

Planting New Parishes:

Lessons Learned from the Field

Presented by Father Theodore Dorrance at C.O.M.E. Conference – Portland, October 2016

- C.O.M.E. Objectives < 18:43
- History of St. John the Baptist Parish < 26:30 (8 minutes)
- Principle 1: 26:35 – Eucharistic Life (8 minutes)
- Principle 2: 34:58 – Witness of parishioners to others (12 minutes)
- Principle 3: 46:45 – 100% funded by stewardship (3 minutes)
- Principle 4: 49:30 – Focused on Adult Education (8 minutes)
- Principle 5: 57:45 – 1:05:40 – Growing vision: to foster a new parish (8 minutes)

History

1. How come their seed money was never used?
2. How many people are they now? What is their budget? Where does it come from? How much is the average stewardship?
3. Who's responsible for their success? God. Holy Spirit does incredible things that people cannot do.

1. Eucharistic Life

1. Not a Sunday-only church. Eucharistic, sacramental, liturgical.
2. Eucharistic life: worship life of the church is at the center of the lives of the members. Everything we have comes from God. Royal priesthood: giving back in thanksgiving, all of us. Eucharistic living in everyday life. Life suspended between two eucharists: preparation + liturgy. Preparation → fulfillment → gratitude → preparation. Transformative. Preparation: prayerfulness, fasting with thoughts, senses, critical consumers, seeing the created essence. Enter in the purpose of things as mean of communion with God.
3. Confession. A good confession = 1,000 fantastic sermons.
4. Expressed in: church attendance, participation in services, way we prepare, being on time (our value), knowing how to participate in services, connect with God in profound way that changes us.
5. We attract the grace of God. His light shines in us, people around us see the good work and give glory to God.
6. People around us need transformed lives, saints, holy people – to attract the grace of God and through that attract others.
7. What drives the success?

2. Witness of parishioners to others

1. First personal and most important experience is through worship – Sunday at Liturgy. Collective witness will keep them coming back. In some churches visitors are not acknowledged.
2. Be Christ, be the Gospel to these people! They will come back → the power of the Church!!
3. Way people pray, worship = more than anything what they believe, Who they believe in, their relationship with God! Empty church at Orthros or liturgy.
4. Humble piety to approach God with faith, love and fear.
5. Clergy celebration - fear, love. Church music, order, cleanliness, architecture, greeting, altar servers, hospitality, care to visitors.
6. Sharing: People share with family neighbors, friends only what they are enthusiastic about. Why don't we share our faith? Low on the hierarchy of our priorities. We need to change this! We are ignorant of our faith. We are not educated about our faith. → Preaching, teaching, educating in life changing,

inspiring ways. Fight the secular society. Being Greek is not enough. God has to mean something to us, to touch our lives.

7. What could we do if God was the first priority in our lives? No more financial crisis. Crisis is not an administrative problem! – Look at health of our church and of our members!

3. 100% funded by stewardship

1. Stewardship is the blood, the heart and the soul of the Christina life, NOT a ministry of the parish!
2. Everything that we are and do IS stewardship!
3. Becoming a Christian steward: everything is a blessing from God and we give back. Engaged, invested in giving back in parish life and ministry. Time Talent → money flows in. Credit card bill shows what we value.
4. We must feel so indebted to God for what He did in our lives. Feel indebted to our neighbor. *Philotimo*. The heart of Christian fellowship → we cannot give enough!

4. Focused on Adult Education

1. Parents to be the main catechists of their children. Teach the parents and they will teach the children.
2. Witness, evangelize, influence, show them the Christian values. Tradition = pass the baton.
3. Grow children to be sent out!

5. Growing vision: to foster a new parish

1. Their size now: 130 families, \$500k operating budget, Vespers on Saturday with 40-50 people, weekday Liturgies with 90-100 people, 2 priests, administrator, every week 40 or more confessions, 250 people attending on Sundays, 110 kids. Cannot simply add more without degrading the spiritual life.
2. From ground up, founded on these healthy principles:

Questions for group discussion

History

1. Father Theodore mentioned that they started with 6 families (1997) with \$30k seed money. How come this seed money was never used?
2. Father also mentioned that they are now 150 families and that they have an operating budget of \$500k, all from stewardship. This comes down to $\$500k/150 = \$3,333$ average annual pledge per family. Our community has 70 stewards at an average of \$1,000. What would you like our community to do if we had the same average?
3. Who is responsible for their success?

1. Eucharistic Life

1. Father mentioned that they did not want to be a *Sunday-only* church.
 - a. What does that mean?
 - b. Are you a Sunday-only participant? Why is it hard for you to participate more?
2. Eucharistic: worship life of the church is at the center of the lives of the members.
 - i. Everything we have comes from God. Our *Royal priesthood*: giving back to God in thanksgiving, all of us.
 - ii. The transformative cycle: Preparation → Fulfillment (Liturgy, Eucharist) → Gratitude → Preparation → ...
 - iii. Preparation: prayerfulness, fasting with thoughts, senses, critical consumers, seeing the created essence. Enter in the purpose of things as means of communion with God.
 - a. Why should the *gratitude* part be important to every one of us?
 - b. Where would you start to make this three-stage cycle transformative for your life too?
3. Sacramental: Confession. A good confession = 1,000 fantastic sermons.
 - a. Why is Confession important in our life and in the life of the church, particularly in light of the three-step cycle?
4. Liturgical: expressed in church attendance, participation in services, way we prepare, being on time (our value), knowing how to participate in services, connect with God in profound way that changes us.
 - a. Name a few from the above list where you could do better. What is in the way? What does the church offer to help you overcome the barriers?

5. What did Father mention that happens to us when we live the Eucharistic Life of the Church?
6. What are the first things you would do to improve the Eucharistic Life of our community?

2. Witness of parishioners to others

1. According to Father Theodore, what are the first things visitors see when they come to their church that make them want to come back?
2. We are ignorant of our faith and sharing our faith is low on our priority list, according to Father Theodore.
 - a. Do you agree with him? If so, what can you use from what the Church offers to change your mindset and attitude?
 - b. Father Theodore mentioned: “What could we do if God was the first priority in our lives? No more financial crisis... Crisis is not an administrative problem! – Instead, we should look at the health of our church and of our members!” Do you agree? If so: What would you do to strengthen the health of our church?

3. 100% funded by stewardship

1. Father mentioned that for them Stewardship is NOT a ministry of the Parish.
 - a. What did he say it is though?
 - b. Why do we, in our community, treat it as a separate ministry?
2. Name the two factors that cause money to flow in from the stewards at Father’s parish. What do they do?