

The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic

by Matthew Kelly

Ch. 1 Incredible Possibilities

- Transforming people one at a time is at the heart of God's plan for the world.
- 6.4% of registered parishioners contribute 80% of the volunteer hours in a parish, 6.8% of registered parishioners donate 80% of financial contributions, and there is an 84% overlap between the two groups.
- If just 7% of Catholics are accomplishing more than 80% of what we are doing today, imagine what 14% could do. Not to mention what 21% or 35% could accomplish. Our potential is incredible. We literally have the power to change the world. The Catholic Church is a sleeping giant.
- If a parish engaged just another 1% of its parishioners over the next year, transforming them into Dynamic Catholics, it would be a game changer. It would result in 15% more volunteer hours, which would allow you to serve other parishioners and your community that much more effectively. It would also bring about a 15% increase in revenue, which would allow your parish to invest in powerful and important ministries that would drive further engagement. All this as a result of a shift from 7% to 8%- just 1% more highly engaged Catholics.
- If we could transform another 7% into highly engaged parishioners over the next 7 years- 1% each year- it would not mean every person in the parish would be passionately interested and engaged; it would just be 14%. But imagine the incredible outreach, service, and spiritual development your parish could deliver.
- This is the 1% that could change the world. If we can focus on engaging 1% more of our parishioners in a truly intentional way each year, we can literally change the world. If you have a thousand adults in your parish, that means transforming just ten more into highly engaged members.
- Continuous improvement is a long-term approach that seeks to achieve small, incremental changes. Each change can be so small and simple, that, at the time, it seems insignificant, but as you add these changes together over time they become enormous.
- Highly engaged Catholics have four things in common, the four signs of a Dynamic Catholic:
 1. Prayer: Dynamic Catholics have a daily commitment to prayer.
 2. Study: Dynamic Catholics are continuous learners.
 3. Generosity- Dynamic Catholics are generous.
 4. Evangelization- Dynamic Catholics invite others to grow spiritually by sharing the love of God with them.
- This book is not about overwhelming you. Wherever you are in your spiritual journey, this book is about taking the next small step toward becoming a Dynamic Catholic. If at any point you feel overwhelmed, you have misunderstood the message. At the end of each chapter I hope you can say to yourself, "I can do that!"
- You don't stumble into great things, or even worthy things. They have to be sought out with intentionality.

Ch. 2 The First Sign: Prayer

- When we are spiritually healthy, nothing bothers us.
- The most dominant quality among Dynamic Catholics is a daily routine of prayer.
- A daily routine refers to a specific time and place set aside for prayer. Dynamic Catholics make this time a priority each day.
- More than just a time and a place to pray, Dynamic Catholics have a routine within their routine. When they sit down to pray each day, they don't just see what happens; they have a routine within

their routine. They tend to begin their time of prayer in very specific ways: by reading the Bible, praying the morning prayers of the Church, reading from a favorite spiritual book, etc.

- Dynamic Catholics universally begin their day with some type of prayer, even if the main time they set aside for prayer is later in the day.
- God speaks to us in silence. Spending time in the classroom of silence is indispensable in our quest for spiritual growth.
- The Prayer Process is a seven-step tool designed to help us develop a routine of prayer, and the routine within the routine.
- Prayerlessness is one of the great torments of modern times.
- Every family needs a prayerful giant.
- At some point Dynamic Catholics have become convinced that a life with prayer is better than a life without prayer.
- Most Catholics have never been taught how to develop a daily routine of prayer.
- Dynamic Catholics see a connection between the joy and fulfillment in their lives and their efforts to walk with God and grow spiritually.
- The Prayer Process
 1. Gratitude: Begin by thanking God in a personal dialogue for whatever you are most grateful for today.
 2. Awareness: Revisit the times in the past twenty-four hours when you were and were not the best-version-of-yourself. Talk to God about these situations and what you have learned from them.
 3. Significant Moments: Identify something you experienced today and explore what God might be trying to say to you through that event (or person).
 4. Peace: Ask God to forgive you for any wrong you have committed (against yourself, another person, or him) and to fill you with a deep and abiding peace.
 5. Freedom: Speak with God about how he is inviting you to change your life, so that you can experience the freedom to be the best-version-of-yourself.
 6. Others: Lift up to God anyone you feel called to pray for today, asking God to bless and guide them.
 7. Finish by praying the Our Father.
- The first sign of a Dynamic Catholic is Prayer.

Ch. 3 The Second Sign: Study

- Jesus challenged the worldview of every person he encountered.
- God has an incredible dream for each and every one of us. He wants you to become the best-version-of-yourself.
- The genius of Catholicism is that everything makes sense in relation to this one idea. Whether you want to use the phrase “growing in holiness” or “becoming a better-version-of-yourself” is entirely up to you. Life is about saying yes to the things that help you to grow in holiness (become the best-version-of-yourself) and no to the things that don’t.
- A world without truth would be a world without joy and meaning.
- Relativism is the theory that there are no absolute truths, but rather that all truth is relative. That is, something that is true for you may not necessarily be true for me. This philosophy is full of contradictions because the idea that nothing is absolute is itself an absolute statement.
- The real problem with relativism is that if there is no place for truth, there is no place for wisdom. Wisdom, by definition, is the ability to discern or judge what is true, good, right, or lasting. Relativism makes wisdom irrelevant.
- If humanity is to make any progress in the coming century, moral relativism must come to an end.
- People deserve answers to their questions, especially those surrounding the faith.
- Catholics have an almost universal inferiority complex around how little they know about their faith.

- Highly engaged Catholics are continuous learners. On average they spend fourteen minutes each day learning more about the faith. They see themselves as students of Jesus and his Church, and they proactively make an effort to allow his teachings to guide and form them.
- Dynamic Catholics have a routine for their continuous learning. Just like with prayer, they don't learn more about their faith simply when they get around to it. It has a place in their day. They have a plan. They have a routine.
- If you read five pages of a great Catholic book every day, you will be amazed how your knowledge and enthusiasm for the faith will begin to grow. Five pages a day is 1825 pages in a year, 18250 pages in a decade, and 45625 pages over twenty-five years. That's 228 books with an average length of two hundred pages.
- If you asked most people to read 45625 pages of Catholic material, they would be completely overwhelmed. If you asked most people to commit to reading 228 Catholic books they would feel intimidated. But five pages a day, we can do that. Continuous improvement- it makes incredible things possible.
- How would your life be different one year from now, five years from now, ten years from now if you read five pages of a great Catholic book each day?
- How would your parish be different one year from now if every parishioner read five pages of a great Catholic book each day? It's a game changer- simple, practical, powerful, transformative.
- The second sign of a Dynamic Catholic is Study.

Ch. 4 The Third Sign: Generosity

- The happiest people I know are also the most generous people I know.
- God is generous, and generosity is at the heart of the Christian life.
- Generosity begins with gratitude.
- Dynamic Catholics live in a state of gratitude. They have an overwhelming sense that their lives have been blessed.
- The world draws us into a conversation about all that we don't have, but God invites us into a conversation about all that we do have. We are at our best when we are grateful.
- When we speak about generosity at church we usually do so in the context of stewardship, and we talk about three categories: time, talent, and treasure. Stewardship is the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care. As Christians, we are taught that our time, talent, and treasure are all on loan to us- and that one day we will have to account for the way we managed them.
- Don't let what you can't do interfere with what you can do.
- Generosity is a trademark of Dynamic Catholics. They are generous with their time and talent and with their money and possessions, but their generosity goes way beyond these commonly defined areas. They have not just a spirit of generosity, but a spirituality of generosity that reaches deep into every corner of their lives. Generosity is central to their value system, and they often think in terms of how they can do the most good with what they have at their disposal.
- The 7% are generous lovers, parents, and grandparents. Their neighbors and colleagues at work often acknowledge them among the most generous people they know. They are generous with their praise and their appreciation. They are especially generous with their encouragement. They are constantly encouraging people all around them. The scope of their generosity reaches into every aspect of life.
- Establish giving goals. Give one percent more of your income this year than you did last year to your church and favorite charities. Increase this giving percentage by one percent of your income each year until you reach a tithe of 10% (or until it simply is not possible or prudent for you to give any more). Goals bring out the best in us. We have goals for everything else; isn't it time we had some generosity goals?
- The third sign of a Dynamic Catholic is Generosity.

Ch. 5 The Fourth Sign: Evangelization

- The world is the way it is today because of human behavior. The world is constantly changing, for better or for worse. What makes it better or worse tomorrow? The way we live our lives today.
- Imagine all of the misery that could be avoided if we all just lived by the life-giving wisdom found in the Ten Commandments. Think for a moment on all the suffering that is caused because humanity has been unwilling to adopt a pattern of behavior and a social structure that celebrate the wisdom of the Ten.
- Every great civilization has concerned itself with this question: How is the best way to live? The rigor with which a person or culture approaches this question is very telling. It is of disturbing importance to note that the present culture has virtually no interest in pursuing this question. Today we are more interested in how we want to live than we are in discovering the best way to live.
- In our quest to discover the best way to live, we discover three universal principles:
 1. You are here to become the best version of yourself.
 2. Virtue is the ultimate organizing principle, whether it is in a person's life, one's marriage, or the life of a nation.
 3. It is better to live with self-control than without it.
- Jesus's answer to how the best way to live was, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind . . . and love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 26:37-39)
- God wants to **win** you with his love and wisdom; God wants to **build** you up spiritually so that you have the knowledge and habits to live in his love and walk in his ways; and God wants to send you out into the world to share his love with others. Win. Build. Send.
- There are three ways people are won: through truth, beauty, and goodness.
- Among the highly engaged Catholics who were interviewed as part of this research, 89% described a conversion experience- an event in their life that won them to a more engaged relationship with God.
- God wants to build in you a dynamic spirituality. He wants our parishes to help people of all ages build a spiritual life so that through our regular spiritual routines he can build and refine us in his image. It is not enough for us to hope that this happens. We need process and intentionality. These are two of the key ingredients of effective evangelization. It isn't just going to happen. We need a plan.
- Friendship is the most natural and effective way to share the faith with others.
- People don't fail because they want to fail. They fail because they don't know how to succeed.
- Throughout the win and build stages, one of the things that happens to people is that they start to feel good about being Catholic. We don't talk anywhere near enough about this. In the context of a theological discussion or Church governance this might seem a little soft, but it is absolutely essential to the life and growth of the Church. Highly engaged Catholics feel good about being Catholic. They are inspired Catholics.
- The research surrounding the fourth sign of a Dynamic Catholic unveiled some interesting findings. Even among highly engaged Catholics, Evangelization is the weakest link in the chain. When asked to rate themselves between 1 and 10 for each of the four signs, the 7% rated themselves at 6.8 or higher for Prayer, Study, and Generosity, but at just 4.9 for Evangelization.
- When Dynamic Catholics were asked what they did to try to share the faith with others, their top six answers were:
 1. Pass books and CDs around
 2. Invite people to Catholic events
 3. Bring a godly perspective to conversations

4. Learn the Catholic teachings on certain issues and be able to articulate them when the Church is attacked over those issues in social settings.
 5. Help people discover answers to the questions that cause them to doubt the Catholic faith.
 6. Demonstrate the love of God through faithful and generous friendship.
- Astoundingly, when asked if anyone had ever taught them how to evangelize, 99.4% of respondents said no.
 - Evangelization is to the Church what breathing is to a person.
 - Try to do one thing each week to share the faith with someone who crosses your path.
 - The fourth sign of a Dynamic Catholic is Evangelization.

Ch. 6 A New Level of Thinking

- “If you are what you should be you will set the world ablaze.” –Catherine of Siena
- The way forward to a vibrant and relevant future requires a rigorous honesty about our strengths and weaknesses, and a willingness to change and grow. The starting point of a rigorous self-examination is an assessment of where we are today.
- The tide is going out on Catholicism in America, and business as usual is not going to turn the tide.
- What would it take to make your parish the church in town that everyone is curious about? What would it take to make your church the one in your area that everyone has come to at least once to check it out? Those planning to open a megachurch spend weeks and months thinking about questions like these. They study the area and the demographics, and they target particular groups- and Catholics are always one of the groups they target. It might be the right question, and it might not. But I think it demonstrates that they are thinking on a completely different level than we are. We need a new level of thinking.
- Unless a great Catholic vision emerges for our time, the slow demise will continue. Proverbs 29:18 states clearly, “Where there is no vision, the people will perish.”
- Throughout this book we have explored a number of key concepts” continuous improvement; incremental spirituality; continuous learning; best practices; game changers; personal transformation, “I can do that!”; intentionality; engagement and disengagement; meeting people where they are; Win, Build, Send; you get what you measure; the 80/20 principle, and the fours signs model, to name just a few. These key concepts represent a new level of thinking. They are largely missing from our current approach, and that needs to change. Start thinking about how well you apply these key concepts in your life. Every time you get involved in your parish in any way, try to apply one of the concepts.
- The Catholic Church in America needs a game change. This implicitly means that most Catholics also need a game changer for their individual spirituality.
- Imagine what would happen if we intentionally organized everything we do in Church around the four signs. Imagine if from cradle to grave we focused on helping Catholics develop the four signs.
- Are you ready to let Jesus take you to the next level in your spiritual life? When enough people answer yes to this question, the Church will again become fresh and vibrant, relevant and invigorated. Real hope for the future comes from giving everything to the present. If we give ourselves generously to the present God will transform us, and in turn he will use us not only to transform our parishes and the Church, but to change the world.

The four signs are not only a model to reengage disengaged Catholics but also a model of continuous renewal for even the most highly engaged Catholics. The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic are: PRAYER. STUDY. What I find most fascinating is the way Dynamic Catholics approach each of the four signs. What I find most admirable is the almost unerring consistency with which they apply themselves to the four signs, especially the first and second. While I have dedicated a chapter to each of the signs, I think it would be helpful to take a quick journey through the entire model as an overview. The first sign - prayer. Dynamic Catholics have a daily commitment to prayer. God is not a distant force to these people, but rather a personal friend and adviser. Four things make the difference between highly engaged Catholics and disengaged Catholics: the four signs of a Dynamic Catholic. Whether you are ready to let God take your spiritual life to the next level or want to help reinvigorate your parish, The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic promises to take you on a journey that will help you to live out the genius of Catholicism in your everyday life. The central idea in this book should change the way we live our faith and the way we teach our faith. The 4 Signs of a Dynamic Catholic from Matthews's extensive research are: 1 Prayer 2 Study 3 Generosity 4 Evangelization. Or in a longer format: 1 Dynamic Catholics have a daily commitment to prayer. 2 Dynamic Catholics are continuous learners.