

MAKING DISCIPLES

RESOURCE SUMMARIES

By Revd Dr Gareth Leyshon,

Chair of the Evangelisation Group of the Archdiocese of Cardiff

Tel. +44 (0) 29 2073 1061 – Email leyshon.gareth@rcadc.org

SUMMARY 3

Book: [The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic](#)

Author: **Matthew Kelly**

Associated Website: dynamiccatholic.com

This series of summaries is intended to help busy pastoral professionals and church volunteers know whether a resource is going to be helpful to them. If a resource looks useful – PLEASE BUY IT! I do not wish to take away the livelihood of any author by summarising their key points online!

Overview

This book came out of Kelly's finding that typically in the USA, 7% of Catholics do 80% of the giving and volunteering.

Kelly asks: What do those 7% of Catholics - the "Dynamic Catholics" have in common? He found there are four broad hallmarks: regular prayer, personal commitment to developing one's knowledge of the faith, a generous spirit and a natural desire to share. He devotes one chapter to each of these themes, and a final chapter to asking what the church could do corporately in the light of this.

The 7% can alienate the others by cliquishness, jargon, or forgetting their own lukewarm origins. But those who are in, or aspire to be in, the 7% can choose to pursue holiness. **You** can make an incremental change. What is the one step that would make a real difference right now?

Kelly's other core idea is that every action in life can contribute to one's growth, or regression, in holiness – in other words, “becoming the best person I can be”.

Most of Kelly's ideas are relevant for Catholics who are already in the “commitment zone” – that is, they have recognised that following Jesus requires the kind of decision that is going to have a significant impact on one's lifestyle, and are open to making such a change. Offering the 93% in the congregation exhortations to prayer, study, generosity and evangelisation will be of limited usefulness without helping them over the threshold of commitment. But intentional development of these four areas will be very valuable to those actively seeking to find out what commitment to Christ means, or who have explicitly decided to become disciples.

Prayer (Chapter 2)

Dynamic Catholics pray. They do this as a personal commitment, and usually follow a structured routine, both of when to pray, and what format to follow.

Most Dynamic Catholics find that their day goes better when it starts with prayer. Families that stay faithful tend to have a "giant of prayer" in their midst - Kelly tells the story of Eddy Baranski, which is particularly inspiring.

Trial and error may be needed to find one's prayer style, but Kelly proposes a 7-point plan for personal prayer with self awareness which most people could use as a starting point.

Study (Chapter 3)

Dynamic Catholics know they are in need of ongoing learning and unlike other Catholics, when they find church teaching challenging, they approach this humbly to try to understand the Magisterium's point of view. They have a desire to learn from Jesus!

The Dynamic Catholic Institute has [successfully trialled](#) a model of encouraging congregations to give every Christmas worshipper a Catholic book (a different book each year); bulk orders are also requested by many of the receivers who wish to have copies to pass on.

Generosity (Chapter 4)

Do we act as if we trust God to provide? Is the problem that our level of expectation is that of greed (which God won't provide for) not simple need?

Money symbolises what we have, and has a particular hold on us; the way we treat it is spiritually powerful. Preachers need to speak about money in a holistic way - not just "planned giving" but the whole concept of making, sharing and using money. (See also [Rebuilt](#) which has a [chapter](#) on this.)

Kelly gives an examples of a parish that tithed from its whole income, and his own personal growth from being a 1% giver to tithing and beyond.

Dynamic Catholics recognise the blessings they have received and consistently have an attitude of gratitude. In their turn, they are generous to others.

We can reflect on how generously we share our time, talent and treasure. It may be helpful to objectively measure our generosity and set ourself a target for growth. Generosity in virtue (e.g. patience) is the hardest kind to measure and grow.

Evangelisation (Chapter 5)

Dynamic Catholics tend to rate themselves poorly when asked whether they are "evangelisers" and have trouble identifying Catholic figures who they would grace with this label. But when Dynamic Catholics were asked about particular activities, Kelly found that they did indeed do simple things, such as:

- Passing on inspiring books and CDs
- Inviting people to Catholic events
- Bring their Catholic perspective into general conversations about life
- Learning good responses which they could make to attacks on the church
- Learning responses to reasons why people doubt God
- Acting generously

Kelly speaks about our call to holiness but describes holiness consistently as me "being the best version of myself". This means that I am not called to become a second-rate self, nor a clone of anyone else - God is guiding me towards the best possible version of ME.

Corporately, as Church, we are truly called to make this world a better place: it is an integral part of our mission, as well as connecting others with God.

Although Western democratic societies do not seek to impose any system of values other than "live and let live", we find that in practice human beings still favour people who are virtuous and self-controlled. Nevertheless, our culture doesn't have a core aspiration for the human person other than that we should "consume". ([Rebuilt](#) examines the impact of consumer mentality at parish level.)

If we are to help others to live the faith, we must win, build, and send them. 89% of Dynamic Catholics report a moment when their faith clicked, or a moment they would explicitly identify as one of "conversion" - how do we bring others to that winning moment? (See [Forming Intentional Disciples](#).) When Catholic children are raised through the usual staged sacraments, we never challenge them to make a personal commitment.

Kelly opines that we can be WON by truth, beauty or goodness. (Other research suggests that different personality types are won by relationship, shared service projects, and good apologetics - heart, hands and head.)

Once won - or at least open to taking the next steps, since Christ never stops winning great control over the life of a growing disciple - we can be BUILT up by steps. Kelly shares his own personal growth through a 10 minute daily visit to church. Daily Gospel. Voluntary Mass once a week. A service project. Spiritual reading. Rosary.

Committed Catholics feel good about their faith. They can be SENT to share it with others. But few Catholics have ever been taught how to evangelise. Discipling others requires intentionality and a thought-through process. The people we guide desire answers to their questions. Our committed friendship, generosity and honest answers mediate the Gospel

Strategic Implications (Chapter 6)

So what does this mean strategically for the Catholic Church in the USA?

The "management strategy" in place seems to be an acceptance of managing decline rather than new initiatives to promote growth.

Millions of Catholics are flocking to evangelical megachurches. We need to learn from them! (As indeed the authors of [Rebuilt](#) did!)

The Catholic Church is not speaking into the needs of people's lives.

Each parish is tackling things on its own. We need to pool our resources to come up with "world class" solutions to sacramental programmes and key seasons.

One possible approach is for a parish to deliberately highlight the "four signs", keep referring to them in homilies etc., maybe have a four-year programme focussing one sign a year.

We need to have a simple, clear and repeatable message.

Perhaps we need a flagship project that the world can agree is positive, lest all attention focus on child abuse and sexual teaching. Kelly suggests the American church pursue "eradicating child poverty in the USA".

EPILOGUE

Kelly finds that in most parishes, more than half of the active 7% were inspired by a common factor. What that is varies from parish to parish, but a possible strategy is to identify what that was in YOUR parish and have a sustain campaign of encouragement for all parishioners to take part in the same thing.