

Initial Building Process

What was the experience for your parish as you began to build a new parish?

Fr. Andrew Barakos

- Began worshipping in a converted house, which allowed the community to grow while they planned for a permanent building.
- Faced challenges with contractor management and stressed the importance of careful oversight, especially when choosing the lowest bid.
- Emphasized the value of educating parishioners on Byzantine architecture to build appreciation for Orthodox tradition.
- **Key Quote:** “Going with the lowest bid, you better have a very good committee that’s working with the contractor... they built the church three times over due to mistakes along the way.”

Fr. Evan Armatas

- Experienced rapid growth, underestimating the capacity needed for their initial building.
- Quickly expanded sanctuary and other facilities to accommodate increasing attendance, highlighting the need for strategic, flexible planning.
- Demonstrated the importance of adaptability to respond to unexpected community growth.
- **Key Quote:** “When we moved into the building, we were like 150... We thought that building for 300 would be fine, but growth was exponential.”

Fr. Samer Youssef

- Parish faced the hardship of rebuilding after their church was destroyed by arson, leading them to worship in a tent for three years.
- This experience underscored the resilience and vision of the community.
- Focused on creating a beautiful and centrally located church as part of their evangelistic mission during the rebuilding process.
- **Key Quote:** “We worshipped in a tent for three years until the new building was completed.”

Fr. Barnabas Powell

- Initially planned an ambitious, large building but scaled back after a feasibility study to align with financial resources.
- Cautioned against overly ambitious projects without adequate planning, advocating for a strong, realistic community-driven approach.
- Found that adjusting to a manageable building size allowed for a more sustainable project that met the parish’s growth needs.
- **Key Quote:** “They scaled back their plan... after doing a serious feasibility study.”

Fr. Raymond Browne

- Encountered zoning and architectural challenges, adapting plans to fulfill Orthodox worship needs.
- Limited the building size to accommodate around 150 people, emphasizing community closeness over growth into a large congregation.
- Planned to start a new mission if the parish grew beyond this limit, reinforcing a preference for smaller, intimate parish sizes.
- **Key Quote:** “We want a building that can hold about 150 people, no more. We're aiming for a sustainable size, not a mega church.”

Key Takeaways for Our Parish

- **Start with a Flexible Space:** A temporary space can support growth while planning a permanent building.
- **Plan for Strategic Growth:** Consider future expansion needs to prevent outgrowing facilities too quickly.
- **Prioritize Community Resilience:** Building a strong community foundation is essential, especially during challenging circumstances.
- **Focus on Feasibility:** Right-size building plans to match financial resources and avoid overly ambitious projects.
- **Maintain an Intimate Parish Size:** Limit growth within a sustainable range, planning for new missions if necessary to preserve community closeness.

What size were you when you started to build a new church? What size were you when the church was actually built?

Fr. Andrew Barakos

- Started building efforts while operating out of a converted house that held about 150 people, making room by removing the kitchen.
- By the time the new church was completed, Sunday attendance averaged 400-450 people, with up to 800 attending on major feast days.
- **Key Quote:** “We took out the kitchen to make room for 150 people in metal folding chairs.”

Fr. Evan Armatas

- Began building with around 150 regular attendees and constructed a sanctuary for 300 people.
- Rapid growth soon required an expansion to accommodate over 400 people, underscoring the need for flexibility in planning.
- **Key Quote:** “When we moved into the building, we were like 150... We thought that building for 300 would be fine, but growth was exponential.”

Fr. Samer Youssef

- Parish was relatively small when they started rebuilding after their church was destroyed by arson, worshipping in a tent for three years.
- Designed the new building to hold 300 people, serving approximately 150 families today, with gradual community growth.
- **Key Quote:** “We worshipped in a tent for three years until the new building was completed.”

Fr. Barnabas Powell

- Initially smaller, the parish began with an ambitious plan for a 23,000-square-foot space, but scaled back to 8,500 square feet after a feasibility study.
- Aimed to grow the community to 300-400 members to fully utilize the new space.
- **Key Quote:** “We knew that we needed to grow to double our size (to between 300 and 400 adherents) to support the church going forward.”

Fr. Raymond Browne

- Began building as the parish outgrew its space, with a goal of a 150-person capacity for the new church.
- Planned to maintain a smaller, intimate community size and to start a mission if the parish grew beyond this limit.
- **Key Quote:** “We’re building for 150 people, and if we grow, we’ll look into starting a new mission.”

Key Takeaways for Our Parish

- **Plan for Growth Beyond Initial Size:** Consider future expansion needs to avoid quickly outgrowing facilities.
 - **Right-Size Building for Community:** Choose a building size that supports current and anticipated needs.
 - **Maintain Community Intimacy:** Design with a sustainable, intimate size in mind, with the flexibility to start new missions if growth exceeds capacity.
 - **Adapt to Unexpected Growth:** Be prepared to expand as needed, ensuring the church can accommodate rapid community growth.
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Planning, Design, and Financial Considerations

How did you go about deciding what type of building to build? Architectural structure?

Fr. Andrew Barakos

- Prioritized Byzantine architecture to reflect Orthodox spirituality and serve as a “window into heaven.”
- Viewed the building’s design as an expression of Orthodox tradition, adapting some elements to the local environment, like earth-toned colors for a desert setting.
- Committed to creating a sacred space that honors tradition while considering the parish’s geographic context.
- **Key Quote:** “A Byzantine church is as much a window into heaven as our iconography... everything in our tradition is an expression of the spiritual life of the people.”

Fr. Samer Youssef

- Emphasized the importance of beauty in church design as a means to attract people and honor God.
- Preferred Orthodox stylistic elements and viewed a beautiful, centrally located church as enhancing the parish’s evangelistic reach.
- Encouraged parishioners to contribute to funding iconography, allowing them to personally invest in the church’s beauty.
- **Key Quote:** “It’s important to make the church beautiful to attract people and to please God.”

Fr. Barnabas Powell

- Initially planned a large, multi-functional church but scaled back to an 8,500-square-foot building to match financial capacity.
- Stressed the importance of a feasibility study to ensure realistic and financially sustainable planning.
- Emphasized balancing community needs with available resources, adapting plans to avoid overextending the parish.
- **Key Quote:** “They scaled back their plan to 8500 sq.ft. after doing a serious feasibility study.”

Fr. Theodore Dorrance

- Prioritized financial prudence and mission-focused growth over architectural style, aiming for a design aligned with the parish’s financial and mission goals.
- Emphasized that building decisions should be financially sustainable and avoid overextension, ensuring alignment with long-term parish needs.
- Advocated for flexible, needs-based design rather than grandeur, with a focus on the parish’s future stability.
- **Key Quote:** “The decisions you make today regarding debt will determine your future.”

Fr. Raymond Browne

- Faced challenges finding architects familiar with Orthodox liturgical requirements; partnered with Speedwell Construction, who sourced Orthodox architects to fulfill these needs.
- Focused on creating a sustainable building for 150 people that adhered to Orthodox traditions.
- Ensured that the architectural design met both the practical and liturgical needs of the community, prioritizing sustainability and traditional values.
- **Key Quote:** “They [Speedwell] went out and found Orthodox architects from around the country to make sure they could get it right.”

Key Takeaways for Our Parish

- **Prioritize Tradition and Context:** Choose a design that reflects Orthodox tradition but also considers the local environment and community needs.
- **Emphasize Beauty:** Beautiful, Orthodox-inspired design attracts people and honors God, enhancing the church’s evangelistic reach.
- **Conduct Feasibility Studies:** Ensure that building plans align with the parish’s financial resources and realistic capacity.
- **Focus on Financial Prudence:** Make decisions that align with long-term financial stability and mission goals.
- **Work with Experienced Architects:** Partner with architects who understand Orthodox liturgical needs to ensure the building supports worship and community needs effectively.

Did you have to make any changes in your building in the church? In regards to your program? Did you have to scale back?

Fr. Andrew Barakos

- Did not scale back but emphasized the importance of oversight when choosing a low-bid contractor, which led to construction challenges.
- Adapted Byzantine design elements to fit the desert setting, using earth tones instead of traditional colors.
- Highlighted the value of flexible spaces, such as removable walls, to allow for future growth.
- **Key Quote:** “Going with the lowest bid, you better have a very good committee that’s working with the contractor... they built the church three times over due to mistakes along the way.”

Fr. Evan Armatas

- Expanded the sanctuary soon after moving in, initially building for 300 people but quickly adding 70 more seats due to rapid growth.
- Demonstrated a need for scaling up rather than scaling back, adjusting the space repeatedly to accommodate increased attendance.
- Emphasized the importance of flexible planning to handle unexpected growth effectively.
- **Key Quote:** “When we moved into the building, we were like 150... We thought that building for 300 would be fine, but growth was exponential over the last three years.”

Fr. Barnabas Powell

- Originally planned a 23,000-square-foot building but scaled back to 8,500 square feet after conducting a feasibility study.
- This adjustment aligned the project with the parish’s budget and resources, avoiding challenges associated with an overly ambitious plan.
- Highlighted the importance of realistic planning and financial sustainability.
- **Key Quote:** “They scaled back their plan to 8500 sq.ft. after doing a serious feasibility study.”

Fr. Raymond Browne

- Encountered initial challenges with architects who did not understand Orthodox liturgical needs.
- Partnered with a firm that engaged Orthodox architects, ensuring the design met both practical and traditional requirements.
- Did not scale back but adapted the project to maintain alignment with Orthodox architectural and liturgical standards.
- **Key Quote:** “They [Speedwell] went out and found Orthodox architects from around the country to make sure they could get it right.”

Key Takeaways for Our Parish

- **Ensure Strong Oversight:** Select contractors carefully and maintain a dedicated oversight committee, especially with low-bid options.
- **Plan for Flexibility:** Consider adaptable elements, like removable walls, to accommodate future growth needs.
- **Conduct Feasibility Studies:** Align building plans with realistic financial resources to avoid unnecessary scaling back.
- **Partner with Knowledgeable Architects:** Choose architects familiar with Orthodox traditions to ensure the building meets liturgical requirements.

How did your parish approach funding and sustaining growth?

Fr. Andrew Barakos

- Adopted a community-centered approach to fund his parish, focusing on internal support rather than external aid.
- Funding was primarily raised through a three-year capital campaign managed by RSI, a consulting firm, along with proceeds from annual parish festivals.
- Emphasized that responsibility for building the church should rest with parishioners to ensure autonomy and avoid reliance on external, potentially unstable sources.
- This approach reinforced a sense of ownership within the community, aligning financial responsibility with parish independence.
- **Key Quote:** “Put the onus on the people to build the church... it’s their responsibility to make the church a reality.”

Fr. Samer Youssef

- Emphasized inclusive giving by encouraging donations from both wealthy and less affluent members to foster a sense of unity.
- Secured a \$1 million matching grant, which catalyzed additional giving within the parish.
- Found that small, personal meetings with families helped build trust and increase support.
- **Key Quote:** “Even if it’s pennies for some, everyone needs to contribute towards the new church, alongside the big-dollar donors.”

Fr. Barnabas Powell

- Focused on community-driven fundraising and face-to-face communication to convey the church’s vision.
- Adjusted initial building plans to better align with parishioners’ capacity after conducting a feasibility study.
- Emphasized education on tithing and sacrificial giving to secure ongoing financial support.
- Stressed that funding should come solely from within the parish, with no reliance on external sources.
- **Key Quote:** “There is no magic money coming from outside sources. Your people have to raise the funds and build a church.”

Fr. Theodore Dorrance

- Advised caution with debt and emphasized conservative financial planning to avoid burdens that could impact staffing and mission work.
- His parish currently pays a substantial annual amount to service debt, a decision he advises others to avoid if possible.
- **Key Quote:** “The decisions you make today regarding debt will determine your future.”

Fr. Raymond Browne

- Established a Parish Development Fund and collaborated with a consultant to lead their capital campaign.

- Encouraged creative donation options such as stock donations and minimum distributions from IRAs to maximize support.
- Focused on transparency with parishioners to build trust and secure sustained support.
- **Key Quote:** “Transparency is key with the parish. People need to understand where the money is coming from and where it’s going.”

Key Takeaways for Our Parish

- **Inclusive Giving:** Engage all members, regardless of capacity, to build unity.
- **Educate on Tithing:** Emphasize tithing and sacrificial giving for sustained support.
- **Matching Grants:** Leverage matching grants to inspire additional giving.
- **Personal Engagement:** Meet with families to build trust and ownership.
- **Internal Funding:** Rely on parishioner support to maintain autonomy.
- **Financial Transparency:** Communicate fund use regularly to build trust.

Is there anything you would not do again or do differently?

Fr. Andrew Barakos

- Would have pre-secured financing before signing a contract, as signing with the contractor before obtaining a loan added risk to the project.
- Regretted not designing the building with more adaptability, such as including removable walls, to allow for future growth.
- **Key Quote:** “We signed the contract without a loan, and thankfully, it worked out. But I’d recommend having financing set in place ahead of time.”

Fr. Barnabas Powell

- Would have started with a more realistic building plan from the outset, as the initial ambitious plan exceeded their financial capacity.
- Noted that the overly ambitious plan led to delays and caused some donors to withdraw support.
- Found that adjusting to a feasible plan improved project flow and garnered community backing.
- **Key Quote:** “We shifted course, admitted that we had dreamt beyond our means, and came up with a realistic plan that was actionable.”

Key Takeaways for Our Parish

- **Secure Financing Early:** Ensure that all financing is in place before committing to contracts to avoid unnecessary risk.
- **Plan Realistically:** Begin with a feasible building plan that aligns with the parish’s financial means to prevent delays and maintain donor confidence.

- **Design for Adaptability:** Incorporate flexible design features, such as removable walls, to allow for future expansion needs.
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Impact on Clergy and Congregation

How did the larger church size affect your priest? His health? His effectiveness?

Fr. Andrew Barakos

- Emphasized the strain on physical and spiritual well-being when managing a large parish as the sole priest.
- Stressed the need for a strong personal prayer life to manage the workload effectively and avoid burnout.
- Recognized that increasing pastoral responsibilities underscored the importance of additional support to meet parishioners' needs.
- **Key Quote:** "If your spiritual life isn't intact, you're in trouble... my prayer life was everything. That's what kept me going."

Fr. Evan Armatas

- Initially handled the parish alone, leading to a high-stress environment and difficulty in managing duties effectively.
- Realized that delegating tasks to additional staff was essential for his health and the parish's growth.
- Found that a strong support staff allowed him to focus on sacramental duties, improving his effectiveness and overall well-being.
- **Key Quote:** "I'm a Parish priest now. I wasn't a Parish priest two and a half years ago. I was running around with my head cut off."

Fr. Barnabas Powell

- Highlighted the importance of expanding support ministries and roles as the parish grows to prevent overwhelming the priest.
- Emphasized small groups as a crucial structure for managing pastoral needs, helping reduce the priest's workload as the community size increases.
- Suggested that healthy small group systems are essential for parishes to thrive as they expand.

- **Key Quote:** “Small groups are paramount as the church grows. The parish needs to be healthy to go through this process.”

Fr. Adam Roberts

- Noted that larger parishes often strain a single priest, leading to a less personal environment and reduced pastoral effectiveness.
- Warned against the “Sacrament Factory” dynamic, where a priest’s role becomes focused mainly on sacramental duties, leaving little time for deep engagement with parishioners.
- Pointed out that as parish size increases, regular attendance and adherence often decline, which can impact community vitality.
- **Key Quote:** “As the size of the membership goes up, the percentage of attendance and regular adherence goes down. So, we are creating churches where people don’t go to church.”

Fr. Theodore Dorrance

- Stated that a single priest managing a large parish (e.g., over 200 households) is unsustainable for maintaining effective pastoral care.
- Advocated for adequate staffing as parishes grow, recommending two priests for every 200 families to ensure quality care and prevent burnout.
- Emphasized that without proper clergy support, essential duties like house blessings and confessions become nearly impossible to manage.
- **Key Quote:** “A single priest trying to manage over 200 households is simply not sustainable—house blessings, confessions, and regular pastoral care become nearly impossible.”

Key Takeaways for Our Parish

- **Support Clergy Well-Being:** A strong prayer life and manageable workload are essential for clergy health and effectiveness.
- **Delegate Responsibilities:** Additional staff or ministry roles can relieve the priest’s burden, allowing focus on sacramental duties.
- **Establish Small Groups:** Small groups can address pastoral needs and help prevent the priest from becoming overwhelmed.
- **Avoid the “Sacrament Factory”:** Ensure clergy have time for deep engagement, not just sacramental duties, to maintain a vibrant community.
- **Scale Staffing with Growth:** For every 200 families, consider adding clergy to sustain quality pastoral care and prevent burnout.

How did the larger church size affect your congregation? Are they able to receive the same level of community and service?

Fr. Andrew Barakos

- Observed that personal connections with parishioners became challenging as the parish grew.
- Prioritized regular meetings with catechumens and new members to foster belonging and spiritual growth.
- Emphasized the role of lay ministries in meeting community needs, allowing continued care for parishioners despite growth.
- **Key Quote:** “After the pandemic, I made it a priority to really know my people... I sit down with every catechumen regularly to witness their transformation.”

Fr. Evan Armatas

- Faced challenges with rapid growth, requiring adjustments to maintain community and service quality.
- Expanded staff and developed structured programs to provide consistent care and engagement.
- Focused on building a “transcendent culture” to sustain community bonds regardless of priest turnover or parish size.
- **Key Quote:** “Our goal is to build a transcendent culture and staff so it doesn’t matter who the priest is.”

Fr. Samer Youssef

- Emphasized a shared vision and the beauty of the church building to keep parishioners engaged.
- Encouraged contributions from all parishioners, fostering a sense of connection to the church mission.
- Highlighted the importance of small groups and personal meetings to maintain engagement amidst growth.
- **Key Quote:** “Meet one-on-one or at least in small groups with families to answer their questions. People don’t talk in big meetings.”

Fr. Barnabas Powell

- Pointed out that larger churches often struggle with active engagement from members.
- Advocated for small groups within the parish, like choirs and stewardship groups, to build community and offer mutual support.
- Stressed that discipleship and stewardship education help retain engagement as the church grows.
- **Key Quote:** “Small groups are paramount as the church grows... every ministry group needs to focus on fellowship and mutual support amongst its members.”

Fr. Adam Roberts

- Observed that as parish size increases, participation and community intimacy tend to decline.
- Noted that smaller parishes generally maintain stronger community bonds and personal responsibility among members.
- Highlighted that smaller church sizes often see higher rates of attendance and engagement.
- **Key Quote:** “The smaller the church is, the higher percentage of attendance from membership.”

Fr. Theodore Dorrance

- Suggested that larger parishes risk a sense of disconnection among members.
- Recommended keeping parish sizes around 200 households to maintain personal attention and engagement.
- Proposed planting new parishes once this size is reached to prevent parishioners from feeling disconnected.
- **Key Quote:** “The ideal parish size is around 200 households... Any larger, and you face the risk of people drifting to the periphery and getting lost.”

Key Takeaways for Our Parish

- **Prioritize Personal Connections:** Regular one-on-one or small group meetings with parishioners, especially new members, foster belonging and engagement.
 - **Develop Lay Ministries:** Lay ministries can help meet community needs as the parish grows, allowing clergy to maintain quality care.
 - **Build a Strong Parish Culture:** A “transcendent culture” that reflects shared values sustains engagement regardless of parish size or clergy changes.
 - **Encourage Small Groups:** Small groups (like choir and stewardship groups) are vital for fostering fellowship and maintaining community bonds.
 - **Keep Parish Size Manageable:** Smaller parishes or capped sizes (around 200 households) help preserve intimacy and personal responsibility among members.
 - **Consider Mission Planting:** Planting new parishes as growth reaches certain thresholds can prevent disconnection and keep community relationships strong.
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Mission and Future Planning

Did you consider forming a second parish?

Fr. Andrew Barakos

- Supported church planting as part of his parish's mission, viewing his parish as a "mother church" for establishing new Orthodox communities in areas like Prescott, Flagstaff, and Havasu.
- Saw expansion into new communities as a natural extension of the parish's growth and spiritual mission.
- Believed that nurturing new communities was integral to Orthodox outreach and parish development.
- **Key Quote:** "Our culture is one of planting... we helped in Prescott, Flagstaff, and Havasu. It's part of our mission to nurture new communities."

Fr. Barnabas Powell

- Believed that a parish reaching around 400 members would benefit from planting a mission rather than expanding further.
- Emphasized maintaining an intimate parish size, preferring mission planting over transforming into a larger "mega-church."
- Saw 400 members as a natural limit to maintain close community ties and advocated for mission planting to preserve parish intimacy.
- **Key Quote:** "Once one passes the 400 adherent mark... I wouldn't want to grow past that. I would want to plant a mission rather than become a mega-church."

Fr. Adam Roberts

- Advocated for starting new parishes once a congregation reaches about 250 people to preserve community intimacy.
- Supported the "daisy chain" model, where missions are planted within 20-30 minutes of the main parish, strengthening connections among nearby Orthodox communities.
- Emphasized that this approach fosters intimacy and is essential for sustainable Orthodox growth.
- **Key Quote:** "The ideal church size is a seating capacity for 250 people... The only way to grow Orthodoxy is to plant new parishes."

Fr. Theodore Dorrance

- Recommended mission planting once a parish reaches around 200 households to sustain community bonds and strong pastoral care.
- Viewed manageable parish sizes as crucial for effective pastoral engagement, making mission planting a priority as growth approaches this limit.
- Stressed that responsible Orthodox growth requires new parish formations to maintain community quality.

- **Key Quote:** “The ideal parish size is around 200 households... The only way to grow Orthodoxy is to plant new parishes.”

Fr. Raymond Browne

- Limited parish size to around 150 people to preserve a close-knit, intimate community.
- Planned to start a mission if the parish grew beyond this capacity, reinforcing the value of smaller community-centered parishes.
- Saw mission planting as a solution to growth beyond the planned size, keeping the focus on strong member connections.
- **Key Quote:** “We’re building for 150 people, and if we grow, we’ll look into starting a new mission.”

Key Takeaways for Our Parish

- **Prioritize Mission Planting:** Consider new missions as the parish reaches 200-250 members to maintain intimacy and pastoral care.
- **Limit Parish Size for Connection:** Smaller, capped parish sizes support closer community bonds.
- **Use a “Mother Church” Model:** View larger parishes as “mother churches” that can support and nurture nearby missions.
- **Strengthen Local Connections:** Place new missions within close proximity to build interconnected Orthodox communities.

Are you continuing to grow and do you have plans for the future?

Fr. Andrew Barakos

- Continues to see growth in attendance, especially on major feast days.
- Envisions fostering new Orthodox communities, showing a commitment to mission work in nearby areas.
- Advocates for designing church buildings with flexibility for future expansion, such as using removable walls.
- **Key Quote:** “Who would have predicted the incredible interest in Orthodoxy in 2024?”

Fr. Evan Armatas

- Experienced rapid growth that has led to several expansions.
- Future plans include developing a sustainable church culture and staffing model to ensure stability and vibrancy, regardless of leadership changes.
- Aims to build a resilient community framework to support continued growth.
- **Key Quote:** “Our goal is to build a transcendent culture and staff so it doesn’t matter who the priest is.”

Fr. Samer Youssef

- Continues to grow, with a current focus on expanding facilities, including a new hall and Sunday school rooms.
- Emphasizes community engagement and development as the parish grows.
- **Key Quote:** “We are still growing and working on constructing a hall and Sunday school rooms.”

Fr. Barnabas Powell

- Plans to double parish size to about 300-400 members to support future projects and financial stability.
- Focuses on structured discipleship and community-building, aiming to prepare the parish for growth while preserving an intimate environment.
- **Key Quote:** “We knew that we needed to grow to double our size... in order to have the resources, not only to fundraise, but to support the church going forward.”

Fr. Theodore Dorrance

- Promotes growth through mission planting, advocating for starting new parishes once a community reaches 200 households.
- Emphasizes mission-oriented growth, focusing on outreach rather than simply expanding the size of a single parish.
- **Key Quote:** “The only way to grow Orthodoxy is to plant new parishes.”

Fr. Raymond Browne

- Plans to maintain a small, sustainable parish size, building a new church for 150 people.
- Supports growth through mission planting if attendance exceeds capacity, aiming to preserve community intimacy.
- **Key Quote:** “If we grow, we’ll look into starting a new mission.”

Key Takeaways for Our Parish

- **Design for Flexibility:** Plan buildings with adaptable spaces to accommodate future growth.
- **Focus on Sustainable Growth:** Prioritize manageable community sizes, with mission planting as needed to maintain intimacy.
- **Develop a Resilient Community Culture:** Build a sustainable church culture and structure to support growth, regardless of leadership changes.
- **Promote Mission-Oriented Expansion:** Consider starting new parishes as an approach to growth that emphasizes outreach and community-building.

Does Dunbar's Number play a role in church growth?

Fr. Barnabas Powell

- Observed that as parish size reaches certain thresholds (100, 250, and 400 members), leadership and organizational adjustments are needed to maintain community intimacy.
- Suggested that at around 400 members, it's best to plant a new mission to prevent the church from becoming too large and impersonal.
- Believes these growth plateaus provide a guide to fostering community bonds and keeping the parish engaged.
- **Key Quote:** "The first is 100 regular adherents. The second is about 250. The third is 400. Each of the plateaus requires a lot of changes and adaptation in leadership."

Fr. Adam Roberts

- Advocates for parishes to remain between 150 and 250 members to preserve community intimacy.
- Notes that as parishes grow larger, attendance and engagement often decline, leading to a less connected community.
- Recommends capping parish size within this range to foster meaningful connections and maintain strong engagement.
- **Key Quote:** "The ideal church size is a seating capacity for 250 people... intimacy is lost among the parishioners."

Fr. Theodore Dorrance

- Recommends capping parish sizes at around 200 households to sustain strong connections and effective pastoral care.
- Believes that growth beyond 200 households makes it challenging to maintain community health and engagement.
- Suggests mission planting once the parish reaches this threshold to prevent members from feeling disconnected.
- **Key Quote:** "The ideal parish size is around 200 households... Any larger, and you face the risk of people drifting to the periphery."

Fr. Raymond Browne

- Limits his parish to around 150 people to ensure a close-knit, engaged community.
- Plans to start a new mission if the parish grows beyond this size, supporting the idea that smaller, community-centered parishes foster stronger connections.
- Prioritizes a manageable parish size to keep members feeling connected and involved.
- **Key Quote:** "We're building for 150 people, and if we grow, we'll look into starting a new mission."

Key Takeaways for Our Parish

- **Plan for Growth Plateaus:** Recognize and adapt to growth plateaus at 100, 250, and 400 members, making leadership adjustments as needed.
- **Limit Parish Size for Intimacy:** Aim to maintain parish sizes within 150-250 members to preserve community bonds and active participation.
- **Prioritize Mission Planting:** Begin planning new missions as parish size approaches 150-200 households to sustain connection and pastoral care.
- **Support Meaningful Connections:** Smaller, community-focused parishes help parishioners feel engaged and connected.

What needs to be considered in regards to a second priest?

Fr. Andrew Barakos

- Added a pastoral assistant in 2016 to help address the growing pastoral and sacramental needs of the community; this assistant was later ordained as a priest in 2018.
- Highlighted the importance of adding staff as the parish grows, particularly to serve younger parishioners and expand outreach.
- Emphasized that expanding clergy helps maintain the quality of care and community engagement in larger parishes but suggested that without clearly defined roles, adding clergy could create coordination challenges.
- **Key Quote:** “As the church grew, so did staff... brought on another priest in 2016 to minister to young parishioners.”

Fr. Evan Armatas

- Had a second priest for a period, which he found beneficial for managing the workload and providing more focused pastoral and sacramental support.
- Experienced challenges with diocesan reassignments; his second priest was reassigned after only a year and a half, impacting continuity and stability.
- Noted that the required training period for a second priest can be time-intensive, making reassignments especially disruptive when clergy are needed to build long-term relationships with parishioners.
- **Key Quote:** “I had a second priest for a year and a half, and then he got moved... It takes a year to train them before they're really useful, and then two years of ministry, and they leave.”

Fr. Samer Youssef

- Did not discuss having a second priest directly but emphasized the need for small groups and personal connections to meet pastoral needs effectively.
- His approach implies that a second priest might be useful as the parish size grows, allowing for more one-on-one pastoral relationships.

- Values consistent pastoral care that can be scaled through small groups, suggesting that he may see small groups as a substitute or complement to additional clergy in larger parishes.

Fr. Barnabas Powell

- Believes that once a parish reaches around 300-400 members, a second priest becomes necessary to manage the spiritual and pastoral demands.
- Supports the idea of shared ministry responsibilities, with clergy focused on discipleship and personal engagement, but cautions that multiple clergy require clear coordination to avoid complexity.
- Emphasized the need for additional clergy at this growth stage to ensure pastoral care remains personal and effective.
- **Key Quote:** “In a parish of 3 or 4 hundred that a second priest would be absolutely necessary.”

Fr. Adam Roberts

- Prefers smaller parishes where pastoral needs are manageable with a single priest, minimizing the need for additional clergy.
- His approach favors mission planting over expanding one large parish, as he believes smaller parishes allow for stronger connections between clergy and parishioners.
- Implies that additional clergy might dilute personal connections in large parishes, whereas multiple smaller parishes provide each community with direct pastoral care.

Fr. Theodore Dorrance

- Recommends having two full-time priests for every 200 families in a parish to ensure adequate sacramental and pastoral support, which he believes prevents burnout for the primary priest.
- Emphasizes that relying solely on one priest for a large congregation risks compromising the quality of pastoral and sacramental care.
- Suggests that a balance of clergy to parishioners is essential to maintain high standards of care, especially as parishes grow.
- **Key Quote:** “For every 200 families, you should have two full-time priests.”

Fr. Raymond Browne

- Focuses on maintaining a smaller, intimate parish size of around 150 people, which reduces the need for multiple clergy.
- Prefers starting new missions if growth exceeds this number, ensuring that each parish remains community-centered and adequately staffed with a single priest.
- His approach emphasizes that a smaller parish model allows one priest to meet pastoral needs effectively without requiring additional clergy.
- **Key Quote:** “We want a building that can hold about 150 people, no more.”

Key Takeaways for Our Parish

- **Add Clergy When Needed:** As the parish approaches 300-400 members, consider a second priest to support pastoral care.
- **Manage Stability and Reassignments:** Diocesan reassignments can disrupt continuity; aim for stability in clergy roles.
- **Use Small Groups:** Small groups can foster connections and ease the clergy's workload.
- **Consider Parish Size:** Smaller parishes allow intimate care, while larger ones may need additional clergy or mission planting.
- **Define Roles Clearly:** Clear roles help avoid coordination challenges with multiple clergy.