

RENEW MY CHURCH SUMMIT VIDEO AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

**Resource for parish groups to discuss and broaden
understanding of a common vision of renewal**



“AS WE MOVE FORWARD, IT WILL BE OUR THREE MISSION IMPERATIVES THAT WILL STEADY OUR STEPS ON THIS NEW PATH. OUR AIM IS TO MAKE DISCIPLES, BUILD COMMUNITIES, AND INSPIRE WITNESS. AMID ALL OF THE TWISTS AND TURNS IN THE ROAD AHEAD, IT WILL BE IMPORTANT TO KEEP OUR EYES FOCUSED ON THESE THREE PRIORITIES.

WE ARE GOING OUT ON A LIMB WITH *RENEW MY CHURCH*, NOT AS RECKLESS THRILL-SEEKERS, BUT AS THOSE WHO SEE THE GREAT POTENTIAL AHEAD OF US AS THE SPIRIT LEADS US FORWARD. IT IS, AS PAPA WOJTYŁA OBSERVED: OUT OF A FAITH THAT A VAST OCEAN IS OPENING BEFORE US, THAT WE TAKE UP THIS VENTURE TOGETHER, EVER RELYING ON THE GUIDANCE OF JESUS CHRIST.”

– *Cardinal Blase J. Cupich*



Photo: Alexander Gouletas

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

Renew My Church is a process of both spiritual and structural renewal with the goals of growing in our own discipleship and making disciples of others, building stronger communities of faith, and inspiring witness to the light of Christ in a world desperately in need of His love. As we enter into this process, it is necessary to have a common vision of where we are headed and language that articulates our journey together.

The *Renew My Church* Summit provided many of us a glimpse of what renewal will mean for our parishes and Archdiocese – one of shared leadership in our parishes, a deeply-rooted culture of evangelization, a vibrancy of prayer and sense of community, and incredible trust in the Holy Spirit to lead us forward, all centered on the sacramental life of our Church. Now we must continue to share that vision with others and invite them into conversations about what renewal will look like in each of our parishes.

The *Renew My Church* Summit videos and discussion guide are resources to facilitate meaningful discussions about how your parish community can respond to Christ's call for renewal.

In the next few pages, you will find links to the talks and reflections given by various speakers at the *Renew My Church* Summit. To facilitate sharing and learning, we have provided a set of questions that can be used to guide group discussions.

For your reference, the videos can also be found at renewmychurch.org/events-media/summit.

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COME AND FOLLOW ME

1. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- Read Mark 10:17-21
- What are 1-2 words that you would use to describe a disciple?
- Would you call yourself a disciple of Jesus Christ? Why or why not?
- At what points in your life have you heard Jesus Christ say to you, “come and follow me”?

2. REFLECTION (TO BE READ BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- First and foremost, we have to recognize that our journey of renewal is not simply a structural exercise in the prudent stewardship of our common resources, but it is a task of sharing a sacred story. This is inspired by Jesus’ invitation and continues to be the foundation and goal of our renewal. It challenges us to imagine effective venues for and practices of sharing the story of Jesus, witnessing to his work in our communities, and finally, helping each other to experience his sacramental presence. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to first recognize his presence in our lives and to learn how to discern his unique call to each and every one of us. Then, we are sent within our parish communities to share this encounter by works of charity, the witness of catechetical teaching, and active participation in the liturgy. This active discipleship not only benefit the lives of our fellow parishioners but impacts the lives of many others who, through our generously and works of mercy, can experience first-hand the work of a disciple of Jesus.

3. WATCH VIDEO (LINK TO VIDEO ~15 MINUTES)

4. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED AFTER THE VIDEO)

- We are in a time of challenge and opportunity.
 - How do you feel about the current time that we are in as a Church? Are you excited, anxious, skeptical, hopeful?
 - From your perspective, what are the 1 or 2 greatest challenges facing the Church today?
 - From your perspective, what are the 1 or 2 greatest opportunities for the Church today?
- It is “like we are stretched between two tow trucks: between nominal Catholicism and a more evangelistic approach”.
 - Where would you say you find yourself today along that spectrum?
 - What are 1 or 2 positives of each end of the spectrum? What are 1 or 2 drawbacks?

- We may be in different places as it relates to renewal, but we are all one in Christ through our baptism.
 - In your own words, how would you describe your baptismal call? How has this manifested itself in your life over the last 12 months?
 - How do you see Jesus calling you to be a part of the process of renewal?
 - What is keeping you from being “all in” to answering Jesus’ call to renew His Church?
- Jesus looks at us, loves us, and says, “come, follow me”.
 - How do you follow Jesus today? What would you have to let go of, if anything, to follow Jesus more fully?
 - What would it look like if you, your family, and your parish whole-heartedly followed Jesus?

A CASE FOR HOPE

1. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- What are 1-2 positive developments that have occurred in the Church in the last 50 years? To what can we attribute them?
- What are 1-2 negative changes or trends that have occurred in the Church in the last 50 years? What do you see as the root cause(s) of those trends?
- What changes have you seen in your own parish community?
- What opportunities do you see in our current situation?

2. REFLECTION (TO BE READ BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- To appreciate both the need and opportunity we have for *Renew My Church*, we must recognize three key elements that define the current reality:
 - A movement occurred from an age of Christendom to a new Apostolic age. We no longer live in an age where Christian values can be presumed or where the culture helps people live out their faith. Many of the assumptions and presumptions we made about faith being passed on from one generation to the next have been challenged by our new cultural reality, leading us to re-think those assumptions and ask how we can respond more effectively to the reality.
 - Given this shift, we need to make sure that our parish structures, methods of sharing the faith, and models of community life are renewed to be suitable for the evangelization of our faith communities today. We have always been called to evangelize and share our faith. If we want to be effective in making disciples, building communities, and inspiring witness in today's world, we should be willing always to discern God's movement in our lives and our parish communities, and be open to adapting our methods so that we can be the active co-workers God has called us to be in his work of evangelizing and renewing our communities and world today.
 - Renewal cannot, and must not, be just another program. Rather it must involve a personal conversion and a renewed mindset, rooted in a missionary attitude that embraces new ways of sharing an encounter with Jesus Christ and His Church.

3. WATCH VIDEO (LINK TO VIDEO ~60 MINUTES)

4. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED AFTER THE VIDEO)

- We are in a change of ages, from the age of Christendom to a new Apostolic age.
 - How has this change of ages affected our Church, your parish, and your own faith life?
 - How has your parish responded to this change of ages?
 - How have you responded in your own faith life?
 - How does this change of ages intrigue you? How does it challenge or disturb you? How does it motivate you?

- To respond to the end of the Age of Christendom, we must be willing to change methods for the sake of the mission.
 - Do you think your parish is willing to change methods for the sake of the mission?
 - What makes you excited about this opportunity? What makes you fearful?
- Real change must be personal, not just organizational.
 - To what extent are you discontent with the status quo, or convinced that things can be better?
 - Are you personally convinced of the need to renew, not just the Church, but also parish life and individual ways of sharing Christ with others?
 - How can adapting our methods help us in communicating and carrying out our mission to baptize all nations and make disciples?
- Actions speak louder than words.
 - What would it look like for your parish to place mission over methods?
 - What would it look like for you to place mission over methods in your own life?
- This journey of renewal is grounded in making disciples, building communities, and inspiring witness.
 - How does your parish intentionally identify, form, and send disciples out to make more disciples (i.e., those on fire to learn and share the Good News about Jesus and His Church)?
 - How do you measure discipleship and the strength of parishioner engagement in your parishioners?
- We have an opportunity for real spiritual and organizational change through *Renew My Church*.
 - What are you most hopeful for in *Renew My Church*? What are you most fearful of?
 - Five, ten, twenty years from now, how do you want to remember *Renew My Church*?
 - What would you like our gift to be for future generations of Catholics?
- Vision matters – it provides unity, direction, and inspiration.
 - Picture in your mind the ideal parish – one you have dreamed about. How would do you describe that parish? What would it look and feel to be a part of that parish?
 - How would the sacramental life (i.e., preparation for, and celebration of the sacraments) of that parish look?
 - What can you start working on today to make that parish a reality?

UNPACKING OUR BAPTISMAL CALL

1. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- Read Luke 15: 11-32 (The parable of the Prodigal Son).
- Write down 5 qualities of the father that you admire the most.
- Where do you see those 5 qualities present in your parish?

2. REFLECTION (TO BE READ BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- There is a difference between wanting things **from** people and wanting things **for** people. We may want to change our parishes and communities because we want more participation, attendance, or resources, but this parable helps us to recognize that our first intention must be for people to discover (or rediscover) their own relationship with our loving Father, and in so doing, to step into the life of His family, our Church.

3. WATCH VIDEO (LINK TO VIDEO ~45 MINUTES)

4. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED AFTER THE VIDEO)

- The parable of Prodigal Son illustrates the love and heart of the Father.
 - What new insight or lessons did you receive from this perspective?
 - How did it make you feel about your own relationship with God?
- Understanding your own identity matters.
 - Which of the two brothers in the parable do you identify with the most?
 - Has it always been that way, or were there moments in your life where you felt like both the younger brother and the older brother? If so, what was it that brought you back to the Father's embrace and back into his house?
 - Do you see yourself as a slave to God, or as His son or daughter? Why?
- Our underlying motives must be rooted in the love of the father.
 - Do you and your parish focus more on what you want from people or what you want for people?
 - Is the motivation of your actions a need for self-preservation (i.e. maintaining all that is currently in place – ministries, Mass times, programs, etc.) or an authentic desire for evangelization (i.e. willing to take risks and allow the Holy Spirit to lead you into new ways for the sake of His mission)?
- Priorities point to where our heart really is.
 - Where do you think your parish is most focused? Looking inward or looking outward?
 - How do you and your parish demonstrate a sense of urgency in bringing more people into encounters with Jesus?
 - How do you and your parish actively care about the plight of the lost sheep?
 - How do you and your parish actively care for the “older brothers” in the parish?

- We celebrate what we care most about.
 - In the last year, on what did you and your parish spend the most amount of time, money, and energy celebrating?
 - In the last year, how did your parish celebrate lives that were transformed by Jesus Christ (that is, those who may have only begun their journey of faith, those who moved closer in relationship to Jesus, and those who embraced the call to full communion with the Church)?
 - How does your Sunday liturgy reflect and include witness of those who are transformed by belonging to Christ?
- Stories are one of the most powerful forms of communication.
 - How did Jen's story make you feel?
 - How would Jen's story have played out if she had been at your parish?
- Renewal starts with you.
 - Do you see a need to instill a missionary impulse in your parish?
 - Do you care about bringing people to an encounter Jesus Christ? In what ways do you or would you like to live that out?
 - Do you know how to bring people to an encounter with Jesus Christ? Does that idea seem uncomfortable? Why or why not?
- *Renew My Church* is a movement towards mission and it will not be easy.
 - What challenges or opposition do you foresee in your parish from a greater outward focus?
 - What makes you excited or anxious about this?

UNLOCKING OUR POTENTIAL

1. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- What are the strongest ministries in your parish? What makes them strong?
- What, if anything, holds you back from imagining strong ministries in your parish?
- What are 2-3 ways of engaging and forming a new group of parish leaders?

2. REFLECTION (TO BE READ BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- Why does a parish, any parish, exist? The answer to this question is pretty easy; it exists to proclaim our faith in Jesus Christ and share the gift of this life-changing faith with others. In fulfilling this task, we are to be both students and teachers: those who learn and enter more deeply into the mystery of God's presence, and those who are being sent in his name to change the world. The opportunity that *Renew My Church* (RMC) gives to every community in our Archdiocese is to re-examine how clear our values are, and how clearly we fulfill the task of learning and of teaching others. Without question, our parishes are already very busy offering a great portfolio of programs, but RMC is calling us to examine if all those programs and offerings are effective and whether they appropriately fulfill our mission of deepening and proclaiming our faith.

3. WATCH VIDEO (LINK TO VIDEO ~35 MINUTES)

4. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED AFTER THE VIDEO)

- “Be not afraid” are powerful words that can guide us through this process.
 - What are you most hesitant about as a part of the *Renew My Church* process? Why?
 - What are you most excited about as a part of the *Renew My Church* process? Why?
 - What do you think God is calling you and your parish to during the *Renew My Church* process?
 - How will you accompany those who are most hesitant and those who are less excited about the *Renew My Church* process? How will you help others focus on the joy that comes from trying something new?
- We are being called to look at the reality of what is happening and move forward.
 - In what ways has your parish been open to renewal? How is your parish fostering opportunities for parishioners to be engaged in acknowledging and leading renewal?
 - How can you and your parish focus on quality over quantity as it relates to ministries, programs, activities, etc.? What makes this challenging?
 - How does your parish involve the laity in the life of the parish?
 - How does your parish engage the laity to participate in leading ministries of the parish?
- In this day and age, we need to be more intentional about sharing our faith.
 - What experiences have you had with sharing your faith with others?
 - Are you comfortable or uncomfortable with speaking to others about your faith? Why?
 - What have you seen as effective ways to share the faith in your family or parish or work or friends?

THE ANATOMY OF FAITH

1. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- What is your baptismal call?
- In what ways does your parish support and recognize the baptismal call of all believers?

2. REFLECTION (TO BE READ BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- There is a difference between **knowing things about Jesus** and **knowing Jesus**. Our communities have to ensure that we not only teach things about Jesus, but that we also create a space for encountering the living God—a space where people can learn, share, and witness to the transformative power of God in their lives.

3. WATCH VIDEO (LINK TO VIDEO ~30 MINUTES)

4. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED AFTER THE VIDEO)

- It is important to rediscover the tradition and art of kerygmatic preaching and sharing.
 - When you think about what it means to talk about Jesus Christ with someone who doesn't know Him, what first comes to mind? The Bible? The Church? The sacraments? Your story?
 - When was the last time you shared the Good News of Jesus Christ with someone? What was that experience like? What did you learn from it?
- There is a difference between knowing Jesus and knowing things about Jesus.
 - How would you describe your belief in God – is it something you feel in your heart, or something you know in your mind (or both)? Why?
 - How would you describe your parish's sacramental preparation programs or movements today? Do they teach both things about Jesus as well as introduce a practice of recognizing and entering into an ongoing relationship with the Lord?
- According to Pope St. Paul VI, evangelization always involves the explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ.
 - How does the point that “the witness of life must give way to the word of life” make you feel (e.g., excited or anxious)? Why?
 - What would it take for your parish to embrace a model of communal evangelization?

- Mission depends on unity, and unity depends on mission.
 - To what extent does your parish have and express these two elements (i.e., mission and unity)?
 - Why do you think that unity enables mission and vice versa?
 - How do you and other people in your parish encourage others, pray for others, and offer service to others in support of unity and mission?
- There is real power in a Church that is united.
 - What did the prayer for the Cardinal make you feel or think about? Why?
 - In your parish, what gets in the way of unity and mission? How can those obstacles be overcome?
- The first step we must each take toward unity is to continuously pray for our own change of heart.
 - How have we personally hurt the unity or mission of our Church?
 - What pain, hurt, or suffering is holding you back from loving others?

THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION

1. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- Read Mark 16:1-7
- What are 1 or 2 words that come to mind when you hear the Gospel of the Resurrection of Jesus?
- How do you go about sharing the message of the Resurrection? If you never have, how do you think you would if given the opportunity?

2. REFLECTION (TO BE READ BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- There is only one resurrection story, but there are many ways to communicate that story with others. The renewal to which we are all called through *Renew My Church* prompts us to reflect on the different ways in which we might share the account of the Resurrection to those who have never truly heard it before.
- For example, on a busy Christmas Day, as families gather for Mass, it is not hard to imagine that many of our parish visitors are not Catholic, and some are not even Christian. Some in our parishes were catechized, but never evangelized (that is, they attended Catholic school or religious education but never really understood what it means personally, or never received the Good News in their hearts), others received the Sacraments of Initiation but never entered fully into a relationship with the Lord as a disciple in His Church. Everything between initial front-door hospitality and our liturgy provides an experience of Christ and an invitation to return for more. Thinking about our own parish, will our visitor:
 - leave with a better understanding of the Gospel?
 - experience the joy of the Resurrection in our welcoming embrace?
 - be offered an opportunity to understand our Catholic liturgy?
- In an increasingly post-Christian society, we have to challenge ourselves to embrace creative methods and tools to share the story of Jesus in meaningful ways, and at the same time, establish easy entry points for people to come and learn more about God.

3. WATCH VIDEO (LINK TO VIDEO ~15 MINUTES)

4. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED AFTER THE VIDEO)

- What we are called to do (i.e., to “go and make disciples”) is not new, but we must do this in new ways for the evangelization of today’s world.
 - Why do you think people leave the Church? Do you think they know what they are leaving behind?
 - Are we making disciples of Jesus Christ today in an effective way? Why or why not? How could we be more effective in making disciples?
 - In the past year how, and to whom, have you shared message of the Good News?

- If our methods for sharing the Gospel do not reach the hearts of others, then we are missing our moment to share the account of the Resurrection and to make disciples.
 - In what ways has the message of the Gospel touched you in the last 12 months?
 - Does your parish communicate the message of the Resurrection in a way that can be heard, understood, and internalized? Why or why not?
 - In the last 12 months, how has the message of the Gospel transformed lives in your parish? How has it transformed the lives of those around your parish?
- We are invited to reflect upon how Jesus Christ entered into our lives, and how He enables us and challenges us to go out and invite others.
 - In what ways has Jesus Christ transformed your life? In what moments in your life have you most clearly felt His presence?
 - What makes you anxious, nervous, or afraid to share the message of the Gospel with others?
 - Who is the first person in your life that you would want to share the Good News with? How would you go about doing so?

GROUNDED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- Read Acts 2: 1-11
- Have you experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in your own life?
- When did you last experience the Holy Spirit at work in your parish?

2. REFLECTION (TO BE READ BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- Our work of renewal is led by the power of the Holy Spirit who reminds us that the Church must constantly reexamine her mandate to go and make disciples. As you engage in your small group discussion, be mindful of the movement and presence of the Holy Spirit right here and now.

3. WATCH VIDEO (LINK TO VIDEO ~50 MINUTES)

4. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED AFTER THE VIDEO)

- There is a difference between having the Holy Spirit and being filled with the Holy Spirit.
 - How have you experienced the feeling of being filled with the Holy Spirit?
 - Reflecting on the experiences of being filled with the Holy Spirit, what impact did those experiences have on your faith?
- The Church will always remain in the “upper room” unless she is constantly renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - In the past year, how have you and your parish been renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit?
 - How have you and your parish left the “upper room” as the apostles did to boldly proclaim the Good News?
 - Do you and your parish have clarity around the mission of making disciples?
- At times, the greatest distance is between our brain and our heart.
 - How do you feel about the need to talk about and share experiences of the Holy Spirit (e.g., excited, suspicious, dismissive, etc.)? Why?
 - How do you help others to recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit in the sacramental life of the Church?
- Renewal will not happen if we just change structures; we need to allow God to renew us from within.
 - In what ways have you felt God calling you towards renewal?
 - What is God asking of you and your parish in this time of renewal?
 - Do you believe renewal will only take place if we trust in the power of the Holy Spirit? Why or why not?
- Every parish is filled with people that the Lord wants to raise up and lead others in renewal.
 - How do you and your parish identify and activate people’s spiritual gifts?
 - How do you nurture their passions and gifts for ministry?
 - How do you measure/ assess people’s wiliness to share their spiritual gifts?

ASTONISHED BY GOD

1. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- Read Matthew 18:1-5
- How do you take up the task of being a disciple?
- In what ways does your parish support and recognize the call of discipleship in every believer?

2. REFLECTION (TO BE READ BEFORE THE VIDEO)

- We, who are using this guide, do so because we have encountered Jesus. We were introduced to Him by our families, our catechists, and our clergy. They have helped us learn the teachings of Jesus, and through His grace, we entered this journey of self- and communal discovery of who Jesus is, and who we are as sons and daughters of God. This knowledge of Jesus and His experience in our lives explains our approach to the world and each other. Our faith shapes our lives. This moment of renewal in our local Church is meant to help us re-examine the ways in which we teach, celebrate, and share that faith with each other. Our call to discipleship is not a challenge to bravery but an invitation to generosity. We are called, as parishes and individuals, to ask ourselves: "How generous are we in sharing our faith and witnessing to it in ways that inspire and astonish others?!"

3. WATCH VIDEO (LINK TO VIDEO ~15 MINUTES)

4. GROUP DISCUSSION (QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED AFTER THE VIDEO)

- The message of Jesus Christ is astonishing, and so is His Church.
 - How has the message of Jesus Christ astonished you?
 - What are 3 to 5 of the most astonishing aspects of our faith?
- The world needs the message of Jesus Christ more than ever.
 - How do you take responsibility for sharing the astonishing message of the Gospel?
 - How does your parish take ownership for sharing the message of the Gospel?
 - Who would be the first person that you would share the message of the Gospel with? How would you approach that? Where would you start?
 - If your parish closed tomorrow, would people on the outside of your parish care? Why or why not?
- We need to put our pastoral imagination into practice.
 - What does a parish that is fully alive and vibrant and evangelizing look like? What would it take for your parish to be a place of greater encounter with Jesus Christ and with each other?
 - What challenges or obstacles do you foresee in being a fully vibrant parish?
 - What type of Church do you want to leave for the next generation?

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



835 North Rush Street
Chicago, IL 60611-2030
archchicago.org