

**The end of what we used to be, the beginning of what we really are
THIRTY APOSTOLIC STRATEGIES**

Carlos Mraida

Translated by Orville Swindoll

This is the second encounter of AFI by Zoom. Thus it is a clear sign that we are living a new reality in the world, in the church, in our ministries, implying that we face very difficult pastoral decisions. I will try to be pragmatic. I want to suggest thirty strategies for our apostolic ministries. Here is the first.

Strategy #1: *I encourage you to have what I call a Personal Encounter with the Holy Spirit. A personal retreat with two objectives: a renewal of the Holy Spirit in your life and the search for revelation and wisdom for yourself and your pastors for the time in which we live.*

We have had to face considerable stress. When we are denied our regular and well-known routines, we discover our own vulnerability, as well as our urgent need of the strengthening presence of the Holy Spirit. We need him to help us to see what is ahead and teach us what we need to know and guide us to all truth.

Strategy #2: *Once you have had your “Personal Encounter with the Holy Spirit”, I encourage you to have a “Apostolic-Pastoral Encounter with the Holy Spirit”: a direct or virtual retreat **with the pastors** that make up your apostolic network in which you seek the Lord with the same two objectives, and that you share the suggestions you receive in this consultation of AFI, and whatever the Spirit reveals to you in your personal encounter with him. You will need a retreat of more than one day, or more than one retreat.*

We are at the end of an epoch and these moments are rather traumatic. But not all the ends of an epoch should be seen as times of loss. For the end of one season becomes the background where the beginning of something new occurs. And it constitutes for me the great opportunity to develop ecclesial and leadership models more in line with the biblical model and more specific to the new reality. In order for this to be the case, I think we need to understand what is happening and share it with our pastors, so that they too might transfer it to their leaders and congregations.

Understanding the changes that occur

The reality has changed. To deny this would invite more problems and delay the processes of renewal that God wants to carry out. My perception is that many pastors believe that the current situation is like a parenthesis. That is, they believe that we were living in a normal mode, then the pandemic came and opened a parenthesis, but at some point it will pass, the parenthesis will close, and we return to the earlier normality. But we are not dealing with a simple parenthesis or a pause, but with a change of epoch.

During the pandemic our pastors have faced a variety of challenges: the suspension of face-to-face meetings, the use of technology, networks and digital platforms, without prior preparation, the question of offerings and finances, difficulties in receiving the pastoral stipend, the maintenance of personnel, the cost of unused buildings or their loss, the death of members in their congregations, the migration of members from their congregations to others that use more effectively these virtual means, etc. Some churches and pastors have responded well. Unfortunately, many have not. One consulting firm presented the following statistics: only 35% of the members returned to face-to-face meetings. Some 32% decided to drop out. 18% attend multiple congregations on-line. And 15% decided to change their congregation.¹

¹ www.wavesprogram.com/members

Experiencing the pandemic has been disruptive for everyone. It is as if someone had cut off our electric current and we had to respond in ways for which we were unprepared. The majority adapted quickly. But entering a new era is not as simple as turning on the light switch. As Karl Vaters suggests, it is more like being discharged from the hospital and initiating a long and slow process of rehabilitation.

With the authorization to return to face-to-face meetings, pastors tell us: “The meetings began again, but the people didn’t come”. The complaint of many is that the city congregations with more resources “have stolen many of our members”. One pastor from the city of Mar del Plata, in Argentina, indicated that 80% of the churches that used a rented building as their temple, closed down. In my country, there is a process of forced renewal of pastoral leadership, since more than 250 of the pastors died.

Understanding the two hermeneutical horizons

The pandemic has served as a catalytic agent that accelerated a process of decadence that would normally require years. This is true, not only in society, but also in relation to the model of church and pastoral ministry. We have been developing a model that was no longer relevant for the transformation of society, and lacked pertinence for the believers themselves. More than 50% of those who call themselves evangelical, are not involved in any congregation. That is to say, such a model was no longer viable for them. For many years I have been saying that such a model for the church already had a signed death certificate. The pandemic has now buried it under several feet of dirt.

Several paradigms of church and leadership have ceased to be viable. These paradigms were the ways in which the church sought to give shape to the eternal truths of the Word in a specific historical and cultural context. Every cultural change provokes a change of paradigms. The church delayed in understanding the cultural changes that were taking place. Therefore, the models for church, pastoral ministry and for missions that were valid in an earlier time were no longer useful. Some of them, because they were not faithful to the Word, others for lack of relevance to the changing reality. But unfortunately, the church was not adequately aware of this and continued functioning with a model that was neither biblical nor relevant. The pandemic accelerated those cultural changes and some of those models will no longer function.

When the crisis provokes such a profound change, a vacuum is produced, in which what was once vital is no longer, and that which is to replace it is still undefined. This is a great opportunity, so that the apostolic ministry of the church is involved in the effort to re-read the Word in order to recover the biblical paradigms. Every reading of the Word is conditioned by our cultural lenses. But if we are able to make the effort to extract the eternal principles from the situational questions and, above all, from our ecclesial and ministerial presuppositions that we keep repeating, then at least our cultural reading will be pertinent for our time.

Apostolic ministry must nourish itself through knowledge of the other hermeneutical horizon, which is the new reality. Reading, consulting with the experts and surrounding ourselves with younger elements that understand the new world. And with the spirit of revelation reinterpret that information, and with the spirit of wisdom channel that knowledge into practice. Out of the fusion of the horizons of the Word and that of the new reality, will come new forms for the church, missions and pastoral ministry that are more faithful and more pertinent.

Strategy #3: Work with your pastors on the concept of the two hermeneutical horizons. That of the Word that never changes and which should become incarnate in the reality that is always changing.

Strategy #4: Investigate what changes have already been produced and those that the tendencies indicate are ahead. Share this with your pastors.

Strategy #5: Meet with adolescents and young people and ask them how they feel, how they understand the reality, what changes they are perceiving, in what is the best way they believe they can fulfill the mission today. Share with your pastors what you learn, and encourage them to do the same.

Understanding the change of paradigms for church and leadership

It is important to avoid falling into oversimplification, supposing that everything is reduced to knowing what things we can continue to do face-to-face and what remains virtual. We should rather use the moment to rethink the church. I suggest some changes.

1. Toward a reduction of the church as institution and growth of the church as community.

In practice the church has two dimensions. First, it is a community, the Body of Christ. And then it is structured also as an institution. The church is first born as a community: the people begin to convert, be baptized and disciplined, and when a group is formed, the church starts to structure itself as an institution: with personnel, buildings, programs, activities. It functions as an institution to serve the church as a community, and to represent it legally, among the entities that make up society. Ed Kivitz, whom I follow in this, reminds us that not all of us that make up the church community are members of the church institution. There are persons that congregate in the meetings, in the home groups, that follow the virtual programming, that feel themselves part of the community, yet are not members of the institution. We must include the children, who are part of the church community.

In the same way, there are members of the church institution that are not members of the church, the Body of Christ. Already in the year 1000 there was a theological debate between Anselmo and Abelard. Anselmo said: anyone who does not know the church as mother does not have God as father. He was speaking of the church as an institution, at that time the Apostolic Roman Catholic Church. And Abelard, responded that: God has many that the church does not have, and the church has many that God does not have.

In our days the church as institution is experiencing a reduction. Buildings that are no longer used as before, reduction in the number of personnel, offices that have been decentralized. The temples may be closed, but the church as community continues to function. The church as institution serves the church as community through its programs and activities. In these days it becomes indispensable that the apostolic ministries help the pastors to define which of those programs and activities are essential, which are desirable, and which should be discontinued. The essential programs and activities are those that the church cannot cease to do since, according to the Bible, they define the church's reason for being. Those that are desirable are the ones that, in the new reality, it would be good for the church to begin to realize. And they are determined by the needs which the world today presents. For example, faced with the pandemic of mental health problems of today, and which will continue to increase, it would be desirable for the churches to offer interdisciplinary pastoral counseling open to the community, attended by pastors, psychologists, psychiatrists, and medical physicians.

This definition of programs and activities in these categories will help us to simplify the many tasks that evangelical activism has brought to our attention. The road ahead of us will be very demanding for the people, and the fewer the unnecessary activities that we have, the better use we can make of the human resources that we have.

Strategy # 6: Work with your pastors on this change of paradigms. Strengthen the idea of a reduction in the institutional. It is not necessarily a loss, but can be seen as an advance, with outreach and the mission of the church as community.

Strategy #7: *Redefine with your pastors the essence of the mission of the church: What the church cannot cease to do.*

Strategy #8: *In groups with your pastors define the current needs of the people in your areas, and propose programs and activities that would be desirable to initiate*

Strategy #9: *Analyze with your pastors which of your programs and activities are essential, which are desirable. And encourage them to discontinue those that are unnecessary.*

Strategy #10: *Analyze with your pastors the financial budgets of their congregations in the new reality. Which of the personnel oriented toward the institutional can we eliminate? What personnel oriented toward service to the Church as Community will we need to incorporate and sustain?*

It is important to understand that the church as community is a present reality, influential, but not necessarily measurable, structurable, and therefore it is not controllable, manageable. Many of the things that occur in the life of my church as community, I discover after they are already occurring. The brother who provides financial backing for young people so they can study, the sister that volunteers her services in an old folks home, the couple that opens the garage of their home to feed the poor, etc.

Ariovaldo Ramos shows us three concepts of the church in the N.T.: the church of Jesus Christ: *where two or three are gathered in my name I am there*. There is the ecclesia. The church of the apostles. It has an ecclesiological structure, deacons, presbítters, epístles, discipline, norms, government, organization, elections of presbiters. It also appears as the Church of the Holy Spirit, which is the church of the charismas. And it goes through the church of the apostles. And often creates “holy messes”, in the church of the apostles. An example: The church of the apostles wanted to limit the group of apostles to twelve. But the Spirit interrupts and sticks Paul in; and not only him, but others as well. And since the apostles had to be twelve, they elect Matthias by sorting, while it remained more than clear that in the will of God, the preeminent apostolic figure was Paul. So it is that the church of the Holy Spirit often reorients the church of the apostles. The manifestation of spiritual gifts, the freedom with which the Spirit moves, even disturbing the apostolic organization, for the ever-present danger is that the church as institution compresses and seeks to institutionalize the church as community. What we are able as persons to control to a certain point is the institution, but not the community. And this modifies the paradigm of pastoral leadership that seeks to keep everything under control.

In these days the church as institution is reduced and the weight of the church as community is increased. The church as community is structured by two central elements: a network of relationships, and a network of mission. The network of relations keeps the church alive, united and shepherded. The network of mission keeps the church active. These conform the community dimension of the church. The network of relationships has to do with spiritual friendships, mutual pastoring, the care for each other. With the multiplicity of needs, the pastoring of dedicated pastors would not be enough; some forms of mutual pastoring is required.

Strategy #11: *Work with your pastors on ways to strengthen the network of relationships. How can interpersonal relations be stimulated? How can mutual pastoring be generated?*

2. Toward a church that strengthens the *ecclesia* and perfects it for the *diáspora*.

There are two expressions of the church: *Ecclesia*, this is the gathering of the church, the congregation. Until now the principal emphasis has been concentrated on this dimension: meetings for worship, events. *Diáspora* is dispersión; it is the church spread out. Today we are experiencing a kind of sacrifice of the dimension *ecclesia*. We are unable to meet as we always have done. It is a time of emphasis on the *diáspora*. The church spread out. And here we have two tasks. The first is to discover in what ways we can strengthen the *Ecclesia*, the

need and the possibility of its manifestation. For the biblical mandate to gather is not only still valid², but also because it has a vital role in the edification of the Body of Christ³. And in the pandemic, for the emotional health of the people, the congregation of the church is fundamental.

Here we need to evaluate the encounters for worship and community ministration. By introducing the people in huge numbers to a virtual encounter, since we have no alternative, we brought them into the world of possibilities that the evangelical “market” offers today. Many pastors lament that their members have discovered other ministries better prepared technically, musically and with greater pastoral skills, so they are opting out for another congregation. Of course, behind such a decision, there is a lack of discipleship, of adequate pastoral care, and of maturity. But even explaining it thus, it continues to be a painful reality for many pastors. An *upgrade* at the pastors’ level, as well as their meetings, and even in technical aspects, would help. This will not resolve the problem of the lack of maturity, that can only be resolved with genuine discipleship, but at least a massive desertion might be avoided.

Strengthening the dimension *ecclesia*, also has to do with the programs of groups separated by age. Especially children, adolescents, and youth. Those areas need our principal emphasis, adjustments, our investment in personnel and money. For they are the most vulnerable sectors, needing spiritual growth in the various age groups. There is a real threat that these kids go through another year without friendship with similar age groups in the church, and that they develop friendships only with their school companions. This is a stage of life where the affirmation of faith among their age group is more important than the influence of adults, a stage where we could lose a significant part of their generation. A strategic alliance is needed between the church and the parents to care for these generations, providing attractive programs that lead them into strong spiritual experiences, but also through friendly relations with others their age who have a solid faith.

Another question is: How can we care for the spiritual and emotional health, and pastor those who, due to their age or health, cannot meet face to face?

The second task is to perfect the believers ministerially, providing them with tools for their ministry in the diáspora. This is the Network of Mission. The church in the diáspora fulfilling their mission. Here there is a change of paradigm. In the past we concentrated on training ministries that were developed principally in the temple: those that lead the worship, ushers, those that develop evangelistic or social tasks to be fulfilled in the temple. Now we need to train them to carry out their mission in their neighborhood and work environment. Train the lawyers, housewives, students, to serve, evangelize, heal, liberate their companions in their work environments, persons who have not come to our meeting halls.

Strategy #12: *Analyze with your pastors ways to strengthen community worship both face-to-face and virtual, primarily in the spiritual aspect, as well as in the technical, esthetic, musical. Do our resources need to move to a new level? Which of our resources, whether human, technical, material, can you share with them?*

Strategy #13: *Develop a proposal for a strategic alliance between the church and the family for pastoring children and adolescents. And distribute it among your pastors.*

Strategy #14: *Generate a space for a “brainstorm of ideas” among your pastors about how to carry out pastoral ministry, for the members that are unable to have personal contact with others.*

² Hebrews 10:25: *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

³ Concerning the importance of congregating, see: Carlos Mraida, *Returning from Captivity, in Consultation of AFI 2020: What is God saying to his church in this time of pandemic?*

Strategy #15: Prepare a list of the principal professions of the people in your region and share it with your pastors. And request that each one meet with believers of one of those professions from your congregation and prepare helps to serve, evangelize, disciple others who are close to them. In a later meeting with your pastors, have them share their experience with the rest, so that everyone might develop a plan for training believers in their different professions to carry out their mission in the diáspora.

3. Toward a church of protagonists instead of spectators

The paradigm whose brevity of usefulness is most obvious is that of the auditorium, where a “religious show” is presented, and in which ten persons minister (pastors and musicians), and the rest receive ministry. Many pastors believe they can continue with this even virtually, and some have even expressed happiness because initially the number of spectators increased over what they had in the face-to-face meetings. But with the return to meetings in person their joy was turned into a letany: “The meetings were renewed, but the people didn’t come”.

In my presentation in AFI 2020, I expressed my perception concerning the future, and unfortunately it came to pass. For that reason I want to repeat it, not as a potential threat, but as a reality for us to work on:

“If before the pandemic more than 50 % of the believers in all the cities did not attend our meetings, in the post pandemic the percentage will increase. The churches will add the face-to-face worship to the meeting on line, enthusiastic to reach the unreached people. But when this happens, many of those who attended earlier will decide to “watch” the same meeting-show of ten persons from their home, without attending, without travel, without having to “dress up”, without any demands. So that to the deformation of “Let’s go to church” now will be added “Let’s watch the church”. To avoid this outcome, apostolic ministry is needed...whose first and most important action is a renewal in the mentality of the pastors” ... “The people will move about and serve themselves as in a self-service restaurant buffet, with the music they prefer, the preacher of their choice from anywhere in the world”⁴.

We have not transformed our meetings into opportunities to function as the Body of Christ, with collective ministry, where all function with their gifts, well aware that “we are church” instead of “let’s go to church” nor “let’s watch the church”. The church in diáspora mode, will gather in *ecclesia* mode if, and only if, the meetings are experiences where the presence of God is truly in the midst of the community, with signs and wonders and various miracles and manifestations of the Spirit⁵ and where that occurs with collective ministry, in which all have the opportunity to be protagonists and not spectators. Then the people will not want to miss being part of that double live experience: the moving of the Spirit in the meeting, and where that occurs in their own life. Otherwise, in the best of circumstances, the people will continue to watch our show from their homes, and probably, they will see others as well.

Strategy #16: Prepare with your pastors suggestions for meetings with a dynamic that is not centralized in the platform, and in which the people participate.

Strategy #17: Minister to your pastors so that they experience a renewal of the Holy Spirit in their lives that enables them to conduct a time of renewal in their congregations, so that the presence of the Lord might be evident in every meeting.

4. Toward a church of disciples instead of simply members.

Some of the problems we face today (lack of strong sense of belonging to a congregation; constant migration of members from one congregation to another; lack of

⁴ Ídem.

⁵ Hebrews 2.4.

faithfulness in tithes and offerings; lack of commitment in attendance and service; indifference and departure of brothers; etc), are the result of a church model, in which discipleship hardly exists.

The over emphasis on numeric growth of the church, in detriment to growth in quality, has provoked the awareness in many congregations that they were large but not strong. We are facing an opportunity to return to the beginning. The virtual situation is allowing many more to experience possibilities of formation. A combination of both modalities can be the great opportunity to return to the biblical paradigm, which is that of making disciples.

Strategy #18: *If our network of pastors does not have a plan for discipleship, explore among the many possibilities that exist, and choose one you can share with your pastors and make it one of your priorities to disciple your members.*

5. Toward a leadership that is plural and multi-generational

The leadership of a “pastor-orchestra” is increasingly being replaced by an orchestra of pastors. The concentration in one physical site favors the unbiblical model of singular leadership. The model of church as community in the diáspora, renders insufficient the ministry of only one person.

Many pastors were already exhausted prior to the pandemic. And stress from the change of reality found them without strength, deepening their exhaustion. The reason is that those who fulfill responsibly their ministry are often overburdened with work. Today there is a new cultural emphasis on care and wellbeing. For the majority this involves a return to self-centeredness. Nevertheless, this may be a healthy emphasis. Let us take advantage of the change of reality to develop a more biblical leadership based on teamwork.

This is not just a question of moving from singular to plural, but also to a multi-generational leadership. In Argentina we are seeing a generational change among pastors, thanks to the pandemic. More than 250 pastors have died. And the majority left their congregations without a pastor, because there was only one pastor and he had no one to succeed him. The biblical model is not one of replacement, but of shared ministry. The older pastors must reproduce themselves in other pastors, and raise up especially younger ones, which are the ones that understand the world in which we live. Besides assuring ministerial continuity, those youth will be a fountain of spiritual renewal for the church, with new enthusiasm, a renewed passion, new strength. It is not youth instead of the older ones, but rather the older folk joined with the youth. For that reason it is indispensable that the pastors who already have much experience in leading, learn now to jointly lead and be led by others. The older ones focused on “what” and “why”. That is, to take care that always in the church the eternal gospel is preached, for the glory of God and the extension of his kingdom. Meanwhile, we should leave with the youthful element the “how”, suggesting new ways to shepherd people, that our mission be relevant and pertinent for the current time.

Strategy #19: *Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you which one of your pastors you need to train to accompany you in a shared apostolic ministry.*

Strategy #20: *Challenge your pastors with the Word of God to raise up new pastors in each congregation. Help them to do so with scheduled concrete goals.*

6. Toward a leadership that is more flexible and healthy.

Vaters rightly says that this is a time for the pastors to change their rhythm. They responded to the new situation at an impressive speed. But they cannot continue all the time at that same speed without suffering consequences.

I like to say that it is time to move beyond the Jamaican rhythm to a Kenyan rhythm. The Jamaicans and the Kenyans are the fastest athletes on the planet. But the first are specialists in 100 meters, and the Africans are the best with the marathon. The ministry is not

a race of 100 meters, but a marathon. The rhythm of a marathon is slower. Not only is the ministry long, but this process of the pandemic is also slower. And we need a leadership that doesn't just respond to emergencies, but that leads the processes of change. The retreats that I propose to you with your pastors is for your leaders to become more reflexive and that they stay on the front line of the changes and not just to run when the occasion arises.

The rhythm also has to do with a healthier leadership: pastors that take care of their health. Our generation was not trained to be careful about our nourishment, or physical exercise, regular medical checkups, the necessary physical rest. We will have to change first, but also teach our pastors to do so. Many pastors, that didn't take care of their health, with excessive weight, sedentary life, became victims of the virus. Teaching them to take time for a rest is not sinful, but rather a biblical command.

Strategy #21: *Encourage your pastors to organize their agenda leaving space for family time, and time to do what they enjoy, even though it is not ministry.*

Strategy #22: *Take along to an encounter with your pastors a physician to talk to them about the importance of diet, exercise, rest, healthcare and checkups.*

7. Toward a leadership that inspires and liberates rather than a leadership that controls.

The church that is community that takes their mission forward in the dispersion has a heightened lever of liberty. Leadership that seeks to control everything will seem very limited or too stressful. In Genesis 1.1-2 we read that God had created the heavens and the earth but the earth was in a chaotic state: *disordered and empty*. It is in that chaos that the Holy Spirit moves and the creation acquires form and content. The moment of maximum creativity is in the union of chaos and order. Businesses today have a new form of organization which they call "chaordic". The order is the result of having the same vision and the same objectives, but each one is reached freely, in its own way. They say it is the most productive business organization.

The chaos of the new reality requires of us a "new-old" way of leading in the church: a ministry that is *chaordic*. Where the pastors align the people to carry out a common vision and objective, while leaving room for liberty so that each one in the diáspora handles it with creativity, in his own style. This type of conduction produces considerable insecurity to those accustomed to control, so that nothing is done in the church without our authorization. But it is the most productive way of corporate mission that we can handle in the new time. A leadership is forthcoming that is much less vertical. But the essence of Christian leadership is to inspire and liberate more than to control.

Strategy #23: *Plan an encounter of ministration with your pastors so that the Father's love might be perfected in them and will do away with all fear and control.*

8. Toward a leadership that lives and advances in unity

The pandemic created cracks that tend to separate the pastors in the cities. The politization of the crisis, the sanitary measures, the closing (sometimes partial) of the temples, the catastrophic eschatologies, the surging of individualistic leaderships that took advantage of the delays in the formal structures of unity, occupying positions of power, were some of the reasons that generated more division. On the other hand, these cities where the Pastoral Counsels, the Ministerial Fraternities, were functioning well, were a great help, providing accompaniment, orientation and strengthening. And these were the background for the appearance of some projects of common mission.

It was clearly shown that ministry that acts alone is one of the worst evils. And that all of us need close relationships, that are healthy, friendly with our peers. It is essential to teach our pastors to have close friends, find other pastors with whom they can share and in whom they can trust. And the same is true for the fulfillment of the mission in our nations. We live

in a broken world. There is a new dimension in the mission of the church: the reconstruction of ruins. And the unity of the church in mission is necessary to respond to such a challenge.

Strategy #24: *Create a Fraternity or Counsel of Pastors in your city if there is none.*

Strategy #25: *Ask your pastors if they have close friends and challenge them to have them. Encourage them to take part in groups of pastors in their city or create them..*

Strategy #26: *If you have an apostolic ministry of unity in your city, plan a retreat with the pastors and analyze the state of unity in your city, and move it forward.*

9. Toward a leadership with its own identity.

Someone has said that to be a pastor means that we all have to do the same thing. But that is against our nature, and contrary to the work of the Holy Spirit who gives us different charismas. The desire for success led many pastors to imitate the most successful pastors, losing their own identity and without being successful in the imitation. The virtual situation made all this evident. Because people will always choose the original rather than the copy. The worst thing has been that those pastors annulled the potential that God gave them to present a singular vision to their congregation, and align the believers with that vision. When we understand the concept of the church of the city and that each congregation is only a portion of the pie and not the whole thing, not only do we stop doing things that another congregation does better, but we understand something even more important, and it is that each congregation also has their own DNA, a unique task to perform, that no other congregation of the city can do. And God will put the people in that congregation that share that DNA.

Strategy #27: *Help your pastors to discover their unique ministerial fingerprint and to focus on that.*

10. Toward a church with a defined ethos.

It may be that clearly defining the congregational ethos is most important today. What is the soul, the DNA, the identity of your congregation? Culture is what we are. What we do may vary, but not what we are. The pastors should define very carefully the specific *ethos* and teach it always. In times of migration of the believers, changing their congregation, this is fundamental. The person who knows the identity of his church and is in agreement with the vision, develops a sense of belonging and is unlikely to change to another, even when the “show” of the other one is better.

Strategy #28: *Ask your pastors: When do you mention the name of your congregation, the people with whom you associate? Why do the people in your congregation feel the pride of belonging to that community? What gives them the feeling of being involved? How do they identify themselves? What is it that binds them to that congregation?*

Strategy #29: *Engage your pastors in an exercise to define the culture of your congregation with a foundation in the Word of God.*

Strategy #30: *Allow for practical ways to emerge in which those cultural values will be expressed in your congregations so as to promote them and reinforce them among the people.*

Conclusion:

A church that has developed like a machine to produce events, might find itself in a delicate situation now. A church that revolves around a professional clergy, or a dominant personality, will face difficulties. A church where the institutional aspect controls the rest and is stronger than the focus on community, will have problems. A church whose worship revolves around a model where 99% of the people are spectators, and 1% are protagonists at the front, faces a serious problem. A church in which what is done face-to-face is identical to what is seen virtually, will find it difficult to sustain the program.

If the complex of Community and Institution are properly related, where there is a significant work of the Holy Spirit, where there are networks of relationships and mission, and with a harmonious movement of union with *ecclesia* and mission in the *diáspora*, then we are in a marvelous situation of advance and growth for the church.

This a time to strengthen the community culture. When as part of that *ethos*, persons take preeminence over activities and programs and this is expressed in networks of relationships and mission, pastoring and serving people in their vast needs, the church will experience an exponential growth and a level of impact in the city like never before.

When as part of that corporate culture, the community is promoted rather than individualism, it will be a wonderful time for the church. Because what the people need the most is the community aspect.

When as part of that DNA of the church, there is liberty for every believer to be a protagonist, when this *chaordic* movement of the Spirit characterizes the mission, this will be a time of multiplication in the church. When we have an *ethos* that celebrates that charismatic undercurrent, with the risks implied for our institutional schemes, then this moment will be one of extraordinary richness. For when the institutional dimension is most limited, the temple is closed or semi-closed, where the clergy are not so exposed and visible, then that community dimension acquires a great richness if the people have that liberty, that chaotic order. For the church is a charismatic community, that is to say, *chaordic*.

If the culture of generosity and of solidarity becomes part of our *ethos*, with the strong emphasis on networks of relationships and mission, then the church as community will be dynamic. When in the soul of the church it is more blessed to give than to receive, then the people will be part of the community, not only to see how much better than can live; for now they will ask how to become part of this mission of Jesus in this world: how to heal a fractured world, how to rebuild a nation in ruins.

I believe there is coming a church more faithful to the Word and more synchronized with the Holy Spirit, with a strong passion and need for community, which gathers as *ecclesia*, not out of custom, but because they recognize that it is essential to experience sharing together with the rest, in a real and concrete way, and not behind the curtains, and with a mission fully developed by each one of the disciples.

God is not calling us to survive in difficult times, but to be a church that advances, transforming the reality of a broken world. Apostles and prophets are called to seek God to be able to guide the pastors to what I believe will be a glorious season for the church. For the church that responds to the needs of the people will bring more and more glory to the name of Jesus Christ. May it be so.