

CHANGING PARADIGMS



5 PARADIGM SHIFTS LEADERS MUST MAKE TO TRANSFORM PARISHES



From an
Institutional Faith
to an Intentional
Faith



From a Culture of
Engagement to a
Culture of
Encounter



From a Focus on
Maintenance to a
Focus on Mission



From Programs
to People



From Avoidance
to Accountability

Pastoral Conversion for Cultural Change

This necessary change, of course, is one of culture. This cultural change means a deep, deep change. It means changing what we consider to be normative for the Christian life. It means a total conversion of our lived values, not merely the stated ones. Compared to this change, all others, including closing churches, are merely cosmetic.”
Fr. James Mallon, *Divine Renovation*

Once a leadership team has made these paradigm shifts, they need to create linked processes of Strategy, People, and Operations so that they create a culture of discipleship and mission, where these principles influence, inform, and guide the actions and activity of the parish. This is where the rubber hits the road. It is critical that there are disciples involved in this process who are committed to evangelization and mission.



Institutional Faith

- Leaves little space for personal relationship with God.
- Tends toward the “transactional”
- Parishioners act more like “consumers”

Intentional Faith

- Personal relationship with Christ is at the center of communal life
- This is the focus of all parish efforts.
- Leadership teams seek the Will of the Lord together in regular times of prayer.



Culture of Engagement

- Focuses involvement. Conversion to community.
- Skips over discernment processes.
- Confuses “activity” with personal relationship & discipleship.

Culture of Encounter

- Focuses on encounter. Conversion is to Jesus.
- Evaluates all of parish life through the lens of encounter.
- Has a stable group of disciples willing to invest themselves in others.



Focus on Maintenance

- Vision is primarily inward focused, toward the community.
- Majority of the time, energy, and resources of leadership are geared toward “keeping the trains running on time.”

Focus on Mission

- Focus of leadership is on sharing the message and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ with the world outside of the parish.
- Every parishioner is called to be a missionary disciple and pathways created to equip them.



Program Based Models

- Sees the “right” program as the primary solver of problems, or the primary driver of engagement
- Creates a programmatic cycle or “meandering path.”
- Often executes programs with little personal followup.

People Based Models

- Equips & empowers disciples to accompany others into discipleship
- Combines the right programs with the right people so that this accompaniment bears the greatest fruits



Leaders Who Avoid

- Avoids difficult conversations because we don't want to hurt other people's feelings.
- Won't press forward on a strategic direction or execute a solid vision because of the perceived difficulties of change.

Leaders Who Are Accountable

- Sees the role of leadership as discerning and pastoral, concerned with fruit and effectiveness.
- No tolerance for passive-aggressiveness, “sacred cows,” or resistance to direction.