

# Spiritual Formation

## OUR CHOSEN EXPECTATIONS

### 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.

### 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.

## THE **Joe!** STUDY: THE HEART OF THE MATTER

*“Yet our relationship with Jesus is found in our relationship with the community of Jesus, the Church.” Go and Make Disciples, United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, 1982*

This week we are reviewing our chosen expectation:

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

Most of the time, we are surrounded by those with whom we have much in common. Frequently our paths cross those with whom we share very little of life’s experiences. As much as we try to walk in their shoes, their walk is left to our imagination. This expectation encourages all of us to be accepting, compassionate and understanding of those whose needs and challenges are different from ours.

“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. Compassion comes from the root word passion or *passio*, which means to *suffer*. To have compassion is to have a deep awareness of another’s suffering. This amplifies your empathy. Empathy calls us to clear out our own distractions and thoughts to actively sense the *path* or the story of another. This is more than a Christian community building strategy, it is a Gospel imperative.

**Portrait of an Average Joe!** Joanne has a wonderful awareness of the people around her, whether she’s grabbing a coffee at the Caribou or attending the 7:15 Mass. She likes the collective pronouns “us” and “we.” Belonging, connection, relationships, diversity, community, generosity, and freedom are all part of her living vocabulary. Over time, she has come to understand that we are all in relationship with one another and that Jesus is a part of that awareness. She doesn’t worry about “her image.” Her image doesn’t even occur to her. She is free from what others may think. She sees the possibility for encounter and embraces everywhere! She is not preachy or rigid. And she wonders why she has so many friends.

Look around you right now. What are the varieties of challenges and needs you see? What is the one thing (consider just one thing) you will do for another? Make it a habit!

*“The actions aren’t complicated, yet they speak of profound realities. They are just the simple acts of a community of faith. The early church community is an example of what faith communities here and now can be... positive and cheerful.” Forming Generous Hearts, Anslinger and Shepp*