

Climbing higher: a vision for parish transformation

Hands up if you have family and friends you love. Hands up if some of them don't practice, or have stopped practicing, the Catholic faith. It hurts, doesn't it? We know they're good people. We trust that God is good, loving, and His arms are always open wide. Their lives — and ours — are made fully alive in this life in a personal relationship with Jesus! Without Jesus, something is always missing.

The Church is growing in parts of Asia and Africa. However, it has been declining in the West for decades. Why? Many leave not because they reject Jesus, but because they never truly meet Him, they don't experience real Christian community, solid biblical teaching, or a parish committed to reaching those far from God. And abuse scandals—financial, moral, and leadership coverups—have further damaged trust.

The good news is that parishes can be transformed. **Transformation** has started here!

Effort - In today's Gospel, Jesus takes Peter, John, and James up a mountain. Parish transformation is a climb — it takes **effort**. There's a saying: "Everyone wants change... but no one wants *to* change!" If you desire a transformed, vibrant, missionary parish where your loved ones can meet Jesus, don't be complacent or resistant. Commit to climb together.

Prayer - As Jesus prays, His face is changed. Transformed parishes are praying parishes. If you're part of a prayer group, and when you pray, make parish transformation your number 1 priority — for your loved ones to meet Jesus and be transformed by Him.

Meaning - Moses and Elijah appear, speaking of Jesus' "departure" in Jerusalem. Jesus' departure was his victory over death. You may be suffering, or bereaving loved ones. Jesus suffered and died for you! A

transformed parish gives **meaning** and strength to those who suffer and are grieving.

Fully Awake - Peter and the others are sleepy—until they see Jesus' glory. Sunday Mass can feel sleepy and heavy. That's why people drift away. A transformed parish makes the Sunday experience glorious, alive, and vibrant! Today is Jo's last official day with us. We are grateful for her work, and sad to see her go. We are continuing to work to offer glorious worship at every Mass — to become **fully awake!**

Hospitality – St. Peter wants to build tents to give Moses and Elijah hospitality, even though he doesn't fully understand. Transformed parishes emphasise hospitality. That's why we have and want more welcomers at Mass, prayer partners, and want more hospitality after Mass. Maybe you don't feel worthy, or fully understand how to give hospitality. Say "yes" anyway. God will do the rest.

Experiencing the Holy Spirit - A cloud descends, and the disciples hear God's voice: This is my Son, listen to Him! Experiencing the Holy Spirit may sound or feel new, or even unsettling. But transformed parishes welcome the Holy Spirit. The **Holy Spirit** enables us to hear God speaking and leading.

Finding Jesus Alone - After the vision ends, the disciples see Jesus alone. Maybe you feel lonely. Don't be afraid of some solitude. A transformed parish creates spaces to be **alone with Jesus**. That's why we have Eucharistic Adoration every Saturday from 5-6 PM. Come and be alone with Him.

Know when to speak - The disciples kept silent about what they saw. Transformed parishes don't just shout at people on street corners about Jesus, and throw Bibles at them. Transformed parishes walk with people, listen, and love them into relationship with Jesus. That's what we do at alpha. This parish is already part of the solution of parish transformation! On Thursday, May 8th, we begin our fifth season of Alpha—a space where non-

religious people explore faith over food, video, and discussion. If you're not religious, it's designed for you, try it. If you're a curious Catholic, try it. It's great to invite others to. If you don't like it after a few sessions, don't worry. There's no call back.

Alpha is not just a programme though. I want it to transform parish culture: to make everything we do make church feel like family, friends, home, Jesus, and love.

In the coming weeks, we'll hear stories of people who have met Jesus and been transformed through Alpha. Where ever you are in your faith journey, climb the mountain of **parish transformation!**

Prayer

Jesus, thank you for climbing my mountain with me.

Help me climb your mountain. To see people transformed by you.

In this bread and wine, I offer you the people you desire to reach.

Come in to my heart now... and in this Eucharist.

Help me play my part in helping people meet you.

Amen.