

## **See: reality, hope, the next steps**

The bible message today is see: “**See**, the days are coming” (Jer), “Then they will **see** the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Lk). St Paul talks about seeing “progress in the kind of life that you are meant to live” (1 Th).

Similarly, we need to **see: reality, hope, next steps**.

**See reality** – The Catholic Church is sick. It's in decline. In the UK, for every 1 person who is baptised, 10 people leave. 95% of young people confirmed leave within three years. In the US, over 50% of Mass goers, don't believe in the \*concept\* of a loving God!

This is true in most parish in the West. However, in 2013 over 600 people were coming to Mass here every Sunday. 11 years later it's just under 300. Hands up how many of you have friends and family who have left the practice of the Catholic faith? Many of you are in pain.

It's been said that everyone wants change (people to come to faith), but no one wants \*to\* change (for us to do something differently). Albert Einstein said the definition of insanity is to continue to do the same thing over again, and expect different results. We cannot continue the way we are. We need to do something different.

**See hope** - Divine Renovation is a 2014 book by Fr James Mallon about the renewal of the church. When I read his book, I thought 'this priest is Catholic and gets it!' I went to Canada to stay with his parish for a month. It was amazing!

In Divine Renovation, Fr James argues that although there are many reasons for the church's current sickness - sexual and financial abuses, cover ups, poor witness, etc. - forgetting our missionary identity (to help others meet, accept, and follow Jesus) is the Church's main sickness.

He highlights how every pope has been encouraging parishes to “make disciples” for the last 60 years: John XXIII,<sup>1</sup> Paul VI,<sup>2</sup> John Paul II,<sup>3</sup> Benedict XVI,<sup>4</sup> and Pope Francis,<sup>5</sup> all talk about the need for Catholics and parishes to evangelise and make disciples.

The Catholic Church has not had to evangelise and make disciples for 1700 years, because the church has been so strong – the church didn’t need to \*go to\* people, people \*went to\* church. For the first time in 1700 years, people are not \*going to\* church. We need to \*go to\* people. Parishes haven’t had to live out their missionary identity (to help people meet, accept, and follow Jesus). We don’t know how to do it... until now!

Fr James started by using alpha. Alpha is a series where people can explore freely the big questions of life, faith and meaning. He came to see that when the principles of alpha are used across the whole parish, it transforms everything.

These principles are what he calls the 3 keys:

Evangelisation: helping people meet Jesus

Experiencing the Holy Spirit: becoming like Jesus

Leadership: serving like Jesus

Divine Renovation is now a global ministry, helping hundreds of parishes around the world (including Fr Shaun Church!) “make disciples.” All parishes apply the same 3 keys, but live them differently according to our different

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<sup>1</sup> “the 2nd Vatican Council’s principal task will be concerned with the modernization (aggiornamento) of the Church after 20 centuries of life.”

<sup>2</sup> “She (the church) exists to evangelise.” (Paul VI, EN 14)

<sup>3</sup> “The moment has come to commit all of the church’s energies to a new evangelisation” (JP II, RM 3) “new in its ardour, new in its methods, new in its expression.” (JP II, Celam 1983)

<sup>4</sup> “we are searching for... a new evangelisation...” (Cardinal Ratzinger address to catechists, 2000) “a personal encounter with Jesus Christ...” (B16, Lineamenta to Philippine Bishops, 11)

<sup>5</sup> “I dream of a “missionary option” ... a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the church’s (parish’s) customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today’s world (helping people meet, accept, and follow Jesus) rather than for her self-preservation.” (EG 27)

contexts. No 2 parishes will look the same. However, they will all feel the same: alive!

I invite you to **see** the future of this parish: a parish where people are loved into a “community” and feel cared for; a parish where people can meet Jesus at “alpha”; a parish where people can joyfully “worship” in a variety of musical styles; a parish where people can be accompanied in their “faith growth”; and a parish where people can utilise their God-Given-Gifts to gladly “serve”.

This is my vision for this parish and the entire Catholic Church. It's already happening here! Would you journey with me in this exciting adventure to renew the Catholic Church starting in this parish? Remember, I'm not talking about \*changing\* the Catholic Church into something it's not. I'm talking about \*renewing\* it to become who she says she is!

**See: next steps** - “**Explore**” Divine Renovation in small groups with me in the New Year. **Try “alpha”**. We hope to have our 5<sup>th</sup> one (amazing achievement) in the New Year. Young people, try our monthly alpha youth. “**Serve**”: see the noticeboard and website). Get more involved in “**community**”, eg, teas and coffees, and Christmas social Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> Dec. “**Worship**” regularly: Carol concert 15<sup>th</sup> Dec, Sunday and Christmas Masses.

Brothers and sisters, I'm excited to be able to say the words “Divine Renovation” to you. I have been journeying with them for nearly 10 years. Everything I have preached about in the past 2 years, doing alpha, creating teams, and seeing lives changed by people filled with the Holy Spirit, has been inspired by Divine Renovation.

Join me in being a part of the renewal of the Catholic church, starting in this parish, for the salvation of the world, in Jesus' name, amen!