



THE THREE KEYS TO UNLOCKING YOUR PARISH

Bring Your Parish From Maintenance To Mission

STUDY GUIDE



WELCOME!

This study guide will help you and other leaders in your parish prayerfully reflect on how you can begin or continue to help your parish come alive.

How do I use this study guide?

We suggest the parish priest and key leaders gather for three sessions. Each session will focus on one of the three keys of parish renewal.

Focusing on these keys has unlocked the missionary potential in parishes all over the world – and your parish is next!

What will the sessions look like?

Each session will involve three parts:

- 1 **Welcome and an outline of each Key, including a short video (15 min).**
- 2 **Personal reflecting and small group discussion (35 min).**
- 3 **A time of personal and group prayer (10 min).**

Divine Renovation regularly host events for priests and parish leaders. You can keep the conversation going by joining us at divinerenovation.org.

Ready? Let's start!

SESSION 1: THE PRIMACY OF EVANGELIZATION

In your small group(s), take turns reading aloud the following paragraphs:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”

– Matthew 28:19-20

The Church exists to evangelize. Your parish exists to evangelize. It’s right there in the Great Commission. But is your parish doing things in the right order? That is, the order the Great Commission places them in! Read it again. Jesus commands us to: first, go and make disciples; second, baptize; and third, teach.

Most Catholic parishes get this all mixed up. We are so much more inclined to teach to people who don’t believe, or sacramentalize those who have no real faith.

What would your parish look like if we put these things in the right order? Imagine if the people in your pews, if the people in your parish, really knew deep in their hearts that Jesus was Lord. Now imagine they love Him. They love Him with every ounce of their being.

Your community would be starved! Starved for the grace found in the sacraments. They would be starved to learn more about Jesus. That’s the way it should be. That’s the kind of community Jesus imagined us creating. It starts with us making disciples: Inviting people to encounter Jesus, rather than simply teaching about Jesus.

To do this you must put evangelization first at your parish. Through evangelization you will reach the unchurched and the de-churched. But to evangelize well, you have to prioritize it. That may mean putting other things on hold or stopping them altogether. Possibly many things. The Great Commission comes with a cost, but it’s a cost worth paying since we become instruments through which Jesus will literally save souls.

“Conversion means accepting by personal decision the saving sovereignty of Christ and becoming his disciple.” (RM 46)

The goal of evangelization is conversion. Pope Saint John Paul II affirms this in *Redemptoris Missio*: “Conversion means accepting by personal decision the saving sovereignty of Christ and becoming his disciple.”

“All that matters is Jesus is proclaimed, that is what gives me joy.”

– Phil 1:18:

Each parish must take up the task of “adopting clear and comprehensible means of communication that announce the Lord Jesus according to the ever new witness of the kerygma”. (From *The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelizing Mission of the Church*).



Watch the video on *The Primacy of Evangelization* at:
divinerenovation.org/keys

SESSION 1: CONTINUED DISCUSSION

Questions for reflection and discussion:

Take 5 minutes in silence, reflecting on each of the questions below. Write down your thoughts. Then take time to discuss each question as a group.

- 1** What is bearing most fruit in your parish right now in terms of evangelization? What's the biggest evangelization opportunity that you see?

- 2** *"It is sad when a community of believers loses its desire and is content with 'maintenance' rather than allowing itself to be startled by Jesus and by the explosive and unsettling joy of the Gospel." (Pope Francis, 6 January 2022, Homily for Solemnity of the Epiphany)* What activities in your parish could be described as "maintenance"? How much of the resources of your parish do they take up? How might we address the balance to prioritize mission?

- 3** Re-read the quote from Pope Saint John Paul II on the previous page. In what ways is your parish inviting people to make this personal response to Jesus?

- 4** What's one step your parish could take to embrace this Key of The Primacy of Evangelization?

SESSION 1: PRAYER

An Invitation to Prayer

You can pray however you like. We suggest not simply closing in a brief prayer, but including a time for silence, brief sharing, and/or prayers of intercession specifically around this key. Below is a guide that you could use or adapt.

Begin with the sign of the cross.

Pray together, as a group:

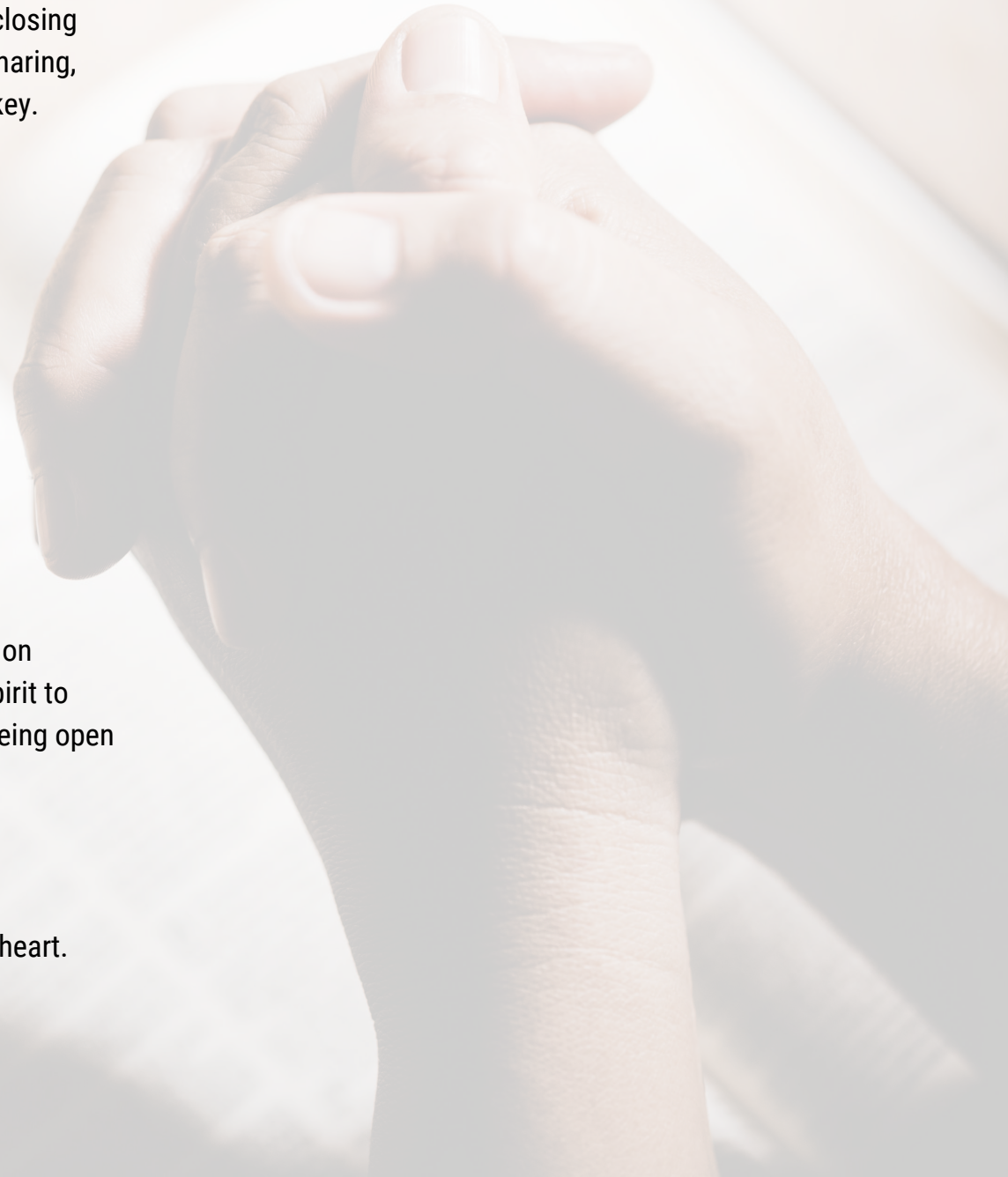
Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you will renew the face of the earth.

Now the group can take a moment in silence, reflecting on everything that's been discussed today. Ask the Holy Spirit to highlight something that's been discussed, while also being open to something new that God might want to say.

Have 2-3 minutes of silent prayer and reflection.

Each can briefly share what the Lord is placing on their heart.

End the time of prayer with an Our Father.



SESSION 2: THE BEST OF LEADERSHIP

In your small group(s), take turns reading aloud the following paragraphs:

"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

– Ephesians 4:11-13

We can't do parish renewal alone. No one person has all the gifts and strengths needed to single-handedly lead, let alone transform, a parish. There is no such thing as a balanced person, but you can have a balanced team.

As a priest leads renewal in the parish, he can partner with holy men and women, lay and ordained, to accomplish God's Kingdom here on earth.

The secular world has discovered that leadership is a science. It is a multi-billion-dollar industry, with books and tests and coaches and training programs all designed to help leaders like you do your best work. If it's important for a company that sells widgets or sneakers to have the best of leadership, how much more important is it for priests and parish leaders who shepherd people to God and deal with questions of the eternal?

"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service."

God made you a leader. Now you must embrace your leadership, with the power of the Holy Spirit (which we'll look at in the next).



Watch the video on *The Best of Leadership* at:
divinerenovation.org/keys

SESSION 2: CONTINUED DISCUSSION

Questions for reflection and discussion:

Take 5 minutes in silence, reflecting on each of the questions below. Write down your thoughts, then take time to discuss each question as a group.

- 1** Think about the best team you've ever been on. What were the positive characteristics of that team?

- 2** Think about the worst experience of a team you've had. What made that experience so negative?

- 3** Re-read the verse on the previous page from Ephesians 4, thinking about your own gifts and strengths. Which words resonate most with your gifts? Which do you find most daunting or difficult?

- 4** How might your strengths be used in your parish renewal effort?

SESSION 2: PRAYER

An Invitation to Prayer

You can pray however you like. We suggest not simply closing in a brief prayer, but including a time for silence, brief sharing, and/or prayers of intercession specifically around this key. Below is a guide that you could use or adapt.

Begin with the sign of the cross.

Pray together, as a group:

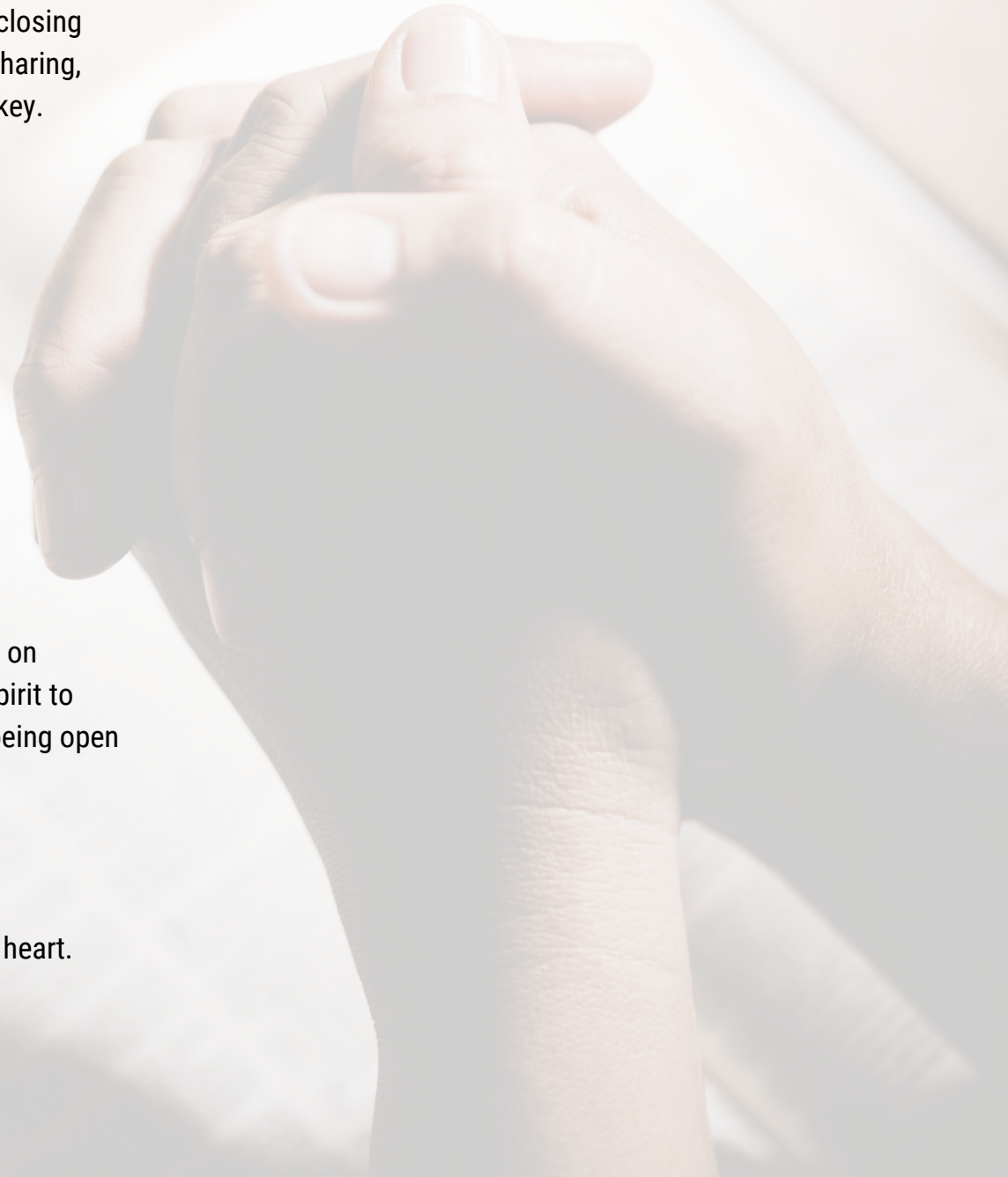
Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you will renew the face of the earth.

Now the group can take a moment in silence, reflecting on everything that's been discussed today. Ask the Holy Spirit to highlight something that's been discussed, while also being open to something new that God might want to say.

Have 2-3 minutes of silent prayer and reflection.

Each can briefly share what the Lord is placing on their heart.

End the time of prayer with an Our Father.



SESSION 3: THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In your small group(s), take turns reading aloud the following paragraphs:

"Be filled with the Holy Spirit addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father."

– Ephesians 5:18-20

"Be filled with the Holy Spirit."

This is God's work. You are not enough... but He is. It is not by your own power that your parish will transform. There are two truths happening at once: Your parish will not transform with you. Your parish cannot transform without Him.

Like the first disciples, you cannot set off on your own as the hero of the story. First, you pray. Then, you wait until you are clothed with power from on high. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that makes your work fruitful. Call on the Holy Spirit and expect Him to show up, because the Father has promised Him to us. Surrender your work, surrender your leadership, surrender your parish, and surrender your whole self to Him.

Prayer is the engine of our mission. All the work you do to transform your parish must be drenched in prayer.



Watch the video on *The Power of the Holy Spirit* at:
divinerenovation.org/keys



SESSION 3: CONTINUED DISCUSSION

Questions for reflection and discussion:

Take 5 minutes in silence, reflecting on each of the questions below. Write down your thoughts, then take time to discuss each question as a group.

1 What would it look like if the Holy Spirit came in power and transformed people in your parish? Describe your vision of what change would be seen. What would it look like if all your parishioners were radically reliant on the Holy Spirit?

2 Think of a time when you were filled with the Holy Spirit – what was it like? What difference did it make in your life? If you can't relate to that experience, what's your perception of that type of experience?

3 Re-read the verse on the previous page from Ephesians 5. Various Greek scholars and Bible commentators point out that the Greek present imperative tense is used in this verse. It has the connotation of a continuous replenishment, an ongoing state of being filled. How might our parish continually be filled with the Holy Spirit?

SESSION 3: PRAYER

An Invitation to Prayer

For this final session, we suggest taking extra time at the start of prayer to welcome the Holy Spirit.

Begin with the sign of the cross.

Pray together, as a group:

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you will renew the face of the earth.

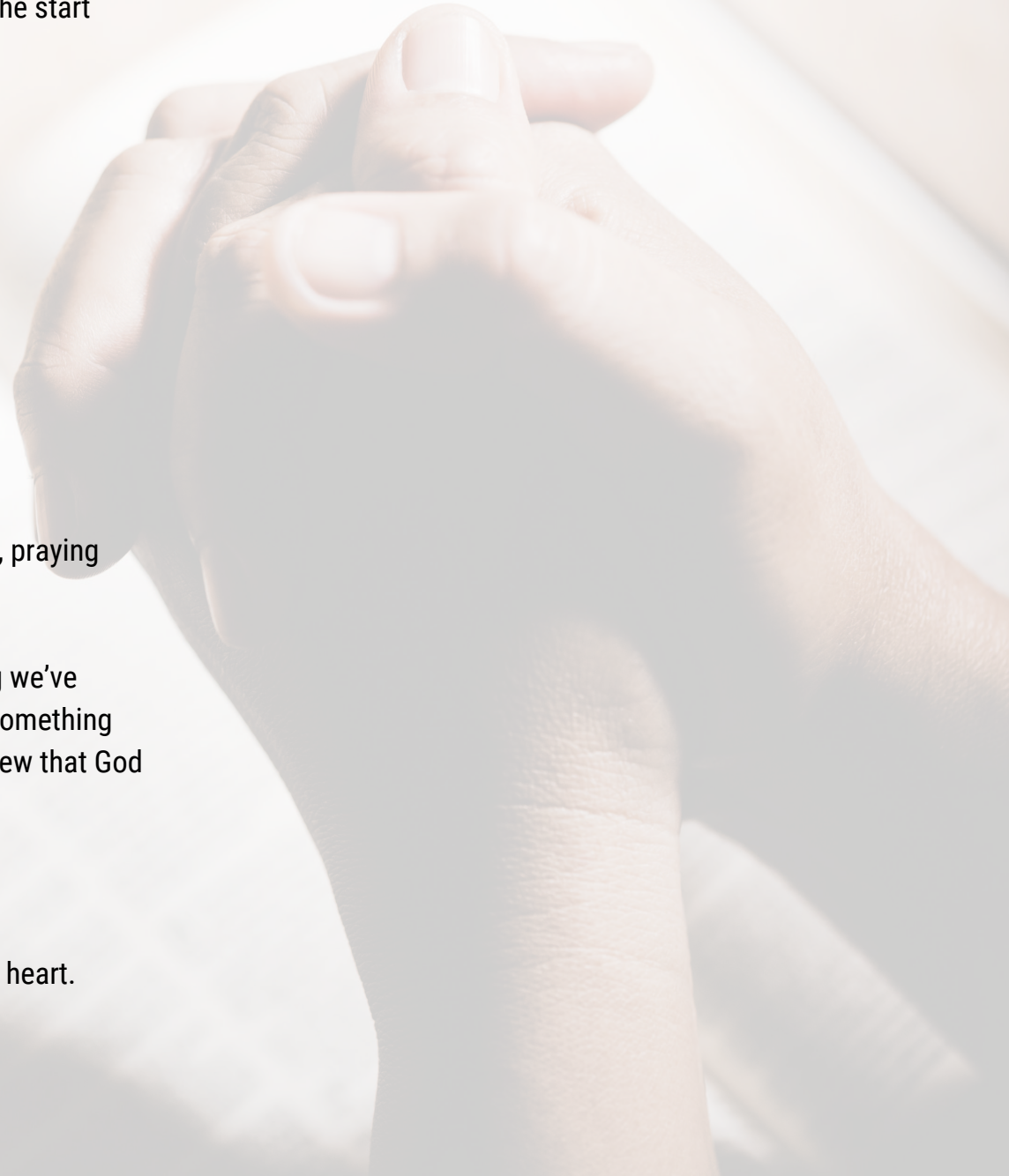
You might want to welcome the Holy Spirit a few times, praying "Come Holy Spirit."

Let's take a moment in silence, reflecting on everything we've discussed today. Let's ask the Holy Spirit to highlight something we've discussed, while also being open to something new that God wants to say to us.

Have 2-3 minutes of silent prayer and reflection.

Each can briefly share what the Lord is placing on their heart.

End the time of prayer with an Our Father.



THANK YOU FOR USING OUR RESOURCE!

WHO WE ARE

Divine Renovation isn't "yet another program" – we're a ministry. You're the expert on your parish, and we can help you unlock it in a way that meets the needs of your community and population. We have parishes around the world embracing the 3 Keys and seeing renewal.

Is yours ready to be one of them?

DID WE MENTION WE'RE FREE?

Our work is fully funded by our amazing donors. God has called Divine Renovation to help leaders just like you, no matter where your parish is on the journey from maintenance to mission. We would love the opportunity to come alongside you in your journey. All you need to do is ask.



divinerenovation.org/connect