



ZOOM MEETING HELD ON 5<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2020 AT 7:30PM

**CHAPTER 6**

*By Harvey Martin*

PP. 197-232

**The Front Door**

**The Sacraments as Our Greatest Pastoral Opportunity**

**Outline**

**BAPTISM AND MARRIAGE  
PASTORAL OPPORTUNITIES  
FAITH FORMATION FOR ADULTS  
CONFIRMATION  
EVANGELIZATION OF PARENTS  
RCIA AND ALPHA COURSE**

**Content**

Pastoral opportunities arise through Baptisms and Marriage; people who often have little connection to the Church. When they come we must welcome them, despite their often tenuous reason for the administration of the Sacraments. We must never say no to their requests; and this open door can help them on a journey to authentic conversion. "Go and make disciples, baptising and confirming."

We have failed to evangelise many who have come for these Sacraments. We must use the opportunity, so they may grow in maturity. Having not



been led into a deeper faith, people often leave the Church after receiving the Sacraments. This especially could be said of teenagers receiving

Confirmation. It proves to be their door out of the Church rather than into it. There must be an ongoing faith to bear fruit from the Sacraments.

The faith of the parents is of course essential to infant Baptism. Without faith the child grows without experiencing the effect of Baptism- the removal of sin.

Consequences are in most parishes over 90% of those under 40 no longer practise their faith, if indeed they had any in the beginning. The very integrity of the Church is at stake. Indeed, we compromise our own faith just accepting these situations. We become like the Pharisees washing the outside of the cup instead of also the inside.

We could often see the Sacraments as aggravation, rather than unique opportunities. If the Body of Christ is to be healthy, we must demand authentic discipleship. Are we willing to do all we can to bring this about.

Bringing in new programmes and changing resources will not work unless we work with parents; faith formation for adults is essential. We have found the Alpha course a useful beginning.

Bringing adults towards a mature faith is the greatest gift for our children. Small groups of families go through a sacramental programme before bringing their children for the Sacraments. This happens 3 times a year; evangelising families together. This is GIFT, growing in faith together.

Only bringing children to the Sacraments when they are ready. The result has been that families are being reconnected to the parish and begin to experience the love of Jesus in their lives.

Confirmation-- youngsters become part of these programmes; but only receive the Sacrament when they are ready. The evangelization of parents



helps the young people in their decision. It becomes a personal decision and no longer a conveyor belt system.

The youth group and youth Alpha have been well received by young people. Of course, there are failures; but we need to press on in our belief with the strength of the Lord.

We need to stop private Baptisms; it must become part of the Sunday Mass. We have introduced information evenings, calling parents to reflect more deeply on what they are requesting for their children. Parents must be led to be aware of their own need for faith.

The same for Marriage, proper pastoral preparation is necessary. Couples are to be welcomed lovingly and discuss their request. Atheists often want a Church Wedding. We are in the disciple making business, not wedding business.

The RCIA, Christian Initiation of Adults is part of a faith formation programme, for everyone; it is not exclusive; again, acceptance for full Communion when the individual is ready. Every candidate takes the Alpha course; more of a sure way to encounter Jesus. Afterwards we have connect groups; furthering the process of discipleship. Those of a mature faith helping their brothers and sisters become established in their faith; helps the Church to grow together in love and bear fruit for the Kingdom of God.



**CHAPTER 7**  
***Brid Greateorex***

PP. 233-286

**Leader of the House**  
**The Essential Role of Leadership**

**Outline**

**The essential role of leadership**  
**Learning leadership**  
**Cultural obstacles**  
**Vulnerability**  
**Vision and communication**  
**Developing strategy**  
**Executing the plan**

**Content**

In the second part of this Chapter Fr. Mallon focuses on leadership, specifically the role of the Pastor in bringing about change in the Parish. He is highly critical of current leaders in our parishes and wider Catholic community. He states that *"If the primary crisis of the Church of our time is one of identity, then a second crisis is one of leadership"*. He understands the huge challenge this presents for the Priests as nearly all like him will have had no training in leading and motivating a team of volunteers. In his experience this is one of the most difficult tasks and recommends this is addressed in the Seminaries where future priests can also be trained as leaders.



On the positive side he states: *“everyone has some degree of leadership ability”*. Put another way, we all have *“the ability to influence another person”*. Relying on the old model of official authority will not work in today’s Church. In his own words, *“A leader with no one following is just a person going for a walk”*. For inspiration he looked again at Evangelical Protestantism and found the call to dream big through his involvement with Alpha, both at home and abroad. He found that being spiritual was not enough to bring about renewal of the Parish; he had to learn the art of leadership from sources outside the Catholic Church. As mentioned in previous chapters, the Gallup organisation provided great assistance including its Leadership Excellence Course.

However, there are many cultural obstacles to overcome in the transformation of the Parish culture which he believes is because of the way our Church is structured, with parishes as part of a Diocese that can bail them out or prop them up if they are failing.

He contrasts this with many Evangelical Churches who function without a local network resembling a Catholic Diocese and where the Pastor is always aware of the need to grow and develop their leadership capacities. The pastors in the Evangelical Church need to be strong leaders as often their livelihoods depend on it. Father Mallon tells us that he has met many passionate and holy men & women working as leaders who care about the renewal of the Church and who are *“crying out for support”* which is not easy to find within the existing Church. He finds that this is not the case in the Evangelical world from which he has found so much inspiration in his search for good leadership skills and refers to the Copy and Steal Everything (CASE) method of Church renewal. He suggests that *“we do not have to reinvent the wheel when it comes to leading renewal in our Churches”*.

Another major problem with the leadership of Catholic parishes is the length of time pastors are appointed to a Parish. If meaningful cultural change in any organisation is to happen, it is going to take time and the Churches that have



inspired Father Mallon have all had the same Pastor in situ for at least 12 years. Most of the Churches had the same Pastor for 18 to 25 years to lead the necessary change. In Catholic Dioceses priests are transferred every six to eight years. This is an obstacle to meaningful change taking place in the Parish as it promotes mediocrity and the culture of maintenance.

Father Mallon then goes on to talk about vulnerability, and the need for all good leaders to recognise their own vulnerability. He writes *"we should lay down our masks of strength and perfection and admit that we do not have all the answers and cannot do it by ourselves; we need to do this together"*. A good leader knows their strengths and weaknesses and it is a myth to say there is a well-rounded person, *"we are all imbalanced, but there is such a thing as a well-rounded team"*. All leaders can benefit from this perspective. It is no longer viable for a Priest to try to do it all by himself, he needs to develop his own team to lead a Church from maintenance to mission. The team must include pastoral staff or key ministry leaders, pastoral council members and competent parishioners.

A leader also needs to develop and communicate a vision for the future and share this with his leadership team. In the past many churches worked out mission statements then hung them on a wall and forgot about them. These statements often focused on the tasks to be done rather than where we are going. Real mission is always about going somewhere and we need to establish where it is we want to go. To identify this end goal Fr. Mallon believes *"we should all take the time to write down a one-page description of our Diocese, Parish or ministry"* which identifies what we want our Parish to look like in the near future and beyond. Importantly, he tells us not to be distracted by the challenges or obstacles, *"just write down your dream"*. This should help the Parish develop a formal vision statement. This *"is not the result of a democratic process, but of a consultative and collaborative process led by the Pastor"* as forming vision is one of his key tasks. Once the vision statement is finalised the leadership of the Parish must make every effort to communicate this to all



members of the Parish. This must be a sustained effort and will be a long process, but everyone should be invited to embrace it and make it their own.

To re-enforce the message, Fr. Mallon preaches some form of visioning homily at weekend Masses every three weeks as Sunday is the only time to speak to the whole community, and advocates repeating it at every gathering of Parish leaders. It is not enough to presume that everybody will continue to focus and be motivated by this vision. The methods employed by Fr. Mallon to develop and maintain this strategy include Alpha, connect groups and stewardship. He emphasises the need to establish a culture of evangelisation and discipleship within the Parish.

As mentioned before, leading change within a volunteer organisation is the most challenging, as no-one is compelled to be a part of this organisation. As any good leader knows, one must make sure you have the right people on the bus in the right seats. This includes the Pastor who will always drive the bus and should know when to slow down and when to speed up. This is where the true test of leadership is found.

### **NEXT MEETING**

**19<sup>th</sup> August 2020**  
**7:30 p.m.**  
**Divine Renovation**  
**Conclusion**

**Leader: Fr Julio**  
**Secretary: Alice De Lima**  
**Chair Person: Pauline McKenna**