

“Now is the time...”

June, 2011

Saint Joseph Parish
Libertyville, Illinois

Our Parish Covenant: a brochure for your review

See Covenant on pages 6 and 7

*“We want to listen to our whole faith tradition,
church teaching...and ask, “What is the Spirit
saying to us as a community of faith?”*

- Rev. John Hennessey

Covenant
Explored
p. 2

The
“Top Ten”
on
Covenant
p. 3

Q and A
on
Covenant
(see back
cover)

What you
expect...
the details
pp. 4-5
and
pp. 8-11

History in Brief

1. Twenty-six months ago, in March 2009, Fr. John Hennessey requested that the Parish Pastoral Council look at and plan for the future of the parish.
2. *Growing an Engaged Church* was selected to address Fr. John’s request and at the same time assess the spiritual health of the parish.
3. Over 1,900 parishioners participated in the Joe! Study. This study was designed to comprehensively assess parishioner engagement.
4. The Joe! Study results raised questions. Focus groups were conducted. The follow-up Mini-Study further clarified parishioner expectations of one another and the parish.
5. These Expectations are the basis for the Covenant.

For more complete information, history, and background,
see our parish website under “Covenant”.

www.stjoseph-libertyville.org

What is a covenant?

A covenant is a prayer, a declaration, a celebration, a promise and recognition of who we are called and empowered to be by God, and what we are calling from ourselves and one another as a community. Our faith tradition is rich with acts of covenants made by God.

Covenants are a part of our history in scripture and tradition!

As we enter into our St. Joseph Covenant, it is important to remember that we have a history of covenants that have resulted in clear expressions of God's love and calls for action by his people. It has been noted in other research that there are 300 covenant references in the Bible. The notable covenants in the Bible include:

- The covenant with Noah
- The covenant with Abraham (and his descendants)
- The covenant with Moses (and the Israelites)
- The covenant with David (his lineage) and
- The covenant fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:20
1 Corinthians 11:25)

The prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah remind and challenge us to remember His Love, to be actively engaged in our part of the covenant.

- They shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will make with them an eternal covenant, never to cease doing good to them (Jeremiah 32:40).
- I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice, I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations (Isaiah 42:6).

*May we find our "covenant" moment joyful as we remember and strive to become the parish that is **His** light to our community.*

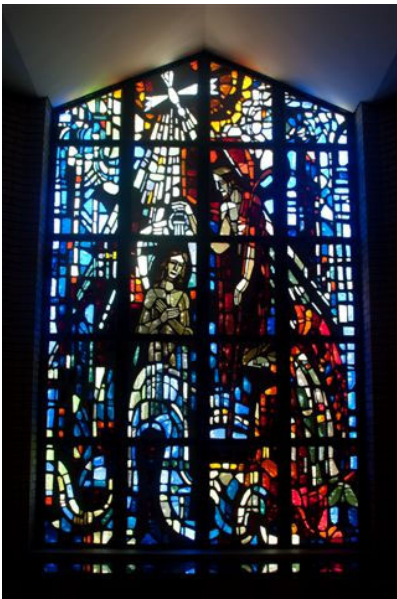
Why present a covenant?

Why present a covenant? A “Top Ten” List:

1. *Covenants unambiguously call out great love, and affirm the greater Love of God.*
2. *Covenants are core to our faith tradition (Abraham, Noah, Moses, Jesus).*
3. *Covenants clarify and embrace expectations and beliefs.*
4. *Covenants serve to focus and renew the mission and vision of a community of faith.*
5. *Covenants candidly declare we are a community in relationship and faith (both between God and His people and among His people.)*
6. *A covenant signing promotes added prayer, reflection and ownership of one’s individual role in a community of faith.*
7. *Covenants call God’s people to an even greater awareness of our significance and meaning as a community.*
8. *Covenants offer a healthy, renewing, and direct invitation to grow... and the invitation to sign asks for a celebratory, affirming, and simple RSVP.*
9. *“I have called you by name, and you are mine!”
Covenants openly “hit the refresh button”
and affirm all as daughters and sons of God!*
10. *A signed covenant engages the mind, heart, attention of the signers! The covenant signing calls for and signals an added collective community movement.*

Reflections on Your Chosen Expectations

“In living out this covenant, I promise to welcome you as I have been welcomed by Christ...”



“I will be kind and welcoming to all.”

“Welcome others as you would welcome Christ.”

- The Rule of Saint Benedict

At first glance, this expectation may seem so obvious that some may wonder why so many of us selected it. In scores of ways, it is more challenging than we may immediately realize. Many parishioners live and express this spirit of kindness and welcoming! But, while the following may represent common sense, common sense doesn't always mean common practice.

“I will participate in the celebration of Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days.”

Wait a minute! Isn't this an obligation? Indeed it is. But there is an extraordinary emphasis in our chosen expectation for us as a local faith community. For Saint Joseph Parishioners, this goes beyond the familiar world of Catholic obligation and duty. This goes beyond the third commandment. In this chosen expectation, we are reaffirming our identity as a Eucharistic Community. This is our core!

“I will seek out opportunities to grow in my faith.”

The trick here is remembering that the Spirit is generous and works in a number of ways to promote growth! The process, the classes, the service, the prayer styles or approaches that work for you may not work for others... one could be in the terrible comparison trap of saying, “I should be more like them;” or “they should do what I do the way I do it.”

...our parish covenant

“I will bring my God-given talents, gifts and strengths to the service of others.”

“You are the light of the world. No one lights a lamp and keeps it under a bushel.”

- Jesus of Nazareth

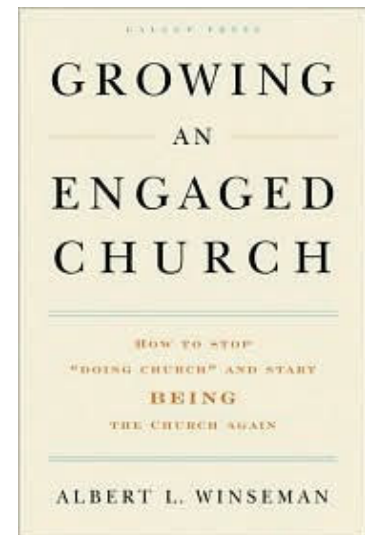
We are calling one another to discover, appreciate, and take action! Name the gifts, the strengths, the talents. Use them in the service of others! In the life of a Christian, it is dangerous not to do so. The dangers: mediocrity, unfriendliness, boredom, and emptiness. For many, it is easier to see talents and strengths in others. Many times we confidently identify our failings, limits and weaknesses but we struggle in naming our gifts.

“I will maintain an open heart and spirit by embracing the unique challenges and needs of others.”

“Maintain an open heart and spirit.” How do you do that? Jesus offers a number of clues. Jesus embraces. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus meets others in their condition, in their story. There is a seeing, listening, beholding, the extension of a hand, touching, contact, words said, positive intuition, forgiveness, the act of healing. This requires observation, consideration, taking into account, and positively regarding one another. More deeply, in our chosen expectation we imply **a call for compassion.**



For more complete background on The Joe! Study, see Albert L. Winseman's *Growing an Engaged Church.*



St. Joseph Catholic Church Our Parish Covenant June, 2011

Expectations of Ourselves

- I will be kind and welcoming to all.
- I will participate in the celebration of Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days.
- I will seek out opportunities to grow in my faith.
- I will bring my God-given talents, gifts and strengths to the service of others.
- I will maintain an open heart and spirit by embracing the unique challenges and needs of others.

We celebrate the covenant God chose

to make with us in baptism! Through his Son, Jesus the Christ, we are bound to God and to one another in love. God has given us this extraordinary gift of grace! This enables us to be God's sons and daughters, brothers and sisters in Jesus. We are therefore covenantated to one another; together in the grace of God, sharing our lives of faith. As the author of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah:

“This is the covenant I will establish with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord:
I will put my laws in their minds and

I will write them upon their hearts.

I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”
(Hebrews 8:10)

In living out this covenant then, I promise to welcome you as I have been welcomed by Christ; embracing you no matter where you are on life's journey, no matter how different you may be from me. To give voice to this covenant and to celebrate our common faith, I commit to participating with you at the table of the Lord on all Sundays and Holy Days.

In order to continue growing in the covenant God has made with us, I commit to growing in my faith with you, my brothers and sisters, understanding that this growing in faith includes a life-long journey of study, learning, prayer and service.

As a steward, I will develop and share **the talents and strengths God has given me.** Through Confirmation and Eucharist I am called to serve you, my brothers and sisters, to the glory of God. I will extend and deepen my heart by embracing others in their unique challenges and needs, whether in the parish, the community, or the world. I know that I am incapable of living out this covenant on my own, but only with the grace of God can I be faithful. I pray that I will respond in faithfulness to **God's grace.** In the words of Saint Paul:

“Our qualification comes from God, who has indeed qualified us as ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; **for the Spirit gives life.**”
(2 Corinthians 3:6)

As a community of believers we together will nurture, celebrate and teach one another about the Good News of Jesus and the Kingdom of God. Among our promises we will collectively focus on our youth and our young families. We also commit ourselves to life-long faith formation and development by supporting religious education of children, youth, young adults and adults of all ages. With an open heart, we look out for one another, no matter what the challenges or needs. We will honor and respect each other's unique journeys of faith and embrace our diversity.

We will engage our mission, vision and resources in accordance with these promises, aware that none can be accomplished without God's grace and favor. We remember the words from Deuteronomy:

Understand, then, that the LORD, your God, is God indeed, **the faithful God** who keeps his merciful covenant down to the thousandth generation toward those who love him and keep his commandments. (Deuteronomy 7:9)

Expectations of Our Parish

- We will demonstrate respect for all parishioners and their unique journeys of faith.
- We will continue to use Religious Education and St. Joseph School to facilitate spiritual growth in children and families.
- We will focus on youth, young adults and young families of our parish to build for the future.
- We will maintain an open heart and spirit to embracing the unique challenges and needs of one another.
- We will grow the community and friendship dimensions of our life together as a parish.

Now is the time...

“We will demonstrate respect for all parishioners and their unique journeys of faith.”

All of us have experiences that changed our lives and our relationships, times in our life when we truly experienced the presence of God. We all have such stories.

The demonstration of respect is an important component in recognizing our individual journeys of faith. It requires we first acknowledge our paths are different but all of us are all on a journey of faith. Together we are a rich mosaic of various and unique experiences.

Whatever our walk or stage in life, within the Saint Joseph community, **there is vastness to our diversity.** There is a need for us to acknowledge and appreciate our differences. Telling the story of these journeys is critical. Hearing the real story of a person’s experience of God and life stages leads the listener to a more active Christian awareness. Christian awareness is foundational to truly “demonstrating respect.” In order to do this, the parish is called to provide safe and accepting places where parishioners can share their stories.

“Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.” - Benedict XVI



“We will
honor and
respect each
other’s
unique
journeys of
faith and
embrace our
diversity.”



Reflections on Your Chosen Expectations



“We will continue to use St. Joseph School and Religious Education to facilitate spiritual growth in children and families.”



This chosen expectation reflects the importance our community places on the religious education and spiritual growth of the children at St. Joseph Parish. As in academic education, the parents are the primary teachers of the religious education and spiritual growth of their children.



It is the partnership between home, school and church that builds on the foundation the parents have established. As a community, we are stating this is an area where resources need to continually be directed.



We are blessed that our School and Religious Education Program are supported by professionals and 140 parishioners who feel called to support families in the spiritual growth of over 1,700 students in both programs.

Reflections on Your Chosen Expectations

“Among our promises we will collectively focus on our youth and our young families.”



“We will focus on youth, young adults and young families of our parish to build for the future.”

A recurring theme in the focus group discussions and the responses from the mini-study has been the need to focus on three groups: the youth, young adults and young families of our parish.

As a parish, we seem to be keenly aware of the need to concentrate our time, energy and resources on those who are our future. This expectation calls all of us to participate in creating an environment that welcomes, celebrates and supports our youth.

This is a clear and demanding expectation. This “focus” designates a call to careful thought and action and will precipitate a dynamic venture for our parish. This expectation focuses on three groups with a common theme: the young.



Reflections on Your Chosen Expectations

“We will maintain an open heart and spirit to embracing the unique challenges and needs of one another.”

The author and teacher Fr. Ronald Rolheiser put it simply and strongly: “We are one of two things for others in all we do. We are either a blessing, or a curse.” Being a people of blessing has a particular purposeful look and feel to it: positive, engaging, supportive, affirming, embracing, forgiving, courageous honesty tempered by compassion; these are all deliberate and intentional attitudes.



“We will grow the community and friendship dimensions of our life together as a parish.”

Your chosen expectation does not call for the empty image of community or the idea of it. Image-making is easy! Also, you are not calling for shallow or superficial friendships. You expect real community and real friendship for real people. (“Real beef: it’s what for dinner!”) Jesus calls us to this kind of authenticity. (He might say, “Real community: I’m in with you!”)



“Grow community... friendship... life together.” These are powerful words that demand potent strategies in order to facilitate this kind of growth.

You're Invited, We're Invited!

Covenant Signing on Ascension Sunday

Some RSVP Q and A

In prayer, respect, reverence, and delight, you are invited to sign our parish covenant on June 4th and 5th.

*Dear Saint Joseph
Parishioners,*

*In prayer, respect,
reverence, and
delight, you are
joyfully invited
to sign our
parish covenant
during mass,
June 4th and 5th,
2011*

What is a covenant? A covenant is a prayer, a declaration, a celebration, a promise and recognition of who we are called and empowered to be by God, and what we are calling for from ourselves and one another as a community. Our faith tradition is rich with acts of covenant made by God.

Why a parish covenant? Our covenant is based on our parish discernment and choices in the Joe! Study and expectations. The covenant will be used a foundation of our vision and future planning. Parishioner acclamation and affirmation by signature of the covenant empowers the focus and application of that vision and planning!

What should I do? Take the time to read and review the Saint Joseph Parish Covenant in the current and upcoming Carpenter's and on the website. Ask: What will I do in response to this covenant? Where are the challenges, calls, affirmations and invitations for me? Then join us for our first community signing of our parish covenant at the liturgies on June 4th and 5th.

*A gathering of
community signatures
lends connection and
courage – calling all
to share in and live
the mission.*

Do I have to sign? Absolutely not! This is conditioned on respect for all wherever they may be in relationship! This is an individual matter of the spirit and heart.

How old do I have to be in order to sign? Once you are confirmed you may sign the covenant, (or if you are baptized and over 16 years of age.)

Will there be other opportunities to sign the covenant in the future? Yes. Future signings are in the plans. But this is the inaugural signing.

Why my signature? Your signature, your name, and your mark represent you when you are not immediately present. Signatures are used for celebrations, (birthday cards, love letters, RSVP's, etc.) church certifications, (baptismal certificate, marriage, ordination, etc.) and for business purposes (contracts, checks, promissory notes, etc.) Your mark, your signature, unique to you!