

Mission Action Planning – Red Alert: Self-Awareness

Through the last four articles, we have been looking at steps involved in developing a parish Mission Action Plan (MAP). We are now dealing with some ‘Red Flag Alerts.’ What are those issues that could derail the formation and implementation of a successful MAP? I mentioned these four problems:

1. Lack of a proper process
2. Lack of self-awareness in those putting the MAP together.
3. Misunderstanding of what it means for a parish to be ‘the Body of Christ.’
4. Misunderstanding of what it means that God has given gifts to each member of the parish ‘for the common good’ as Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians.

I dealt with number 1 last time. This time I want to talk about self-awareness.

We are seeing afresh in the I.D. framework, now prototyped in four parishes, how important self-awareness is for our discipleship. As a tool for self-awareness, we have incorporated a day-long session on the Enneagram into I.D. because it helps us all see how our own ego can influence, for good and ill, the way we react and respond to what is going on around us. Unless we deal seriously with the need for self-awareness, it’s very possible that we could be making decisions that are actually sub-consciously driven by fear or the need for approval, or the need to maintain a sense of control. Indeed, without self-awareness, we may read Scriptures through the messages of our own ego. For example, my personality type is shaped by a deep ego-desire to help others. This might sound noble, but it has taken me a long time to learn that my desire to help was, at times, actually shaped by a fear of being unlovable. Without self-awareness, we are actually unaware of our own motives. The Enneagram was a great assistance to my progress in self-awareness.

So, imagine what a MAP process might be like if a group of people who are largely not self-aware are trying to decide what things God is calling them to do? For some, keeping control of the process will be paramount. For others, doing things in a particular way is a must. Others will work to hold onto the status quo out of a fear of change. Understanding where each other is coming from would be nigh on impossible. Many will keep away from ever being part of a MAP group, due to the perceived stress! Thus the MAP group might miss vital insights that are always present in the whole body of Christ. That leads us nicely to number 3 above and that is where we will pick it up next time.

With every blessing,

Richard