

BUILDING VIBRANT ORTHODOX PARISHES



11/10/2015

Joe Kormos Parish Development Ministry

Joseph Kormos

Parish Development Ministry, Archdiocese of Western PA

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- Secular Experience

Marketing; Strategic Planning

- “Cradle” Orthodox

Metropolia era & OCA era parishes

- Parish Development

84th Orthodox parish in eight years

Over 25 multi-parish workshops & webinars

Agenda

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- Intro Thoughts
- Fundamental Observations: Vibrant Parishes
 - A Few Brief Examples
- Eight Important Practices
 - Metrics
- Questions

Introductory Thoughts

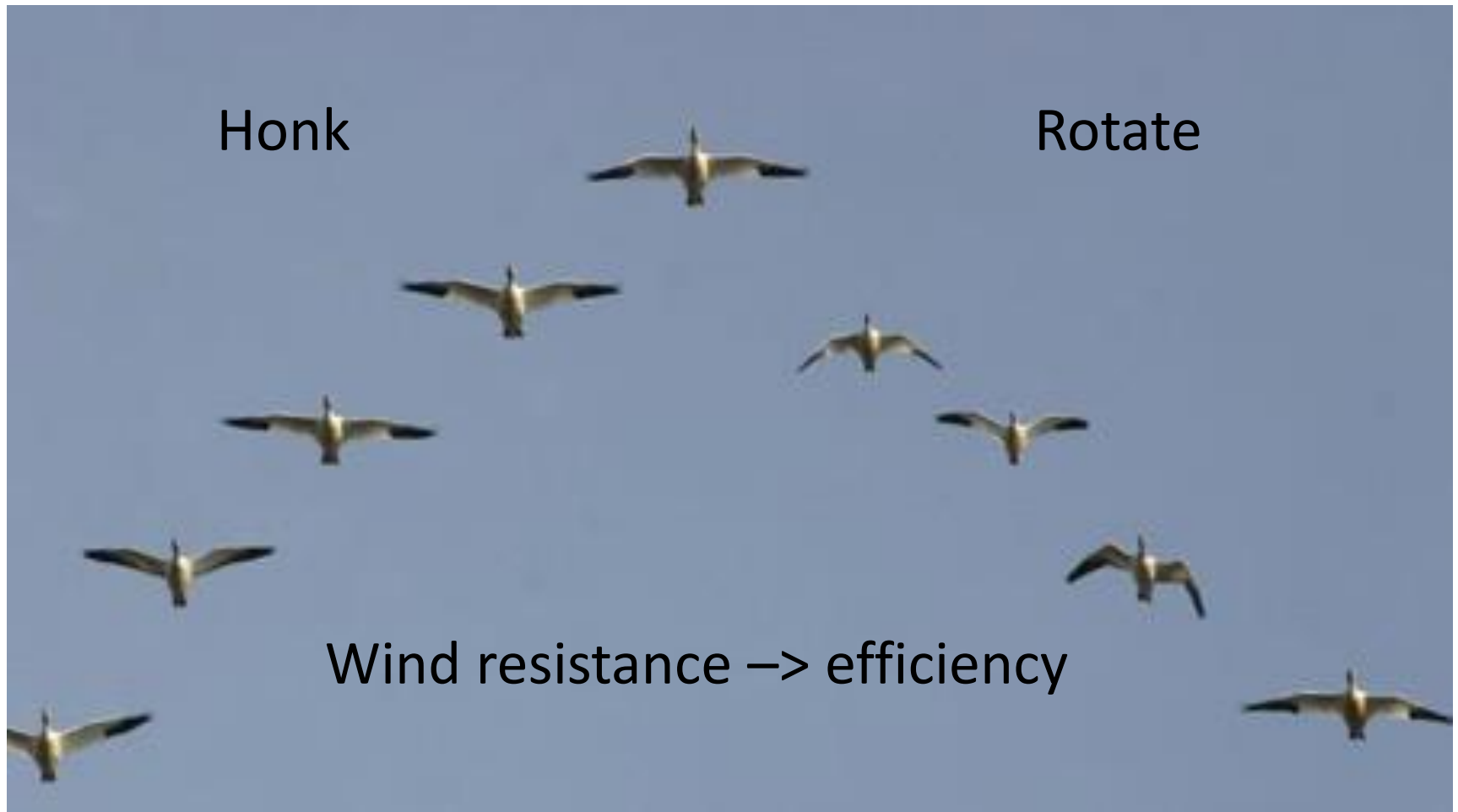
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- Difficult time to be a Christian
 - Post Christian environment
- Orthodoxy has much to offer
 - Apostolic, authentic, alive
- “Just Orthodox” –*sickness*
- Not “diaspora”
- Priests & Bishops can’t do this alone!



We Need to Fly in Formation

5



We Are Stewards of Our Parish Future

6

- “To whom much is given much will be required.” *LK 12:48*
- Parable of Talents
 - Three stewards...
 - But -- the one talent steward offered back *no increase*.



7 Fundamental Observations

Building Vibrant Parishes

1. There are Myths

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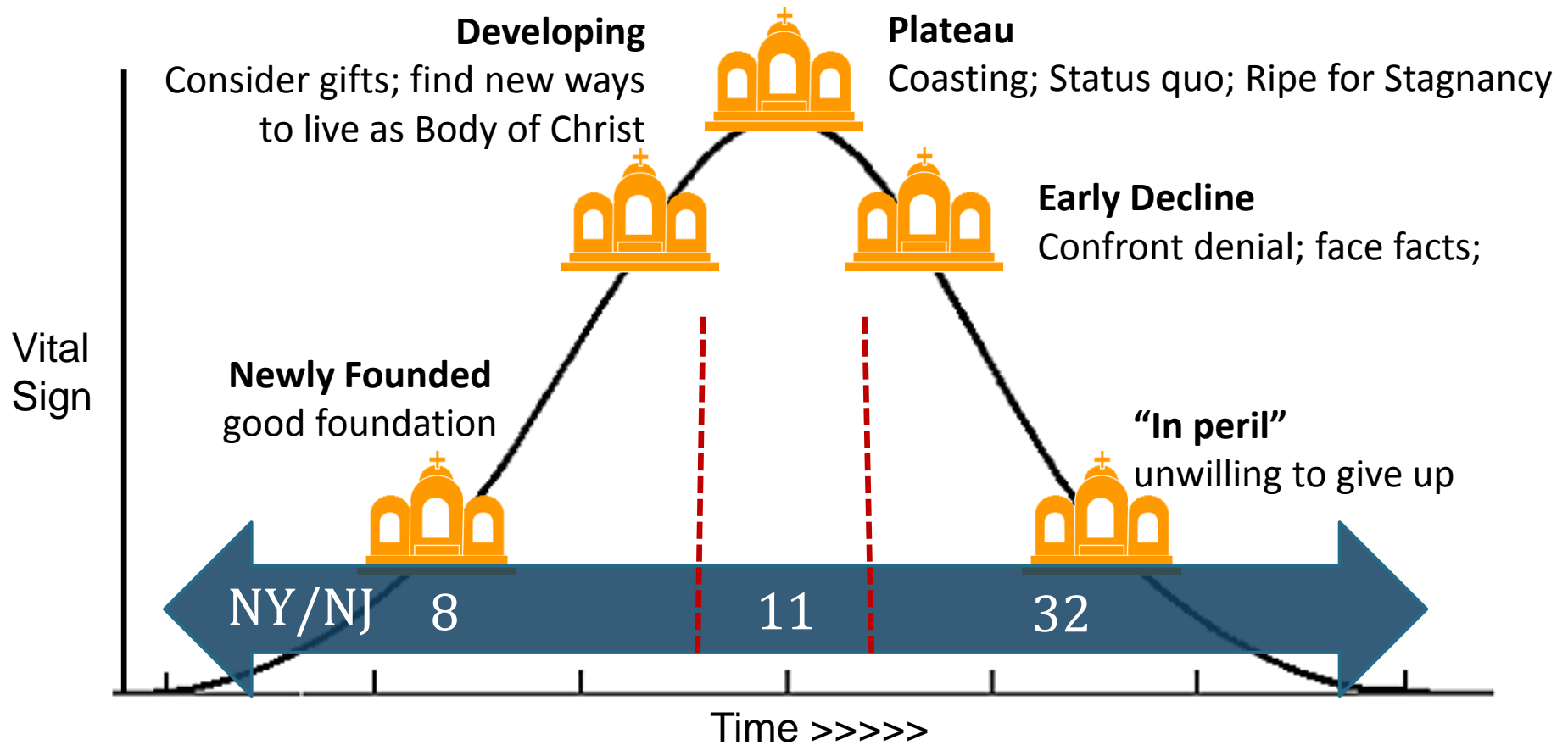
- ❑ Only “new” parishes can be vibrant.
- ❑ Only parishes in the suburbs can be vibrant.
- ❑ A new priest is required for renewal.
- ❑ Need a new, beautiful building.
- ❑ The silver bullet is _____.

Myths



2. Every Parish Needs “Renewal”

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3. Any Parish Can Become More Vibrant

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“All that is required is that its members, beginning with its leaders, be firmly resolved to have it so.”

Fr. Thomas Hopko

Parishes Have Become More Vibrant

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**Holy Trinity
Willimantic CT
12>> 40**



**Sts Cyril & Methodius
Milwaukee WI
55 >> 107**

Parishes Have Become More Vibrant

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“a new-born ministry to the depressed neighborhood around our church, has its roots directly in the Urban Parish Conference ...a difference was made to the day-to-day life of our local church, in ways small & very large.”



Parishes Have Become More Vibrant

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“Climate survey >> pinpoint priorities >> act upon important outreach opportunities”

“Currently blessed with eight catechumens.”

*“Attendance increased (1 year) **56 per Sunday to 85”***

“Financial situation. Improved”



Parishes Have Become More Vibrant

Excerpt from Parish Warden Report

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“Today we think and act differently as a parish community.

No longer are we **focusing on our existence** as a parish, but instead on **what kind of a parish we should be.**

Father ____ made the observation that we **no longer spend a day selling cookies** to help our finances but **now spend two days to provide a weeks worth of groceries** and gifts to over 200 families.

We now think less in terms of what we have accomplished but instead are thinking of how much more we can do. Can we support food efforts for 300 families, 400 families or more?”

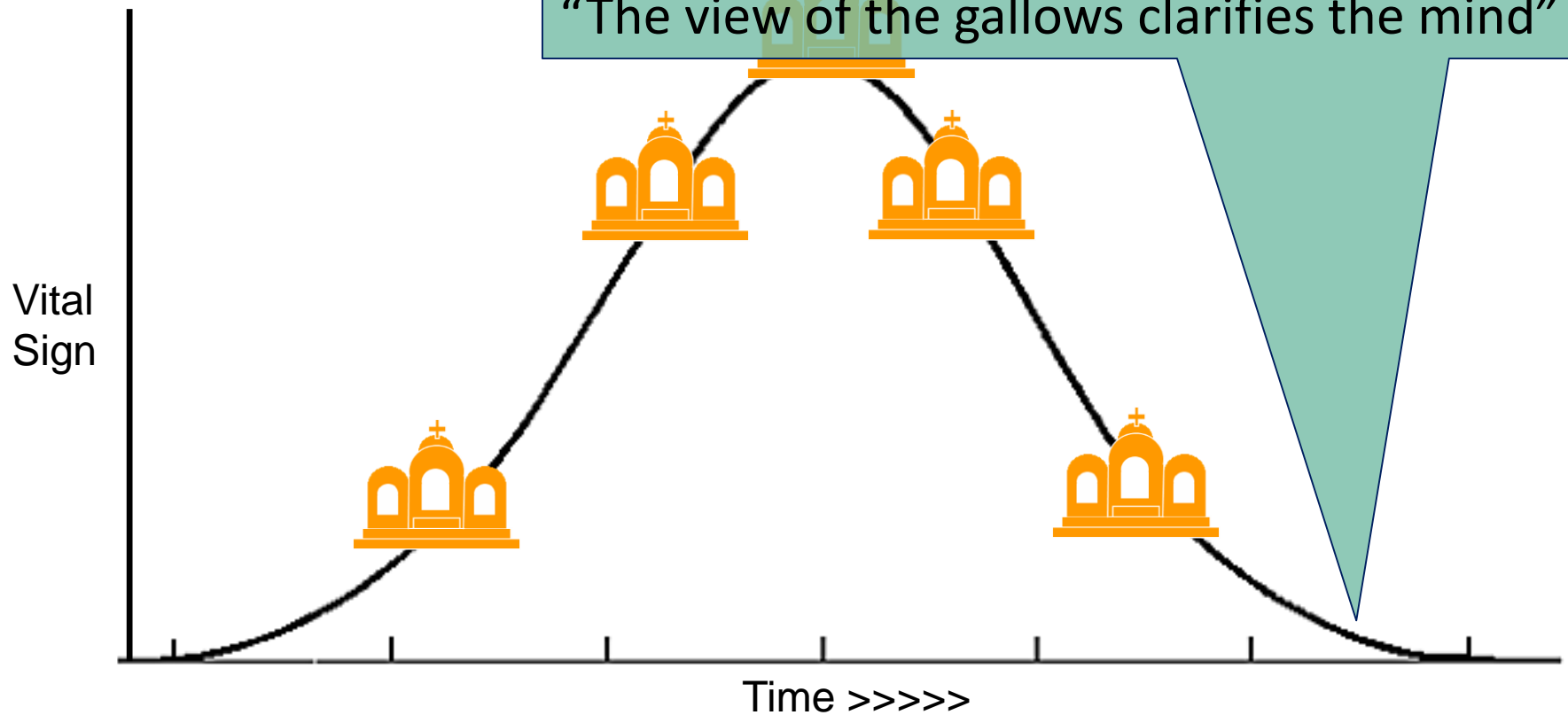
The parish grew by 22 persons between 2007 and 2011.

4. Motivation is Critical

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Primary motivator for action

“The view of the gallows clarifies the mind”



Motivation

A.K.A. “The Law of the Buffalo Bridle”

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“You can make a buffalo go anywhere you want
him to go...
as long as he already wants to go there.”



4. Motivation is Critical

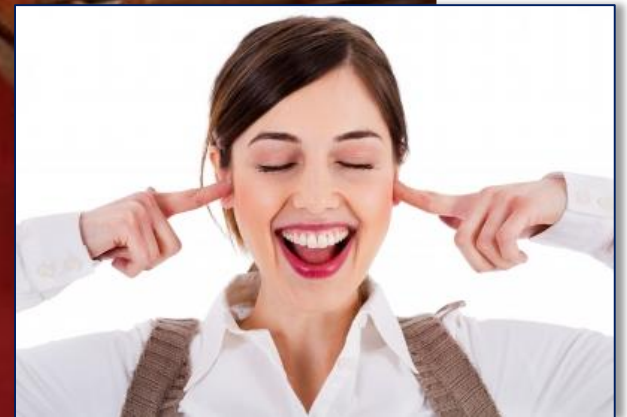
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“There are only two motivators:
Crisis and Vision”

| Push | Pull |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Prevention | Promotion |
| Fear of failure/loss | Excitement of something better |
| Concerns, crisis | Desire, anticipation; hope vision |
| Unpreferred present | Preferred future |
| View of the gallows... | What if... Why can't we... |

5. Denial: A Major Factor

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“All is Well???”

Denial

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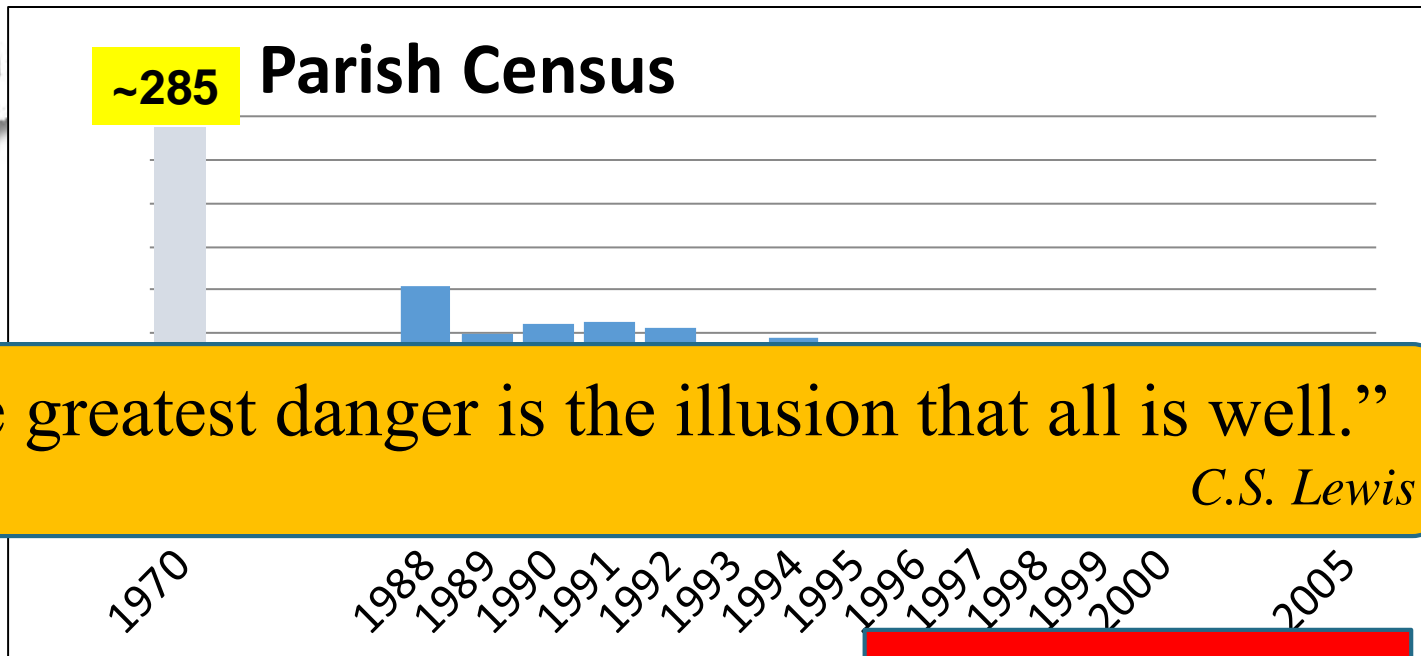
Excerpt from 1995 Report

All is going well at St. **Xxxx**. The parish spent several thousand dollars, much of it donated, to install burglar proof windows. An additional benefit is that outside noise and heat transfer is greatly reduced. During the month of August the church building sustained storm damage.

Seven

~285

Parish Census



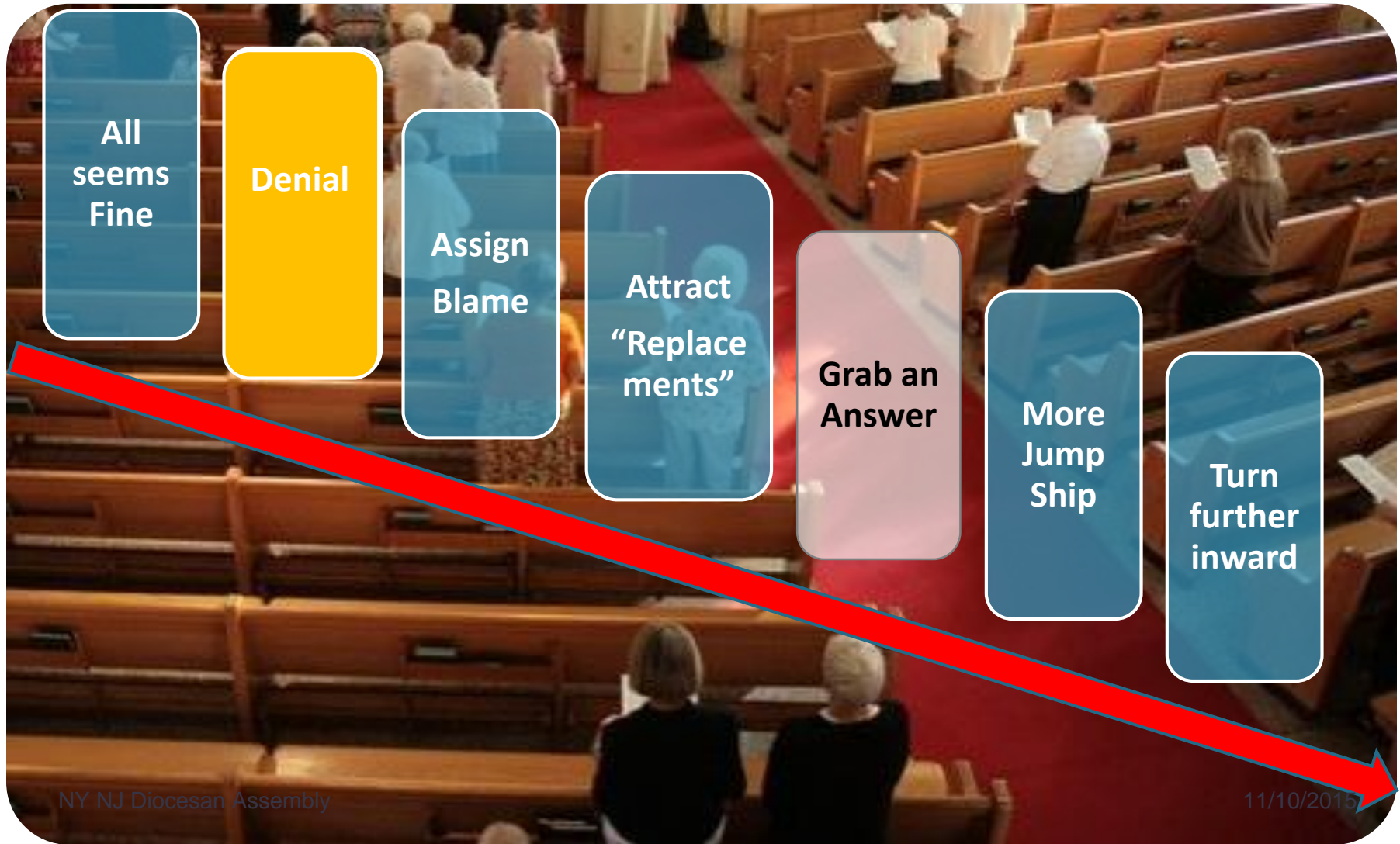
“The greatest danger is the illusion that all is well.”

C.S. Lewis

Write this down!

6. Typical Decline Pattern

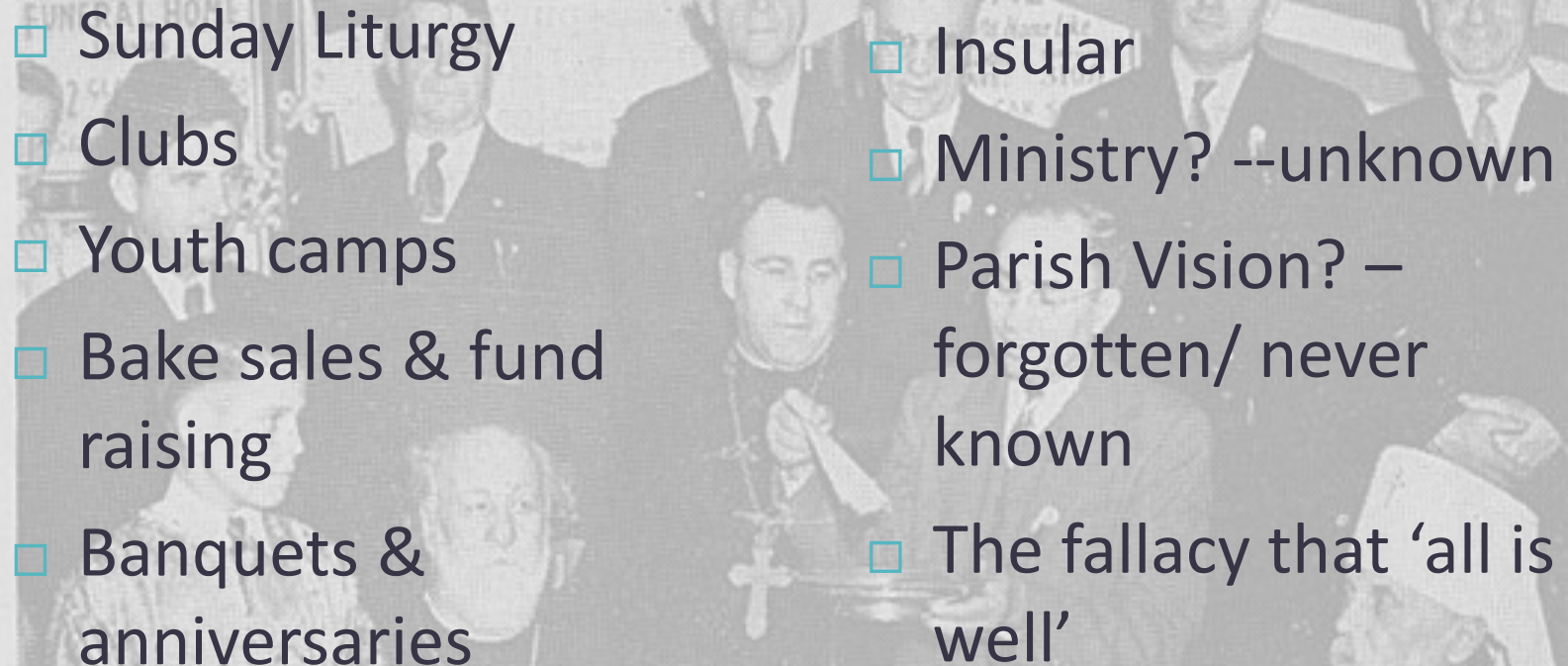
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7. Parishes Are in Ruts/Complacent

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Our Assumptions About Parish Life

- 
- ☐ Sunday Liturgy
 - ☐ Clubs
 - ☐ Youth camps
 - ☐ Bake sales & fund raising
 - ☐ Banquets & anniversaries
 - ☐ Insular
 - ☐ Ministry? --unknown
 - ☐ Parish Vision? – forgotten/ never known
 - ☐ The fallacy that ‘all is well’

The Rut Cycle

“When you don’t know what to do,
you do what you know.”



“Ruttedness”

We’re stuck:

... in the past... happy talk
... on ourselves
... low expectations

Do You *Want* to Be Made Well?

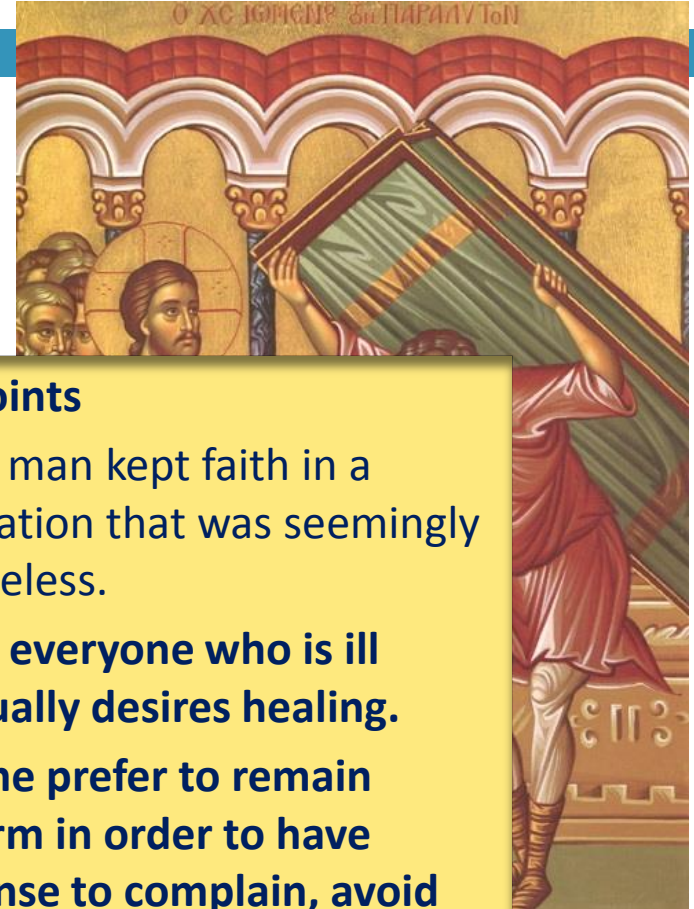
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Paralytic at pool of Bethesda (John 5:5-7)

“Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years.

When Jesus saw him lying there, and already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, **‘Do you want to be made well?’**”

The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me.”



Key Points

- The man kept faith in a situation that was seemingly hopeless.
- **Not everyone who is ill actually desires healing.**
- **Some prefer to remain infirm in order to have license to complain, avoid responsibility and receive pity of others.**

Orthodox Study Bible

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A Few Important Practices

And Metrics

1. Understand Your Current Reality

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Face Facts: Our “Current Reality”

Parish “Vital Signs” Summary Sheet

Parish Name/ Location _____ Founding Date (year) _____ Fill Out Date _____

Prior to undertaking a Parish renewal effort it is important that parish leaders get on the same page with respect to the real conditions in the parish.

As opposed to building efforts based on differing versions of reality this form can help summarize certain characteristics that are quantifiable.

Of course many important aspects of parish life are not quantifiable –this is only part of the conversation.

**As of
Jan 1
this
year**

**3 yr Trend
?
(up+, down
-, same =)**

**Satisfied?
(Y=Yes / N=No)
Identify
(circle) 2-3
items with
which you’re
most
concerned**

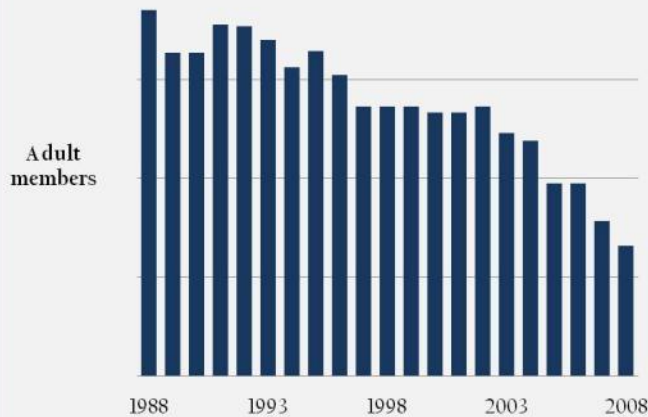
People Related

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| 1. Adult Membership # | | | |
| 2. Total community size (adults + children + non-Orthodox who attend with some regularity) # | | | |
| 3. Typical Attendance Sunday Liturgy -- # adults +children | | | |
| 4. Typical Attendance Saturday Vespers (#) | | | |
| 5. Typical attendance Non Sunday Feast day (e.g. Ascension)(#) | | | |
| 6. Median age of parishioners (exclude children; include anyone over 18) (<i>median: half the adults are younger than this</i>) | | | |

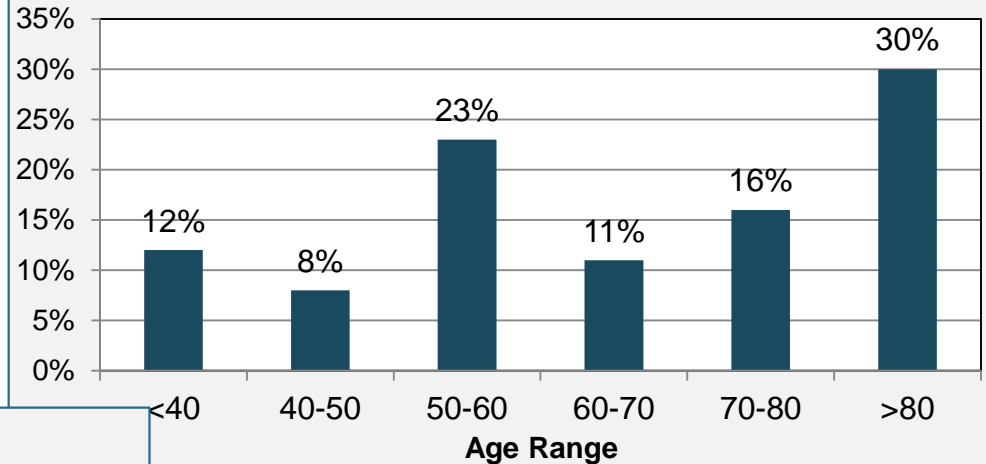


1. Understand Current Reality

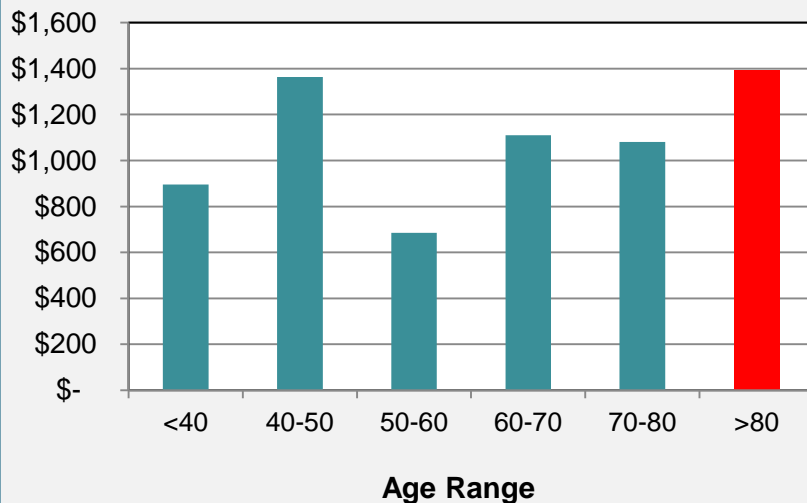
20 Year Membership History



Member Household Breakdown by Age



Average Annual Donations By Age



Are you satisfied?


2. Dialogue

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Most communication –one way

Ask Good Questions

How Long Do You Want
Your Parish to Live?



Forever → making choices on behalf
of his great, great grandchildren

More Questions

11/10/201
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What is the purpose of this parish?

Do we want to grow? Really?

What kind of parish do we want to be?

What do we want to look like in 10 years? Do we reflect that?

Who is responsible for this parish?

Do we need...

What am I unwilling to do?

**What do we want our parish
to look like in 10 years?**

**What are top 3 issues
facing our parish?**

3. Express a Mission, Vision, Identity

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Mission.Mercy.Ministry

Mission: To embrace the church's history and tradition while actively engaged in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Mercy: To support our mission by extending our church's hands and hearts to those in-need, both in the local community and beyond.

Ministry: To further our mission by establishing and maintaining educational programs and activities designed to build our spiritual lives; as well as the preservation and beautification of our temple.

- A Sense of Mission
- Body of Christ – not a cultural center
- Be Sure to translate into 1-2 real goals

4. Charitable Service

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- ❑ Local
- ❑ Multi- generational
- ❑ Time
- ❑ Special Venues
- ❑ Budget line item



NY NJ Diocesan Assembly



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5. Do Stewardship Well

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No Dues

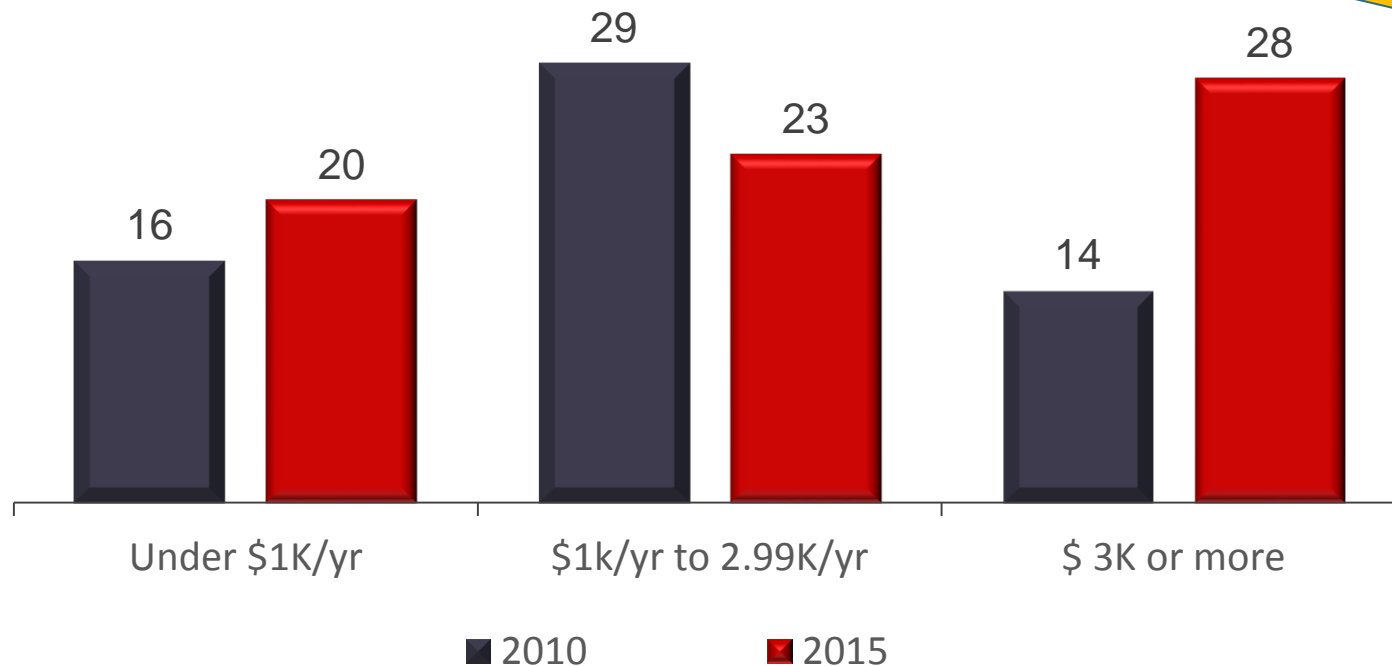
“Tithing”

High Median
donation

Stewardship
Committee

2010 vs 2015

Pledges In Each Category Annual Donation



6. Website/Online Presence

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- ❑ People make “taste and see” decisions.
- ❑ Drive beyond one parish for another.



Website Jobs

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□ Communicate

- Basics: What/when/where/why; WIIFM- can I find a friend? A role?

□ Express & reshape parish identity

- Who you are, what you do, what you stand for: “Proclaim Christ”
- Help parish *understand* who they are.
- Importance of talking to others.



Use Photos Well

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Good



Better



Best



11/10/2015

Use Photos Well

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WELCOME 

We are a warm, diverse church community that embraces newcomers to the experience of ancient Orthodox Christianity.

We hope our website will just be a first step in your learning about the unchanging Orthodox Church, and will inspire you to “come and see.”

[LEARN MORE »](#)

7. Great Sign

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“Something good is happening inside!”



8. Administrative Practices

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- Parish Council needs to become *engine* not *brake*
 - Scope – Total Mission
 - Important vs Urgent
 - Material AND Spiritual
 - Collaboration
 - Annual Retreat



Ten Metrics and Targets.

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1. 25% vespers / liturgy; 35% feast day/Sunday liturgy
2. \$2500/yr. median; 20% > \$5K/yr.
3. < 65% of income from > age 70
4. 10% of budget to charity
5. ~ 10% or less from fund raising
6. 10% new per year to stay even
7. 3 new catechumens/year
8. > 25% of PC meetings on vision/ministry
9. Priest compensation > = County MHI
10. > 5 great photos on your website.

Summary

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Fundamental Observations

1. Myths: new, 'burbs, silver bullet
2. Every parish needs renewal
3. Motivation is critical
4. Any parish can become more vibrant
5. Denial
6. Typical Decline Pattern
7. Ruts Complacency

Eight Important Practices

1. Assess current reality
2. Dialogue: Ask good questions
3. Express Mission & identity
4. Charitable service a must
5. Do stewardship well
6. Online presence
7. Great sign
8. Parish council leads

Quotations

- Any parish can become vibrant if it wants to
- View of the gallows clarifies the mind
- There are only two motivators: crisis and vision
- Greatest danger is the illusion that all is well.
- When you don't know what to do you what you know

11/10/2015

THANK YOU

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