

Divine Renovation: Part Two – New Vision and Leadership



Father James Mallon writes extensively in his book entitled *Divine Renovation* regarding the importance of forming strong lay and ordained leadership within our parishes. He reminds us that, in order to be a successful leader, one must have a clear sense of direction and purpose in mind. This is why a pastor needs to have a vision for his parish - a vivid mental image of the desired future for his congregation that truly excites him and captivates the hearts and minds of his parishioners. Vision is essentially about where the parish is heading - it connects people to a meaningful purpose, uniting and challenging them to become a part of something bigger than themselves. And so, what is my vision for Immaculate Conception Parish?

I envision IC as a welcoming community of disciples where everyone is known, loved and cared for – a family of families. I dream about the vibrant and powerful experience of the Eucharist enhanced by strong hospitality, uplifting music, and inspiring homilies. I imagine a community that makes disciples by introducing people to Christ, bringing them to spiritual maturity, equipping them for ministry, and sending them out to serve. Finally, I picture a community that has an invitational and missional culture (an outwardly focused church) where our parishioners are inclined to go forth beyond our doors, eager to share Christ's love by extending invitations to others to follow the Lord and by serving those in need – a community of missionary disciples.

Once a pastor has crafted his vision, Fr. Mallon reminds us that a leader cannot successfully accomplish his dream alone. He needs a trusted group of advisors, a leadership team, to support him and assist him in achieving his goals as the journey from dream to reality takes time, perseverance, and tremendous energy. It also requires prudence, creativity, and openness to change. A pastor, ably assisted by his leadership team, will have to confidently lead his people through the cultural transformation occurring in his parish. This is not an easy task because while we all might want change, we often don't actually want *to* change. The truth is that any change or renewal begins with us, within our own hearts and minds.

As communication is the key to effective leadership, Fr. Mallon advises that the pastor work together with his leadership team and pastoral council to develop a clear communication process for the parish as any proposed changes will need to be clearly articulated and explained within the context of the bigger vision. Furthermore, the leadership team will need to develop a long term pastoral plan – a strategy. If the vision is our final destination, then the strategy is the path that will get us there.

While it is clear that there is a considerable amount of work ahead of us, I am confident that with God's help and the faithful support of our parish community we will ultimately succeed. I humbly ask you to pray for each other during this time of renewal, to be open to proposed changes, and to consider joining an army of volunteers needed to transform our dream into reality. May the Holy Spirit inspire and empower us all to become missionary disciples.

Fr. Robert