

RESULTS OF OUR PARISH RENEWAL-- "ONE IN THE SPIRIT"

As discussed by Father Nolker at all Masses this weekend, this written report details the progress of our Parish Renewal project that commenced last Fall. This Renewal effort was initiated by Pastoral Council and Father Nolker in order to better understand opinions, concerns and issues that you the parishioners have about our parish. We wanted to know what you think.

Lots of Hard Work and Broad Participation. More than 400 of you turned out for enthusiastic participation in the Input Sessions last fall. Many others provided written input. The Renewal Committee worked diligently to review and catalog the more than 4300 pieces of data collected during the initial process. Additional volunteers spent hours to help catalogue it. More data was collected in later surveys.

We appreciate the time and thoughtful responses you provided. We listened to all of it and we heard what you said! The renewal process was designed to renew our commitment to each other to be "One in the Spirit" in our parish life and your input will help us move toward that goal.

Careful Organization of the Input. The Renewal Committee with the help from volunteers identified themes from the input sessions. As we reported in December, several key themes identified for renewal were (1) Worship including Music; (2) Youth of the Parish, including more youth involvement and greater connection between parish and school; and (3) Parish Leadership. Detailed recommendations within these 3 themes and 5 other themes are summarized below.

Actions Going Forward. Everyone wants to know what is really going to happen now. The Renewal Committee recommended to Pastoral Council and Council in turn recommended to Father Nolker a number of actions. In some instances these recommendations can be implemented fairly quickly. Many will require more work and study in order to fully consider and implement them properly. This work will be done by Task Force groups that are currently being set up. These task forces will report to Father and he will provide regular updates on activities and progress to Pastoral Council and to you, the full parish (via bulletin and website).

Some of the specific recommendations can be acted upon very soon. For example:

- * To address a top priority noted last Fall, we will begin immediately looking at our music at Masses with the intention of addressing the parish desire for enhancing our liturgical experience.
- * We will begin investigating spiritual renewal programs for the whole parish. We think this can happen this summer with plans to begin the program in 2010.
- * We can initiate weekly Faith Formation programs on basic Catholic teachings in September.
- * We will immediately begin encouraging all parish organizations to pray and do "Faith Formation" at each of their meetings and/or activities.
- * This summer we will solicit email addresses from all parishioners to enter them in a data base. This will enable greatly improved methods of communicating important information about all aspects of parish life to all parishioners.



Special Thanks. We want to take this opportunity to again thank all of you who participated in the renewal process. Your input is invaluable to helping our parish grow both spiritually and as a community of God. Father Nolker is personally very pleased with your participation and encouraged by your enthusiasm and commitment. He is committed to leading the implementation of as many of the recommendations as are feasible, and plan to do so as quickly as possible.

Special thanks goes to the Renewal Committee – Ray Heyob, Karen Orth, Rich Harmeyer, Kati Miller, Al Piller, Beth Koenig and Blaise Kah – as well as all the volunteers who assisted them. Without their dedicated work and long hours this process could not have come to this point.

What it will truly take for success. Please understand that not everything can be done at once and not everything will be done in exactly the way each of us expects. We will all need to be patient and prayerful, seeking God's guidance as actions are researched and then implemented. We must be prudent so as to do well each thing that we do.

Yes, these recommendations will often require change; change for all of us. We must be prepared to accept these changes and be guided and strengthened by the Holy Spirit through this process.

Most importantly, these efforts will only be successful with the continued enthusiasm and commitment of ALL parishioners to gracefully accept change and to actively support and participate in the programs that will be part of this renewal process. The enthusiasm and participation we saw last Fall was exciting/ heartening, and we look forward to the continuation of this positive energy. a great start, and it must continue now.

Please look for and support the actions that will be undertaken over the coming weeks and months. Please join me in praying for the continued success of our parish community, the greater church, and community of God to which we all belong. Together we can be “One in the Spirit”.

Parish Leadership Recommendations

Objective: Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of parish leadership at St. James, resulting in a more aligned and connected parish community.

Indicated Actions:

- Relaunch parish vision (with the goal of Improved awareness of parish vision and the essential works of Church).
- Increase priest visibility in priority areas of the parish (with the goal of understanding of clerical activities; improved empathy and clergy connections in parish).
 - Continue to increase clergy involvement at school and with targeted ministries.
 - Awareness of the breadth of clergy activities and responsibilities. “A day in the life” approach...
 - Develop plan to effectively improve “one to many” communications.



- Support for our parish clergy.
 - Interview our clergy to understand what support for their vocation looks like.
 - Develop welcome/onboarding plan that would be used for any new clergy. Execute this plan with our current clergy (better late than never).
 - One possible example: organize periodic social gatherings with small groups with clergy to help build individual relationships.
 - Over time, this effort could expand to active support for growing vocations.
 - Over time, this effort could expand to active support for parish staff.

Worship Recommendations – Music

Objective: To improve the music ministry at St James parish by forming a committee to address the needs of the parish while following liturgical guidelines

Indicated Actions:

- "Musical scavenger hunt" to investigate the musical styles of nearby parishes and other appropriate sources to determine what best suits St James. Based upon this scavenger hunt, and after consultation with current musicians at St. James, the music ministry subcommittee is asked to consider bringing in a number of outside groups of different musical styles later this year to provide music on a guest basis at St. James Masses. The committee shall then make a specific recommendation to Pastoral Council and Father Nolker later this year on what type of group to add or what to change, based upon what music best suits St. James.
- Music selection within the accepted guidelines that offer parishioners a variety of styles, encourage participation and provide inspiration to the congregation
- * Review role of cantor program.
- Scheduling music groups and musicians; establishing a scheduled rotation of the various groups so that a variety of musical styles can be experienced by all of the parishioners•
- Announcing music selections by the cantor or organist

Worship Recommendations – Mass

Objective: To improve the function of the current Worship Commission in order to ensure that the Mass at St James better meets the spiritual needs of the parishioners while acknowledging liturgical guidelines.

Indicated Actions:

- Define the role of the Worship Commission



- Perform a worship review of our weekend services using an approved assessment tool
- Develop and implement an educational program for all lay ministers
- Develop and implement an educational program for the parish regarding the Mass
- Address the pace of the Mass without changing the integrity of the Mass
- Encourage parish organizations to attend Mass together and be recognized from the pulpit
- Discuss and execute a Mass that encourages youth participation and attendance

Communications Recommendations

Objective: To improve the coordination and content of Parish communications. Appoint a member of Parish Council to be the “Communications Leader” responsible for all aspects of Parish communications.

Indicated Actions:

- Establish a Welcoming Committee who would develop a “Welcome to the Parish” packet containing current information about Parish Ministries, Organizations, and current initiatives. Meet with new Parishioners and tour the total facility, church and school, introducing them to parish staff, the priests, and school principal. Develop an exit interview process for those who leave the parish. By Oct. '09
- Update the documents, booklet, web site, bulletin, containing information about parish ministries and organizations. Have routine pulpit announcements to highlight current events/ activities and recognize special or group accomplishments at mass. By Aug. '09.
- Initiate a project to get all parishioners with an Email address into a St. James system by Feb. '10. Continually promote the use of the St. James Web site.
- Establish, by Oct. '09, a facilitated quarterly forum, open to all parishioners, where the parish leadership (Pastor, Parish Council, Office staff) can communicate the direction of the parish, current progress, and invite dialog.

Youth Recommendations

Objective: To improve the youth ministry at St James Parish by forming a committee to address the needs of the youth of the Parish. And, to increase the connectivity between the Parish priests and the school and school children.



Indicated Actions:

- Appoint or hire a youth coordinator
- Youth Coordinator consults with surrounding Parish youth ministers for ideas / advice
- Youth Coordinator links together various groups that serve the youth of the Parish
- Survey youth of our Parish to find areas of interest
- Designate a specific Mass time that encourages youth involvement
- Provide opportunities for priests to interact with children
 - Priests can walk around school and greet children in the morning
 - Priests can walk around playground during recess
 - Invite priests to teach religion classes
 - Invite priests to present awards in school
 - Invite priests to come to school to watch plays and assemblies

Outreach Recommendations

Objective: Form an outreach committee to oversee and coordinate outreach efforts in the parish and to improve communication and offer outreach to our community of St. James and beyond.

Indicated Actions:

- There is solid interest in making Circle of Care an active program at St. James. Many parishioners would like to see it regain its effectiveness. Contact current volunteers and name a chairperson.
- Create a list of ongoing outreach programs in the parish. Publish a list and a calendar. Update the bulletin board in lower west vestibule with current outreach projects.

Volunteerism Recommendations

Objective: To effectively place volunteers into positions for which they are suited. To increase awareness of volunteer opportunities and to recognize volunteers for what their efforts.

Indicated Actions:

- Appoint a volunteer coordinator (VC)
- VC contacts leaders of volunteer organization of the parish to learn about their purpose, activities, current volunteers and volunteer needs
- VC solicits volunteers where needed through various communication forms
- VC keeps current records of all volunteer organizations, their leaders and their volunteers



- Parish Leaders recognize parish volunteers or parish groups from the pulpit
- Parish volunteers are recognized in the bulletin and Parish News Life. Groups would be asked to submit information about their group to the office. Office staff would be responsible for featuring a weekly highlight in the bulletin by a Parish group.

Faith Formation Recommendations

Objective: Provide help to the faith formation leader by forming a Faith Formation Committee.

Indicated Actions:

- Based on the survey results and references, the committee should consider:
 - Starting a “Christ Renews His Parish” program or a “Renew” program
 - Work with the Archdiocese on recommended programs
 - Offer programs at different times, probably during the day and the evening
 - Prescreen programs with parishioners, prior to choosing
 - Find out what has been popular at other parishes

Spirituality Recommendations

Spirituality is considered very important to our parish's future. Input sessions and survey data indicate that for a majority of parishioners “St. James is in a spiritual drought.” Most people want to “Leave Mass uplifted spiritually and with a smile on their face.” The hope is that “We grow as a community and that we are able to live out our Catholic faith more thoroughly.” For 95% of people, receiving Eucharist is the most important part of their spiritual life. Parishioners agreed that “Spirituality includes a welcoming environment in the church, parish office, school, sporting events, etc.” Community outreach is an important part of individual’s spirituality.

Indicated Actions:

- Mass is the main focus of spirituality. Improve Liturgy so that parishioners have a deeper spiritual experience at Mass.
- Offer a program for spiritual renewal such as “Christ Renews His Parish.” This is a copyrighted parish renewal process that has existed since 1969 and is recommended by the renewal office of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops . . .
- Encourage all groups and organizations at St. James to pray before all meetings. This could come from the Pastor and be directed to all chairs of such groups. This moment of prayer gives us a chance to pause and reflect how God is alive and active in our lives.
- Priests bless groups at Mass such as teen drivers, expectant mothers or young people.
- Offer Reconciliation more often to increase accessibility of the sacrament. Possibly offer the sacrament during the week.



- Organize prayer groups and a prayer chain. The prayer chain could be connected with Circle of Care or as an email chain.
- St. James to “adopt” missionaries religious orders or seminarians and/or a sister parish.
- Create a reading group to discuss various spiritual writings.
- Encourage parish organizations to share Mass together and be recognized from the pulpit.

Parish Renewal Key Themes

