it can be as short as a paragraph or as long as a couple pages). Consider the following:

- Use the themes and elements captured before on the whiteboard
- Remember to not die on every hill. It doesn't have to be perfect.
- Remember the dream is more important than how you write it out!

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Evaluate Your Vision

1. Missional
   - In what ways is it missional, what elements are insider focussed by catering primarily to regular churchgoers, is there insider or inward looking language that new people wouldn't understand?

2. Concrete
   - Is it tangible? Can you relate to it in your context?

3. Exciting for the future
   - Each of you write a number down from 0-10 of how excited you are by the amalgamated vision.

4. Inspired by the Holy Spirit
   - Is it big? Do you think you can achieve? If the answer is yes, propose a reflection on whether it is big enough...

5. Discerned
   - In what ways can you hear God's voice in this? Have you felt or heard this? Has God been heard in the way he speaks through you?

Wrap Up

Homework:

- Continue to pray for parish renewal.
- The vision will not be completely discerned in a day. You should commit to prayerfully continue to discern God's vision for the parish. If you need to meet as a team before the next facilitated session, take some time now to schedule the upcoming meeting(s) and, if necessary, reschedule the next facilitated sessions.
- Share your vision informally with 2-3 ppl you are comfortable with (straight shooter, neighbour, friend, spouse, non-Catholic) before the next facilitated session. Bring that feedback to the next session.

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Session 6

Refine

Pre Session Reading

The Four Steps of Vision

Step 3: Refine

Your experience in articulating the vision will start to hone and shape it. You will want to phrase certain elements differently, cut out particular parts, and add others in. This is important if it is to be God's vision of the parish, not your pet project. Your passion for this vision needs to be continually brought to prayer, tested, and discerned. This is the role of self-forgetful attentiveness to the other ("descending love" described above) and of discernment.

Live with your vision for several weeks and months, exposing it to and subjecting it to the different circumstances, experiences and feedback listed in the section on discernment above. Put your vision through the "filter" of other fruitful churches, of passionately like-minded parishioners, of the lived needs and events of your local neighbourhood. Ask friends to pray for wisdom and clarity. Use these experiences to "sift" your vision and pay attention to your own emotional experience in prayer. How is God speaking to you through scripture, through life circumstances, through the words of others? Let the circle of people who are invited into this vison gradually expand, always watching, listening, and seeking prayer and discernment.
Identify key trusted stakeholders in your parish and beyond who you think could provide critical feedback on your parish's vision. These key stakeholders can be select ministry leads, staff, friends, family, benefactors; those who have the greatest impact on you or your parish.

<u>Five Characteristics of Vision</u>
Finally, filter your vision through the five characteristics.

i. Is it missional?
ii. Is it concrete?
iii. How excited is it getting people for the future?
iv. If the Holy Spirit left your parish, would your vision fail?
v. For how long, and in what ways, has it been discerned?

Step 4: Cast

"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea." Antoine de Saint Exupery
In many ways, step 4 is just the beginning. It is the moment when the vision is intentionally cast to the parish community so that we can begin to take steps together to bring it about. This part is about people – about people starting to see the vision clearly in their own minds, and to see their place in it.

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A Masterclass in Casting Vision

Nobody really decides or takes a step without having some sense of where they are going, at least subconsciously. Martin Luther King's speech – the first time his dream was fully articulated in public – was a culmination of a long process. He had shared it with people, refining it for some time before he cast it in his speech.
Studying his speech more closely offers a prime example of how to share a vision. Most people will remember the "I have a dream" part, but that is only a portion of what he so brilliantly weaves together.

King begins by presenting an initial hope – freedom – that has not been realized in people's lives. He lets them know that he understands that this is not the reality they are living. Casting vision must start from people's everyday experience. If people do not believe that you understand their current lives, they will not follow you however inspiring the vision is. It says to people, "I know that you are not experiencing all that you had hoped for."

Next, King presents the dream of how it could be, a dream that transforms the discontent into a life-giving picture of the future.

Finally, he expresses his confidence at why he believes it will become a reality. He tells people that he knows this dream will become a reality because of God's promise and because all the people gathered there will together "shout freedom" from every mountain top. The dream is not possible just because of him, but because of God, and because of the people who hear him.

What would it look like to craft the casting of your vision along the same lines King used?

1. Initial hope – what do people long for in their lives, in their parish?
3. The current reality – what hope has not been realized, their holy discontent?
4. The potential future – what dream or picture of the future could inspire passion and hope?
4. Why the dream is possible – God's promise and power working through the gifts and talents of the people empowered by God.

Knowing When to Launch

Timing is everything. We want to know that we have prayed, listened, and discerned long enough that this vision is truly "God-inspired". This process does not need to stall other initiatives you might start in the parish, such as laying groundwork of prayer (Day 1), starting an evangelization program (Day 3), or raising up other leaders (Day 4). Don't be paralysed by thinking that your parish vision must be "complete" and polished before taking any other steps. In some ways, starting some of these other elements might in fact offer useful experience to feed into the vision!

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However, your vision does need to be clear enough, early on, to provide some sense of direction and hope. You need enough of an idea of your vision to be able to answer someone who asks, "why are we starting this evangelization program?" or "Why do you want me to help lead?" Your answer to those questions can form the rudiments of the initial vision. Remember, vision expresses the parish's particular way of living out the universal mission to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19) in its local context.

Experts in People

When you decide the time is right to launch, this is the moment when you want to bring around you people who are "influencers" and "relationship builders". They are naturally wired to understand how the vision might land with different personalities. They will perceive the best approaches psychologically to achieve the best buy-in possible.
"Community of communities"

In Evangelii Gaudium, Pope Francis describes the parish as a "community of communities" (§28), and this is a helpful way of thinking of your parish now. Different people will need to hear about the vision in different ways.

- Key influencers: Who are the people whose viewpoint holds a lot of sway in the parish? Make a list of all these people. Which of them are most likely to get excited about the vision and want to bring people on board? You will probably want to prioritise these people. What is the best way of sharing with them? Individually? Certainly, there will be a handful of people you want to share with over coffee. Are there other groupings of people you could meet together with over a meal and share with them as a group? Prioritise those who will be instrumental in spreading the vision to others and implementing it.
- 'Laggards': There may be those who are influential in the parish but who may be known as laggards: they will not get on board with change and will complain whatever the vision is. If one or two of these people are likely to have disproportionate influence in the parish, what would it look like to take them individually for coffee? What is the "why" behind your vision that is most likely to resonate with this person? Are their children or grandchildren involved in the parish? If not, that's what this vision is about – we want this parish to be a place that attracts them! Do your best to share the vision such that they will want to get on board, but do not overinvest time here and do not be derailed from your mission if you receive a negative reaction. This is to be expected from some.
- Other groups: Map out other groups in the parish: ministries, parents of school children, Bible studies, prayer groups. Are you or members of your vision group able to attend these groups to share about the vision? Plan your messaging carefully to maximise chances of understanding and buy-in from the group involved. What are their questions likely to be? What might they object to? Have answers, but also be ready to listen. Discernment is ongoing, and if the same feedback is heard multiple times it is certainly worth being attentive to it. What is God saying?

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Vision Homilies

Many parishes use a series of vision homilies to launch the vision. They plan these over a few weekends, both to unpack the vision piece by piece, and to ensure that people who miss one weekend will hear it. To explore this more deeply, we encourage you to read Preaching on Purpose: A Divine Renovation Handbook for Communicating the Gospel Today. Read pages 108-114 'Casting Vision' and pages 331-336 on using a preaching series.

Repeat, repeat, repeat!

It is commonly said that "vision leaks". People get excited for it one Sunday, and on Monday morning they are absorbed in the whirlwind of life and have forgotten it. We need to repeat and return to vision again and again. It is extremely optimistic to assume that people have taken it fully to heart and allow it to guide their ministry in the

parish. One Divine Renovation Board member quips that CEO stands for "Chief Echo Officer". If you are a leader in your parish, your role is to "echo" – until people are sick of hearing it! – the vision, the "why", behind your parish.

Vision is the Yardstick

Launching your vision is only the beginning. Now the real work begins of making it a reality. Once established, it becomes the measure of all the work and decision-making that follows. Don't make the fatal mistake of discerning a vision, talking about it in a few homilies, getting people excited about it, and then leaving it to one side. The vision becomes the lens through which we see everything we do in the parish. When deciding what ministries should get priority, where money should be spent, where people should invest their time and energy, the question that needs to be asked is, "What will help us achieve our vision?" Those things that contribute towards achieving our vision are nurtured, and those that do not are let go. This is why taking the time to truly, honestly, and prayerfully discern and work on the vision is so crucial. After all, it is the light by which you will be guided in the re-creation of your parish.

The previous steps to Four Steps to a Vision can be found in the following pre-session readings…
Step 1: Dream (session 2)
Step 2: Articulate (session 3)

What to expect

1. I will critically evaluate the vision for clarity and alignment with the Characteristics of a Vision.
2. I will make necessary adjustments to enhance the vision's impact and feasibility.

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Group discussion

1. Share whatever feedback you have received about the vision from the 2-3 trusted confidents. How do these insights make you want to adjust your vision?

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2. Expand the circle a little wider. Take some time now to list one person inside the parish and one person outside the parish (key stakeholders) to get critical feedback on the parish vision. Share your choices with the group. These people are different from the 2-3 trusted confidents from last session's homework. Start with these people after the session and let the circle of people who are invited into this vison gradually expand, always watching, listening, and seeking prayer and discernment.

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Define the vision

Through the eyes of another

Imagine the following people hear the vision. What do they "see" as they hear it? What would sound attractive to them and what would put them off? Are there any jargon words or insider language you are using that would mean nothing to them? How do these insights make you want to adjust your vision?

- 'Cradle Catholic Catherine'
- 'Atheist Andy'
- 'Teenage Tara'

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Time machine

A time machine gives you access to your parish in 10 years' time at a point when the vision has been wildly fruitful. Imagine three people arriving in your parish:

- A non-religious newcomer: What do they see and experience?
- A single mother: How do they feel?
- A newspaper reporter: What are some of things they will write and report on?

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Wrap Up

Homework:

- Continue to pray for parish renewal.
- You should commit to prayerfully continue to discern God's vision for the parish. If you need to meet as a team before the next facilitated session, take some time now to schedule the upcoming meeting(s) and, if necessary, reschedule the next facilitated sessions.
- Share your vision with the people you listed at the top of the session. Remember, as you share your vision with more people, you will be able to further refine it.

Notes

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Session 7

Mobilize & Cast

What You Can Expect out of today's Session

1. I will analyze the potential impacts of introducing a new vision in the parish.
2. I will identify some practical next steps along my renewal journey.

Group Activity

How many people on average attend your Sunday Masses? _____

Stage	Proportion	Number of people in your parish
Innovators	2.5%	
Early Adopters	13.5%	
Early Majority	34%	
Late Majority	34%	
Laggards	16%	

Where do you anticipate encountering the biggest challenges as you continue to transform your parish? How will you respond to these challenges?

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Take time now as a group to identify the innovators and early adopters (16%) of your parish. List as many names as you can recall. These are the people you can count on to help catalyze your parish toward mission.

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Communicate Your Vision

Now that you've identified your innovators and early adopters, you will need to make a case for renewal that they can connect with. Martin Luther King Jr. does a masterful job of communicating his vision for America. Listen to the structure he uses; we will look at incorporating that structure into how you communicate your visions.

Initial Hope

King begins by presenting an initial hope – freedom – that has not been realized in people's lives.

"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

The Current Reality

He lets them know that he understands that this is not the reality they are living.

"I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice."

Casting vision must start from people's everyday experience. If people do not believe that you understand their current lives, they will not follow you however inspiring the vision is. It says to people, 'I know that you are not experiencing all that you had hoped for.'

The Potential Future

Next, King presents the dream of how it could be, a dream that transforms the discontent into a life-giving picture of the future.

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

Why the Dream is Possible

Finally, he expresses his confidence at why he believes it will become a reality. The dream is not possible just because of him, but because of God, and because of the people who hear him.

"…the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope."

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Group Discussion

Using the same outline found in Dr. King's speech, draft some talking notes that will help you to communicate your vision to others.

1. Initial hope – what do people long for in their lives, in your parish?

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2. The current reality – what hope has not been realized, their holy discontent?

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3. The potential future – what dream or picture of the future could inspire passion and hope? This is your vision!

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4. Why the dream is possible – God's promise and power working through the gifts and talents of the people empowered by God.

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Wrap Up

Discuss the next steps on your parish journey. Which of the seven Genesis Compass days does your parish need most? Do you as a team need to meet regularly on your own from this point on? How can Divine Renovation support these needs?

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Notes

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