

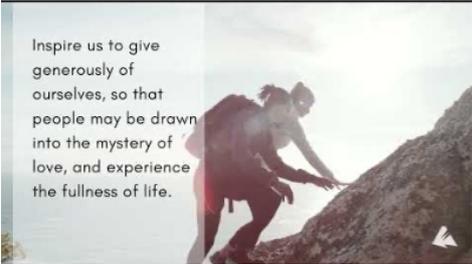

Areté
 CENTRE FOR MISSIONARY LEADERSHIP
A work of the Missionaries of God's Love

**Parish Renewal and the
 Parish Life Cycle**

MLTP 11

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Inspire us to give generously of ourselves, so that people may be drawn into the mystery of love, and experience the fullness of life.



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Introduction to Parish Renewal: Francis (1)

The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelizes, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be “the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters”. This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few.

EG 28 

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Introduction to Parish Renewal: Francis (2)

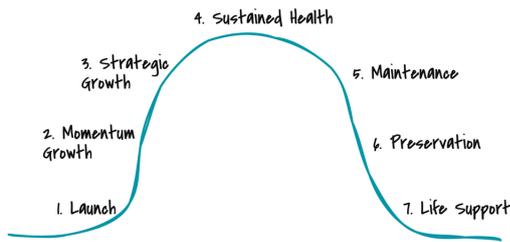
The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God's word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach. We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented.

EG 28



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The Parish Life-Cycle



Tony Morgan, The Unstuck Church



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The Stages are Ideal Types

- Idealisation has its strengths and weaknesses
- There is value in being able to name where you are at



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An Overview of the Stages

1. Launch – new parish (or a newly amalgamated parish)
2. Momentum Growth – Numerical growth (driven by demographics, outward focus, word of mouth)
3. Strategic Growth – systemic, intentional growth.
4. Sustained Health – unified, growing over time, good fruit: disciples
5. Maintenance – decline, inward focused, ministry silos,
6. Preservation – increased decline in numbers, finance, no mission
7. Life-Support – bare basics of ministry, financial crisis, no fruit

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1. Features of Launch Stage

- Brand new parishes – in some parts of the country
- Need people
- Need finances
- Be clear about the **mission**
- Focus upon core activities – Sunday Mass, but also some form of mission
- Reliant upon priest’s vision

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1. Leadership @ Launch Stage

- Clear about **mission**
 - Some combination of the great commandment and great commission
- Clear about vision
- Be able to prioritise what’s important now
- Unified around vision and core values
- Volunteer engagement required
 - Priest cannot do all the ministry himself (clericalism)
 - Volunteers more important than staff (watch for pseudo-clericalism, pride, perfectionism)

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2. Features of Momentum Growth Stage

- Growth takes place due to momentum
- The growth is numerical
- The growth may be due to:
 - demographic factors,
 - word of mouth
 - may be dependent upon the the personality of the parish priest
 - an outward focus



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2. Leadership at the Momentum Stage: Vision

- Need to develop a clear and shared **vision**
- Vision = a compelling picture of the future that produces passion
- Describes where we are going, what the parish could like into the future
- It clarifies the parish's direction
- Means we are being intentional about creating the future
- Inspires people to engage
- Will not inspire everyone



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2. Leadership at the Momentum Stage: Values

- Determine and clarify your parish's values
- These are the underlying principles that shape the parish's culture
- What are the common characteristics of those people who embody what is best about the parish?
 - 3 to 5 values
 - Genuinely create your own values
 - Values are not strategy



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3. Features of the Strategic Growth Stage

- Can be an absence of systems in momentum growth. There's often just been a bit of a 'get it done' mentality. But the parish is too big and too complex for that now
- **Strategic** growth requires that the leader (or key leaders) give up ministry, leadership, and decision-making to others. Have to let go of control
- Key Features:
 - Think teams (not individuals)
 - Think strategically
 - Present a Clear Discipleship Path
 - Systems and Processes
 - Healthy structures that provide a clear picture of roles and responsibilities



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3. Leadership at the Strategic Growth Stage

- Strategy answers the question: how are we going to accomplish the vision? We need a clear picture of what needs to be done
- Systems and processes need to be developed: e.g. a clear volunteer recruitment process; leadership development; connection with visitors/guests
- Systems:
 - Empower people to make decisions without needing permission
 - Means not reliant upon individuals but upon clear process
 - As simple as possible, as clear as possible, and respected by the leadership



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3. Leadership at the Strategic Growth Stage

- Discipleship Pathway
 - Need a clear simple path that forms people, rather than a smorgasbord of options
 - "Instead of offering a ministry buffet with multiple tempting choices of activities and studies, these churches make one singular pathway a virtual prerequisite for membership and full engagement with the church" (Tony Morgan, *The Unstuck Church*, p83).



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3. Leadership at the Strategic Growth Stage (3)

- Establish teams in all major ministries
- Right Structure
 - The parish structures need to support the discipleship pathway

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4. Features of the Sustained Health Stage

- Growing over time
- Unified
- Healthy
- Bearing good fruit – missionary disciples
- Ministry is multiplying – but in a coordinated way
- Open to change – especially in strategy
- Generous – with time, talent, resources

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5. Features of the Maintenance Stage

- Long slow cooling to this point
- It's not always recognizable but the leaders are aware first
- Looks healthy on the surface
 - Some sense of mission/vision
 - Strong leaders
 - Healthy finances
 - Some new people coming
 - Some systems and processes in place



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5. Features of the Maintenance Stage (2)

- Attendance plateaus, begins to decline, ages
- Vision is stale
- Ministry silos form
- Parishioner focused (not looking outwards)
- Small number of staff/quasi-staff doing most of the ministry (although might be healthy number in liturgical ministries)
- No real pain here – numbers are good, financially stable



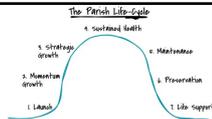
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Signs of Inward focused-parishes

- Multiplicity of programs – compete with and cannibalise each other
- Resistance to any sort of change
- People do not invite their friends

“When everything you do is focused upon people who already attend your church, you create barriers for engaging new people. And that’s how your Church starts to die.”

Tony Morgan, *The Unstuck Church*, p132



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6. Leadership at the Maintenance Stage



1) Renew the vision

- Mission = why we exist
- Vision = where we are going in the future
- Mission rarely changes; Vision needs refreshing every few years
 - 12-year vision, reviewed and adjusted every 3 years.
- Mallon – Vision begins with the parish priest
- Requires a small group to engage in a collaborative process
- Cannot be developed by the whole parish
- But whole parish should be consulted in due course
- Distinguish vision (where we are going) from strategy (how we will get there)
- Give key stakeholders a say in the vision first (staff, ministry leaders)



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6. Leadership at the Maintenance Stage (2) – vision cont.



- Explain why staying where you are will be worse than adopting the new vision
- Some people will not like the new vision



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6. Leadership at the Maintenance Stage (3).



2) Prioritise Evangelization

- The simplest way to move from RHS to LHS of the life-cycle is to focus on evangelization
- This means more than just starting Alpha (although you absolutely need an evangelization tool) – have to be able to change strategy and structures that reached and sustained existing parishioners in order to reach new parishioners
- Have a clear focus upon discipleship – provide a clear plan for growing people after initial evangelisation



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6. Leadership at the Maintenance Stage (4).

2) Prioritize Evangelization (cont.)

"inward-focused churches hope (and sometimes pray) that people outside the faith will somehow join what the church is already doing for existing church members. When it comes to reaching people outside the faith, I've never seen that strategy work."

Tony Morgan, *The Unstuck Church* (p. 129).

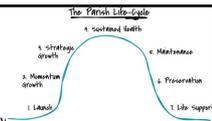


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6. Leadership at the Maintenance Stage (5).

3) Develop a Simple Discipleship Pathway

- Develop a simple, clear, unified and aligned strategy for spiritual growth
- This pathway is your fundamental **strategy**
- Help people to take a next step at every stage
- Communicate one thing – the next step
- Create a whole-of-parish structure that is based upon, and supports the discipleship pathway
- Less programs means more volunteers involved in the core activities
- Evangelization and Discipleship are intrinsically messy – but a discipleship pathway makes growth easier



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6. Leadership at the Maintenance Stage (6).

4) Tie the changes to the vision and the plan (strategy)

- Somethings may have to be let go of
- Honour them when they close
- Change at level of whole parish has to come from the top (parish priest)
- May need to bring in person or people from beyond the parish to bring about change



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6. Features of the Preservation Stage

- Noticeable decline in numbers, finances
- Parishioner focus is dominant – little to no outward focus
- The methods are more important than the mission
- Ministry silos are total
- No mission, vision, or strategy
- “Nostalgia is the air we breathe”
- “The parish must change to survive”



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6. Features of the Preservation Stage (2)

- The signs of decline are apparent but “the pain typically isn’t bad enough to foster a desire for change”
- It needs prayer: that the “parish’s heart will change”
- The strong leaders and visionaries have left
- The focus is upon retaining existing members
- For the change to take place: a “growing core” of people need to realize that the Church is not about me, but is actually for the people we need to reach (mission not maintenance)
- An awareness of the urgent need for change is required.



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6. Leadership at the Preservation Stage

- We cannot wait for everyone to get to that point – need a quorum who want change
- Make the case for urgent change based on data
- Re-clarify the call to mission – the “why we exist”
- communicate Jesus’ mission, the Church’s missionary mandate: fresh articulation of this call (a “mission statement”)
- Get evangelising



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7. Features of the Life Support Stage

- Unwilling to change
- No fruit (no disciples being made)
- Parish is driven by a tiny handful of people
- In financial crisis
- At the extreme end of the ageing demographic
- Leadership crisis – expressed in blame
- Can still be in denial in Life Support(!)



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7. Features of the Life Support Stage (2)

- Maintenance to Preservation to Life Support is a logical progression without intentional intervention
- Some kind of 'death' is usual (but not inevitable)
- Parish will be stuck on maintaining bare basics – Sunday Mass and sacraments



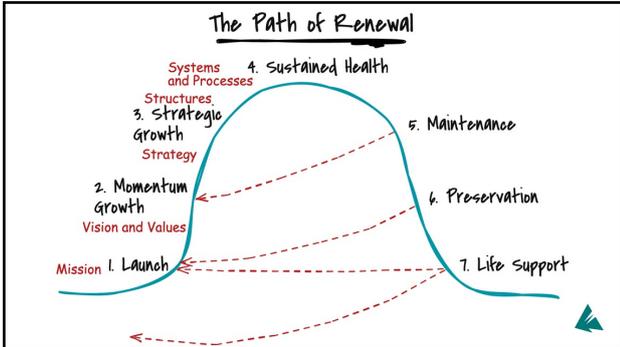
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7. Leadership at the Life Support Stage

- New parish priest
- Amalgamation
- Begin with re-clarification of mission (as at Preservation Stage)



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Next Steps

What are your next steps going to be?

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Ten Possible Next Steps

1. Intercession
 - Personally
 - A team
 - Group of people wanting renewal
2. Practice the elements of Leading when you're not in Charge
 - Build Relationship
 - Earn Trust
 - What Crucial Conversations are Necessary?

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Possible Next Steps

- 3. Initial Steps in Parish Renewal:
 - Alpha
 - Start working on Sunday (hymns, hospitality, (homilies))
- 4. Start on developing a team
- 5. Start working on defining and achieving Clarity around Mission, Vision, Strategy
- 6. If there's lots of trust – have a conversation about parish life-cycle



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Possible Next Steps

- 7. Be attentive to the process of evangelisation
- 8. Family Educators: How do you see your role in the light of the course now?



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Possible Next Steps

If the door to parish renewal feels closed ...

- 9. Pick one person
 - One to one Evangelisation
 - Personally Disciple

And for all of us:

- 10. "I am about a mighty work and I cannot come down" (Neh 6:3)



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