

## PAC Game Changer Exercise Overview

In February, 2013 bestselling author and highly sought after Catholic speaker, Matthew Kelly, spoke at St. John of the Cross Parish to a church filled to capacity. What follows are some of Kelly's key points revolving around an idea called "Game Changers." Game Changers are exactly what the word says - ideas that will turn things around – change the game.

Taking this concept and applying it to our parish and parish mission, we can ask ourselves, "What are Game Changers that we could identify that would help our parish to live out our Mission? To engage more people in their faith? To attend Mass? To be Christ to others?" Game Changers are simple, implementable, sustainable and collaborative ideas that will have a radical impact. A big impact.

In recent months both the Parish Pastoral Staff and the Parish Administrative Staff have brainstormed and identified potential Game Changers for our parish, what they would look like, who would be responsible, etc. Our Game Changers will be suggestions to the various staff, advisory groups and consultative bodies who may consider them as they write their goals this summer.

After reading the background information on Game Changers below (pages 2 and 3 follow) and reviewing a few of the Game Changers developed by our Staff (page 4), please begin to think of some new Game Changers for our parish that you can share at our next PAC meeting (page 5).

At our meeting, Council members will:

- discuss Game Changers in small group and prioritize,
- share and discuss ideas with the whole group, and
- categorize Game Changers by who might consider making it part of their goals (specific Goal Committee, Ministry Advisory Group, Consultative Body, or Staff member).

A blank sheet for your Game Changers for our parish is attached for your personal brainstorming (page 5). Please spend some time before our PAC Meeting jotting down some thoughts. Feel free to query your family, friends, and fellow parishioners.

**Background information on Game Changers for the Church and for individuals from various books and presentations by Matthew Kelly:**

People engage and disengage in their marriage. People engage and disengage in parenting. People engage and disengage in their personal finances," declared Matthew Kelly. "And people engage and disengage in the Church as well."

His research concluded that there are four qualities of faith each engaged Catholic possesses:

- an intentional and rich prayer life,
- the study of faith and Scripture,
- generosity and
- evangelization.

"You put these four things into any person in your parish, and they join the highly engaged," said Kelly.

He challenged Catholics to be "large, generous and fearless." Kelly said the key to bringing into the fold those who are on the brink of being active and engaged is offering what he calls "Game Changers."

"Most Catholics," the best-selling author said simply, "don't believe the future can be bigger than the past. The tide on Catholicism in the U.S. is going out." One issue resulting from that is our tendency to look for big solutions to big problems. As Kelly says, big solutions are complex solutions, and complex solutions almost never work. The best answer is usually blindingly obvious.

What's needed to stem this way of thinking — and to stem, and eventually turn around, the flood of Catholics leaving the church — are Game-Changers, he said. Turning things around, changing the game — those sound like major undertakings, and they are; but Kelly emphasized that true game-changers are simple. They are not complex answers to difficult problems.

Game-Changing actions have to be:

- simple,
- implementable,
- sustainable and
- collaborative.

So we should be asking ourselves how we can help people lead more virtuous lives.

To counter the challenges facing the Church, there's no need to brainstorm a new national or international program. In fact, the solution is much more basic: It is for each of us to transform ourselves. "Part of our mission as Catholics is to transform the world," Kelly said. "Our challenge to transform the world will always be a challenge to transform the individual."

New Year's resolutions to the contrary, self-transformation is not an easy task to undertake — and part of it is because of our mind set: true change can be draining. "We're more interested in surviving than we are in thriving," Kelly admitted. "We're more interested in maintenance than in mission."

The early Christians captured people's attention because they were so different; their very lifestyles made them stand out from the crowd, Kelly said. The way they loved — forgiving their enemies, a complete turnaround from the old rule of "an eye for an eye" — was a radical departure from the norm.

But today, Catholic Christians tend to blend in with the crowd. As Kelly put it, "We don't live differently, we don't love differently, and we don't work differently." Our countercultural roots have withered.

Kelly noted that 52 percent of Americans attending nondenominational Christian churches are former Catholics. Catholics have to be able to intrigue people, and if we lived our faith fully, we'd be doing just that. But in reality, Catholics are just blending in; we're not living, loving or working differently from other Christians. "What about your life is countercultural?"

After sharing two **Game-Changers his organization**, The Dynamic Catholic Institute, **has undertaken** —

- a book give-away at Christmas and
- new programs for major sacramental moments in the lives of Catholics,

Kelly invites his audiences to implement a Game Changer in their lives, offering three **Game Changers that individuals** might choose from: reading the Gospels for 10 minutes each day for a whole year; receiving the

sacrament of reconciliation once a month for a whole year; and keeping a Mass journal to track suggestions for ways to become a better version of one's self and inspire others.

1. Spend more time with the Bible, particularly in the Gospels. Kelly recommends spending 10 minutes a day for a year reading the Gospels. When you finish them, start over again! The goal is to get to know Jesus, apart from the notions of him in today's modern world. As Kelly says, Jesus was a radical. And if we committed to living out even one Sunday Gospel reading, our lives would be radically changed. "People want boldness. People follow mission, and mission is bold."
2. Go to confession, once a month for a whole year. As Kelly says, we all need spiritual coaches, and the priest we talk to for Reconciliation can be just that. A spiritual coach can help us be better Catholics just as, say, a golf coach can help us with our swing. "We don't see things as they really are," Kelly notes, and confession can help us to do that.
3. At Sunday Mass, "Ask God, 'Show me one way in this Mass I can become a better version of myself.' Kelly recommends keeping a Mass journal, as he does himself.

The ripple effects of these efforts to re-engage in our faith and to become better people — the people God created us to be — will go on to transform our parishes, schools, dioceses, and the Church as a whole, Kelly said. "There's nothing wrong with Catholicism that can't be fixed by everything that's right with Catholicism," he declared. "This I know for sure: the world's in need of changing, and there's no group of people in the world better positioned to effect that change than Catholics."

Which of Kelly's suggestions speaks to you as an individual?

**What Game Changers can our parish consider? What would change the game at SJC? What can we do differently as a parish to transform parishioners into highly engaged parishioners? What would inspire us to live radically? To live our faith fully? Please bring your ideas for Game Changers for our Parish to the next PAC meeting!**

### Game Changer Examples from Staff

Game Changer for SJC	What is necessary for it to happen	Who would own it
With 70% of parishioners married, focus on enriching marriages.	Recognize married life as a vocation, bless wedding anniversaries, encourage renewal of vows, have a newlywed dinner, send cards on big anniversaries, promote couples spirituality, have programs that would strengthen marriages and family life	Priests, staff
Have more parishioners be more active at SJC	Need to personally invite, speak at homily on involvement, direct mail to people not attending church on how they can become more involved and what the benefits are, promote ministries	Pac stewardship committee, welcome committee, welcome coordinator, priests, and whole parish
Have more priests and deacons	Have priests more involved in high school ministry, yc and school programs, promote the work of our deacons	Staff, priests, deacons
Encourage people who only attend Mass on Christmas and Easter to come to church more often	Direct mail ministry info and inspiring articles on Eucharist, bring a friend to Mass weekend, make cards in pews that can be put in collection basket that request more info about sjc	Stewardship committee, staff, and whole parish

**Your Game Changer Brainstorming Sheet**

Game Changer for SJC	What is necessary for it to happen	Who would own it