

# CULTURAL SHIFTS FOR PARISHES

The Cultural Snapshot Inventory was designed for parishes to clarify their current culture relative to the five paradigms below, and to begin discussion toward an intentional change in culture. The inventory tool and descriptions of each paradigm shift can serve as a starting point in creating a pathway for cultural change.

## Living a Paradigm of Institutional Faith

- Primary way of relating to God is through institutional things.
- Parishioners focus on the external practices of the Catholic faith.
- Spiritual practice tends toward the transactional.
- Parishioners act like consumers.
- Pastoral leaders do not spend much time together in prayer.

## Living a Paradigm of Intentional Faith

- Personal relationship with Christ is at the center of community life.
- Staff focuses on facilitating and sustaining that relationship with Christ.
- Leadership teams and pastoral leaders seek the will of the Lord together in prayer.
- Parishioners display active cooperation with the power and person of the Holy Spirit.

## Living a Paradigm of Engagement

- Leadership is focused almost entirely on activity and involvement.
- Discernment processes are skipped in searches for volunteers.
- Availability is valued over specific giftedness or experience.
- Motion is equated with mission and vitality.
- Tendency is to convert people to the community rather than to Christ.

## Living a Paradigm of Encounter

- Community sees and evaluates its life through the lens of encounter with Jesus.
- Community intentionally modifies and creates events so that they foster encounters with Jesus.
- Discernment processes connect giftedness with areas of service.

## Living a Paradigm of Maintenance

- Parish vision, action, and activity are focused inward.
- The majority of parish time, energy, and resources are geared toward “keeping the trains running on time.”
- There is a strong emphasis on throughput (attendance, numbers, and resources).
- Leadership tends to see parishioners primarily as wounded and in need.

## Living a Paradigm of Mission

- Parish vision, action, and activity are focused outward.
- Parish time, energy, and resources are geared toward the transformation of the local community and the world through the power of the Gospel.
- Attention is on fruitfulness, transformation, and change rather than attendance and numbers.
- Parishioners are seen as empowered sons and daughters sent into the world for its renewal and transformation.

### Living a Paradigm of Programs

- Parish sees the “right” program as the primary solution to problems or the primary driver of engagement.
- Parish functions under the belief that good programs will make disciples.
- Parish tends to hire in favor of administrative and operational strengths and gifts, often valuing programmatic execution over spiritual fruitfulness.
- Parish doesn’t link programs along a clear pathway of discipleship or mission.
- Programs are executed with little personal follow-up or recognition of the importance of the individual spiritual journey and response to grace.

### Living a Paradigm of People

- Parish understands that discipleship emerges out of a sustained experience of accompaniment (that is, people make disciples).
- Parish raises up parishioners who are equipped and desire to accompany others.
- Parish links programs, events, and processes strategically, to create clear pathways to discipleship.
- Parish combines the right programs with the right people, so that this accompaniment bears the greatest fruits.

### Living a Paradigm of Avoidance

- Difficult conversations – about fruit, performance, or behavior – are avoided because “we don’t want to hurt other people’s feelings.”
- Disagreements are buried or misaligned with strategic direction or proposals during meetings, in order to keep the peace.
- Eight-hundred-pound gorillas lurk over conversations and decisions.
- Parishioners, leaders, and staff experience frustration, poor morale, and dysfunction because issues are not addressed.
- There is no forward movement on a strategic direction or execution of a solid vision because of perceived difficulties of change or consequences for a person or group in the parish or diocese.

### Living a Paradigm of Accountability

- Leaders at every level see their roles in both pastoral care of individuals and fruitful effectiveness of mission.
- Individuals embrace radical candor as a primary mode of communication.
- Conflict is understood as a catalyst for positive change, growth, and transformation.
- Passive aggressiveness, sacred cows and resistance to direction are not tolerated.
- Leaders do not shy away from strategic decisions in fear that the decisions might upset others.

### Discussion Questions:

#### **From Institutional Faith to Intentional Faith**

Have you personally committed yourself to Christ?

Does everything we do at the parish lead people into relationship with Christ?

#### **Engagement to Encounter**

Do we just get people involved in activities, or do we help them encounter Jesus?

Do we just fill slots, or connect people to ministry based on their spiritual gifts?

#### **Maintenance to Mission**

Are we spending most of our time keeping the organization running (balls in the air), or are we on an intentional mission to transform people (making disciples)?

Do we focus mostly on the people inside our walls or are we focused outward in evangelization?

#### **Programs to People**

Do we offer disconnected random programs, or do we have a plan to help people grow in Christ and discipleship?

#### **Avoidance to Accountability**

Do we avoid the hard issues and conversations with no strategic thinking, or do we address problems head on, speak honestly, and plan strategically for the future?