

Divine Renovation Conference DR16, Tuesday morning Plenary 14 June 2016

Fr James Mallon (FJM): We want to introduce you to another parishioner. Let's welcome Laurie. Where were you 5 years ago?

Laurie* (L): I was not on any spiritual journey 5 years ago. I was a cradle Catholic and had fallen away from my faith in my early 20s. (**The spelling of this name could be incorrect. If so, my apologies.*)

FJM: How come you are now standing in front of 600 people? We had 2000 views on Livestream from yesterday morning. There's a lot of people watching out there as well. Let's give them a wave. (they wave to the viewers) That didn't make you nervous at all?

L: I'd do anything for Fr James. That's true.

FJM: So what happened? What was the beginning of your journey?

L: I had a very tragic marriage that ended in divorce. I am the mother of 2 beautiful children, a son 17 and a daughter 12. I'd done all the secular things to try and heal from my divorce. I went to counselling and I sought other relationships. None of these things worked. I actually woke up one morning at my boyfriend's home and I walked into the living room and I was hit so quick that I knew that I had to find God. I ended the relationship from that moment and I went on a search for God, and the only place I really knew to find God was in the church. I didn't really want to come back to the Catholic Church because I was divorced. I could never reconcile being divorced and Catholic. So I sought out a couple of non-denominationalists and they were very nice, but didn't seem right to me. So I spoke to a co-worker and said, 'You know, this church search is not going so well' and her parents were members of this parish, and she said, 'You know, you should really try St Benedict', they have a young progressive priest'. That was 5 years ago.

FJM: I was reacting to being called a progressive. We aim to be very traditional here, like apostolic traditional.

L: So I decided to come to Mass one day. I could not tell you what happened that day except for when I came into this church I was given a huge sense of peace and just sat in the pew and sobbed my eyes out. I did that for about 2 months. I did not reach out to anyone in the parish, I came in and left. And finally I knew God wanted me to do this for my children – and I really, really had no idea how to do this. The only minister my children knew was the Prime Minister. This is when I reached out to someone and asked about how to get my daughter baptised. This came with huge shame and guilt because I never baptised my daughter. Someone from the baptismal committee called me and she loved me on that phone. She did not judge me, she was just so full of joy and said, 'I cannot wait to tell Fr James this story' and we made arrangements to meet, and of course I was scared to death to meet a priest. And again, praise the Lord, Fr James was the same, he just loved me, he did not judge me, he gave me 3 directions, and he said, 'Laurie, I want you to start taking the kids to Mass (1), put your son in youth group (2) and your daughter in catechism class (3), (at that point he was 12 and she was 8), and I promise you God will do the rest': and, He has.

FJM: What was the next step after that?

L: My children received the sacraments, and during that year my daughter was baptised and my son received his first Holy Communion, they did it together. That was very special. My son joined the youth group and he as well was loved by the youth ministers and had a powerful experience of the Holy Spirit through a youth minister. We became active members in the parish, and the parish just loved us. Eventually, due to a lot of talk about Alpha in the parish and the encouragement of my priest, I did take Alpha and had a powerful experience of the Holy Spirit on the retreat weekend, and again the profound thing for me during my Alpha experience was being loved by the table helper. My table host was pretty cool, (Ron Huntley), but the table helper loved me, and that just made me want to come back.

FJM: So after Alpha, what kind of impact did that have on your life?

L: Well Jesus became my Lord and King, I gave my life to Christ, and I want to share that. My family saw complete transformation in me, including my brother who was away from his faith. Both my parents were away from the church as well. I prayed that the Lord would help me evangelise my family, and eventually my mother did take Alpha, and she had a profound experience as well, on the weekend away, and at the Holy Spirit retreat.

FJM: And what's your mum's name?

L: My mum's name is Gail*.

FJM: Is she here today? Gail, get up here. (clapping) Come and stand beside your daughter, Gail.

L: Yes my mum eventually went on to serve on Sushi Alpha and both my parents (my Dad's not here today) are active members of St Benedict's.

FJM: That's an Alpha we run in a Sushi restaurant, in case you were wondering.

L: My son is quite an invitational disciple. He has invited my father to prayer breakfasts, his father – who is not a Christian – to prayer breakfasts. He even brought his father to Mass on Easter, which was very healing for our family. He invited my brother to a men's prayer breakfast where there was a very profound witness shared at that prayer breakfast, and it started to stir things into my brother's life, and he started to ask me questions, and praise God he texted me in September and said, 'I just went to Mass these last 2 Sundays'. So I tried to act really cool, I went 'Cool', but I was jumping up and down in my kitchen, ecstatic, praising God. The kids thought I was crazy. And so he returned to his faith. And since then my niece, who is 10, was baptised in January, and she just had her first Holy Communion. I'm a godmother for the first time, and my son is a godfather.

FJM: Speaking of your son – well he's here. Come up here.

L: So my dad, who is a very devoted husband, came back to church with my mum, and so they attend Mass every week and it's just awesome.

FJM: Gail, can I just ask you, what difference has Jesus made in your life?

G. Well I feel it helped me understand my relationship with Jesus, and also He is the light in my life.

FJM to L's son: The first time I met you, you were about that height (double that now). This guy had a job interview a few months ago and he invited the lady interviewing him to come to church. And she came. What difference has Jesus made in your life?

L's son: Well, I had let anxiety and fear stop me from following Christ, and when I threw that all away and got on my knees I really felt I had a purpose to be a missionary disciple, and I let that run my life now. It's amazing how I've changed. (clapping)

L: When I completed Alpha I knew God was calling me to apply for an annulment. This as many know, is a very painful process but to me it was so healing. The Lord brought so much healing to my life through that, and then the boyfriend that I talked about before, when I woke up at his home, we always maintained contact and we'd bump into each other once in a while. So we happened to have this conversation, and he was struggling with some things related to his father having dementia, and he was asking me questions and I said, 'You should really think about taking Alpha, you might get your answers there'. And there just so happened to be an Alpha 'Come and See' the next week, and it was just perfect timing. And I asked him to come, and he did, and he took the Alpha course – and he as well had a profound experience of the Holy Spirit on the weekend away, and again the helpers and the people on that team just loved him and just

showered him with non-judgment and love, and he as well has returned to his faith. He was just confirmed this Easter.

FJM: And just to be clear. This is the boyfriend you dumped, and now you've got him back. Alan*, come up. Alan, what difference has Jesus made in your life?

A: O big question. Calm. A lot of glory, and .He has let me realise that if anybody is going to bring you through anything – it's Jesus.

FJM: You know, the remarkable thing is that 4.5 years ago (family photo on screen) not one single member of this family was connected to church, and now they are all not just connected, they're living as disciples, as missionary disciples. It is an amazing grace and it doesn't stop there. Laurie, tell us a bit about what the Lord (we talked yesterday about passion and vision). What did the Lord put on your heart?

L: When I was applying for my annulment, I really wanted to know what the Catholic church said about me being divorced. So I was on the internet and I came across this beautiful website called divorcedcatholic.com , and I saw a ministry there called [Journey of Hope](#) (now called [Recovering from Divorce](#)). It is a Catholic based ministry for divorced Catholics and there's a [book](#) on there, and I thought, 'O that looks interesting'. I applied to get the [devotionals](#) from that ministry to my emails. And those devotionals are written by people who have taken this program. So I was getting them for about a year. They were very, very powerful, very healing. This was all around the time I was going through my annulment, and a year later one of the parish staff, she saw the [ministry](#) on another church [website](#) and she said and asked me, 'Laurie, would you do this?' And I said, 'Absolutely!' God has healed me of my deep pain of losing my marriage and He wants to use me to help others, and that is my mission.

FJM: And what has happened since then?

L: The ministry was launched at St Benedict's 3 years ago, God provided the perfect person to help me launch it. We will be finishing our 3rd year next weekend, and through this program people who have taken it have become leaders in the ministry, and it has been a profound healing for the women who have taken the program. Some of the women who have come were disconnected from the church, and last year in particular, 4 of the women who were disconnected from the church came to take the ministry, received some profound healing, went on to take Alpha, and one of them actually was just on our Alpha team.

FJM: What's your vision? What's your hope? Your desire for this ministry?

L: Firstly, that the Lord will raise up male leaders, so we can have a group for men. Secondly, I would love the ministry to be offered in the community, because for a lot of people coming to the church is scary, so I would love for that to happen. And also that perhaps some leaders here would have it on their heart to take that ministry home.

FJM: Thank you so much to you Laurie, and to all of your family, thank you.

Dan O'Rourke then gave some announcements. (You can find him on Twitter as [@DanORourke](#) and you can find the podcasts [here](#) and [here](#).) Those announcements included encouragement to keep tweeting about the conference, reasons why the podcasts have been on hiatus, plugs for the [Divine Renovation Guidebook](#) and for [Novalis](#), and an introduction to Ron Huntley.

(During this plenary session Fr James Mallon and Ron Huntley bounced off each other as they co-presented this Unread Chapter. This is not a precise transcription.)

Fr James Mallon (FJM): Praise God! Isn't God great?!

Ron Huntley (RH): Good morning.

FJM: We originally called this talk the Unwritten Chapter because when the book ([Divine Renovation](#)) was published in early September 2015 it was actually written – I finished writing it in the very first days of January 2015. So if you think about the time gap (from end of writing to start of this conference), it's a good year and a half. And one thing about our experience here at St Benedict's – and any time a parish heads off in a direction of mission it is because you are innovating, you are doing things you've never done before, you're taking risks. And if we keep our eyes, our minds, our hearts and our ears open, we are always going to be learning things. So the original idea of this talk this morning was to communicate to you all the stuff that we've learned – mostly through making all kinds of mistakes – since the book was published, to bring you up to date. However, as you heard from Dan, well, we now have to call it the Unread Chapter, because basically all the content of what we are going to cover this morning is in the [Guidebook](#), and as Dan said, the royalties (not necessarily all of them mine) are going back into supporting this ministry. Perhaps it is certainly yet Unread but not Unwritten. We are going to cover 6 things.

- The three phases of renewal
- Four non-negotiables of a senior leadership team
- Process versus programs
- The game plan (one of the workshops covered this in depth)
- The three 'Ables' of ministry
- Three critical success factors for ministries

RH: How many days do we have to do that? It's going to take a while. As we were planning for the conference and were preparing staff for the workshops we realised some of the things we don't do anymore, and some of the things we are doing we are looking at transitioning. So should we stop what we are doing and go back and live out who we were when the book was originally written? No, because we are living this in real time, and what's so fun about this and what we want to communicate today is this spirit of learning that takes place on our team. It's really fun. What is really cool about it is we have no idea what God is going to come up with next. God is God. He is in charge. And the Holy Spirit animates our ideas, our hopes and our dreams in ways that we have no idea where the next wave is going to present itself. So it's been really fun learning together in this culture of health, and it does include a lot of conflict – as Dan said – but it's fun conflict, because we love each other, we love our team, we love our parishioners and leaders and we are committed to the goal, and so the first idea doesn't rule the day, it's the best idea that we want to rule the day. We want to share with you what we've learned, but we also want to communicate to you a spirit of being open to how the Holy Spirit wants to empower your team with even better ideas. That's what we want to communicate right now more than anything else.

The Three Phases of Renewal

FJM: At this point, this is $\frac{1}{4}$ theory, $\frac{3}{4}$ coming from our experience. Why do I say that? Because I believe in this journey from maintenance to mission. We haven't completed it yet, we're not fully there, we're still in process, but out of our experience we've discerned what I believe are 3 distinct phases of renewal. Now I've got an image of a sailing ship up there. I'm not much of a sailor, but imagine a trans-Atlantic voyage. There are 3 phases to a journey isn't there? There's when you go out and you go to the point where you can no longer see where you came from. Remember the 'Lord of the Rings'? When Sam says, 'Mr Frodo, if I take one more step I'll be further away than I've ever been before'. Well, this is the end of Phase 1. And the middle phase is the whole part in the journey where you can't see where you've come from and you can't see where you are going. And the third phase is where someone shouts 'Land Ho!' The end is in sight. This middle phase is where we find ourselves at St Benedict's parish right now. We have a sense that we're halfway through this middle phase. And I'll tell you, it's sometimes scary. Have you ever seen 'Mutiny on the Bounty'? You know, it's the middle phase, where you can't see where you are going and you can't see where you came from that you begin to think, 'Are we doing the right thing? Are we crazy?' And maybe some of the crew might begin to think of mutiny.

FJM: But I think that these 3 distinct phases are very, very necessary, and I want to speak briefly about what they are. I want to use a good old Canadian symbol to talk about that. Now I know that some of you cannot relate to this (image of men pushing a snow-bound car) but when a car gets stuck in the snow there's a technique to it you see. There's an initial phase where you have to rock the car back and forth, you've got to build up momentum and get it going and you need 3 or 4 people, and at one point when you have enough momentum you give it a big heave and it starts moving. And what's really cool is when the car starts moving you kind of just walk alongside it. You can push it with one hand and it's really easy, but the other thing you need – you need someone at the steering wheel. Because if you don't have someone at the steering wheel, you are in big trouble. And in a sense, that's Phase 2. And in most Catholic parishes, when it comes to discipleship and evangelisation (and we've already identified that the primary task of leadership is to change culture: is to lead cultural transformation) that initial phase is about getting momentum, enough momentum to overcome the inertia, and that requires a lot of building momentum, back and forth, a lot of brute force, a lot of repetition and a lot of pushing. But just like when the car gets freed from the snow once it starts moving, you don't keep rocking it, you've got to change what you do. You've got to change how you do it. We didn't know this when we started off. In many ways we didn't know what we were doing. We just knew where we wanted to go. But we knew that something was up.

RH: It does take a lot of momentum, it takes a lot of teamwork to rock the boat. But do you know what it takes? It takes a lot of trust. Because if the people in the parish don't trust that you love them, and that you care about the people that they care about, then it's just a good idea. We need to care about people and we need to communicate that, and they need to see us loving them, Right? Because if people catch you loving them they are more likely to get behind you and help you in the direction you're going. But if it's all academia, if it's all good ideas on paper, then it's not going to get a lot of traction: it's love that wins the day. It's love that wins people over, and so one of the really cool things that Alpha does (if you haven't done Alpha, you should really try it) is that it gives us an opportunity for people to see us loving them. We love people, and they see us doing it 10 weeks in a row in Alpha. It really creates a lot of people behind this car that we can push things in a direction. Wouldn't you say?

FJM: The primary tools that we used to get that initial momentum were Alpha and Stewardship and having Stewardship Fairs. I cover all that in the book. So basically what you read in the book was this – how we got the car out of the snow. But then, once it started moving we realised we had to make a change, and someone once said that the hardest model to change is a model that works. Because it's working! But the truth is this: that because of the very fact that it works it will mean that you will eventually have to change it, because, guess what, because it works it will eventually stop working or it won't work as well as it once did. And that's what we experienced. And the 5 remaining points of this presentation are the things that we changed because of this.

RH: And what was that line that [Carey Nieuwhof](#) said that day when we went to see him? "Are you married to the method or are you married to the mission?" Sometimes what happens, especially when people have a conversion, they think that's the way to do it. Don't change anything, because it worked for me. It's really funny, we see it every time. We went from Alpha over 10 weeks to Alpha over 7 weeks. People lost their minds. And it was so funny to manage that, because they were married to the "It's the 10 weeks". No it's not. There are a lot of things at play. As people get used to things that work, it really is hard to change. So change is important.

FJM: There's a very difficult thing to communicate to our people. We said, trust us, we asked for your trust as we move forward and do these new things – and you know three years later we're saying, well, remember the thing that we asked you to trust us about? Um, err, we're going to change it. It's even worse when you write a book about it. Because a lot/some of the things I talked about in the book, we don't do anymore. But the principles are the same, the vision is the same, the values are the same, but the method is always going to be adjusted from time to time. So let's dip into what some of these things were.

Senior Leadership Team

FJM: You would have heard Patrick Lencioni talking about this last night (at the conference). [Dominic Perri](#) is here today from [Amazing Parish](#) and he's going to be doing a workshop. For those of you going to it – it's going to be great. This has been the single greatest game changer in my life in the last couple of years as we finished Phase 1. Because, let me tell you something. I came to this parish. I've always had strong vision. My first hire was Ron who has been my sidekick through all this. He's the one who actually introduced me to Alpha many, many years ago. And we knew where we were going, we had a common vision, and I knew what my original strategy was going to be. Why? Because I had used it before in previous parishes, and it worked. But I had never moved into Phase 2 because I don't have those gifts. I get things going. I start things. I blow things up and start new things. But once they're going I get bored and move on and start even more new things. And eventually I blow the engine, and the whole thing comes to a halt. So it required something different, a different way to lead.

RH: I heard it said in a blog I read recently that good leadership needs management and good management needs leadership. And Fr James is an amazing leader and he does blow things up, in a good way, because he wants great results, he expects great results, he expects changed lives, he expects staff and ministry leaders to do great things. What ends up happening is often times his biggest influence is because you guys all invite him to travel all over the place and speak to your dioceses, and so we miss him a lot of the time, which is fine, we love to share him, but what happened was – that's when he'd have the opportunity to read really cool books and when he'd have opportunities to talk to people like you and get really inspired by good ideas, and then without any consultation at all, he would come back to our church and wreak havoc on us when we're already doing something. It was like, "Dude, what are you doing? Stop the madness. Why don't you ask some of us what a good idea is rather than asking everybody else out there?" And he had no idea he was wreaking havoc on our staff and where we were going.

FJM: I knew this is what I wanted to do. The problem was as I said, it worked, and like Sam in the Lord of the Rings all of a sudden I realise, O my goodness I've never been this far out before and then I realised I don't know what I'm doing anymore. I honestly don't know what to do next. My strategy has expired. I need help.

We talk about 4 non-negotiables of a leadership team. These are very much reflective of what Pat Lencioni talks about in his [5 Dysfunctions of a Team](#). We've adjusted that a bit according to our experience, but it's really very much rooted in his teachings and we have some of his books here. And initially we tried to make our parish staff function as a leadership team, and it was at that point about 8 or 9 or 10 of us, and it just wasn't working all that well.

RH: That's an understatement.

FJM: That's an understatement. Then we realised that the optimal size of a leadership team is really the pastor and 3 or 4 other people, or maybe 5 of them at the most. You can read about that in Pat's book.

RH: Was it fair to say it was working for you? Because you travelled and stuff, it was giving you an opportunity to get updated from other people and is it fair to say it was probably feeding your needs? At the time, in terms of meeting in a bigger group. Is that fair?

FJM: Yes, I think initially when we had staff meetings, before we moved into Pat's methodology we would have weekly staff meetings. We'd pray together, and we'd have some time of sharing and we'd have updates from everyone, and that was good because I was travelling a bit and it kept me on track with things. But then we did change how we did things.

RH: And it's really important. And I want to point out to the pastors to hear this. **It might be working for you, but if it's not working for your team, it's not working.**

FJM: I was really excited. I was gone probably about 25% of the time. Was that good or bad?

RH: We've got it all written down. It was.

FJM: I'd be almost like proud, O yes I can be gone 25% of the time and my parish is great because I've got great staff and they're doing great, and I think I remember it was you Ron who said, pulled me in and sat me down and said, 'We're not doing great'.

RH: True enough, and to be honest with you and to be transparent, 2 years ago we were toxic. Our staff culture was toxic. It wasn't a fun place to work, there was a lot of dissension, there was a lot of water cooler talking going on, frustration was high, people were on the edge of burn out. Now we love Fr James, we love his mission, we love his passion, and yet, just because of the way he's hardwired he wasn't able to see that we were dying trying to keep up with the things he was blowing up and doing.

FJM: And I was having a blast. I'm loving it. When we talk about the 4 non-negotiables, this is No.1 **Unanimity of Vision**. We talked about this: vision is where you are going. And if you are going to form a senior leadership team, that close group that's going to meet with the pastor every single week to hammer out your tactical issues, the implementation of strategy, and even some low level strategic stuff (because we work out broad strategy with our pastoral council) you need to have unanimity of vision. You've got to have absolute commitment to where we're going and there has to be absolute intolerance of a different vision. Because if you're in a canoe in the middle of a lake with 3 people, and one person wants to go to the north shore, one person wants to go south and one wants to go east and west, and you all start rowing, guess what's going to happen? You're just going to go round and round and round in circles or tip the canoe. When you have 2 visions, you have division, and division at the top will divide the entire team. But the amazing thing about it is when you have unanimity of vision it opens the door for what Pat talked about – to have healthy conflict about other things.

RH: Fr James, if I could just say too. That doesn't just go for the senior leadership team. That also goes for the rest of your staff and your ministry leaders. You have to raise people up into ministry who have a common vision because they can be in the parish undermining everything you're doing. They might be great people, but it might not be a great time for them to be in leadership because they might not be on board with where we're going. And it's OK to remove people from leadership because that toxicity is what tears down churches and makes them less effective.

FJM: The 2nd non-negotiable is **Balance of Strength**, and this is absolutely fundamental. Last night Pat talked about the different tools you can use, DISC and Myers Briggs. We use [StrengthsFinder](#) from Gallup. We find it's a tool that came our way and it's been very enriching. We really recommend that you check that out. Basically we have this myth of the well balanced person, right? You know in the seminary we were formed to be well balanced. Well, guess what? There's no such thing as a well-balanced person. No such thing. We are all weird. But there is such a thing as a balanced team. I've got real gifts. I've got leadership gifts for influencing and vision and communicating vision and getting things going, but left to my own devices I blow things up. In the end I'll blow the engine. And I will drive everyone into insanity because I've got blind spots. I've got a whole bunch of blind spots. I'm also a terrible coach. I think I'm just too impatient. I'm just not good with that. We found our staff were getting frustrated with me and just a whole bunch of stuff I'm not good at. I'm not 7 foot tall. And here's the great realisation – that everyone is gifted, everyone has particular gifts. You have leadership gifts that I don't have. And I really believe God was able to use our parish to bring us even further because we had the grace to bring a team around me that complemented my gifts. Sometimes pastors will bring a team around them and the people have all the same profile. You see we all have blind spots, and as I said last night the problem with blind spots is you don't know you've got them. And we need a team that will compensate. Whatever tool you use you generally have those 4 quadrants. Make sure that those quadrants are covered.

RH: Just to give you some insight into our team. Fr James is really strong on influence. I'm really strong on relationships, Kate is really strong on executing and Rob is really strong on strategy. So that's 4 of us that cover all 4 quadrants of what you'll find in 'Living Your Strengths' book.

FJM: It's a great balance and it's an incredible gift. Here's the thing about unanimity of vision. If you have total unity in vision it allows us to engage in healthy conflict, not about the vision, but about how we're going to get there. You know Pat when he's writing says that you should mine for conflict, because the more truth we can get on the table, the more perspectives from people who have our blind spots covered, the better decisions, the more information we are going to have to make the best decisions.

Healthy Conflict and Trust

FJM: And healthy conflict is a risky thing. We heard last night that's why you need to have trust and vulnerability. We are going to talk about that as well. I have to say that the 3 hours we meet every week, those 3 hours are the most exciting, fun, difficult 3 hours of my week. It's incredibly life giving. We have a blast.

RH: We do. I'd just like to say I only like mining for conflict when they are his ideas. I don't like mining for conflict when they are my ideas because I don't think it's appropriate. He's the priest, he can handle it.

FJM: We take conflict so seriously that this is a standard piece of equipment (shows a nerf ball blaster) at our senior leadership team meetings.

RH: And the thing is, his attention span is...and he gets bored easy, so he starts shooting people at random for no good reason.

FJM: Sometimes we are on the floor laughing. Here's the thing. We commit together, we pray together, we put up the white board, we have a quick report from our different teams, some stuff for accountability, but the main focus of our discussions are the decisions that need to be made around the implementation of our strategy, when we are not sure what to do. And I mean this in all humility, it's not like we can call the parish next door and say, 'What are you guys doing for this?' They're like, 'Huh? What are you talking about?' So we don't know. And we have some amazing discussions, and Pat talked last night about accountability. And I want to tell you this (and I'll just put the 4th one up, it's self-explanatory), **vulnerability** and trust. Because it gets real. We have sometimes very heated disagreements. We get upset. We get that silence. And we stop and say, what just happened there? Could we just talk it through? We don't let anything like that pass. It's very vulnerable and I'll tell you it's incredible, it really is. We talk about accountability because we will have decided, this is the principle, this is what we're doing and often, OK, sometimes I might come in with a decision and I want it to go this way, but deep down I know it is not in line with what we agreed a couple of meetings ago – and these guys don't let me get away with anything. And sometimes, and I'm going to be very, very honest, in the midst of this passionate discussion because it's right there on the table – and remember it's not about vision, it's about how we get there, there is sometimes a part of me that wants to say, 'I'm the priest!'. But you know, I could do that and there's ways to say that verbally and non-verbally – and we don't get away with it – you get called out on it. I get called out on it. Let's be clear that the goal of senior leadership team is not to come to consensus. We don't try to find consensus. If there's no clarity on what we've got to do, I'm the pastor, I'm the leader, I've got to make the decisions, but as Pat said if people have been able to invest in the process, they're going to buy in. But I know this, that if I was ever to abuse that authority – you know no one in that room is there for the pay, they can all find better jobs somewhere else. They've given their lives to this too, to this vision, to this dream, and for me to do that would be an act of violence, and beside the point, 99.9% of the time they're right anyway, and I know it. And it has been an incredible experience.

RH: And that goes for us too. We come in with great ideas, but we always leave with the best idea. I was the last guy to get shot down in a ball of flames in a senior leadership team meeting, and it was painful. It was really painful for me because I put a lot of thought into it. I did all the pre-work, I did all the discussions, I know where we're going, I know what we're doing, and these guys didn't agree and it drove me bonkers. And I left and we just had to pause it. Fr Simon in his wisdom said, 'Guys why don't we just pause this?' because it was heated, it was, you know, I was blowing my stack. It wasn't healthy, right? That happens sometimes. And we had to walk away and as a day or two passes I'm thinking yeah, they're right. Doh! I hate when that happens.

FJM: You see it's about passion, right? We talked yesterday about the splankna, remember? You know, the feeling you get when you get passionate people who see what you don't see? And I'll tell you, it's amazing. And to my brother priests, when I first realised I had run out of strategy, I felt so alone, because I'm the pastor I've led them this far out – like we can't see the shore anymore – and they're looking at me, and I don't know what to do anymore, I don't know what to do next. I've got to pretend. I'm alone. And since we formed this team and have been living it this way, it's been absolutely profound. There is no decision – I want to speak even to the bishops here, because I think this model we desperately need it in our church – there is absolutely no decision in my leadership that I am left to work through on my own. No decision whatever. Nothing. We want to work it out together, and no one's after my job, and it's been an incredible experience. You don't have to be afraid about losing the authority in all this.

RH: Can I say something to that too? You spoke to the priests and bishops; I want to speak to the lay people here. Can we love our pastor enough to let him make the decisions around who those 2 or 3 people are? Again, it might not be you. You might be here, and an important part of your staff or your volunteers or your leadership, but if your pastor needs people around him that can help him to be the most effective pastor possible, can we put our egos aside and let him make that decision and then support it? Whether we are on it or we're not? I remember talking to you and pleading before we got there, pleading Fr James, who are your people? And I don't care if I'm not one of them, but you need them.

FJM: And by the way, that conversation took place several years before I knew what Ron was really talking about. I remember we were actually in Royal Albert Hall in London and he was saying, 'Who are your people?' 'Who are your team?' I was like, 'Ron, I don't know what you're talking about'. And he saw it. And many of the other staff saw it long before I did.

Process not Programs

FJM: Remember, what we're covering in this chapter is Phase 2 stuff. If you are here today from a parish that hasn't really begun to do anything to move from maintenance to mission, remember your focus is going to be Phase 1. So take notes, but put it aside and go back to it in time. Because the rocking and pushing out of the snow, you've got to do that. If you go into a parish that has no culture of discipleship and evangelisation and start doing this stuff it will blow up. You need to do Phase 1. But if Phase 1 works, you've got to move to Phase 2. We had the first couple of years doing stewardship initiatives, we had tons of stuff going on. I think we had like 73 ministries one year and 76 programs of faith formation, for adults, children and families.

RH: And we'd be at staff meetings and someone would ask a question, 'Hey, who is responsible for that ministry?' I didn't even know we had that ministry.

FJM: I loved it, it was great. I was having a ball, you know, the more the merrier. That was my philosophy: something for everyone. Like when you go to MacDonald's and there's the full menu and you can take your pick, and in one sense I do believe that in that initial phase we needed to do it like that, but once the car got moving, once evangelisation and discipleship began, more people like Laurie and her family, and people having conversions, hearing testimonies, the more that became normal, we had to shift it. Because it's not

just about random programs that aren't connected to each other. This is the thing. People would do stuff, so we had a lot of stuff going on, a lot of busyness, but the question is, 'What's it all about? What's our purpose?' It's to make disciples. And we define our purpose statement, you will see it all over the place: 'To form disciples to joyfully live out the mission of Jesus Christ'. That's our purpose; not to be busy. I mean we might be busy making disciples to joyfully live out the mission of Jesus Christ, and that's good, keep doing it. But we can be busy doing a whole bunch of stuff that's not making any difference ultimately. This was another thing that we had to do.

RH: It was interesting. I was in the pharmaceutical industry and I was running into the hospital and Fr Owen Connolly was the chaplain there. And he said, 'Ron, how are you doing?' 'Hey, Father, I'm doing great, I'm so busy' and he took my arm and he was so sincere and he said, 'Ron, busyness is not a virtue'.

FJM: One of the things that I had to basically repent of was my 'the more the merrier'. To be brutally honest, I think for me, I like the chaos, I think my own needs were being met by that, I think my own ego loved 'Look how busy we are, our parking lot's full all the time, we've got every room at the school..'

RH: That's not hard by the way; it's a small parking lot.

FJM: So I had to repent from a 'more is merrier' to a new philosophy called 'less is more'. Think about when you go to a restaurant, the best restaurants. Do they have 20 page menus or 1 page menus? The point is we can actually accomplish more for the kingdom of God by doing less things and doing them incredibly well, rather than doing a whole bunch of stuff even a little bit well, or oftentimes poorly. We can accomplish more. God can accomplish more in and through us by doing less things, especially when those things are the things that actually work. A couple of weeks after we were talking about this, I actually went on the internet and googled the name 'less more' and I found a photograph of a guy from the 1940s. His name is Les Moore – so we printed it off and framed it and it hangs in the room where we have our senior leadership team meetings and actually if you walk around his eyes follow you everywhere you go. And if you start a suggestion, 'Hey, I've got a great idea, how about we do this?' he actually shoots lasers out of his eyes and gives you a hundred volts. Because as many of you know, it is in one sense hilarious. But it's relatively easy to say no to a bad idea, but there's tons of good ideas, and every single week – especially when parishioners start waking up and taking on the mission and getting excited – they're like 'Woah, I've got a great idea' and every day there's lots of good ideas coming for us. And when I first started I would say, 'Yes, great, go for it', I'd just light fires everywhere. It wasn't such a good idea after all.

RH: In fact, we begged Fr James to no longer say 'Yes' to anything, but to say instead, 'That's a neat idea, you need to talk to Ron', and I say 'No'.

FJM: The next thing we want to talk about is the **Game Plan**. You've seen these pictures. I'll let Ron introduce this concept.

RH: Consider an archaeological dig, sometimes you'd think they happen by mistake, don't they? Maybe a big back hoe making a building or clearing something and all of a sudden they maybe bump into something that they think might be important, and then all the tools change, right? They get rid of the back hoe, they stake everything off, and they start painstakingly uncovering things to see what's underneath. And in many ways, well, it was already there, and we're just uncovering it. And with this spaghetti approach, with this busy approach we were taking at St Benedict's parish there were some things working great, some things working well and some things not working at all. And at one point during this second phase – that is all about nailing down the process – we started unearthing, removing the distractions away, to see what is really working. At that time I was working with [Tanya Rodgers](#), who was previously with C.C.O. She was a staff member here and she was a genius at helping us see through the chaos and the busyness and the clutter to see what is actually working. And the Game Plan, it was unearthed, and it has allowed us to stay laser

focussed now on forming disciples who joyfully live out the mission of Jesus Christ vs 'Oh man, I'm so busy'.

FJM: We had always had a sense of the basic movement of the Game Plan and I've got to tell you this story: that 5 ½ years ago within my first 2 months in this parish, I went to a meeting of church leaders. There were 10 churches, Catholic and non-Catholic, and I had my parishioners with me and we were asked to think about our vision for the role that Alpha would play in the renewal of our church. And I was getting ready to write something down and the presenter said, we want you to draw a picture, and I said, 'Man, I hate that'. It turns out that the guy I was with, his whole life ambition was to be a cartoonist. We sat there and we thought things over and I said to him, 'I have this image of a pump, and the handle of the pump is the Alpha question mark', because I really believe that at least at this point Alpha is the best tool that I've found to help evangelise people; people from the pews and people from outside the pews. We've always brought both together in our Alphas. I think that is very, very important. And to pump them into a discipleship process so that's the image that comes to me – a pump that is pumping people through. And he said to me, 'Wow, the image that came to me was a church building filling up from the inside with water and when it reached the level of the windows, exploding the windows and flooding the city. So this is what we drew – or rather what he drew. My contribution is the written reference to Ezekiel 47 up there beside the church. And at the top, that's not a flying fish, that's actually Nova Scotia, the blue part being our diocese. We said our vision was that by pumping people through Alpha and evangelising and discipling them our church will slowly fill up with missionary disciples who will spill out and touch and change our city. And what absolutely blows me away is the fact that a little less than 5 years later that flow of water has somehow touched many of you, to bring you here today. That was an amazing vision that God put on our hearts and it really was the beginning of a Game Plan. You've seen this poster in our foyer



THE GAME PLAN

Invitational Culture: Alpha: Alpha Team: Connect Groups: Ministry: Discipleship Groups: Worship

What we struggled with was a representation that communicated process but wasn't linear. That was very important to us. It's not that you do this, then you do this, then you do this. We also wanted a process that had multiple on-ramps. This is basically our fundamental strategy in making missionary disciples. This is not just for the people in our church. The starting point is **invitational church**. Yes, we want to invite those

in our pews who have not yet encountered Jesus personally, experienced the power of the Holy Spirit, who have not yet become missionary disciples to take Alpha. But we want to have an invitational culture. You heard about Hayden inviting everyone. That's what we want. That's what we celebrate at our parish. Whether the people say Yes or No, that's not our problem. Our call is to invite. And here's an important thing. Here in our context in Nova Scotia, Canada, and Canada, I think is a bit more advanced in the process of secularisation than the United States – so our fundamental interface with the unchurched is not the weekend experience, it's Alpha. Because I believe there are limits to what you can do (you can still do a lot of things) but in the end it will still be a bit strange because I don't think the Eucharist was meant to be a frontline tool to evangelise. That's why if you look here, (at the Game Plan), worship is at the very end. Now that doesn't mean that we don't recognise the presence of unchurched people in our weekend. We don't have signs up saying 'Only Committed Catholics Allowed'. And we try to maximise our weekends with the 3 H's, Hymns, Homilies and Hospitalities. And often a lot of people will start coming and then take Alpha. We try to do both, but this is our primary strategy.

RH: At one point we did have a couple of different models that we were wrestling with and we were just about to embark on a particular journey of communicating where we were going when I was brought on full time – just about 2 years ago – and I'd realised that it was a clash of two different influences and it wasn't going to work, and so fortunately we were able to hit the pause button before we launched it – and it was such an important piece because where we were really falling short is at the very top, the apex, which is connect groups. Connect groups are where Alpha alumni go to connect and to grow. To grow how? To growth in all of the gifts and also in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and it's out of that model that we have our very most trusted leaders as connect group leaders who then pastor, small 'p' pastor a small church because you (FJM) can't do it. I can't do it. But we want to care for you individually, we want you to be loved and cared for. How many priests here often, or occasionally, get a telephone call from the hospital?, 'So and so is here, they would like you to come down and visit them or anoint them or what have you', and that's really important. But I tell you if you belong to a connect group and you go down, your health goes down, you've got 30 people around you providing food for your family, visiting you at the hospital, praying for you, and yes you will call the priest.

FJM: Yes definitely we have the sacrament of the anointing of the sick once a month, we'll anoint 120 people, and we do go out to homes and to the hospitals for sacramental ministry, but that's a whole other topic. They're about the demands that this is going to mean for our model of priestly ministry, where the pastor is the personal chaplain of everyone. If we cling to that model of ministry we are never going to be able to lead anything like this. The traditional way of belonging to our church and having a sense of belonging was often a personal relationship with the priest – and if you are in a church of 200 people or less, that's actually what you should do, you should keep going, because that's the model of leadership appropriate to the size of your church. But if you are a church of over 500 you need to change that, and definitely if you are a church – we get a weekend attendance here of between 1500 and 1800 people on a weekend and probably have about 2000 'regulars' – that model is not going to work. And if it does work, 2 things are going to happen: the level of pastoral care is going to be pretty small proportionate to the size of this church: and I'm going to be dead in 3 months: and all the growth that we've got is going to be coming to a standstill. And so we see this process as an invitational culture. You heard about the Journey of Hope, inviting people to a pre-evangelisation program, we've used the Marriage Course, the Parenting Course, Prayer Breakfasts, but ultimately the goal is to get people into **Alpha**. We do Alpha several times a year. We have lay witnesses. We constantly invite, invite. I invite people as well. After Alpha our goal is to get as many people as possible either back on the **Alpha team** or into a connect group. Because Alpha team is our basic leadership pipeline. You can only be in the Alpha team circle for a couple of years and then we literally fire you. You get moved on. Because a pipeline can only function as a pipeline if it keeps flowing, if people come out. This often happens in churches, people often own their ministry and they block the pipe. Essentially Laurie was formed in her leadership through the experience of Alpha team, so that when we fired

her we said to her, 'What's the Lord's call on your life?' and then we came around to her and equipped her for this new ministry. You see **connect groups** (on the Game Plan). When I first started doing Alpha many years ago my primary concern was to fill in the catechesis. So that was it, get people through Alpha, and those who have – or have had or have been touched or have had an experience, let's bring them in and let's fill out the theological picture. That was my primary concern. I still realised at the same time that we lost a lot of people. Those of you who have done R.C.I.A., do any of you lose people after the Easter Vigil? It happens all the time. I became convicted that we need to focus primarily after people are evangelised into getting people into community, authentic Christian community, where, as Ron said, they can grow. So connect groups are primarily about connecting, they're about community, where people are loved and known and supported and are accountable to and for one another. And when people are caught up in a web of relationships, then they've got the rest of their lives to grow.

Ministry. We call everyone into ministry. Anyone can enter a ministry; we'll still invite people back to Alpha. We are seeking to have ministry shepherded from within connect groups. Ron, how many connect groups do we have right now?

RH: 13, I believe. We just had 3 new ones. 2 new ones, and I'm hoping to close another deal – right after we're done talking – and start our next one. But it's not growing, it's not keeping up with demand. Our demand far outweighs our supply, but it's really important. One of our values is we will not grow at a pace that exceeds the leaders that God reveals to us and raises up. Because I don't want to do anything poorly, it's important we do a great job. So we will not start something until we have the right people to lead it, and it's hard.

FJM: The next symbol is **Discipleship Groups**. It looks like a little flower or like 3 people gathered around a book. These are our small groups that are focussed on content. This is where our catechesis happens; adult catechesis, bible studies, different programs, and unlike what we did in Phase 1, where we had everything in the building with these big groups, we have decentralised this. All of the connect groups happen in homes. The discipleship groups, the majority of them happen in homes. Small groups between 4 and 10 people who will gather for some program whether its 4 weeks, 6 weeks, 8 weeks, 10 weeks. And the number of groups will fluctuate. Last Lent I think we had about 90 groups meeting at homes. We try not to manage this as much, because it would be impossible to manage. We want it to be impossible to manage. Because we want to say, 'grab 3 or 4 friends and gather for coffee and watch a DVD and talk about it'. That's it. We will vet resources though. We want to vet what people are watching, we don't want any crazy stuff. You know what I mean. We're still kind of implementing this, in changing that model, but it has already started to bear fruit.

The final piece is **Worship**, and you'll see it's the chalice and host are someone doing this, (person with raised arms) symbol of worship because the Eucharist is meant to be the source and summit of the Christian life. The problem is that in most of our parishes all we do is the Eucharist. The only experience of Christian life people have is the Eucharist, and it is not the source of anything, it's not the summit of anything, and the life, the vitality that can come through the Eucharist is blocked. And we believe that when people live the Game Plan to the fullest that's when worship will truly come to life.

And I think of someone like Laurie and her family, a perfect example, you know she was invited, she experienced an invitational culture here, she eventually did Alpha, she did her time in the Alpha team, she went into a connect group. (In fact I understand that Alan and Laurie are actually in 2 different connect groups – it could be a possible source of divisiveness to which connect group they might eventually end up in together.) Involved in disciple ship groups and then finally worship comes to life, and then ministry, involved in ministry. So it's been an incredible blessing for us.

Here's a picture of our family friendly connect groups, and I wish I had time to tell you the story of every person in this picture, because as you'll see Johnny B there, there's Laurie and her family at the back there, it's such a delight. Hundreds and hundreds of these gatherings have happened over the last number of years,

and I think I've gone to 3. I was at one a couple of weeks ago, and I just ate food and prayed, and as we were singing and praying together there were babies crawling over my feet – I was in heaven. It was just such a joy to see this happening.

The Three Able's of Ministry

FJM: The idea of the 3 Able's of ministry, and the first one came out of the experience that we've talked about. The others followed. Sustainable, Scale-able and Transferable. **Sustainability**, this was Ron's big thing in calling me out, because, well, you tell the story.

RH: Fr James' health actually wasn't so good for the first number of years he was here. He would get a virus of some sort, and it would take him down big time, and that would happen several times a year, and plus he'd be travelling and things like that. So he physically was not healthy, his schedule and all the other demands he had, plus the pressure of being a pastor of a big parish like this was hard. He wasn't healthy and he knew he wasn't healthy, and people came along side of him and helped fund a consultant to come and help us restructure, which was wonderful. He started getting healthy, because we had a healthy structure, which allowed him the support he needed to get healthy. And his physical health even got better, and that was great, but our staff – at the time I mentioned – they were burning out too. So he was healthy but we weren't healthy, and so, I'd say, OK I'm glad you're doing good, but we're not. It's so good for you.

FJM: I was so happy. I'd tell, 'I'm feeling so great everyone', 'yeah, well, we're not feeling so good'.

RH: We realised that we needed to stop every now and again because we red line here. We work really, really tirelessly. We've got amazing both volunteers and staff that give like you can't imagine. And we need to care enough about them to see when they're red lining and we need to say, 'How are you doing?', 'What's going on?', and 'How can I help?' We need to be sustainable, which means healthy, as individuals and as a staff team, as leaders and volunteers.

FJM: Healthy things grow and bear fruit.

RH: Amen.

FJM: The second thing is **scale-able**. Why does something need to be scale-able? If you're innovating and looking to create and establish a model, create something from the start that is scale-able, that can grow. Why? Because if your church is healthy, it will grow. If you have a missionary church, it will grow. You heard Laurie's story about her ministry. She started, she found one other person, within a year she had raised up other teams. They were able to multiply these courses. It was set up from the start to be scale-able. And if we have ministries that are running that are all focussed around one person, who is running around really, really busily and not calling out other people, not raising up other leaders, it's not going to grow. And your proportional impact is going to be very little in the larger organisation, even though you're very, very busy. So make it scale-able.

And finally **transferable**.

RH: That scale-ability thing. It often does start with one person. And they're really good at something and we have to figure out why they're good at it. They often don't know why, and we help them figure it out and only then does it become scale-able. Because sometimes people are just really good at stuff and we know that, but we've got to figure out why they're really good at it, and sometimes it's partnering up with them to understand it, and once we do understand it, then we can give it away, and that's the transferability piece. Once we understand, then we become consciously competent. Ken Blanchard has a great book, '[The One Minute Manager](#)' and stuff and he talks about those principles. Once we became consciously competent and knew why, we became really good. Then we can teach other people and give it away. One of the things that we value here is to become a blessing, as much as God calls us to, to anyone who asks. And that's part of the

reason we like to have churches like you understand what you are doing that works well, so you can bless your local diocese. So that people when they come to you – not when you go to them, unsolicited advice never works...

FJM: It doesn't work. I tried it.

RH. Yeah, you did. (laughter) You got shot down like a ball of flames. It was awesome. (more laughter) I told him not to do it. He did it anyway. (more laughter) He thought it was the Holy Spirit. It was indigestion. (more laughter). But when people knock on our doors we want to pour ourselves into people, so that they can make church work. We just love the church, don't we? We love the church.

FJM: I wish I had an hour to spend with every single one of you here. Because I know there are things you're doing in your churches that we could benefit from, and learn from, especially if you're innovating. But if you've made the decision to move from maintenance to mission, and you do find something that works – and by the way for everything you find that works it takes about 3 false starts or mistakes to get there. But don't be afraid of taking risks. But when you do find something that works and bears fruit, we have a responsibility to communicate that to others, and to ensure that from the beginning when we construct a model of ministry to be a part of fulfilling our strategy and purpose that it should be transferable. That we should be able to say, 'here's how it can work in your context'. I'm going to ask Ron to speak about **3 Critical Success Factors for Ministries**.

RH: And the 1st thing is, and we communicate this to all our ministry leaders. You need to be healthy. **'Health vs Toxicity'**. Just because we are doing the Lord's work in the church doesn't mean we are healthy. Toxicity can reign in churches, and it stifles everything. So we teach people how to have that talk. Within team environments do we want to be healthy or are we going to let toxic rule? Because culture is created by two things: what we reward and what we tolerate. If we tolerate toxic behaviour, then that's the bed you made, and you actually deserve it. So root out toxicity. We demand health. We get toxic from time to time, and we need to call each other out, and love each other enough, the mission that we're on can't. I always say, everybody has a bad day, but when a bad day turns into a bad week, a flag should go up. And a bad week should never turn into a bad month when you are in leadership, because there's too much at stake, and I need you to love me enough to call me out when I'm toxic.

The 2nd thing is a **'leadership pipeline'**. Understand your ministry. Understand the different roles in that ministry. Rank them in terms of influence and responsibility. Your early entry points should have low responsibility and low impact. But the more you move through a pipeline, you grow in impact or influence and responsibility. But you need to define the different places because once you've defined each role, what it takes to be good at it, then you can have a great culture for apprenticing. Because now you actually understand your ministry, what's required at each phase, and how you need to grow people through your ministry. It was [Rick Warren](#) who said, 'don't use people to build up your church, use the church to build up your people'. What if we applied that to ministries as well? We want to make people great here by being a member of St Benedict's parish and what we do.

FJM: Ron began this morning by talking about whether we have the capacity to learn, the willingness to learn, whether we are teachable, and in truth, some days we are, some days we're not, especially when there's ego and there's pride and we may have, you know, come up with this great idea. Something we thought was great, and it turns out it's not so great and rather than having an honest conversation and backing away we double down. But sometimes it's not just bad ideas that are a threat to this, or bad models of ministry, but again, if you get something that starts working - eventually it's not going to work, and we need to be willing to allow ourselves to be pruned, and to allow our ministry models and our leadership structures to be pruned as well and **'pruning'** is always a painful reality. It's always difficult. And yet Jesus says, you know, 'I will prune every branch that bears no fruit, it will be cut down and put in the fire'. But here's the thing, 'Every branch that does bear fruit, I'm going to prune it.' Why? So it will bear even more

fruits. See it's not enough to have a good plan or a good model or something that's kind of working. If it's kind of working, let it be pruned so that it will work better. Let it be pruned again. Because as Ron said, we owe it to the Lord, to the mission of the church, to be the best that we can so that grace can build on nature. It's only the Lord who ultimately produces this fruit. So the question for us this morning is, 'Are we willing to learn?' I'm saying this to a bunch of people who have travelled to come and learn, so praise God for that.

Let's stand together and take a moment just to reflect on our ministries. I want you to think right now of everyone back home, your home parish, your staff, your ministry leaders, your volunteers, and let's ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us, to bring to mind to whisper in our ear, our hearts and our minds anything that we need to prune, even the things that might be working, even the things that are working. Does the Lord want to prune it, so it can bear even more fruit? Let's just wait, let's just ask the Holy Spirit to come. I invite you to close your eyes and, if you're comfortable, to open your hands to just pray 'Come' in the silence of your hearts. Come Holy Spirit. Come Holy Spirit. Come into this place Lord. Speak to us now Lord. We come with expectant faith Lord. Come Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit you are welcome here. When the Holy Spirit comes, He will speak truth into our lives, and into our ministries and convict our hearts. (music)

You are welcome Holy Spirit. Come, Come Holy Spirit. Speak to us Lord. Speak into our hearts as we imagine our parishes, our ministries, our staff, those at home, even those who are here with us Lord. Convict our hearts right now. What do we need to stop doing? What needs to be cut and removed? What needs to be pruned Lord? Speak now, into our hearts, convict our hearts.

RH: I see this hole here, and God just pouring His grace and mercy on us. Just allow it to rain down on you. You don't have to do it, but if you've never done it before allow yourself the freedom to raise your hands. Come Lord Jesus.

I get this image while we were praying, this beautiful image of being in a big field, with flowers all over the place, and just dancing, with hands in the air, so aware that God's pouring His mercy, His grace, incredible freedom to just be yourself. You're loved. You are loved. You are loved. It's awesome. As we were praising I see this field and I was just dancing, and God's rejoicing and just smiling. He loves you. Fr James used to have a dog, and he used to love to watch him run, because the dog was crazy, it just loved to run. You were meant to praise God. You were made to praise God, to experience His love and to give Him glory and praise. Thank you Lord. Let us just dance with You as we sing this (music)

We praise You. Let Your love just pour down on us, wash away our egos. Praise You Jesus. Praise You God. You are awesome.

FJM: Father we bless You and thank You. We thank You for this time of grace. Lord we remember Your word to us to not be afraid. Do not be afraid. Lord I pray for the parishes here today who are looking at beginning Phase 1, and with everything that that means to push the car out of the snow, and Lord I pray that they may not be daunted because Lord, You are pushing with them. You are with them. Lord, I pray for the parishes who perhaps are on the verge of Phase 2 and might not know it. Lord, I pray that You will give them wisdom to truly know what to let go of, what to stop doing, what to focus on. And Lord, I pray for any parishes here today that who are moving towards Phase 3, because Phase 3 doesn't happen when Phase 2 is finished. That's the amazing thing, Lord, Phase 3 happens one person at a time, just like Laurie, as she is equipped for mission and off she goes. Just like Flavia, she's equipped for mission and off she goes, and like other people throughout the world. So Lord we bless You and thank You for this day. We pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.