

St. Mary's Pastoral Council

Pastoral Council Update - December 17, 2014

Andy Leech, Pastoral Council Chair

One of our objectives as the pastoral council is to enhance communication with and among parishioners at St Mary Church. A specific task that Fr. Marion charged the council with is the publication of a quarterly update of the goals and directions we discuss and recommend for the Pastor's consideration. Following is a synopsis of pastoral council thoughts and actions since late August.

In our first meeting with Fr. Marion we considered three questions: 1) What do we see as our vision for the parish; 2) What brings us joy; and 3) In the year that Fr. Marion is with us, what one proactive thing can we do to address any struggles we see?

Vision: be authentic and welcoming; hospitable; widow and youth opportunities; volunteer and support financially; maintain beautiful liturgical tradition; enrich what we have and are; turn our flame into a fire and really build a loving community—see and promote the good

Joy: being part of a community; fellowship; the Mass; volunteering; relationships and seeing children serving the parish; turning individual joy into unity; our many children and the importance of nourishing welcoming their parents

Goal: maintain our beautiful facility; create more opportunities for gathering; change the parish image within the community; pastoral interaction with children; achieve unity and peace by increasing the capacity to forgive and build community as referenced in our mission statement.

During our September meeting we considered four roles of the pastoral council.

- Develop and live the mission of the parish
- Form community as a sign and witness of unity for the larger parish community
- Recommend parish priorities, directions and policies
- Promote communication and understanding within the parish and beyond

This conversation led to recognition that the spiritual life of the parish is largely reflected in the nearly 40 apostolates, ministries and programs conducted by St. Mary parishioners. To better understand these activities and to enhance communication and demonstrate support, the council has undertaken to contact the chairs/program leads and understand their joys, challenges and aspirations. The intent is to develop a basis for program recommendations for consideration by the pastor and finance council.

When the pastoral and finance councils met jointly with Fr. Marion at our early October retreat, we spent much of our time considering our parish apostolates and which of the five components of an ideal faith community they most supported. These components are community life, catechesis of the mind, sacramental and devotional life, moral formation and evangelization/mission. In each area we sought to identify programs that would benefit by enhanced attention.

- Community life: new parishioner welcome
- Catechesis of the mind: revitalized youth group program
- Sacramental and devotional life: more volunteers as Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist
- Evangelization and mission: commitment to Faith on Fire as a means of sharing our faith and spiritual outreach

As we further consider our conversations with apostolate and program leads, the council will attempt to discern possible parish priorities and directions. Early in the New Year the council will sponsor a meal and get-together with these parish leaders to have a broader conversation about the life of the parish. In the meantime, please feel free to contact any of the pastoral council members (Leilane Carabba, Lisa Schwab, Ben Thomas or Andy Leech) if you have questions, comments or recommendations. As an aside, you'll note there are only four active members of the council—if you feel a calling to serve, Fr. Marion or any council member would be delighted to talk with you.