

RENEW MY CHURCH SUMMIT VIDEO AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

**Resource for parish groups to discuss and broaden
understanding of a common vision of renewal (Part I)**



“AS WE MOVE FORWARD, IT WILL BE OUR THREE MISSION IMPERATIVES THAT WILL STEADY OUR STEPS ON THIS NEW PATH. OUR AIM IS TO MAKE DISCIPLES, BUILD COMMUNITIES, AND INSPIRE WITNESS. AMID ALL OF THE TWISTS AND TURNS IN THE ROAD AHEAD, IT WILL BE IMPORTANT TO KEEP OUR EYES FOCUSED ON THESE THREE PRIORITIES.

WE ARE GOING OUT ON A LIMB WITH RENEW MY CHURCH, NOT AS RECKLESS THRILL-SEEKERS, BUT AS THOSE WHO SEE THE GREAT POTENTIAL AHEAD OF US AS THE SPIRIT LEADS US FORWARD. IT IS, AS PAPA WOJTYŁA OBSERVED: OUT OF A FAITH THAT A VAST OCEAN IS OPENING BEFORE US, THAT WE TAKE UP THIS VENTURE TOGETHER, EVER RELYING ON THE GUIDANCE OF JESUS CHRIST.”

— *Cardinal Blase J. Cupich*



Photo: Alexander Gouletas

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

Renew My Church is a process of both spiritual and organizational renewal with the goals of growing in our own discipleship and making disciples of others, building stronger communities of faith, and inspiring witness to the light of Christ in a world desperately in need of His love. As we enter into this process it is necessary to have a common vision of where we are headed and language that articulates our journey together.

The *Renew My Church* Summit provided many of us a glimpse of what renewal will mean for our parishes and archdiocese – one of shared leadership in our parishes, a deeply rooted culture of evangelization, a vibrancy of prayer and sense of community, and incredible trust in the Holy Spirit to lead us forward, all centered on the sacramental life of our Church. Now we must continue to share that vision with others and invite them into the conversations about what renewal will look like in each of our parishes.

The *Renew My Church* Summit videos and discussion guide are resources to facilitate meaningful discussion on how your parish community can respond to Christ's call for renewal.

In the next few pages you will find links to the talks given by Fr. James Mallon at the *Renew My Church* Summit (**Note: we will be sending a full list of videos and discussion questions in the next few weeks**). To facilitate sharing and learning we have provided a set of questions that can be used to guide group discussions. We recommend that you watch the video first and use this guide to facilitate the group discussion.

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A CASE FOR HOPE

1. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- What are 1-2 positive developments that have occurred in the Church in the last 50 years? To what can we attribute them?
- What are 1-2 negative changes or trends that have occurred in the Church in the last 50 years? What do we see as the root cause(s)?
- What changes have you seen in your parish community?
- What opportunities do you see in our current situation?

2. REFLECTION (TO BE READ BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- To appreciate both the need and opportunity we have for Renew My Church, we must recognize three key elements that define the current reality:
 - A movement occurred from an age of Christendom to a new Apostolic age. We no longer live in an age where Christian values can be presumed or where the culture helps people live out their faith. Many of the assumptions and presumptions we made about faith passing from one generation to the next have changed.
 - Given this shift, we need to make sure that our parish structures, methods of sharing the faith, and models of community life are renewed to be suitable for the evangelization of our communities today. We have always been called to evangelize and share our faith. Our effectiveness in making disciples, building communities, and inspiring witness in today's world depends on our ability and willingness to change our methods to serve our present reality.
 - Renewal cannot and must not be just another program. Rather it must involve a personal conversion and a renewed mindset rooted in a missionary attitude that embraces new ways of sharing an encounter with Jesus Christ and His Church.

3. WATCH VIDEO (LINK TO VIDEO)

4. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED AFTER THE VIDEO)

- We are in a change of ages, from an age of Christendom to a new Apostolic age.
 - How has this change of age affected our Church, your parish, and your own faith life?
 - How has your parish responded to this change of ages?
 - How have you responded in your own faith life?
- To respond to the end of the Age of Christendom we must be willing to change methods for the sake of the mission.
 - Do you think your parish is willing to change methods for the sake of the mission?
 - What makes you excited about this opportunity? What makes you fearful?

- Real change must be personal not just organizational.
 - To what extent are you discontent with the status quo or convinced that things can be better?
 - Are you personally convinced of the need to renew, not just the Church, but also parish life and individual ways to share Christ with others?
 - If we don't change our methods, how else can we communicate our mission to baptize all nations and make disciples?
- Actions speak louder than words.
 - What would it look like for your parish to place mission over methods?
 - What would it look like for you to place mission over methods in your own life?
- This journey of renewal is grounded in making disciples, building communities, and inspiring witness.
 - How does your parish intentionally identify, form, and send disciples out to make more disciples (i.e. those on fire to learn and share the Good News about Jesus and His Church)?
 - How do you measure discipleship and the strength of parishioner engagement in your parishioners?
- We have an opportunity for real spiritual and organizational change through Renew My Church.
 - What are you most hopeful for in Renew My Church? What are you most fearful of?
 - Five, ten, twenty years from now, how do you want to remember Renew My Church?
 - What would you like our gift to be for future generations of Catholics?
- Vision matters – it provides unity, direction, and inspiration.
 - Picture in your mind the ideal parish – one you have dreamed about. How would do you describe that parish? What would it look and feel to be a part of that parish?
 - How would the sacramental life (preparation for and celebration of the sacraments) of that parish look?
 - What can you start working on today to make that parish a reality?

UNPACKING OUR BAPTISMAL CALL – THE PRODIGAL SON

1. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- Read Luke 15: 11-32 (The parable of the Prodigal Son).
- Write down 5 qualities of the father that you admire the most.
- Where do you see those 5 qualities present in your parish?

2. REFLECTION (TO BE READ BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- There is a difference between wanting things **from** people and wanting things **for** people. We may want to change our parishes and communities because we want more participation, attendance, or resources, but this parable helps us to recognize that our first intention must be for people to discover (or rediscover) their own relationship with our loving Father, and in so doing, to step into the life of His family, our Church.

3. WATCH VIDEO (LINK TO VIDEO)

4. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED AFTER THE VIDEO)

- The parable of Prodigal Son illustrates the love and heart of the Father.
 - What new insight or lessons did you receive from this perspective?
 - How did it make you feel about your own relationship with God?
- Understanding your own identity matters.
 - Which of the two brothers in the parable do you identify with the most?
 - Has it always been that way, or were there moments in your life where you felt like both the younger brother and the older brother? If so, what was it that brought you back to the Father's embrace and back into his house?
 - Do you see yourself as a slave to God, or as His son or daughter? Why?
- Our underlying motives must be rooted in the love of the father.
 - Do you and your parish focus more on what you want from people or what you want for people?
 - Is the motivation of your actions a need for self-preservation (i.e. maintaining all that is currently in place – ministries, Mass times, programs, etc.) or an authentic desire for evangelization (i.e. willing to take risks and allow the Holy Spirit to lead you into new ways for the sake of His mission)?

- Priorities point to where our heart really is.
 - Where do you think your parish is most focused? Looking inward or looking outward?
 - How do you and your parish demonstrate a sense of urgency in bringing more people into encounters with Jesus?
 - How do you and your parish actively care about the plight of the lost sheep?
 - How do you and your parish actively care for the “older brothers” in the parish?
- We celebrate what we care most about.
 - In the last year, on what did you and your parish spend the most amount of time, money, and energy celebrating?
 - In the last year, how did your parish celebrate lives that were transformed by Jesus Christ (that is, those who may have only begun their journey of faith, those who moved closer in relationship to Jesus, and those who embraced the call to full communion with the Church)?
 - How does your Sunday liturgy reflect and include witness of those who are transformed by belonging to Christ?
- Stories are one of the most powerful forms of communication.
 - How did Jen’s story make you feel?
 - How would Jen’s story have played out if she had been at your parish?
- Renewal starts with you.
 - Do you see a need to instill a missionary impulse in your parish?
 - Do you care about bringing people to an encounter Jesus Christ? In what ways do you or would you like to live that out?
 - Do you know how to bring people to an encounter with Jesus Christ? Does that idea seem uncomfortable? Why or why not?
- Renew My Church is a movement towards mission and it will not be easy.
 - What challenges or opposition do you foresee in your parish from a greater outward focus?
 - What makes you excited or anxious about this?

UNPACKING OUR BAPTISMAL CALL – THE ANATOMY OF FAITH

1. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- What is your baptismal call?
- In what ways does your parish support and recognize the baptismal call of all believers?

2. REFLECTION (TO BE READ BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- There is a difference between **knowing things about Jesus** and **knowing Jesus**. Our communities have to ensure that we not only teach things about Jesus but that we also create a space for encountering the living God. A space where people can learn, share, and witness to the transformative power of God in their lives.

3. WATCH VIDEO (LINK TO VIDEO)

4. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED AFTER THE VIDEO)

- It is important to rediscover the tradition and art of kerygmatic preaching.
 - When you think about what it means to talk about Jesus Christ with someone who doesn't know Him, what first comes to mind? The Bible? The Church? The sacraments? Your story?
 - When was the last time you shared the Good News of Jesus Christ with someone? What was that experience like? What did you learn from it?
- There is a difference between knowing Jesus and knowing things about Jesus.
 - How would you describe your belief in God – is it something you feel in your heart or something you know in your mind (or both)? Why?
 - How would you describe your parish's sacramental preparation movements today? Do they teach both things about Jesus as well as introduce a practice of recognizing and entering into an ongoing relationship with the Lord?
- According to Pope St. Paul VI, evangelization always involves the explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ.
 - How does the point that “the witness of life must give way to the word of life” make you feel (e.g., excited or anxious)? Why?
 - What would it take for your parish to embrace a model of communal evangelization?
- Mission depends on unity, and unity depends on mission.
 - To what extent does your parish have and express these two elements (mission and unity)?
 - Why do you think that unity enables mission and vice versa?
 - How do you and other people in your parish encourage others, pray for others, and offer service to others in support of unity and mission?

- There is real power in a Church that is united.
 - What did the prayer for the Cardinal make you feel or think about? Why?
 - In your parish, what gets in the way of unity and mission? How can those obstacles be overcome?
- The first step we must each take toward unity is to continuously pray for our own change of heart.
 - How have we personally hurt the unity or mission of our Church?
 - What pain, hurt, or suffering is holding you back from loving others?

GROUNDED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- Read Acts 2: 1-11 (Pentecost)
- When did you last experience the Holy Spirit at work in your parish?
- Have you experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in your own life?

2. REFLECTION (TO BE READ BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- Our work of renewal is led by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit reminds us that the Church must constantly reexamine her mandate to go and make disciples. As you engage in your small group discussion, be mindful of the movement and presence of the Holy Spirit right here and now.

3. WATCH VIDEO (LINK TO VIDEO)

4. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED AFTER THE VIDEO)

- There is a difference between having the Holy Spirit and being filled with the Holy Spirit.
 - How have you experienced the feeling of being filled with the Holy Spirit?
 - What impact did those experiences have on your faith?
- The Church will always remain in the “upper room” unless she is constantly renewed in the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - In the past year, how have you and your parish been renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit?
 - How have you and your parish left the “upper room” as the apostles did to boldly proclaim the Good News? Do you and your parish have clarity around the mission of making disciples?
- It seems like, at times, the greatest distance is from the brain to the heart.
 - How do you feel about talking about and having experiences of the Holy Spirit (e.g., excited, suspicious, dismissive, etc.)? Why?
 - How do you help others to recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit in the sacramental life of the Church?
- Renewal will not happen if we just change structures; we need to allow God to renew us from within.
 - In what ways have you felt God calling you towards renewal?
 - What is God asking of you and your parish in this time of renewal?
 - Do you believe renewal will only take place if we trust in the power of the Holy Spirit? Why or why not?
- Every parish is filled with people that the Lord wants to raise up and lead others in renewal.
 - How do you and your parish identify and activate people’s spiritual gifts?
 - How do you nurture their passions and gifts for ministry?
 - How do you measure/ assess people’s wiliness to share their spiritual gifts?

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