

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

All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.' Acts 2: 12-13

This week, we are reviewing your chosen expectation:

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!")

There's a certain view that says there's the relationship with "the parish," the institution of Saint Joseph, the organization. It has a corporate or businesslike feel to it. "I belong. I am a member." It is kind of like a country club or a health club. Another emphasis says: "People of God," the friends met and unmet. This is more than the club model. This speaks about the experience of community and friendship, not just the "membership" idea of it. "I am a part. They know me, I know them. There is... relationship!" In this club membership model of being a parishioner, "I pay my dues, I use the facility, I get services." It is a low maintenance and easy model. This model does not speak to your chosen expectation. "Grow community... friendship... life together." These are powerful words that demand potent strategies in order to facilitate this kind of growth.

Research says that the ideal parish size is 200 families. This number allows for people to get to know one another in friendship. 200 families is "community friendly." By this estimation, Saint Joseph Parish is more of a small diocese. In this colossal parish, it is easy for one to feel lost or disconnected. Some like it like that, and that is okay! Many seek meaningful friendship and significant community. It is not more bigness that should be our goal. We must attempt, rather, to bring people back to the warmth of community. In order to live this genuinely, we will establish and support small faith communities.

We will always be a large parish. But community and friendship demand at least three things: time, a *reasonable* number, and presence. Structured small faith communities allow for this to happen. Here, we have the experience of community where shared dialogue, shared prayer, and shared time can take place. In the history of our parish, this has happened and is happening. But more is called for. This demands wise leadership, structure, training, a great process or set of processes, patience, ongoing attention, and common sense. Your expectation: no cheap knock-offs or substitutions, no imaging, no clubs. Instead, community: real, authentic, true, sometimes difficult, accessible, and customarily delightful.

"In the long run, is there any other way of handing on the Gospel than by transmitting to another person one's personal experience of faith? ...whereby an individual's personal conscience is reached and touched by an entirely unique world that he receives from someone else." Evangelization in the Modern World, Paul VI