

REFLECTIONS ON THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Authors Fr. Michael White and Tom Corcoran (pastoral assistant/administer) commenced a ministry amongst a dying parish in the heart of Baltimore only to encounter increasing frustration and failure in striving to meet the spiritual needs of a Catholic consumer culture. "Consumer culture erodes the sustainability of church communities because it allows the parishioners to assume the posture of shallow commitment and the attitude of ceaseless demands." In their first chapter titled "CHURCH IS NOT EASY" they recounted their first five-year effort to turn the parish around, which failed. Here's their top ten reasons they seemed to get it wrong.

1. We assumed if we did more and did it better, people grow in faith maturity and commitment. They didn't!
2. We thought if we did more and did its better people would give more money. Wrong!
3. If we did more and did it better, we were sure people would automatically get involved and help out. That didn't work either!
4. We looked to our stalwart seniors as natural allies in moving forward. That sure didn't work!
5. We had no idea how detached the second and third generations of Catholic consumers had become.
6. We didn't realize how marginalized the whole enterprise of faith and religion had become in the lives of our parishioners.
7. In spite of our best efforts we really were NOT reaching our student population.
8. We didn't understand how uninterested the non-Church going population had grown, how distrustful of any outreach efforts we made and how cynical they could be about all organized religion.
9. We were not turned toward God and relying on His leadership.
10. We thought reversing the decline of the Church would be easy. We were wrong.

The authors offer in conclusion a number of reasons they got so much wrong in preparation for a second chapter on analyzing the problem.

While not all of these issues will be applicable at St. Rose of Lima and OLOR, there is reason for good critical thinking within a Diocese where most sacramental statistical indications reveal we too are in decline. An example is our single seminarian; a serious revelation of a vocational dearth. In planning for mission and ministry, we better pause and ponder. Depressed? I'm not. Fr. Dean