

*Slides Presented at the **New Leaven Discipleship Conference***

May 12, 2018 at Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Detroit

*This material supported a talk that sought to survey
the state of ministry in Catholic Parishes on
the deliberate work of disciple-formation.*

“What’s Happening in Parishes Now?”

*A glimpse from the viewpoint of
ministry in Southeastern Michigan*

This presentation

With little data available...

- Overview of the programs
- Reflection on what we're seeing
- A closer looking at discipleship
- Some closing observations

Parishes Riding the Wave - **Encounters**

- Alpha
- ChristLife
- Life in the Spirit Seminar
- Christ Renews His Parish (Now, “Welcome”)
- Cursillo

Other encounters...

- *the wind blows where it will (Jn 3:8)*
- (but usually not out of thin air)

Few parishes committing to an annual cycle of **Encounter**

Though not common yet, it does seem to...

- gradually change the parish culture
- build up lay ministry thru service on teams
- provide a stage for discerning lay leaders
- bring experience for praying the Spirit's release
- raise boldness for taking the Gospel outdoors
- incubate small groups that wish to continue

Small Groups that extend their **Encounter**

- **Alpha** – Marriage and Prayer courses
- **ChristLife** – Following, Sharing Christ
- **Life in the Spirit** – Basic Christian Maturity
- **CHRP (Welcome)** – Team re-involvement
- **Cursillo** – Group Reunions and Ultreyas

Small Groups that convene using other materials

- **Bible studies**, for example
 - Ascension Press
 - FORMED... The Augustine Institute
 - Walking with Purpose
 - Word Among Us Press
 - St. Benedict Press
 - Etc.

Small Groups that convene using other materials

- **Faith Sharing / Mentoring**, for example
 - Arise, International
 - The Evangelical Catholic
 - Dynamic Catholic
 - Word Among Us
 - Ignatius Press
 - Our Sunday Visitor

Small Groups that convene using other materials

- **Catholic Catechesis**, for example
 - FORMED (the Augustine Institute)
 - Symbolon's "Knowing... Living",
 - The Wild Goose series, etc.
 - Catholic living, via several media
 - Word-on-Fire
 - "Catholicism Study Program"
 - Dynamic Catholic
 - their popular books, as small group studies

Estimating the extent of Encounters & Small-Group followups

- 15% of AoD parishes may have offered an encounter
- $\frac{1}{2}$ of these parishes –have done it only once or twice
- less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of encounter parishes have an annual cycle
- Perhaps $\frac{1}{4}$ of participants go on as small groups
- Virtually zero pursue an intentional discipleship

Apparent Characteristics of Small Groups-after-Encounter

- They like being together
- They like getting more deliberate about God
- They love getting Scripture & Catholic teaching
- Apparent shortcomings:
 - Small group leaders facilitate, but don't guide
 - People commit to participate, but
 - People don't commit to accountability
 - Parish leadership seems to lack vision in this area
 - Very few pastors or lay leaders have ever been there

Materials for individual growth

- **Personal-use products**, for example:
 - Books – a host of Catholic publishers
 - Audio materials...notably, Lighthouse Media, Renewal Ministries, etc.
 - Family materials...notably on FORMED
 - Devotional aids...dozens of sources
 - Publisher-hosted blogs

Other examples of Grace for **Discipleship**

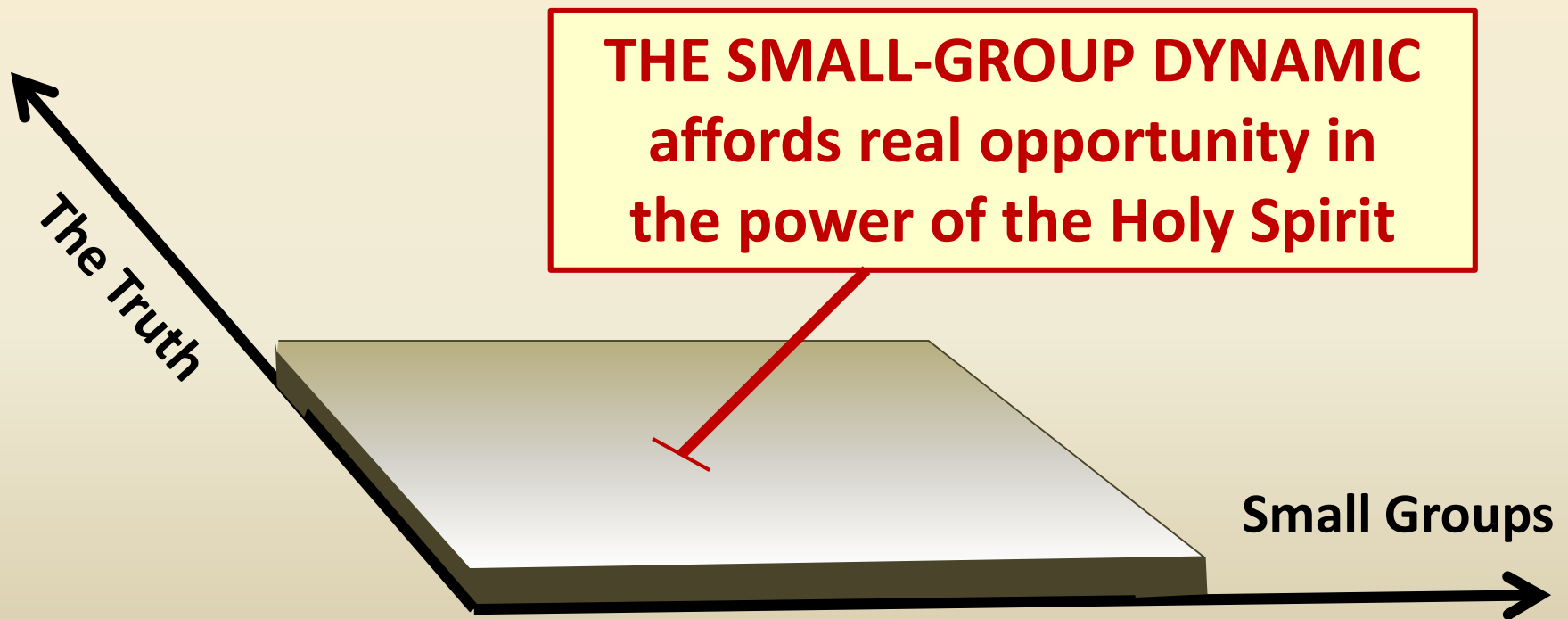
- **Called & Gifted** – *Catherine of Siena Institute*
- **Unbound** – *Heart of the Father Ministries*
- **Evangeliz'n Training** – *St. Paul's Street Evang.
Companions of the Cross*
- **Established ministries** to the poor, infirmed
- **Unleash the Gospel**– *Archdiocese of Detroit*

Most especially, these three
are the primary opening
for Catholic **Discipleship**

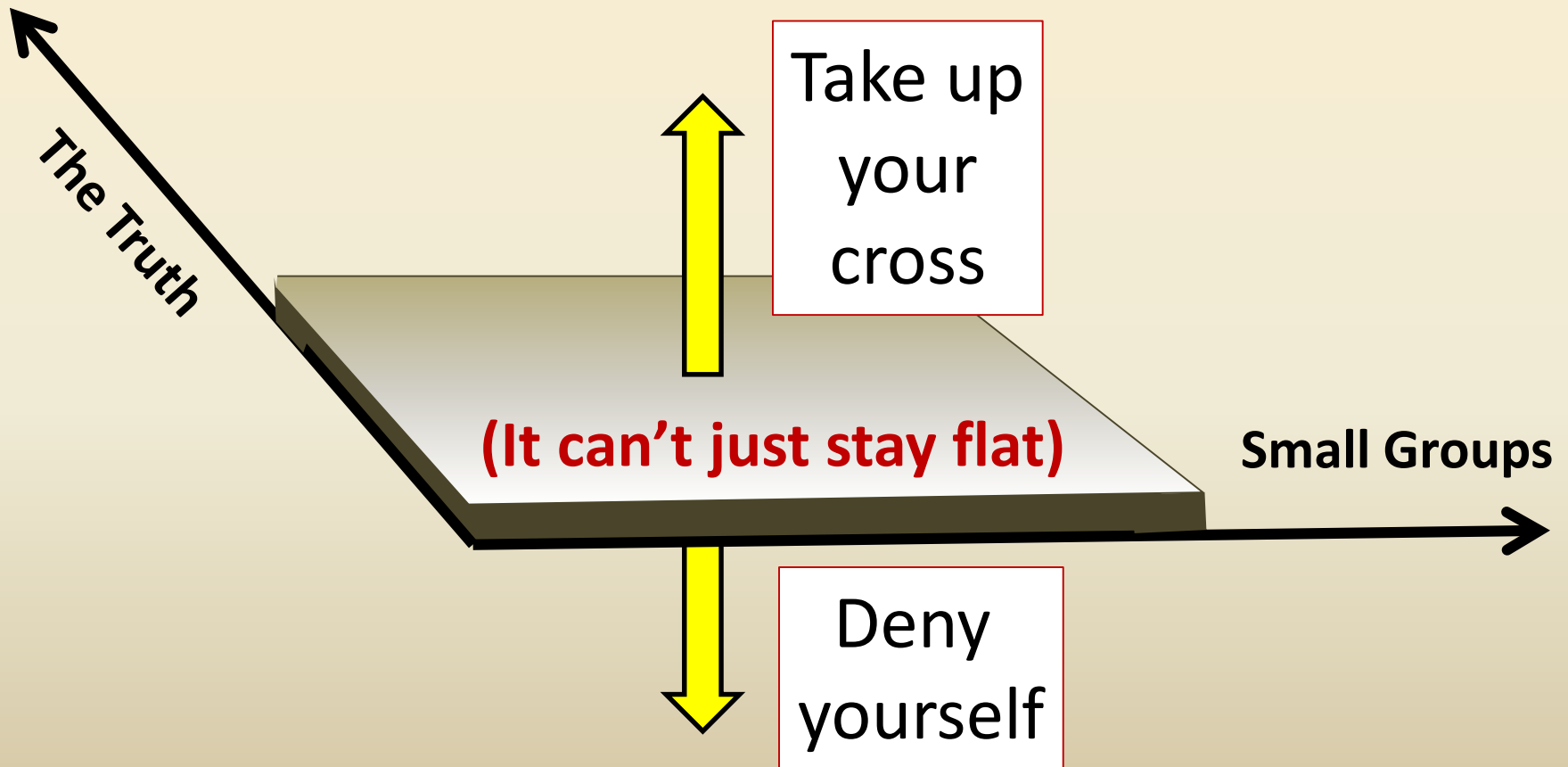
- 1) **Personal Encounters** that can:
 - *reveal Jesus, change a life*
 - *release the Spirit, empower a life*
- 2) **Media-panorama of Catholic Truth**
- 3) **Small Groups – a vital communion**

Celebrating The Truth in Small Groups

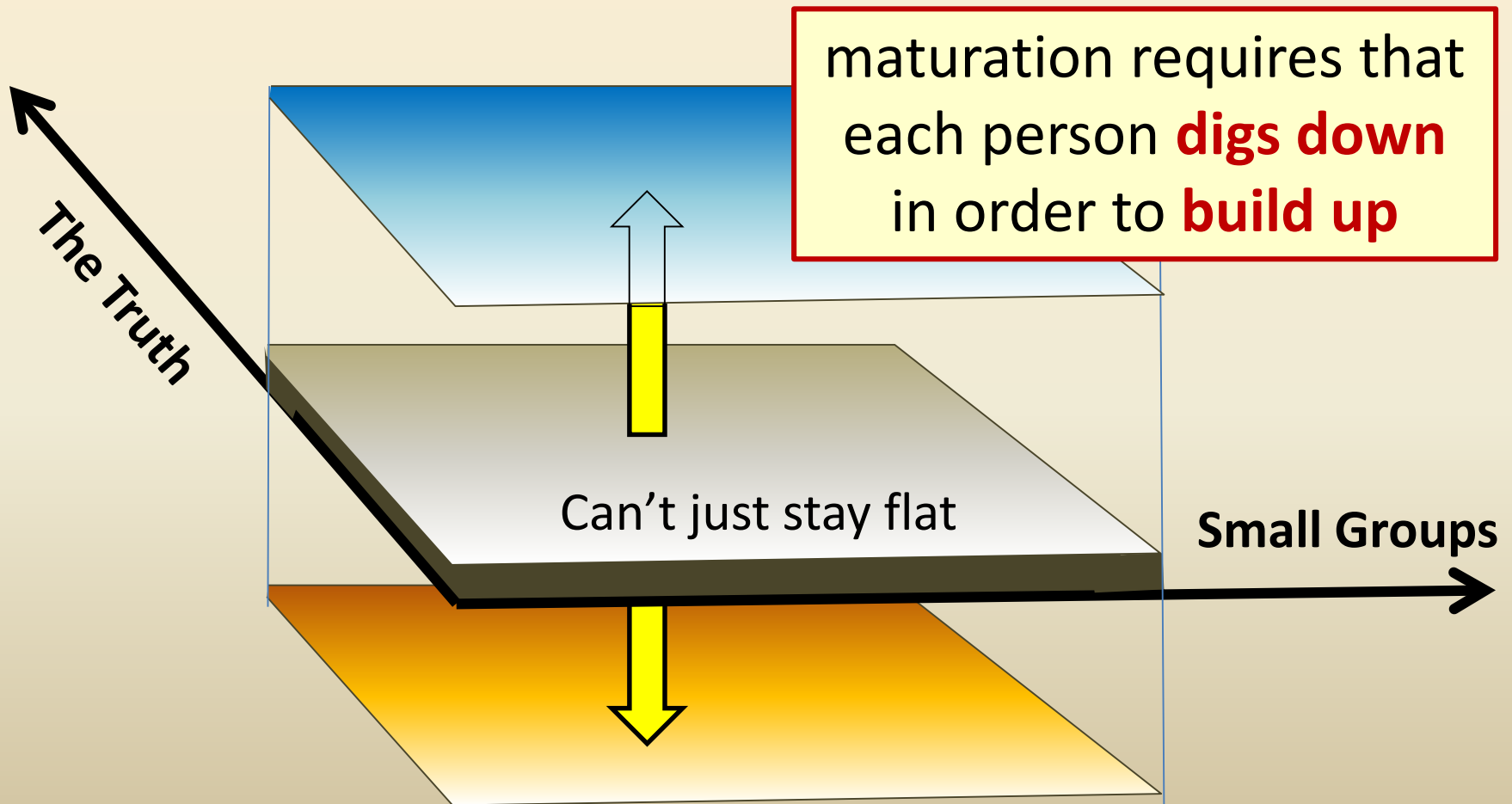
It's a Setup for **Discipleship**



Discipleship must proceed way
beyond the comfort of a group



Discipleship – digging & building



Discipleship begins going down

‘Anyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them is like the person who, in building a house,

dug deeply
and laid the foundation on rock’. (Lk 6:48)

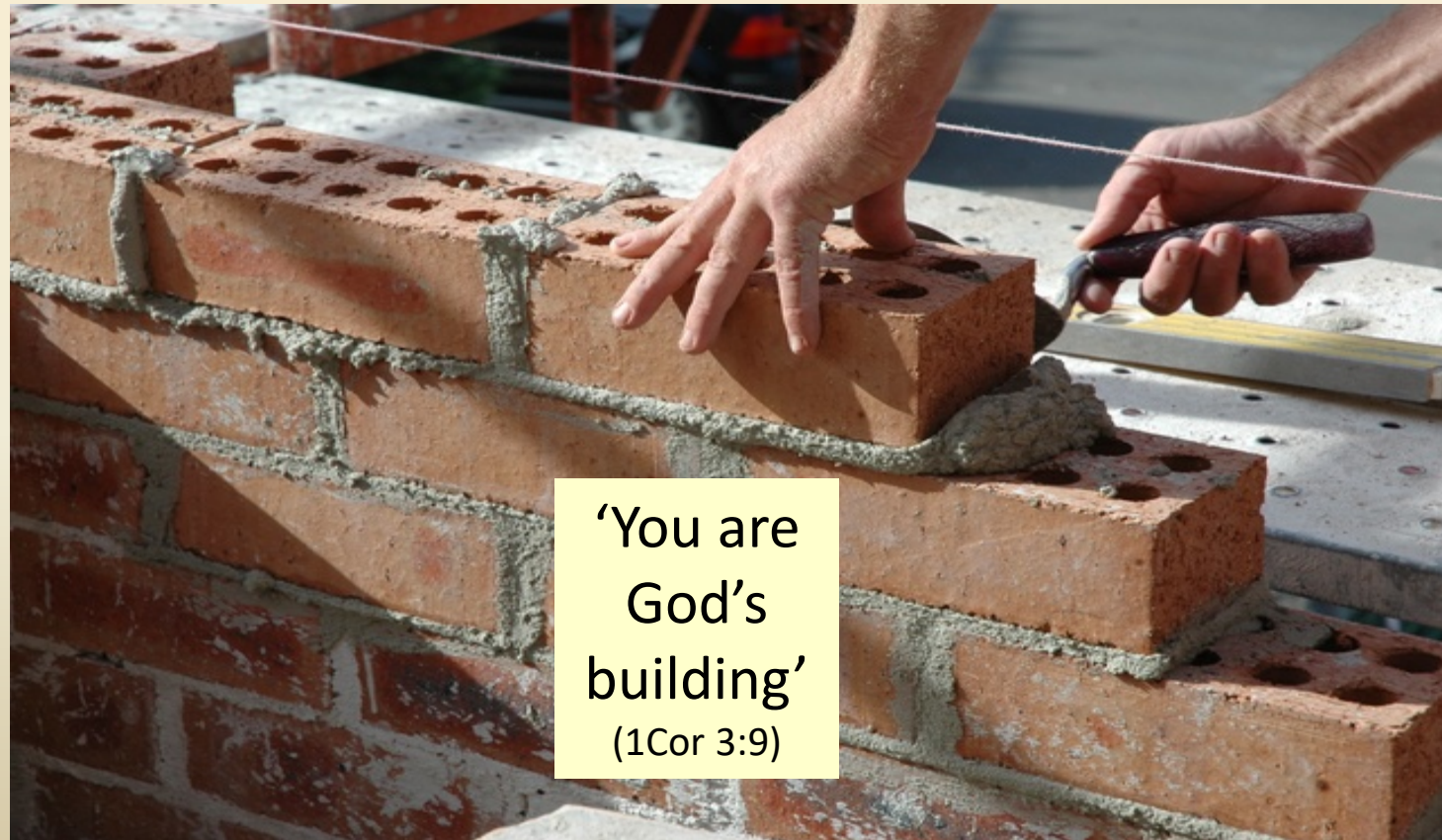


Discipleship must be foundational,
‘like a wise master builder...’ (1Cor 3:10)




Once we've dug
down, we can build up

*‘Let each **(Disciple)** take care
how he builds... for his work
will be tested’* (1Cor 3:10, 13)



*‘You are
God’s
building’*
(1Cor 3:9)

New Leaven is deliberate in establishing a firm foundation upon which to build a Disciple



*'That God might
present you holy...
and persevering
in the faith, firmly
grounded, stable,
and not shifting
from the hope of
the gospel.'*

(Col 1:23)

In Closing

- A lot is happening, by Grace!
- Encounters expanding—Discipleship next
- Parishes are inexperienced, lacking vision
- There will be a need for:
 - Discipleship ministries, such as New Leaven
 - Patience for digging foundations
 - Pastoral guidance for the new disciples
 - Formation of lay leaders for co-responsibility