



2022 Mission Retreat

The Remnant Approach to Parish Ministry

What I am about to present is not formulaic, but simply a matter of our identity as Anglican Catholics. I am no expert and claim no special insights. We do what we do best, and the parish model itself is how we operate as Church. The parish is the microcosm and the practical instantiation of the Universal Church on the local and personal level. That we work this way is one of the great strengths and advantages of Anglicanism. I am rather convinced that one size does not fit all and that what works in one circumstance may not necessarily work in another, so I don't propose any strict guidelines. What follows are suggestions as to how to make a parish more viable. Commitment, serious structuring and formation of the remnant, and persistent fidelity are key. So far as I can tell, there is no one magic formula for parish health and growth. In some ways, the remnant is the parish itself, and often within the parish a remnant is within the remnant. One way of putting it is that we simply are the Church qua Church, and we are called to be the Church as we have received and lived that mystery.

The focus of much of my own work in parish revitalization has been liturgy – liturgy linked to pastoral care, outreach to others, teaching, and fostering community. And that has been effective in Atlanta. One might say that we have approached the remnant from a different direction from others, but the end results are hopefully the same. Some ground rules definitely apply in every parish ministry. The following is a theological reflection based on my years as Rector at Saint Barnabas Atlanta.

An essential ingredient for our future growth and the reason why younger

people, especially millennials and generation zed folks, are already attracted to our Church is the remarkable distinctiveness in the Traditional Mass and Sacraments of the Church in the primeval Western Rite, and the formation around that transcendent liturgy, way of worship, and life of a unique and altogether familial community of relationships rooted in biblical doctrinal teaching and fellowship.

We should do what we do best; we do not do megachurch, we do not do low or high church 1950s Episcopalianism, we do not do modern evangelical showmanship, we do not do rock bands, entertainment, and hootenanny, we do not do Calvinism or Lutheranism or any other sixteenth-century innovation, we do not do the neo-charismatic or the gnostic, we do not do antiquarianism, cosplay, or creative anachronism. We offer in our own contemporary context in the real world the Holy Sacrifice of Jesus Christ Himself, the sublimity of the ancient Eucharistic rite of the Western Church according to Apostolic Tradition and the ministration of the Holy Sacraments in their ancient form. In other words, we are Deep Church. Not mere Christianity, but more Christianity. The fullness of orthodoxy, right worship and right belief.

This is what makes us who we are – and we should treasure it and be eager to spread it abroad. As the Church is at the Altar, so is she in her formation, catechesis, development of meaningful relationships, and the fostering of Christian community. We are called to attention to detail in all of these areas. That meticulousness, attentiveness, and genuine care is our heritage and our gift to the wider Church and the world around us.

In each parish and mission, we should cultivate a remnant, a smaller core group of faithful disciples of Christ who are intentional about prayer, theological formation, communal life, and above all, spiritual direction. In turn the remnant is a leaven that leavens the whole lump, that begins in an influential way to shape the spiritual lives of others who may find themselves more marginal or peripheral in the Church. This is not the Pareto principle 20/80 rule of 20% of the faithful doing 80% of the work! This concept is about having an essential group of unconditionally committed faithful given entirely to the Gospel and living the Catholic Faith in their own lives, who can form around themselves a more vigorous *lex vivendi*, the law of living the Gospel, which in turn converts and intensifies the entire community. Remnant theology/praxis can lead to the complete transformation of a Church.

The remnant is formed principally in three ways in the parish... community, catechesis, and cultus, or in another way... conduct/culture, creed, and cult. The heart of remnant work in a parish is Thornton's 'holy trinity' of Mass, Offices, and Personal Prayer. It is the

cultivation of these three within the core group and spreads the life of the Spirit to others. The remnant is built on Mass and Office Catholicism and development of a life of personal and communal prayer.

In Christian education, we do this by catechesis and formation in our Anglican Tradition. Sunday School, Bible Study, Catechism, Spiritual Formation Class, and Enquirers' Class. We must offer concrete and compelling opportunities for learning about and growing in our holy Faith and require commitment to that formation and spiritual training. We seek for others to be more profoundly conformed to Jesus Christ interiorly and to make him known, loved and adored outwardly. Only as we grow spiritually into Christ our Head and Lord we shall grow in other ways. We need to encourage more participation from our own people in the life of the parish, which will translate into more powerful mission and outreach. Formation and mission remain our future. Formation, Christian Life and living, transforms into mission and growth.

The liturgical aspect has been for me a central feature of this work. The Church is first and foremost a place where God is adored. The measure by which a Church worships and prays is the measure by which it lives and matures – our continuing renewal and growth in the Holy Ghost is nurtured and realised in worship. There are many opportunities to attend to Holy Communion and to enter the making-present of Our Lord in the liturgical year of our Tradition. One of the greatest treasures and strengths of our tradition is the variety and diversity of services we offer: our worship spans the spectrum of what is historically Anglican, from the Morning Office and Evensong to the Sung Mass on all feasts and days of commemoration.

This 'ancient Christian orthodox' First Millennium Anglicanism appeals, it appeals to those outside our parish whom we seek to evangelise. Many Christians, and many persons outside the Faith, are searching for precisely what we offer, the pearl of great price, worship in the beauty of holiness, reverence, dignity, and the sense of the transcendence of God. Eucharistic worship is source and centre of the Christian life. We have the highest standard of liturgical worship of any Christian communion on earth, the rarest and precious of all gems, the Anglican Liturgy. Let us avail ourselves of it and share it with others. The supreme and ultimate purpose of the Church, our Church, is to worship Our Lord, God

and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Gospel is lived in and through our worship, Christ found in the Mystery of Word and Sacrament.

We must continue to pray the Lord of the harvest to send us a great harvest and to send us out into the harvest! A Church only grows if it prays for growth.

Authenticity is vital, the Church being herself, being the Church. We are attracting and shall continue to attract more of the young people of our community, sincere souls looking for the goodness, beauty, and truth which only the Great Tradition of the Church can provide – as we remain fully, absolutely and unswervingly committed to the historic Faith and Liturgy. There has never been a time when the timelessness, transcendence, reverence, dignity, beauty of holiness, and reliability of Anglo-Catholic worship were more needed or able to draw souls. There is a direct correlation between the introduction of the fullness of our Anglican liturgical tradition, and the reemphasis of the centrality of the Holy Eucharist as the supreme act of Christian worship, and our increasing attraction of the young. It is the fullness of the Catholic and Apostolic sacramental and liturgical life that appeals to people of all ages, especially young people. There are many people, unchurched or from conservative protestant backgrounds, seeking precisely what we offer.

Our worship also empowers outreach to the local community in charitable service. We need to be outward looking and translate inner community to outward service. Let us strive to obtain more personal involvement and interaction with outreach ministry – it would be wonderful if we could in the future boast that 10%, 20% or 30% of our membership were personally volunteering in the service of others. We need volunteers to join with us, and we ask our people to consider giving of themselves, time, talent and energy to the service to those in need, those around us in our community. Ministry, service, the love of Christ in action, belongs not just to clergy or to a specialized group of lay-people, it belongs to all us, to every baptized person. The early days of the Continuing Church understandably saw a concern and a need to preserve our heritage and to defend the orthodox faith. But our parishes, and the Continuing Church as a whole, have now matured and grown to the stage where our focus should not be solely inward, but outward. The authenticity of a Church is revealed by how it ministers to others outside the Church in the Name of Christ. We are the hands and feet of Christ in the world. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered

unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

‘The Church does not have a mission: the Church is a mission. The members of Christ in His Church are the Emissaries and Ambassadors of Christ in our age, the light and salt of our generation, the hands and feet of Christ in the world. The Church is nothing less than the extension of Christ’s own Ministry in time and space – that is what it means to be the Body of Christ, which phrase is not merely a metaphor, but the description of a mysterious reality. Ye are the Body of Christ and members in particular. We are the whole Christ, totus Christus, Head and Body together, Head and members together. The Holy Eucharist, the Body of Christ, is given to the Church, the Body of Christ, so that she may truly be the Body of Christ. The Blessed Sacrament empowers us to ‘do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in.’ It makes the Church to be the Church, so that the Church may fulfil the calling and the very Work of Christ.’

As parishes, we need to dedicate ourselves anew in a vital way to the Great Commission of Our Saviour Jesus Christ (Saint Matthew 28.16-20) to make disciples of all nations and to serve Christ’s little ones, the poor and needy, according to the blessing which we have been given by the Lord. Our parishes should commit themselves to this kind of outreach.

The challenge which the Lord now places before our people is personal involvement. Every member of Christ’s Church is called to serve Him in our neighbour. We are the embodiment of the Love of Christ, which constraineth us. Local ministries stand in continual need of our own ministry and service; they need us to help - and all that is required of us is our own precious time, talent and energy. We should encourage all of our faithful to become more engaged and invested in the work of Jesus Christ to those who need us, especially to those who may be afflicted or distressed in mind, body or estate.

Our time, talent and energy are indeed exquisite and beautiful gifts, valuable beyond reckoning – and that is surely why the Lord rejoices in our offering of them to Him in and for His own. We should consider ways in which one can become more active in fulfilling the desire of the Lord Jesus’s heart – and join in the quest. Clergy should be privileged to assist one if one is interested in participating in local ministry.

If we don't offer ourselves for ministry, and heed to the call to give, not only get, we face the same problem as most of contemporary Christendom. The modern challenge for us as traditional orthodox Christians is to resist the all-popular culture promulgated by megachurchdom, the 'demanding consumer' mentality, and rather, promote a culture of service, of self-giving and self-donating love - for Christ and others.

Many false churches today want to be a sort of drive-through restaurant offering a selection of goods for the enjoyment, satisfaction, entertainment, and consumption of the buyer: but we Anglo-Catholics should know that the moral essence of the Christian Faith is sacrifice, love in action, from the Cross of Calvary, on our Eucharistic Altars, and in our own lives. Church is truly about what we give, not just what we get – although the rewards are eternal and everlasting. So let us give with cheerful hearts and resolute wills to the service of Christ and His Kingdom. God is calling us to Romans 12 state of mind and soul.

Finally, to borrow shamelessly from some of Bishop Scarlett's ideas...

In our time is centred on community. In general, people no longer go to church because of loyalty to a tradition or group. In fact, many do not go because they are hostile to their former church. Most of our mission field has decided not to go to church. Thus, merely advertising the church is no longer an effective way to reach out. People go to church now because they are drawn into relationships with other people, through which they are drawn into an experience of God. We are an alienated culture. For all the many connections people make on social media, most people are not that close to many other people. Human beings are communal beings. We have a desire to know and be known. For the church effectively to reach out, it must be a place where people can connect deeply with God and others. The two are connected. We know Christ through membership in His Body the Church.

Our mission situation is nearer to that of the first century church than it is to the mid-twentieth century church in which many of us were raised. Few people actually know what we are doing in church—and not many in the larger culture care. Evangelism begins through relationships. When people get to know us and find us to be a plausible and attractive community, they want to know what we believe. This leads to instruction in the faith and in our life of prayer, which leads to worship. Evangelism must be focused on developing

relationships with other people and on opening new doors of entry – and the relationships are then bolstered by our worship. Community, relationships, formation, and worship are inextricably connected and related.

The most attractive thing about us is the joy we experience in our community and the way we love each other. People want to be a part of an intimate and authentic community; they want a place where they can know others and be known by others. When people see us as a joyful and intimate community, they are attracted to us and want to know more about the kind of faith that creates this kind of community. However, if a church is characterized by contention, gossip, hypocrisy, and joyless negativity, no one cares what it believes, and no one wants to be there. Let us mindful of these truths going forward.