



THE FOUR SIGNS OF A DYNAMIC CATHOLIC

MATTHEW KELLY

 **DynamicCatholic.com**
Be Bold. Be Catholic.®

THE FOUR SIGNS OF A DYNAMIC CATHOLIC

FIRST EDITION

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The Dynamic Catholic Institute
2200 Arbor Tech Drive
Hebron, KY 41048
Phone 1-859-980-7900
Email info@DynamicCatholic.com

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Prologue

ONCE UPON A TIME there was a very successful business owner. His company had faithfully served millions of customers for many, many years. But lately, business had not been so good, and his competitors were just waiting for him to fail. For weeks and months, the man pondered the crisis, but the problems were so complex, and solutions seemed nowhere to be found.

Everyone was wondering what would happen to this great company, so finally the businessman announced that he was hosting a dinner for all of his employees to unveil a plan that would save the company and return it to its former glory. He wanted to convey to them how important each person was to the future success of the organization.

The morning of the dinner, he was sitting in his study at home working on his speech, when his wife came in and asked if he would mind watching their son for a few hours while she ran some errands. He was about to say, "I really need to focus on finishing my speech," but something caught his tongue and he found himself agreeing, reluctantly.

His wife had only been gone about ten minutes when there was a knock on the study door, and there appeared his seven-year-old son. "Dad, I'm bored!" he exclaimed. The father spent the next couple of hours trying to amuse his son while also trying to finish his speech. Finally he realized that if he could not find some way to entertain his child he was never going to get his speech finished in time.

Picking up a magazine, he thumbed through the pages until he came to a large, brightly colored map of the world. He ripped the picture into dozens of pieces, and led his son into the living room. Then, throwing the pieces all over the floor, he announced, "Son, if you can put the map of the world back together I will give you twenty dollars."

The boy immediately began gathering the pieces. He was keen to earn the extra money, as he needed just twenty more dollars to buy a toy he had been saving for since his last birthday. The father returned to his study, thinking he had just bought himself a couple of hours to finish working on his speech, because he knew his seven-year-old son had no idea what the map of the world looked like.

But five minutes later, just as he was settling into his speech, there was another knock on the study door. There stood the young boy holding the completed map of the world.

The father said in amazement, "How did you finish it so quickly?" The boy smiled and said, "You know, Dad, I had no idea what the map of the world looked like, but as I was picking up the pieces, I noticed that on the back there was a picture of a man." The father smiled, and the boy continued. "So, I put a sheet of paper down, and I put the picture of the man together,

because I knew what the man looked like. I placed another sheet of paper on top, then holding them tightly I turned them both over.” He smiled again and exclaimed, “I figured, if I got the man right, the world would be right.”

The man handed his son twenty dollars. “And you’ve given me my speech for tonight. If you get the man right, you get the world right.”

Chapter One



INCREDIBLE POSSIBILITIES

TRANSFORMING PEOPLE one at a time is at the heart of God's plan for the world. It is also essential to developing dynamic marriages, loving families, vibrant parish communities, thriving economies, and extraordinary nations. If you get the man right (or the woman, of course), you get the world right. Every time you become a-better-version-of-yourself, the consequences of your transformation echo through your marriage, family, parish, nation, and beyond to people and places in the future. It is God who does the transforming, but only to the extent that we cooperate. God's grace is constant, never lacking. So our cooperation with God's desire to transform us is essential; it is the variable. Are you willing to let God transform you?

Helping individuals with this transformation from who they are to who they are capable of being is the great work. Is the Catholic Church the best in the world at assisting men and women in becoming all God created them to be? Most people today would say no. We could argue about it, but we shouldn't have to. Should

we be unquestionably the best in the world at this? I think so.

For twenty years I have been speaking and writing about the genius of Catholicism. I have done this with the hope that it might help others to catch a glimpse of what Catholicism truly is and how it can transform us, and the world, if we embrace it. I suppose on a very basic level I want others to experience the joy that the Catholic faith has brought to my life.

In my travels I have noticed that some Catholics are more engaged than others, but I never really took the time to explore why. This is a regret I will live with for the rest of my life, because if I had taken the time to really understand the difference between highly engaged Catholics and disengaged Catholics, the work my staff and I have undertaken over these past two decades could have been infinitely more effective. That has all changed now. The ideas within this book have transformed the way I speak, write, and live. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. This is how it all began. . . .

Several years ago I was having dinner with a group of priests in Minnesota before an event. I was the only non-cleric at the table, and some of the priests started talking about different things that were happening in their parishes. One of the priests was very young, and he was lamenting about how few people were actively involved at his parish. My mind was starting to drift toward what I was going to speak about at the event when I heard something that jolted me back into the moment. Sitting at the head of the table like a king was a warm, humorous, and completely down-to-earth priest who must have weighed 350 pounds and been al-

most eighty years old. Waving a finger down the table, he said to the young priest, “Listen, I have been the pastor of seven parishes over the past forty years, and I can tell you that it doesn’t matter where you go, you will discover the same fifty people do everything in a parish.”

The comment got my attention. I immediately wondered if it was true. In the following weeks I started making informal phone calls to some pastors I knew. I asked them questions like:

- Who are your most engaged parishioners?
- Why are they so engaged?
- What percentage of registered parishioners are actively involved in the parish?
- What percentage of parishioners give regularly to the parish?

The answers they gave me seemed to anecdotally support the priest’s comment, but I wanted data.

There is a concept known as the Pareto Principle. It states, in essence, that roughly 80 percent of effects come from 20 percent of causes. In business this same concept is often referred to as the 80/20 principle. The idea is that 80 percent of your business comes from 20 percent of your customers. For example, while Coca-Cola has literally billions of customers, its largest are companies such as McDonald’s, Marriott, and Delta Air Lines, who serve millions of people Coca-Cola products every day. The concept can also be applied to products. Eighty percent of most companies’ profits tend to come from 20 percent of their products. For example, consider a Barnes & Noble bookstore. There may

be a hundred thousand different titles on the shelves in any given store, but 80 percent of their profits will come from 20 percent of those titles—the books that sell over and over again.

I had always been curious about whether the 80/20 principle would apply to the Church, and the priest's comment had piqued my curiosity. Did the rule hold true in Catholic parishes? The only way to find out for sure would be to obtain some hard data. Over the course of many months I studied a series of parishes from coast to coast, examining two areas in particular: volunteerism and financial contribution. Both are significant signs of engagement. What I found left me speechless.

Did the 80/20 principle hold true in Catholic parishes? No. Not even close. This is what I discovered:

- 6.4 percent of registered parishioners contribute 80 percent of the volunteer hours in a parish
- 6.8 percent of registered parishioners donate 80 percent of financial contributions
- There is an 84 percent overlap between the two groups

Note: Unless otherwise stated, all statistics come from research conducted by The Dynamic Catholic Institute.

I was amazed. Roughly 7 percent of Catholic parishioners are doing almost everything in their faith community and paying almost entirely for the maintenance and mission of the parish. This led me to the seminal question: What is the difference between engaged Catholics and disengaged Catholics? It came as a staggering surprise to discover that there was no significant research available on this question.

The future of the Catholic Church depends upon us finding out what makes this small group of Catholics so engaged. If we cannot identify what drives their engagement, we cannot replicate it.

For the rest of the book I will refer to these highly engaged parishioners as either the 7% or Dynamic Catholics. There is much we can learn from them. It is, however, critical to understand before we go any further that generalizations can provide incredible insight, but they can also be very dangerous if taken too far or out of context. The 7% are by no means perfect, but there is something about them that is worth exploring. Most of them are not spiritual champions, and they would be the first to admit that. They are also often quick to point out that it doesn't take much to be at the top of the heap among Catholics today. The bar is not exactly set very high. But the 7% are the most highly engaged among us. I will refer to their less engaged counterparts as the 93%.

There are almost endless ways to segment both the 7% and the 93%. Not everyone in the 7% is the same. Even among this group, engagement, attitudes, and spiritual habits differ significantly. Needless to say, among the other 93% there are enormous differences. Some in this group come to Mass every Sunday while others are almost completely disengaged. Keep in mind that this group includes everyone from 7.01 percent to 100 percent (more than seventy-one million of the seventy-seven million Catholics in America).

At first I found these results very discouraging, but it turns out this might be the best news the Catholic Church has received

in decades. Why is it good news that only 7 percent of American Catholics are highly engaged? Well, think about the tremendous contribution that the Catholic Church makes every day in communities large and small across America and around the world. Every single day we serve Catholics and non-Catholics around the world by feeding more people, housing more people, clothing more people, caring for more sick people, visiting more prisoners, and educating more students than any other institution on the planet. Now remember that all this is less than 7 percent of our capability. That is good news.

If just 7 percent of Catholics are accomplishing more than 80 percent of what we are doing today, imagine what 14 percent could do. Not to mention what 21 percent or 35 percent could accomplish. Our potential is incredible. The Catholic Church is a sleeping giant. We literally have the power to change the world.

If we engaged just another 1 percent of your parishioners over the next year, transforming them into Dynamic Catholics, it would be a game changer. It would result in 15 percent 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 percent increase in revenue, which would allow your parish to invest in powerful and important ministries that would further drive engagement. All this as a result of a shift from 7 percent to 8 percent—just 1 percent more highly engaged Catholics.

Then I started to think, imagine what we could do if we could transform another 7 percent into highly engaged parishioners over

the next seven years. One percent each year. It would not mean every person in the parish would be passionately interested and engaged—just 14 percent. And imagine the incredible outreach, service, and spiritual development your parish could deliver.

This is the 1 percent that could change the world. If we can focus on engaging 1 percent more of our parishioners in a really 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 this year.

For months after this discovery, I was constantly thinking about how we could go about increasing the number of Dynamic Catholics in a parish. Then one day the obvious finally occurred to me: We needed to do some more research. We needed to find out what made the 7% different. What do the 7% do, think, and believe that is different from what the 93% do, think, and believe?

The book in your hands holds the answer to that question. There are many things that make the 7% different from the rest of Catholics. But there are four things that the 7% have in common. I have named these four defining attributes and behaviors the four signs of a Dynamic Catholic. These four signs are the life-giving spiritual habits that animate their lives. I am convinced that if we work intentionally to help people develop a vibrant spirituality through these four signs, we will see incredible things happen in their lives and in the life of the Church.

For too long we have been hypnotized by complexity. There is so much to Catholicism. It is so rich and deep. As a result, when

we try to share the faith with others they are often quickly overwhelmed. Those who yearn for spiritual renewal in their lives usually don't know where to start. The four signs cut through the complexity and provide a practical and accessible model for engaging Catholics. They provide a simple and understandable starting point. They also provide an enduring model for continually taking Catholics who are already engaged to the next level. Wherever you are in your spiritual journey, whether you are engaged or disengaged, I hope you will find in the four signs a model for renewal.

The Four Signs – an Overview

The things we do repeatedly determine our character and destiny. This is equally true for an athlete, a business leader, a parent, or a Catholic. Life-giving spiritual habits are what set the 7% apart from the rest. When I studied the lives of Dynamic Catholics I discovered many things they did that the other 93 percent of Catholics tended not to do. In fact, I identified 264 behaviors or qualities that were unique to the 7%. I then examined the cause-and-effect relationship between all 264 behaviors, and the overlap that existed among them, to arrive at the four signs of a Dynamic Catholic.

For example, some of the highly engaged Catholics among the 7% pray the rosary every day with great discipline, others attend daily Mass, and some have a big, comfortable chair where they begin each day in prayer and reflection. Each of these finds its

place under the first sign: Prayer.

There are some among the 7% who will tell you that going to daily Mass is the very core of their spiritual life. The danger is to think that is the answer for everyone. Daily Mass is fabulous and has transformed many lives, but less than 1 percent of American Catholics go to daily Mass. More important, for most people it is simply not possible. We need solutions that are accessible to all, that inspire people to say, “I can do that!”

There are many ways to live out each of the four signs; I witnessed this among the people interviewed. The four signs are sufficiently focused to produce the intended result and yet sufficiently broad to allow each person to approach them in his or her own way.

Once again, let me point out that the 7% are by no means perfect. In fact, the research discovered many things about them that repel the 93%. The 7% do things that discourage others from becoming more engaged. They can be territorial, excluding others from joining groups or activities. They often speak in a “church language” that the 93% don’t understand. They suffer from what I would call spiritual amnesia, meaning that they have forgotten or block out how resistant to God they were at different times in their spiritual journey, or how far from God they have been at times in their lives. This spiritual amnesia robs them of the ability to relate to others who are less engaged. It also often makes them intolerant of less engaged Catholics, thinking that those people should just “get with the program.”

Whatever shortcomings the 7% have can be overcome if they

embrace the four signs more completely. 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
- GENEROSITY
- EVANGELIZATION

These may not seem like any great discovery at first glance. 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. They are trying to listen to the voice of God in their lives, and believe doing God’s will is the only path that leads to lasting happiness in this changing world (and beyond).

Am I saying the other 93 percent of Catholics don’t pray? No. Their prayer tends to be spontaneous but inconsistent. The 7%

have a daily commitment to prayer, a routine. Prayer is a priority for them. They also tend to have a structured way of praying. Many of them pray at the same time every day. For some it means going to Mass in the morning and for others it means sitting down in a big, comfortable chair in a corner of their home or taking a walk, but they tend to abide by a structure.

Some start by simply talking to God about their day. Others begin their prayer by reading from the Bible. Still others have a favorite devotional book that they begin with. When they arrive at the time and place in their day for prayer, they have a plan; it is not left to chance or mood. They have a habit of prayer, which they cling to with great discipline.

This daily habit of prayer is the result of real spiritual work. Different things work for different people. Beginners in prayer struggle because they try one thing and it doesn't work, and they get discouraged. Too many people don't have someone they can turn to and discuss the intricacies of developing a practical and sustainable prayer life. In most cases the 7% have developed their routine of prayer painstakingly through trial and error over the course of decades.

What is important to recognize is that Dynamic Catholics have a time to pray, a place to pray, and a structure to their prayer.

The 93% certainly pray, but it tends to be when the mood strikes them or when some crisis emerges. The 7% pray in this way also, but their spontaneous prayer is deeply rooted in their daily discipline and commitment to a prayer routine.

THE SECOND SIGN - STUDY

Dynamic Catholics are continuous learners.

On average Dynamic Catholics spend fourteen minutes each day learning more about the faith. They see themselves as students of Jesus and his Church, and proactively make an effort to allow his teachings to form them.

Jesus doesn't just want followers. He wants disciples. To be a Christian disciple begins by sitting at the feet of Christ to learn. We all sit at the feet of someone to learn. Whose feet do you sit at? For some it is a talk show host and for others it is a politician; for others still it is a musician, an artist, a pastor, or a business leader. But none of these are a substitute for Jesus. The 7% are keenly interested in learning from Jesus and about Jesus. More than just a historic figure, he is seen as a friend, coach, mentor, and Savior. They believe that Jesus teaches them through the Scriptures, Christian tradition, and the Church.

Highly engaged Catholics read Catholic books, listen to Catholic CDs, watch DVDs about the faith, and tune in to Catholic radio and television programs. They go on retreats more regularly than most Catholics and attend spiritual events and conferences. They are hungry to learn more about the faith. They are continuous learners.

It is also important to note that even though they tend to know much more about the faith than the 93%, they have a position of humility, which is a critical element of the second sign. If they disagree with a Church teaching, they approach the issue in this way: "Why does the Church teach what she teaches?"

It is unlikely that I know better than two thousand years of the best Catholic theologians and philosophers. What am I missing?” From this perspective they explore what the Church teaches to further understand God’s way, eager to discover the truth.

When the 93% disagree with a Church teaching, they tend to approach it altogether differently. Their attitude tends to be: “The Church is wrong. The Church needs to get with the times. The Church doesn’t understand me. I know better than two thousand years of the best Catholic minds.” Most striking is that these conclusions are often reached with little more than a surface understanding of what the Church teaches and why.

The second sign is all about continuous learning, the daily discipline of exploring the way of Jesus and the genius of Catholicism.

THE THIRD SIGN - GENEROSITY

Dynamic Catholics are generous.

Dynamic Catholics are filled with a spirit of service and are generous stewards of their time, talent, and treasure.

The 7% are universally described as being generous, not just with money and time, but with their love, appreciation, praise, virtue, and encouragement. They see generosity as the heart of Christianity and the proof that the teachings of Christ have taken root in their lives.

The most fascinating thing that came out of the interviews in relation to the third sign is that Dynamic Catholics believe that it starts with financial generosity. They describe love of money and attachment to the things of this world as a primary impediment



to spiritual growth, and see this as something that everyone struggles with regardless of how much or how little we have.

Financially, Dynamic Catholics give several times more to their parish and other nonprofit organizations (as a percentage of their annual income) than their counterparts in the 93 percent.

But it is how comprehensively generosity is woven into their lives and the spontaneity with which they dispense it that was so inspiring to me. They are generous lovers, they are generous parents, they are generous with their colleagues at work, and they are generous with strangers who cross their path. They are generous with their virtue—generous with patience, kindness, and compassion. Generosity is not a religious requirement for the 7%; it's a way of life, a way of bringing the love of God to the world.

THE FOURTH SIGN - EVANGELIZATION

Dynamic Catholics invite others to grow spiritually by sharing the love of God with them.

Having seen how a vibrant spiritual life has transformed them and every aspect of their lives, highly engaged Catholics want others to experience the joy that flows from having a dynamic relationship with God.

Are you an evangelist? This is one of the questions we asked the 7% in the interviews. Less than 1% replied affirmatively. When they replied no, they were asked whom they considered to be an evangelist. The most common answers were evangelical preachers of the past or present. Not even John Paul II got a mention, even though he preached the Gospel to more people than

any other person in history. So while evangelization is at the core of our Catholic mission, it is important to note that most Catholics do not resonate with the idea and remain uncomfortable with this concept and practice.

At the same time, Dynamic Catholics regularly do and say things to share a Catholic perspective with the people who cross their paths.

During the interviews, the 7% were asked about the latest Catholic book they had read. They would start talking about the book and we would ask them where that book was now. As often as not they looked confused by the question. We then asked if the book was on their bedside table, on a bookshelf, or somewhere else in the house. They responded, “Oh, no, I gave that book to my friend Suzie at work.” They were then asked about the best Catholic CD they had ever heard. “Where is it now?” “I sent that to my son in California,” or “I gave that to my friend.” And perhaps most telling, the 7% are significantly more likely to invite someone to attend a Catholic event than the 93%.

Though they don’t consider themselves to be actively evangelizing, they are constantly trying to help people develop vibrant spiritual lives by discovering the genius and beauty of Catholicism.

In some cases I was able to speak to family and friends of the 7%. In these interviews it became evident that in conversations Dynamic Catholics were much more likely to encourage a perspective that included God and the Church.

It is, however, important to point out that of the four signs, even among the 7%, this is the most underdeveloped. This is where even our best and brightest are the weakest.

Nonetheless, highly engaged Catholics instinctively know that this is an essential part of the Christian life. Sharing the faith (Evangelization) is not something they do; it is a part of who they are. Evangelization is a natural overflow of the first and second signs. In the same way they are generous with their time and money, they generously share their spirituality whenever the opportunity emerges. They yearn to help people find answers to the questions they have about the faith. They want others to experience the joy that comes from having a vibrant relationship with God. But even the most highly engaged Catholics need to become much more intentional and proactive when it comes to the fourth sign.

How Are You Doing?

The four signs can manifest themselves in different ways from one person to the next. But imagine for a moment if everyone in your parish did these four things:

1. Spent ten minutes each day in prayerful conversation with God
2. Read five pages of a great Catholic book each day
3. Gave 1 percent more of their income to support the mission of their parish than they did last year
4. Did one thing each week to share the genius of Catholicism with someone else.

How would your parish be different after one year? How would it be different ten years from now?

Prayer, Study, Generosity, and Evangelization. It is a simple plan, but complex problems demand simple solutions. It is the

simplicity that allows widespread adoption and participation.

So, before we move on, how are you doing? Are you a Dynamic Catholic? Give yourself a score between 1 and 10 for each of the four signs over the past year. (Circle your score.) If you wish, go back and reread the descriptions of each of the four signs, one at a time, and then score yourself.

Prayer	1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • 10
Study	1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • 10
Generosity	1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • 10
Evangelization	1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • 10

How did you do? Over the course of more than three thousand interviews, the 7% rated themselves at 6.5 on average across all four signs, or 26 out of 40. They rated themselves highest in the first sign (Prayer) with 7.3, lowest in the fourth sign (Evangelization) with 4.9. In the second sign (Study) they rated themselves 6.8 and in the third sign (Generosity) 7. So it is clear that even the 7% realize that they have much room for improvement.

As human beings we have a great psychological need to know we are making progress, and so finding ways to measure progress is critical even in an area like spirituality, which is so difficult to measure.

It is also critical to be mindful that the four signs are inter-related. For example, if you read five pages of a good Catholic book each day (Study), your prayer life would no doubt improve (Prayer), you would be more likely to talk with others about the ideas you are reading about (Evangelization), and the more you know God and his Church the more likely you are to be generous with God and neighbor (Generosity).

In the following chapters we will explore each of the four signs in detail, but I hope this brief overview has been helpful in allowing you to catch a glimpse of the whole model.

Incremental Spirituality

By now you have probably surmised that you are either part of the 7% or you are not. To be honest, I was surprised by how much more disciplined many of the people I interviewed were in each of the four areas than I am at times. The research taught me that I am not as good a Catholic as I thought I was and gave me some very specific areas to grow in.

Whether you consider yourself part of the 7% or not, that was yesterday. Just because you were once in the 7% doesn't mean you will always be. What matters is what you do next. If you are part of the 93% I am so excited for you. Incredible possibilities lay ahead for you—a life more fulfilling than you ever could have imagined. At the Dynamic Catholic Institute we are dedicated to helping you in this journey, and we hope we can give you the tools you need to join the 7%. If you are already part of the 7% we want you to help us attract and engage the 93%.

Wherever you are in the journey, you may be thinking that you just don't have time for anything else. The principle of continuous improvement is about to become your new best friend. All this principle asks you to do is to take one small step, and it can be applied to almost any area of your life. Making small daily investments usually leads to large returns. Here are some

examples of what you can apply the principle of continuous improvement to: losing weight, paying off debt, writing a book, improving your marriage, running long distances, increasing the profitability of a business, reading the Bible, and becoming a Dynamic Catholic.

Programs that ask people to make radical and sweeping changes fail the great majority of the time. Examples include diets that require you to cut out all your favorite foods at once, savings plans that insist that you don't buy anything unless it is absolutely necessary, and giving up an addiction cold turkey. Some people succeed in these programs, but the great majority fail. Most of us need a gentler path.

Sometimes Catholicism can seem like one of those very rigid, all-or-nothing plans. We need to find small, simple, nonthreatening ways for people to explore the faith and grow in their spirituality. It is true that God wants to radically transform our lives, and sometimes he calls us to take a great leap. But most of the time he invites us to make small, continuous improvements.

Any suggestion of a single large change to a person's life (or an organization) tends to be met with massive levels of fear, anxiety, and resistance. So the only viable solution is small but consistent steps in a positive direction.

I have read about psychologists who used this method masterfully. In one case a patient who was tremendously overweight was asked to stand on the treadmill for one minute each morning. That's right. Just stand there! Another with the same problem but who was also addicted to television was simply asked to stand up and march in front of the television for one minute each

hour. In both cases the patients did not become any healthier over the course of the next week, but their doctor noticed the attitude of each patient had changed.

The suggested change was so small and nonthreatening that they started to think, “I can do that,” whereas in the past everything they had been told they needed to do seemed so far out of reach that they shut down and did nothing.

Change in its smallest, least threatening form is usually the most successful.

Now, let’s consider the four signs of a Dynamic Catholic. You may be saying to yourself that you have a full, busy, hectic life and that there is no way you can fit the four signs into it. That may be true. But could you spend one minute each day for the next week in focused conversation with God? Perhaps you could set an alarm and try to do it at the same time each day.

One small step! Nobody is so busy that they cannot set aside one minute for a conversation with God each day. It is just one small, seemingly insignificant, nonthreatening step. But if you commit yourself to it and practice it with discipline, you will be amazed how that one minute impacts your day.

After doing that for a week, perhaps the next week you could add reading one page from a Catholic book each day. That’s another small step!

The following week you may commit to practicing one intentional act of generosity each day.

The week after that perhaps you decide to pass a Catholic book you have been reading on to someone else.

Then maybe you go to two minutes of prayer, then two pages

of a Catholic book, and so on. Tiny steps, but they will change your life in the most beautiful ways. You will have more joy. You will be more focused. You will have a greater sense of what matters most. Your relationships will improve. Your work will take on new meaning. You will develop the courage and fortitude to endure the inevitable suffering that is a part of each life. And over time you will become heroically patient.

Small changes often seem trivial. They don't scare people or make them overly anxious, because they seem manageable. The reason they seem manageable is because they are. If an enormous transformation can be broken down into small changes, it will meet little resistance.

God wants to transform you and the way you live your life.

In this model of incremental growth we will find the wisdom not only for personal transformation but also to transform our parishes. We all know how busy everyone is. So we need an approach that seems manageable to busy people. We need a plan that leaves people thinking, "Yes, I can do that!"

With our spiritual lives reenergized and our parishes reinvigorated, then, and only then, the Catholic Church will once again become a beacon of hope and inspiration for the world.

One small step!

Would you take one small step if it helped you to make sense of who you are and what you are here for?

Would you take it if . . .

. . . it led to a deep and abiding inner peace?

. . . you believed it would lead to incredible relationships?

. . . you thought it would lead you to a dynamic spiritual life?

... it helped you to discover the genius of Catholicism?

... you knew it would reinvigorate your parish?

This book is about that next small step. Whatever it is for you, I will be praying that you have the courage to take it. My hope is that I can inspire you to take it, and give you the tools to help others to take a small step each day. At the end of each chapter I hope you can say to yourself, “I can do that!”

Every day God invites me to take one small step toward him. I often resist. Other days I am so enthusiastic and excited I want to run toward him with reckless abandon and make up for so many lost days. But God taps me on the shoulder and says, “Slow down, enjoy the journey—all I ask is for one small step each day.”

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.

Certainly I am going to share many ideas and practices with you, but your job is to find the one small step you should be focusing on at the moment and apply it to your life. You may need to come back and read the book several times to really absorb what I am trying to share with you. But each time you read this brief book, focus on the one small step that best suits you at that time in your life. And be sure to take note of the progress you have made since the last time you read this book, or the first time you read this book.

Most people who have accomplished anything worthwhile in their lives will tell you that when they look back it all happened little by little. There is no such thing as overnight success. Life

tends to unfold little by little, in incremental steps.

It's time we applied the wisdom of continuous improvement to our spiritual lives. Incremental spirituality allows us to recognize where we are and where we are called to be, and at the same time celebrate our progress.

Intentionality

Henry David Thoreau observed, "In the long run, men only hit what they aim at." My experience with people, teams, and organizations has confirmed this observation over and over. But perhaps most compelling is that when I wander aimlessly into a day at work I tend to get very little accomplished. I may be very busy and get many things done, yet real accomplishment lies not in doing many things but in doing the most important things.

Most of us don't live our lives very intentionally.

What's the first thing most people do when they get to work each morning? Check their e-mail. In fact, most people do it long before they even get to the office. Some check their e-mail when they wake up, even before they get out of bed. But let me ask you, when was the last time you checked your e-mail and thought to yourself, "I'm so glad I checked my e-mail first thing this morning because it really helped me to strategically focus my day"? The opposite is probably true. Checking your e-mail first thing each morning probably prevents you from strategically focusing your day, because you then tend to spend your day responding to e-mail dramas and dilemmas. Meanwhile the real work, the

most important work, goes neglected and undone. The most important things are always the easiest to put off, and they tend to require intentionality to accomplish.

About three years ago, I shared with a good friend of mine that I was struggling to get to the most important aspects of my work because I was constantly distracted by meetings, phone calls, e-mails, and other interruptions. The reason I turned to him with this problem was because he works as an executive coach and I figured he had lots of clients with exactly the same dilemma. He suggested that I stop scheduling meetings and conference calls before eleven a.m. each day. This would allow me to use the first and best hours of my day for the most important projects. Then he encouraged me to take twenty minutes each Sunday afternoon to schedule one project to work on each morning for the following week. This simple process has been a game changer for me. Why? At the macro level, it drives intentionality. And at the micro level, fifty percent of most tasks is simply scheduling them. Once you schedule something you are fifty percent of the way to accomplishing it. It is the things we don't schedule that tend never to get done.

Some weeks I don't do it. I don't take those twenty minutes to plan out my week, either because I am lazy, can't be bothered, get distracted, or simply forget. I am always less efficient and effective during those weeks. Without intentionality, one week blends into the next, and little of what matters most gets accomplished.

We tend to stumble through life a day at a time, and look back wondering where a summer, a year, or a decade went. The problem is, you don't stumble into great things, or even worthy

things. They have to be sought out with intentionality.

A vibrant spiritual life is one of those great things. People don't just stumble into it. We either actively seek it because we sense that something is missing in our lives, or we are led to it by another person, who recognizes how incredibly our lives would change if we took our spiritual development seriously.

If they felt a call to go to the next level in their spirituality, most Catholics would not know where to start. Many of us are just fumbling along, oblivious to whether or not we have grown spiritually over the past year. This needs to change if we are going to help people thrive. This needs to change if we want our parishes to thrive. As the story from the Prologue suggests, if we get the man or woman right we will get the parish right. It is impossible to separate personal transformation from the transformation of a parish. And transformation doesn't just happen. It requires intentionality.

Intentionality helps us to perform at our best in any area of our lives. The four signs drive this type of intentionality in the spiritual realm.

The Catholic Church in America is in desperate need of renewal, but where do we start? The needs and problems can seem so overwhelming at times, even on a parish level. I believe we should focus our efforts on helping people of all ages to develop vibrant spiritual lives. Everything else, any other good thing that we desire for the Church and for the world, will flow from a dynamic relationship with God. It always has. But renewal will come about only if we approach it with rigorous intentionality. We need to raise the level of intentionality in every realm within the Church.

A Significant Discovery

Imagine if we discovered that all highly engaged Catholics had four things in common. Then imagine if it could be demonstrated that when someone started embracing these four things they were relatively quickly transformed from a disengaged Catholic into a highly engaged Catholic. Would you be interested in knowing what those four things were? And if we had this knowledge, if we knew what these four things were, what would we do with that information? Wouldn't it make sense to intentionally encourage these four things and use them to focus the way we teach and lead?

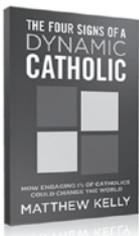
We now know what those four things are. They are the four signs of a Dynamic Catholic: prayer, study, generosity, and evangelization. It is my hope that they will reinvigorate you, and through you, your parish, so that together we can serve your community and the world in ways that inspire many others to give Catholicism another look.

We have a long way to go in order to live up to God's vision for our lives and his vision for the Church. The people of our times desperately need us to live up to that vision. It is a monumental task. How will we get there? How do we transport whole generations from disappointment and discouragement to hope and engagement? Little by little.

When we become convinced of "I can do that!" our lives begin to flood with hope... and hope is a beautiful thing. It is time for Catholics to be filled again with that hope. The hope that comes

from knowing that we have something of immeasurable value to offer to the world. When a group of people becomes full of hope, incredible things begin to happen.

Something wonderful is about to happen!



How many people do you know who could benefit from reading this book?

Visit www.DynamicCatholic.com and request SIX copies for just \$18.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

INCREDIBLE POSSIBILITIES

- Transforming people one at a time is at the heart of God's plan for the world.
- 6.4 percent of registered parishioners contribute 80 percent of the volunteer hours in a parish, 6.8 percent of registered parishioners donate 80 percent of financial contributions, and there is an 84 percent overlap between the two groups.
- If just 7 percent of Catholics are accomplishing more than 80 percent of what we are doing today, imagine what 14 percent could do. Not to mention what 21 percent or 35 percent 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 percent of its parishioners over the next year, transforming them into Dynamic Catholics, it would be a game changer. It would result in 15 percent 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 percent increase in revenue, which would allow your parish to invest in powerful and important ministries that would further drive engagement. All this as a result of a shift from 7 percent to 8 percent—just 1 percent more highly engaged Catholics.
- If we could transform another 7 percent into highly engaged parishioners over the next seven years—1 percent each year—it would not mean every person in the parish would be passionately interested and engaged; it would be just 14 percent. But imagine the incredible outreach, service, and spiritual development your parish could deliver.
- This is the 1 percent that could change the world. If we can focus on engaging 1 percent more of our parishioners in a truly intentional way each year, we can literally change the world. If you

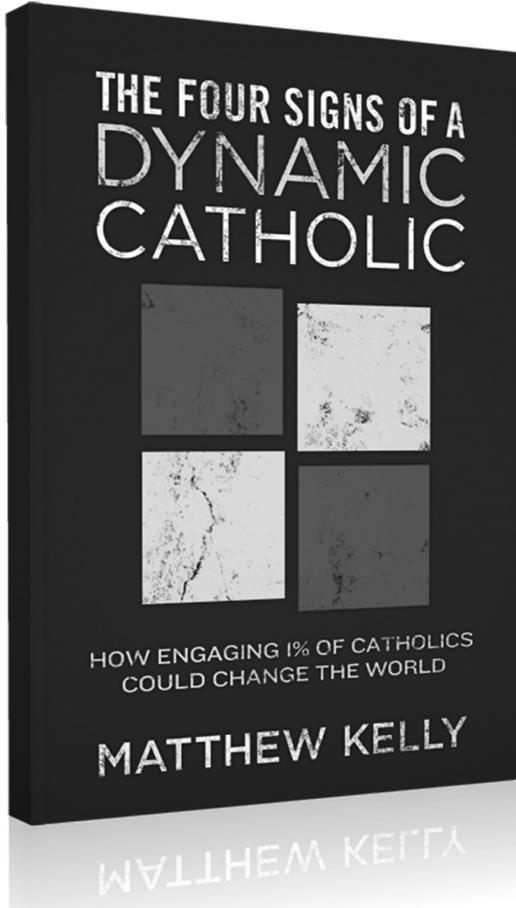
have a thousand adults in your parish, that means transforming just ten more into highly engaged members.

- 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.

KEY CONCEPTS:

Engagement and Disengagement; The 80/20 Principle; The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic; Continuous Improvement; Incremental Spirituality; Intentionality; I Can Do That!; Personal Transformation.

**Request a FREE* copy of
Matthew Kelly's latest book!**



**THE FOUR SIGNS OF
A DYNAMIC CATHOLIC**

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