



## Praise for *Unlocking Your Parish*

“This excellent book provides a very practical and inspiring account of the impact Alpha has had in forming missionary disciples at Saint Benedict Parish, Canada. Ron Huntley and Fr James Mallon share their experience and wisdom with a passion that is both engaging and compelling. I highly recommend *Unlocking Your Parish*.”

—**Nicky Gumbel**, Vicar of Holy Trinity Brompton, London and pioneer of Alpha

“Jesus said you judge a tree by its fruit. Mallon and Huntley’s experience is mine: Alpha, used as a tool, a part of a larger strategy for parish renewal, is hands down the best thing I’ve seen for leading people into a life-changing encounter with Jesus.”

—**Fr John Riccardo**, Pastor, Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish, Plymouth, Michigan

*“Unlocking Your Parish* is a goldmine of practical wisdom for transforming a parish into a community of missionary disciples. Drawing on years of experience, Ron Huntley and Fr James Mallon explain why Alpha is a powerful tool for evangelisation and how to navigate the challenges involved in changing a parish culture. Together they consider the full spectrum of questions—from the appropriateness of Alpha in a Catholic setting to how to choose an Alpha emcee. From beginning to end, this book is engaging, inspiring, and challenging to our preconceived ideas about parish renewal. I will be recommending it everywhere I go!”

—Dr Mary Healy, Professor of Sacred Scripture,  
Sacred Heart Major Seminary

“For the last few years, as the pastor of multiple parishes, each with a with different culture and history, I’ve been challenged by Pope Francis to create a common space for a ‘renewed personal encounter with Christ.’ Alpha has been for us one of the greatest tools in bringing people together and, even more importantly, focusing us on making disciples. *Unlocking your Parish* offers great wisdom

about building a culture of encounter through Alpha. Using their own prayerful experiences and passionate hearts, Fr Mallon and Ron also share practical insights: pitfalls to avoid, along with simple steps to help plan, start, maintain, and grow Alpha as a tool to raise up leaders and create an outward-focused community intentional about making disciples. Truly a blessing.”

—**Rev Msgr Robert J Jaskot**, Pastor, Pastorate of Saint Francis-Saint Mary and Holy Family, Maryland

“This book is essential for any Catholic parish considering Alpha. As I read it I kept saying to myself, ‘I wish I had had this book five years ago when we started our Alpha journey!’ But God’s timing is perfect and he has generously placed this book in my hands just as we are starting to realize how Alpha fits into the overall strategy and vision for evangelisation and discipleship in our parish. Thank you, Ron Huntley and Fr Mallon, for this amazing guide filled with practical steps and encouragement.”

—**Anne Cook**, Coordinator of Adult Formation and Evangelisation, St. Joseph Catholic Church, Marblehead, Ohio

“You will want to make room on your bookshelf for this timely resource if you are passionate about the Great Commission and serious about parish renewal. Fr James Mallon and Ron Huntley have gifted the Church with an important book seasoned with experience, wisdom, and practical advice, answering common questions many have about Alpha and its extraordinary potential to transform lives and parishes. Whether you’re new to Alpha or running your hundredth Alpha, I highly recommend this insightful work.”

—**Mary Guilfoyle**, Evangelisation and Discipleship  
Director, Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish and Alpha  
USA Hub Director

“After serving in sixteen Spanish-speaking Alpha sessions (so far) as a helper, co-host, host, and session leader I have seen how Alpha has helped form new friendships, restore families, and inspire participants to serve in ministry with a new heart. *Unlocking Your Parish* answered all the questions and concerns I have had while being involved with Alpha. I am forever grateful to Fr Mallon and Ron Huntley for this gift.”

—**Suling Cheaz-Laposa**, Alpha Session Leader-Spanish,  
St. Ann Catholic Parish, Coppell, Texas

**Ron Huntley** works internationally with church leaders to build passion and get results. Ron's love for Jesus, people, and the church drive him to make a difference in the lives of pastors, priests, and ministry leaders everywhere. Ron Huntley and Fr James Mallon worked side by side to bring about the Divine Renovation at Saint Benedict Parish in Halifax, Canada. Ron's work has expanded to parishes around the world through international speaking engagements, the Divine Renovation podcast, and the Divine Renovation leadership coaching network, through which he raises up and supports coaches, and mentors pastors who seek to bring their parish from maintenance to mission.

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Fr James is the author of the bestselling book *Divine Renovation: Bringing Your Parish from Maintenance to Mission* and the *Divine Renovation Guidebook*.

The message of Divine Renovation has resonated in the hearts of tens of thousands of pastors and the laity throughout the world. To answer their needs, the Divine Renovation Ministry was created. Fr James serves the Archdiocese with half of his time and serves in the Divine Renovation Ministry with the other half of his time.

We would like to thank Deacon Keith Strohm for his support in bringing this book to completion.

# Unlocking Your Parish

Making Disciples,  
Raising Up Leaders with Alpha



Ron Huntley & Fr James Mallon



Published in Australia by  
Garratt Publishing  
32 Glenvale Crescent  
Mulgrave, VIC 3170  
[www.garrattpublishing.com.au](http://www.garrattpublishing.com.au)

*Unlocking Your Parish: Making Disciples, Raising Up Leaders with Alpha*  
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Cover Design by Faceout Studios

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ISBN 9781925073973

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# Contents

<i>Introduction</i> .....	1
Ron Huntley	
CHAPTER 1	
<i>Setting the Stage</i> .....	9
Fr James Mallon	
CHAPTER 2	
<i>Mission, Evangelisation, and Alpha</i> .....	21
Fr James Mallon	
CHAPTER 3	
<i>Alpha and Parish Transformation</i> .....	35
Ron Huntley	
CHAPTER 4	
<i>Alpha and Pastoral Strategy</i> .....	49
Ron Huntley	
CHAPTER 5	
<i>Alpha and the Leadership Pipeline</i> .....	57
Ron Huntley	
CHAPTER 6	
<i>Planning Alpha: A Recipe for Success</i> .....	77
Ron Huntley	
CHAPTER 7	
<i>Issues and Impact</i> .....	89
Ron Huntley	
CHAPTER 8	
<i>Promoting Alpha</i> .....	109
Ron Huntley and Fr James Mallon	



CHAPTER 9

*The Holy Spirit and Alpha* .....119

Ron Huntley

CHAPTER 10

*Does God Heal Today?*.....133

Ron Huntley

CHAPTER 11

*Concluding Thoughts* .....143

Ron Huntley and Fr James Mallon

*Endnotes*.....148

*Divine Renovation Ministry* .....150

*Divine Renovation Resources* .....151

*Alpha Resources* .....152



# Introduction

RON HUNTLEY

I'm passionate about parish transformation. I'm passionate about it because transformed parishes transform people, and transformed people transform the world around them.

This work of parish transformation requires us to change parish culture—starting with choosing a mission-oriented over a maintenance-oriented culture—that is, the organizational structure and the this-is-the-way-we've-always-done-things thinking that can make change difficult. Parish transformation requires moving beyond a maintenance-oriented culture in which our concern is restricted to caring for the flock—the parishioners. Instead, transformation requires that we choose a mission-oriented culture in which the parish, while caring for the flock, is mobilised to turn outwards to reach those on the outside. That's hard work.

When I come alongside parishes to coach their leaders, I talk about three important elements of a healthy parish: the soil, the seed, and the fruit. Now, we all want to see fruit. We all want to see lives changed by Jesus and for our communities to become effective channels of his love for the world. So what do we do? We get some good seeds—in other words, the best programs—and expect them to bear the fruit we're looking for.

We forget, though, the critical role of the soil. That soil is the culture of our parishes. Even the best seeds cannot develop fruit when they are planted in barren or toxic soil. Changing the culture of our parishes to make them healthier and more life-giving enriches the soil so that we can bear “fruit that will remain” (John 15:16).

Within Divine Renovation Ministry, we have a Divine Renovation Network through which we coach parishes around the world. We have discovered, in our work, that one of the most effective tools for changing culture and sparking transformation is Alpha, a multi-week process that encompasses the proclamation of the gospel message and relationship building.

Alpha is a parish tool for evangelisation based on hospitality, sharing, and open conversation. The same Alpha content is run all over the world, by Christians of all traditions, and provides a common expression of proclamation, service, and witness. Millions of people have experienced Alpha in over one hundred countries and over one hundred languages around the globe. Alpha sessions include a good meal, an engaging movie, and casual conversation in a small group setting. Developed out of an Anglican parish in London, England, Alpha offers an opportunity to explore the meaning of life and to receive a basic introduction to Jesus, his message of salvation, and Christianity in general. My own history with the Alpha process began many years ago, and my ongoing experience has cemented for me the power of this tool.

The first time I went through Alpha, it was so much fun. It had an incredible impact on me personally: it helped me fall deeper in love with Jesus, drew me to the Scriptures, improved my prayer life, and helped me gain a deeper understanding of

the Holy Spirit. My first Alpha experience was in a home at the invitation of a generous couple, Bruce and Marilyn Havell, who were nondenominational evangelical Christians and so I didn't see how it would help me to *help others* fall more deeply in love with the Catholic faith—and that was my calling and passion. I wasn't innovative enough to see how to integrate Alpha into my mission as a Catholic.

Around that time, I ran into Fr James Mallon, an old friend, and we ended up talking about how we could help people come to know Jesus. Bringing them to Mass didn't seem to be effective because, as Fr James pointed out, the Mass was only intended for those fully initiated into the Church—for Catholics themselves. It's not meant for—and is often not meaningful for—people who don't have faith. That left me wondering, though, what I was supposed to do in order to bring people to Christ.

Fr James said that the work of the rest of the week was to reach out and share Jesus with others. I asked him what he was doing throughout the week to bring others to Christ and how he was equipping the people in his parish to do the same. Like many of us, he wasn't doing anything in particular.

At that moment, a light switched on for me. I knew that I had something he could use, so I told him he should try running Alpha. He said he'd look into it, but I pushed and said he *had* to try it. He had the unique opportunity to do what I had been unable to do: anchor the Alpha program in the Church so that people whose lives were transformed through Alpha had a place to go and a place to grow.

After that conversation, Fr James started running Alpha in his parish. Around the same time, I moved to New Brunswick,

where I was reintroduced to Alpha through the Wesleyan Church. Pastor Tim Guptil invited me to a planning meeting for a regional Alpha conference to be held in the Maritime provinces in Canada. He and his team were looking for a Catholic networking coordinator to connect with the dioceses and parishes in the area, encouraging them to come to the conference. I saw myself as an unconnected nobody, so I said no. I told them they should reach out to the diocesan offices—they were well connected and could mobilize people.

Pastor Tim looked me in the eye and said, “Ron, we did, and they don’t want anything to do with us.” It broke my heart. I enjoyed building bridges between Catholics and non-Catholics. I agreed to come to one meeting, hear their plan, and then help them find the right person for the job.

When I showed up for the meeting, I was given a folder with my name on it, and in that folder was a booklet called *Alpha in a Catholic Context*. The booklet was created by David Nodar, who had originally brought Alpha to North America. I couldn’t believe it. No one else had it in their folder. I took it out and devoured it; everything it said made sense. The booklet inspired me, but even more, it made me determined to fill that upcoming conference with nothing but Catholics!

Needless to say, that didn’t happen, but I did manage to bring a delegation of ten people from my local Catholic church. The emcee asked people to stand up, denomination by denomination, and as they did, everyone cheered for them. When they asked the Catholics to stand up, we did, although I felt we had failed because of our small numbers. I felt terrible, but to my surprise, the applause for our delegation was much louder and longer than for all the other groups. I leaned over

to someone who wasn't Catholic and asked what was going on. He said that they'd been praying for Catholics to join them for years and years, and we were the first who had.

Within a few years, not only were Catholics coming to that conference, but we actually hosted it and filled half the seats! The simple request to bring Catholics to that conference sparked something with deep roots. Eventually I saw how Alpha could work in a Catholic context. My heart burned for a way that I might help others within the Catholic Church encounter Jesus as I had—and Alpha provided that way.

A few years later, I ran into Fr James again, and we discovered that we were both using Alpha as a tool to grow our communities. Fr James told me that his priestly ministry was transformed through Alpha—it gave him a tool to bring people to Christ in a way he'd never seen before. He also informed me that he wished he could hire me as his director of evangelisation so that he could wind me up and set me loose. We both laughed it off because we knew from experience that Catholics were leery of the word “evangelisation”—and Fr James didn't have the money in his budget anyway.

Ten years later, I was working in the pharmaceutical industry when I got a call from Fr James. He was at a conference where Nicky Gumbel, the Anglican priest who had developed Alpha into its current format, was speaking. Fr James had been hit by the Holy Spirit and was so inspired that, in the middle of the talk, he had gotten up from his front row seat and stepped out to call me. He'd just been assigned to Saint Benedict, a new parish in Halifax, and he asked if I would join him in ministry as the director of evangelisation.

I sat in shocked silence long enough for Fr James to think that the call had dropped. I knew that my financial responsibilities at the time wouldn't allow me to take on this role full-time, but I wanted a day or two to discern how I could make it work. Fr James said that whether it was part-time, full-time, or whatever arrangement we could manage, he was convinced we needed to work together.

I called Fr James back the next day. I said that if he was asking me to come and help him grow *a* church, I wasn't interested. But if he felt God was calling us together to work to impact *the* Church, I was all in. We were on exactly the same wavelength about the mission God was calling us to in that moment. This began our journey together at Saint Benedict.

The first item on our agenda was launching Alpha. We did it, and the life of the parish began to change from that very day. Alpha was the catalyst for this change.

From time to time when Fr James and I would run into each other at work, we'd take a moment to share how excited we were to be part of a parish like this. This was the kind of Church we'd always wanted to belong to. We knew it was way bigger than anything he or I could ever do; it was the work of God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Alpha is a small but important piece of a bigger puzzle for Catholics and, done well, it unleashes faith that is contagious, filled with joy, and incredibly fruitful. Our Divine Renovation Network parishes are not "Alpha parishes"; they are healthy evangelizing parishes. Therefore we prioritize evangelisation and leadership development. **Alpha just happens to be the tool we use because we've found that nothing works better at both**

**evangelizing and raising up leaders who can change our culture and take people from lukewarm to “on fire.”**

If we evangelise and develop leaders well, we will impact the rest of our parish culture—in everything from outreach and social justice to developing new and life-giving ministries to fostering an ever-deepening love for the sacraments. If you want to see your parish culture transformed; to evangelise those in the parish, those away from the Church, and those who don't know Jesus; and if you want to create a pipeline to form leaders to serve in your parish and build others up, I strongly recommend Alpha.

Maybe you've never heard of Alpha and are curious. Maybe you've experienced Alpha and want to know how best to use it within the life of your parish. Fr James and I decided to write this book because we are convinced that Alpha, done well, can be an essential component of cultural change and transformation. We hope that what you find in the following pages will inspire you, and take some of the guesswork out of how to use Alpha as a powerful tool to enrich the soil of your parish.





## *Chapter One*

# Setting the Stage

FR JAMES MALLON

As a priest engaged in parish ministry for nearly two decades, I have longed to see the Holy Spirit at work in the lives of parishioners. Like any pastor or anyone involved in pastoral ministry, I have also wanted to see the good news of the gospel draw the lost and the searching into the life of the Christian community. Two questions have influenced my thinking: Can Catholic parishes become communities of missionary disciples that bear lasting fruit? If so, what does it take to move them in that direction?

In my book *Divine Renovation: Bringing Your Parish from Maintenance to Mission*, I answered the first of these questions with a resounding yes—Catholic parishes can indeed become missionary and fruit-bearing. I answered the second question—how to accomplish this—by describing the renewal in my own parish, Saint Benedict in Halifax, Nova Scotia. I mention that book here because Alpha played a role in Saint Benedict's transformation, and I believe it can help other Catholic parishes too. *Unlocking Your Parish: Making Disciples, Raising Up Leaders with Alpha* aims to provide insight into what Alpha

can offer the Catholic parish interested in becoming a mission-focused community.

Globally, over the past several years, we have seen parishes rediscover the call to “go . . . and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19), but as a universal Church, we have barely begun to respond to the Lord’s call of renewal. If it were simply a matter of tweaking our processes and changing our activities as we continue to live out our current models of parish life, we might be further along. But our present situation requires far more than minor course corrections and better programming. It calls for a fundamental change of culture—a change in how we understand the world around us and how we understand what it means to be Catholic.

## Living in a Change of Age

Throughout the course of history, there have been watershed moments that have shifted the direction of civilizations and profoundly affected our physical, intellectual, and spiritual lives. These moments—such as the inventions of the printing press and the steam engine—have often displaced or greatly altered the self-understanding and cultural underpinnings of what came before. Currently we are at another watershed moment that is radically altering secular culture and the assumptions people make about themselves, the world they live in, and the meaning of life.

Recognizing this profound shift, observers have said we are no longer living in an age of change; rather we are living through the change of an age. This new age has a number of names. Some call it the age of secularism; others use the term

post-Christian or postmodern. Whatever its name, the reality is that this age is very different from what has come before.

Throughout much of its history, the Church in the West has existed in the cultural soil of Christendom, where the dominant cultural forces supported Christianity and even gave it a privileged place. There was, in the culture of Christendom, a sense of the transcendent importance of hierarchy, an appreciation for the natural law, and a deeply held belief in the universality of truth.

Our current culture, however, embraces a kind of scientific materialism that claims that all truth is relative. In other words, there is nothing objective about truth; it is entirely subjective. What is true for me is true for me, and what is true for you is true for you—even if our truths are mutually exclusive. This has obvious implications for the Church, which claims that there is, in fact, objective truth that serves the good of all peoples.

And so the question becomes: how should the Church respond to this new age and its very secular outlook?

## Vatican II: The Church's Prophetic Response

This isn't the place for a historical retrospective, but briefly, we can see that the seeds of the cultural shift we are living through can be found early in the twentieth century. World War I cast a shadow over Europe; the resulting geopolitical instability set the stage for World War II and the horror of the Holocaust. Other wars and genocides followed, shattering the myth of the progressive improvement of human nature. Cultural forces converged around this time to accelerate social change on a massive scale: the sexual revolution, a growing

drug culture, the reach of television into every home—all of these things created a kind of perfect storm that sent shock waves through Western culture.

In the midst of all this, the Holy Spirit inspired Pope John XXIII to call an ecumenical council of the Church. The documents that came out of the council's discussions contained the building blocks for a renewed engagement with the world and a framework for sharing the gospel message with contemporary societies. Fifty years later, we are finally beginning to understand more broadly and implement locally the Vatican Council's call to holiness and mission.

And therein lies the crux of our current situation. As dioceses and parishes, we continue to live and act as if we are still planted within the soil of Christendom. In the past, within the supporting cultural framework of Christendom, parishes could be communities of maintenance, where people passively received the sacraments and some religious formation. As I wrote in *Divine Renovation*,

Culture supported faith and church attendance. . . . We just had to build it and people would come. . . . As long as we would go and open churches, there were always new communities of migrants and new babies. As long as we baptized and taught in our schools, we pumped out good “practicing Catholics.” In a sense, we got away with not making disciples, because the culture propped it all up.<sup>1</sup>

This is why Catholic parish life in the fifties, sixties, and even to a certain extent in the seventies seems so vibrant to

us in retrospect. The culture supported religious practice. Furthermore, in North America, Catholicism was still very much a religion of immigrants. Living away from their families and the traditions of the various countries from which they came to North America, these immigrant Catholics clung together. The parish became the center of social life, and participation in Catholic life helped reinforce a sense of belonging and familiar cultural and ethnic traditions.

In addition to reaffirming and deepening cultural and social bonds among Catholic immigrant groups, one of the goals of the Church was to help Catholics integrate into the larger North American societies where they lived. Churches built structures, like schools, to accomplish this kind of mainstreaming. The problem was that the larger culture was changing radically. With the unravelling and end of Christendom, the pastoral tools and approaches that we had previously employed became ineffective. Unfortunately, we haven't replaced them with much that seems to bear fruit.

The numbers bear this out. The Pew Research Center undertook a sociological study in 2015 and determined that 50 per cent of millennials who were raised Catholic have jettisoned any connection to the Catholic faith, and for every person who enters the Catholic Church at Easter, six leave.<sup>2</sup> But we don't need statistics to see this reality—the faithful in North America are living it. Fewer and fewer Catholics are attending Mass, and sadly, the Sacrament of Confirmation has become ritualized apostasy, with most young people leaving any practice of their faith right after receiving the sacrament. In addition, most dioceses are in a

process of retrenchment—combining multiple parishes into new administrative structures or placing the responsibilities of multiple parishes on the backs of lone priests.

This is a true moment of crisis but one of tremendous opportunity as well. If our primary reaction is to respond administratively and create new structures to slow our decline, then we might as well hang it all up now. We can't keep doing what we have always been doing and just doing it in more efficient ways. But if we see in this crisis an opportunity to let go of our previous pastoral models and embrace new approaches that place our structures and processes at the service of evangelisation and mission, we will see new life.

Pope Francis seems to be calling the Church to this vision. In his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), he writes,

I dream of a “missionary option,” that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for her self-preservation.<sup>3</sup>

## A Kind of Dying

Embracing this kind of change may mean letting go of many of the cultural hallmarks that have characterized Catholic parish life over the past decades. It may mean taking a hard look at our image of the priesthood and of pastoral ministry and also reexamining our fundamental assumptions about the

ministerial work that we do. This is not easy stuff; it is a kind of dying. Walking this path toward a missionary culture is a clear embrace of the paschal mystery.

It is an essential surrender. Paul talks about this paradox of ministry in his Second Letter to the Corinthians: “For we who live are constantly being given up to death for the sake of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh” (4:11).

We must intentionally enter into this lifestyle of surrender, not only personally, but communally. We must be willing to sacrifice to the Lord even that which may seem integral to our parish life—our buildings, processes, ministries, and ways of doing things. Our goal is not simply efficiency or keeping our parishes viable but rather freeing us to respond to the needs of men and women today. In this way, the life-changing power of the gospel can be unleashed through us.

Jesus told us we would experience the knife: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit” (John 15:1-2). When we become connected more to our model than to our mission, we need this pruning so that more of his life can be manifested through us.

The Church’s missionary impulse lies within the very nature of God, who is love. Love always pours itself out for others. This is why the Word of God left the glory of heaven and pitched his tent among us, choosing to live through our human nature, to suffer, die, and rise from the dead. He did it all so that we might be freed from the power of sin and be filled with God’s own life.

Essentially, we are a missionary people because we belong to a missionary God. The question becomes: How can we, who have received the very life of Jesus, authentically manifest that missionary identity?

## The Frozen Chosen

Part of our challenge in answering that question is the reality that many Catholics, including some within our leadership, have not encountered the love of the Father in Jesus Christ. They do not see themselves as beloved sons and daughters of God, and they may not have made an intentional choice to follow Jesus. In fact, many Catholics today see faith not in terms of their relationship with God and others but primarily as something that places moral demands on them. They adopt an almost servile mentality, focusing on the things they must do for God rather than responding in gratitude for the things that God has done in and for and through them.

This can make it difficult for parishes to live out their mission, since the overwhelming focus becomes how do *I* get to heaven. Many of our people don't see themselves as being part of a larger story—the story of salvation. They don't see themselves as being part of a Church that Jesus sent out on a mission, a Church that the Lord empowered by pouring out his Spirit. The idea that baptized Catholics are loved and are able to be channels of God's supernatural healing, mercy, forgiveness, providence, and justice or that they have an essential and unique role to play in the Church's mission—these are foreign concepts to many Catholics.

This truly is an issue of identity. Jesus explicitly rebuked



the image of slavery in relationship to God when he told his disciples, “I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father” (John 15:15). There is a new intimacy with the Father that comes with life in Jesus Christ and the promise of his Spirit. That is why, when his disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, he gave them the words of the Our Father.

The apostle Paul affirms this reality in his letter to the Church in Rome:

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, “Abba, Father!” The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. (Romans 8:14-17)

Part of the work of evangelisation and mission, then, is to help our people experience and embrace who they are as sons and daughters of God. The depths of their identity can be unlocked only in an encounter with Jesus Christ. Fostering such an encounter and supporting their journey toward Christ will, in turn, propel them out on mission.

## The Right Tool for the Job

When Ron Huntley told me about Alpha, I was curious. But when I found out that it was not a Catholic initiative, I was

hesitant and skeptical. When I played the VHS tape (remember those days?) and heard all the English accents, I immediately had to deal with another natural bias: the fact that I had been born and raised in Scotland. Through God's grace I was able to move past these biases within my own heart as I heard the gospel articulated in a simple and compelling way. The proof, however, was in the pudding.

From the very first time I ran Alpha in a parish, even though we made lots of mistakes, we saw God work through it in a powerful way. We saw transformed lives and soon began to feel that our parish was being transformed. Here, clearly, was an effective response to the challenging times in which we live. The current situation within the Church, the state of secular culture around us, and the urgent call to mission that we have received from Christ demand a response. The Second Vatican Council and our last four popes have reiterated that call to mission. We have found Alpha to be one of the most powerful and effective tools for responding to it, both in reaching those who are far from the Church and in helping Catholics discover their identity in Christ. Moreover, Alpha can be a tremendous catalyst for changing the culture of a parish and helping transform the fundamental model of ministry.

But a word of caution: if Alpha is just one parish program among many that the pastor is encouraging people to attend, it will not bear as much fruit as it could. Alpha's potential to change culture is unlocked when the parish uses it as the foundation for a larger strategy. That strategy should focus on adult evangelisation and connect with other activities that foster discipleship and mission.

I often find myself saying this when I speak to priests and pastoral leaders: evangelisation is the pump that drives everything, and Alpha is a powerful evangelizing process. You can't ever let go of that pump if you truly want to foster renewal and transformation. If you evangelize, it will change your parish's weekend experience—not only how people participate in the Mass but also how parishioners handle everything from hospitality to managing the parking lot. If you evangelize, you will build up your Alpha team and raise up leaders. If you evangelize, people will become hungry for community and service. It has been my experience that people who come through the Alpha process clamor for community!

The time has come for us to stop using pastoral models that try to feed people who don't even know they're hungry. Instead we need to use evangelizing methods that allow God to stir up the hunger for him that already exists within every human soul. In the following chapters, we'll share with you some of the ways we have used Alpha to make disciples, raise up leaders, and foster renewal in the parishes where we work.