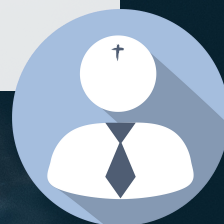




Conversations that transform parish culture

BY JON KONZ

CatholicMinistryProfessionals.com



How do you transform culture?

Does your parish's mission statement look something like this?

"We're a warm, welcoming community of Catholic disciples following the Word of God. The Eucharist is the center of all we do. We're open to all. You are welcome here. Checks can be written out to St. 'Patron of this Parish' Church."

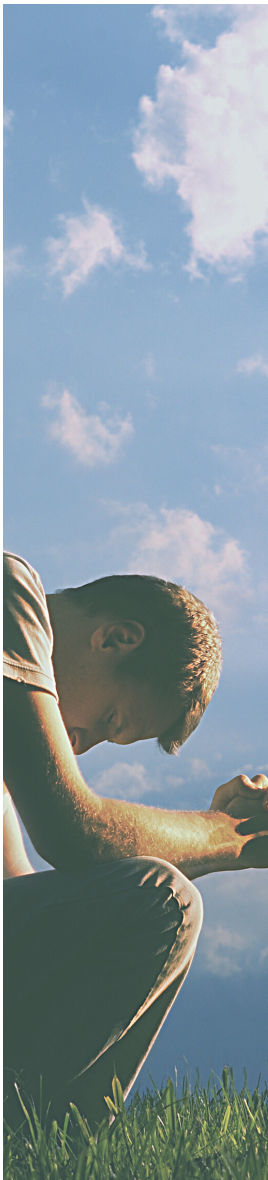
The statement above isn't a mission statement; it's a statement of the culture this parish wishes it had. It's a common miscommunication in parishes, and unfortunately, culture isn't lived out when it's defined, it's defined by the way it is lived out.

If you want to create a mission-driven culture of discipleship, you need to invest more time in three types of conversations: 1) discernment of God's Will for your parish, 2) sharing of God's Will with others, and 3) having the conversations that move His Will forward.



CONVERSATION 1

Discern God's Will



What is God's will?

When you accepted your position at the parish, you didn't just start a new job. You were called into ministry. This came with one important assumption: That you discerned this call out of a deep and rich interior life of prayer. It is a specific calling aimed at fulfilling the mission of the Church. This means 1) You've been given special grace for the task, and 2) it's important that you bear fruit.

Jesus says, "Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned." John 15

Notice: Jesus doesn't say, "Without me you're not going to get as much done." He says, "Apart from me you can do NOTHING." Your work belongs to Jesus. It's all his. If you're not doing His work, you will wither, die, and be pruned entirely off of the branch.



Joy comes from Jesus

Now why does Jesus warn us of this pruning? To motivate us out of fear? No!

“I have told you this so that your joy may be complete.”

-John 15:11

Joy is the mark of discipleship. Your discipleship. People know it when they see it, and they want to be a part of it. Real joy is not something you can fake indefinitely. It comes from truly knowing Jesus and hearing him speak direction and meaning into your everyday life.

If you truly want to light Holy Spirit fires in your church and transform your culture, joy is your best tool. That joy comes from following the will of God.

Joy can make up for many gaps in any person's skill set. Abide in Christ; make His mission your own so that real joy can flow directly from Him into the work you do.

If God has called you into ministry, he will tell you where he wants you to go. And knowing this, is foundational for the hard work that is ahead of you.

Put it into practice

- ✓ The most important conversation you will have in ministry is the one between you and God. Budget time for prayer in the context of your work week. Make it the most important meeting in your calendar. Prioritize praying with Scripture and being in front of the Blessed Sacrament.
- ✓ Write down in 1-2 sentences on what you believe God is calling you to do in the parish.



CONVERSATION 2

Share God's will

Cast vision to inspire mission

A mission statement tells us what we're trying to accomplish. It is the "why" behind our community. Every single parish shares the same mission given by Jesus:

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, 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

Everything in the parish should be oriented toward accomplishing the mission of Christ.

A vision statement tells us how we plan to implement the mission. A good vision statement unifies members, gives clarity to decisions, and compels action



*Make
disciples of
all nations.*

-JESUS



Beautiful feet of the evangelist

Once you've discerned God's will for your parish, you need to tell people.

Find a simple way to share what God is calling you to do. Most people are willing to follow if they know where you're going and why. Why? Because our hearts are made for God, and he is the one calling them. You're simply the messenger of the good news that they long to hear. As St. Paul writes, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news."

"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

-Romans 10:15.

Once you find a clear and concise way to tell parishioners where you're going and why, it will unify them, set them on fire, and give them permission to live out Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations.

Put it into practice

- ✓ Revisit your discernment statement from above and modify it to tell people where you're going and why. Keep it succinct and ordered toward a specific goal with a clear why.
Use this formula: We're going to _____ by _____ because _____.
Example:
"We're going to invite everyone in our parish boundaries to evangelizing events by the end of the year because Jesus commanded us to make disciples of all nations."
- ✓ Share that vision statement with everyone: at meetings, signing up new parishioners, when you emcee the parish potluck, with the cashier at the grocery store. Everywhere.



CONVERSATION 3

Implement God's Will



*Some
conversations
are too
important to
be put off.*

What is a crucial conversation?

A crucial conversation is any discussion that needs happen in order to implement the mission of the church. Sometimes they're fun, like inviting a potential ministry leader to grab coffee. Other times they are more contentious, like removing a leader from ministry. In either case, if this conversation can help to build God's vision for the parish, it's too important to put off.

When Jesus sends the 12 on mission he encourages them to be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves." When you have a crucial conversation keep in mind two things.

First, deeply consider the person on the other side of the conversation and be intentional with your approach. Cornering your pastor during Holy Week to ask for a raise is unlikely to yield the results you were looking for.



Obedience over success

Second, you are called to obedience, not success. The apostles were called to go and make disciples of the entire world. They all died before that work was accomplished, yet the fruit of their obedience is obvious. People are messy, and all the prep work in the world cannot guarantee you success. You may never feel that your crucial conversations accomplished the desired goal. But, if you are obedient to God's call, there will be fruit...even if you don't live to see it.

TIPS

- Do the spiritual work in advance. Pray. Fast.
- Come prepared with the facts of the situation.
- Listen to their side of the story/expectations.
- Get them to offer a solution.
- Come with a solution prepared.

Put it into practice

- ✓ Begin to make a list of crucial conversations that need to happen at your parish. Use the tips above to prepare yourself.
- ✓ Once you have a working list, prioritize the conversations in order of urgency and time needed.
- ✓ Schedule these meetings into your calendar



Thank you!

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