

Joe! Study Focus Group Responses

Focus Groups were held to further explore the responses provided in the **Joe! Study**, which was conducted in October 2009. The data from the **Joe! Study** served as the foundation for the Focus Group questions. There were 15 Focus Group sessions held and approximately 120 parishioners participated in the discussion. Slightly more women than men participated. A significant majority of those who attended have been members of St. Joseph Parish for over 10 years. 75% of the participants were 40 years old and older. The responses will serve as the foundation for a parish-wide mini-study to be conducted in August 2010. The responses to the questions have been compiled and categorized by themes.

Welcoming and Inviting

- The majority of the responses centered on the need to reach out to all parishioners, particularly new parishioners, the youth, and young adults. Many responses noted people are at different places in their faith journey and attempts should be made to meet people where they are spiritually. Creating a sense of community and providing social opportunities were suggested as ways to be welcoming and inviting.
- A few remarks commented on the importance of becoming more welcoming and making life easier for young families. Others suggested the need to support those in our community who are divorced or married to non-catholic spouses, and to recognize others with a Volunteer Recognition Dinner.

Mass:

- Many comments focused primarily on the need to regularly attend Mass. It was offered that parishioners should arrive on time, stay until the end of Mass, and actively participate in the liturgy. Demonstrating respect for each other by turning off cell phones and dressing appropriately were also suggested.
- There were additional comments specific to recommendations for changes to the Mass schedule, the addition of a Latin Mass, concerns that Mass is too long for young families, pull back on singing, more focus on group worship and less focus on individual worship, and to discontinue the practice of passing the cup and celebrating baptisms during Mass. Lastly, it was suggested the communication of the mass schedule be improved.

General Comments on Expectations:

- The bulk of these comments focused on setting, encouraging and communicating expectations while focusing on the issue of accountability within the parish. The sharing of time, talent and treasure was identified as an expectation. Others did not believe there should be expectations, some were not aware of any expectations and a few thought expectations should be encouraged but not demanded.
- A small number of participants felt expectations should make parishioners feel “a little uncomfortable”. The concept of creating “buy-in” for expectations was recommended and identifying expectations will improve accountability with the parish. Participating in Christ Renews His Parish (CRHP) was thought to be an important expectation. **(over)**

Faith Centered:

- Most responses in this area centered on living out one's faith, attending faith formation programs and encouraging each others' spiritual growth.
- A small number of comments provided policy suggestions: the need to create small faith communities, the availability of spiritual counselors and a CRHP program for families.

Ministries:

- There was focus centered on encouraging involvement in the various ministries and helping parishioners discern what they are called to be and identify ministries that match their strengths.
- Additional comments made suggestions regarding creating a marriage ministry, having individuals rotate in and out of ministries, and setting a minimum number of participants in a ministry.

Financial:

- Discussions centered on the need to financially support the parish. Within the theme of general comments on expectation, treasure was a focus.
- A comment was made to solicit financial support within a small group discussion.

Youth:

- A significant amount of discussion expressed the need to create a welcoming and inviting environment for youth and young adults (22 to 40 years old).
- Many suggestions were made as to how to reach out to the youth and young adults: a CRHP experience for teens, family-based Faith Weaving for teens, the celebration of Confirmation during junior year of high school, increased visibility of priests in the school and religious education classes and sponsorship of Theology on Tap.

Communication:

- The need for improved communication with a tone of partnership by using a variety of media was expressed.
- Specific suggestions were made to conduct more focus groups, explore the ways evangelical churches attract individuals, and provide booklets with a synopsis of activities and opportunities.

Once again, the responses will serve as the foundation for a parish-wide mini-study to be conducted in August 2010. In the interim, we look forward to hearing more of your thoughts during the summer Focus Groups!