

**PASTORAL COUNCIL RETREAT**  
**King's House**  
**SEPTEMBER 14, 2014**

The purpose of this meeting was to gather with Pastoral Council and Parish Staff members to discuss techniques for building a parish described in the book, Rebuilt: The Story of a Catholic Parish, by Michael White and Tom Corcoran. We discussed the book in relation to our own parish and brainstormed on how we can make it better.

ATTENDEES: From our Pastoral Council: Fr. Jeff Goeckner, Robin Black-Rubenstein, Becky Bradley, Cindy Clark, Deacon Dan Corbett, Lacey Gelsing, Rich Hahn, Georgann Lautner, Jeff Litterst, Marisa Nieto, Sue Papajcik, Lauren Serfas, and Mary Westerhold. From our parish office and school staff: Benna Denu, Sr. Anna Flanigan, Judy Frank, Jill Griffin, Robin Hake, John Lednick, Sr. Kathleen Ann Mourisse, Cindy Zurliene, and Monica Zumwalt.

Absent: (from Pastoral Council) Mimi Hunter, Jim Jatcko, Maria Carrion and Arthur Langston.

Father Jeff welcomed everyone and opened our retreat with prayer. He then invited us to go around the room and introduce ourselves. From this group there were three life-long members which show how transient our parish is. He thanked Robin for putting the agenda and the program together. This was a conversational retreat where we would hopefully learn to be better disciples for others by drawing upon what we learned by reading Rebuilt and through discussion. He turned the program over to Robin.

Earlier this year our parish mission theme was Here We Grow. Well, here we grow, again. Robin asked that we read and meditate on Acts 2:42-43.

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the Apostles.

We were seated at round tables in small groups. Robin asked us to discuss among ourselves what this passage means to us. Benna's table talked about how important community is. They talked about the people who have come into their lives who were like apostles. Cindy C. having read and re-read the book wondered how difficult it would be to bring change to the people in the pews and especially to those who are not. Change is necessary—especially changing that consumer mentality-- but how do we approach it? Father Jeff spoke of devotion. What the Apostles did still lives on. Intercession happens with our prayers and carrying on with the Apostles' work to our own community. Deacon Dan asked what people want beyond the liturgy. What do they want from "community life"? Marisa talked about the Spanish community. They are, relatively speaking, a small group in our parish family, and probably because of their numbers, they are very close

**OUR GARDEN SPOT**

Who is in our pews? What is our "neighborhood"? Once upon a time there were parish boundaries, and you never strayed and went to Mass in another's area. Now our congregations come from near and far. Our small groups and other programs attract people from other local parishes as well as from other

towns. Yet there are still people who don't come—parish members who don't attend Mass; people who have no religious connection; people who think about going to church but don't. How do we get them here? *Invite them!*

## **OUR MISSION FIELD**

*Reflection:* Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations." MT 28:18-19

Who's making Mass a priority? Our young couples are there with their kids. We have SIU students. Families-in-sports are making, usually, the 5:15pm mass a priority--the last chance Mass.

Who's not making Mass a priority? Our young couples with kids who feel they don't get much from Mass because they're too busy trying to keep the kids under control. There are SIU students who have started questioning their faith or are too busy with studies or other distractions to worry about Mass. The families-in-sports have made sports the priority. Mass is no longer an obligation. It's something they do if they have time.

Rich pointed out that the teens, the 20's, the 30's are missing. They were once a part of the community, but the community is no longer a priority. Why? Benna wondered, what is it that brings those of that same age group back to us every week? Is it that their kids are in our school, in our PSR program? Is it the location, Father Jeff, marriage or one of the other sacraments that brings them in? Then, why don't they stay?

Sister Anna said our Mission Field is unknown. Those that are not present had an interest at one time. We don't know why they left. We don't know who they are. Sister Kathleen Ann talked about the RCIA classes. People come to our classes from all over, but mostly they are coming with someone or *for* someone. They're getting married and one or the other is not Catholic and is going to convert. There are the couples who want to give their kids a faith basis in life. Maybe their kids are now starting school at St. Boniface. Our classes and small groups attract parishioners from St Boniface and an array of people from other parishes who want to learn more about their faith. "We are evangelizers," she said.

Deacon Dan reminded us that parishes are not geographically written in stone anymore. Our congregation is very fluid which makes a parish relational. That is, the people that attend a particular parish relate to the music, to the homilies, to the priest and, more importantly, to the community. If they're not comfortable here, they will go shopping for a place where they feel they fit in better.

Although our feasibility study from Cargill isn't ready for public consumption, Father Jeff offered some preliminary numbers on our demographic. Seven percent of our congregation is over 75 years old; 22% is 60-74 years old; 29% is 45-59 years old; 27% is 30-44 years old, and; 15% is 29 and under. That is based on the 36% response to our questionnaire. Keep in mind, not everyone that comes is registered and not everyone that is registered is coming. Robin BR mentioned recently someone who has been coming to St. Boniface for years has decided to register because he is interested in becoming more involved with the parish.

Father said it goes back to something Cindy C. said at a Pastoral Council meeting a while back, "He's talking to me." Most people sitting in the pews don't respond to our call to community and stewardship because they don't think that they are the ones being called. When you register you become a part of

## **OUR MISSION FIELD** continued

the community. Being a part of the community brings with it accountability and devotion to that community.

### **OUR MISSION FIELD: Those who are not present**

Cindy Z. asked about the young couples that either don't want to go church or have kids involved in other activities that church is low on their list of weekend priorities. How do we bring them in? How do we get them back? Father said people are too busy. They don't accept the obligation of Sunday Mass—they think they don't have to come. Then there are the divorced that are single and the divorced that are remarried who think they can't come or they can't participate in the Mass or are allowed to be a part of the community. That is a huge misconception.

Lauren talked about her experience with young people she knows either through her own experiences with religion classes and the PSR student that she teaches. She said that kids feel that have no say in their faith. They don't have choices in their faith. And when they are old enough to make their own choices they become anti-faithful. Robin BR said that is why youth programs are so important. It helps kids to own their faith. Mary mentioned her college years and how she had a dorm-mate that was Catholic and some other friends who were not Catholic. Mary and her Catholic friend would go to midnight Mass and the others would go along. Young adults generally won't do much alone. But if they have a friend to go with them, they'll go.

Sister Anna who has had experience in campus ministry talked about the community aspect among college age people. There is a need to feel like they're a part of a community. They want fellowship. Struggles about faith at that age are not uncommon. We have to be there to provide the seed of the Holy Spirit and always give them the opportunity to allow the Spirit in. Robin BR told us her vegetable analogy. When our kids are little we make them--like it or not--try all of kinds of vegetables so they can get a taste for what they like. Even though they don't like something now, later in life they may acquire a taste for it. Jeff L wondered what is comfortable to those of us who keep coming back, and what is not appealing to those who don't want to be here? Father Jeff said it's about the invitation. Ask someone who doesn't normally go to Mass. Invite *them*. Personal invitations are much more effective.

### **OUR MISSION FIELD: Consumers**

Benna pointed out that the second grade class—First Holy Communion class-- at PSR is, as usual, a big class. Third grade, by comparison, is smaller. But, not to worry, they will be back in a couple of years when it's time for confirmation. Father mentioned this is also an issue in the school. Historically, there has been and currently is a particular consumer mentality with some of the parents. "I'm paying for this so give me what I want." This attitude doesn't justify poor customer service either. In our school, in the office and in the church we should treat our "customers" with respect, and maybe, not so much give them what they want, but give them what they *deserve*.

Our kids are being taught bad habits when the parents just bring them for catechizing for the sacraments and not bringing them in between. The parents are teaching them that the in-between time is irrelevant. Marisa talked about how in her home country, Argentina, the sacraments are received later in life. Confirmation is received at age 15 or after when the young person is able to understand the sacrament and what responsibilities it carries. It is more a rite of passage and a mature choice. It's not just a decision made by the parents for the child.

### **OUR MISSION FIELD: Contributors**

These are the people who come out of obligation. They say, “That’s my church.” They put their money in an envelope and leave after communion. They offer nothing else to the community. They don’t have or make time.

### **OUR MISSION FIELD: Committed Core**

Sister Anna said these are our disciples. These are the people who have had a personal experience and who have a personal relationship with God and their faith. They are the dedicated individuals that you have in any given organization who do all the work.

### **OUR MISSION FIELD: The Lost**

And then there’s “Tim”. How do we invite our Timonium Tim (TT)?

Deacon Dan asked, “What about our Timonium Tina?” Women are just as busy anymore with careers and with families—taxiing kids all over for all kinds of activities. But it was pointed out that women have a more natural desire towards a spiritual life and will make time for church where a man may not.

Sue said our TT is our youth. The 20-44 year olds love the music and like the program. But these things don’t really appeal to the youth-- <20. Cindy talked about how we can even feel like outsiders with different priests at different churches or sometimes even at different Masses at our own church. We don’t know the people in our own faith community let alone those who are outside it. We need to engage more.

What do we do to invite—to engage? Rebuilt talks about the Welcome/Information Table. Mary said that when she’s standing at the back of the church selling tickets or calendars or manning sign-up sheet tables for whatever function, she always gets questions or is asked directions. We could be more welcoming and helpful to newcomers, TT, and to our own parishioners.

Lacey suggested designating an area for “guest parking”. Then we talked about who would end up parking there--probably the “contributors”. We also talked at some length about having people help out in the parking lot—people who could offer suggestions for alternative parking when our lot is full. We—staff and council—should be parking at Deutsch Place as a courtesy to our parishioners.

In wrapping up before our break, Father Jeff said we need to provide some guidance to our consumer Catholics and to our visitors. For instance, there are no signs on the Chapel doors facing Buchanan Street that direct people to the main entrance. Those Chapel doors are always locked. People try to enter there and leave thinking the church isn’t open at all. We especially need a parking ministry at our high volume Masses at Christmas and Easter and even for our regular 4:15 and 10:15 Masses. Father mentioned that people have told him they leave when they can’t find a place to park in the lot.

We also concluded that the information kiosk would be a good idea. Our greeters and usher ministries are our weakest ministries. We need to find a way to build them up. This information ministry will help a great deal.

***At this point we took a break.***

## **KNOWLEDGE IS IMPORTANT**

When you ask a person what their relationship is with Jesus, what do they tell you? They will tell you what *they do*. They go to church. They work at Bonifest. They make desserts for the Bonifest. Our relationship with Jesus is different for each one of us and it is different on any given day. Robin BR asked us what our conversion stories are. How do we reflect on the holy? And, how do we reflect it when asked?

Father talked about our conscience as being our spiritual guide. It is the core of our decision making process. He explained that shame is different from guilt and describes a person's relationship with Jesus. Shame can cause a person not to show up.

***FAITH AND CONVERSION*** arise from the heart; it causes the believer to live that conversion. (from the General Directory of Catechesis)

People respond more willingly to witness than they do to a teacher. Robin BR talked about God moments. It's those moments that inspire us and when shared, can inspire others, too. "Witness to the fact that you go to Mass because of your love affair with Jesus Christ," Deacon Dan said. Ask yourself, what kind of evangelist are you.

## **SEVEN WAYS FROM CONSUMER TO CONTRIBUTOR**

How would you ask people to help? Lacey said through personal contact. It's harder to say no to someone's face than to say no to a written request. Sister Kathleen Ann suggested inviting someone to a function or event that you already participate in. Cindy Z said some people are looking for an opportunity to help and just need to know that there's an opening. Mary suggested a Ministry Fair. It's a good way for people to weigh their options. Cindy C suggested "church outside the walls" where we would have a parish event followed by an outdoor celebration of Mass.

Father Jeff has recently attended the Stewardship Conference held in Wichita, KS, and pick up some food for thought. One thing they suggested, don't call your volunteers "volunteers". Call them stewards. Then what is a steward? The title "volunteer" has the connotation of not having any real responsibility. It doesn't exude an obligation to fulfill a commitment. Stewardship on the other hand is a responsibility—a ministry to be committed to. People question their worthiness and their ability to perform a service, and then fear keeps them away.

## **CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT** where the Sacraments and the Holy Spirit have an impact!

We talked about noisy Masses. Yes, we agree that the sound of children speaks to the health and future of the parish, but that din can be unhealthy, too. Father said we really need a kids' ministry—childcare during Mass. But call it something other than "childcare". This program could be a learning experience. It would certainly improve the listening skills of the parents. Cindy suggested we engage our Moms group and get an idea what they need and what they can suggest for a kids program. There was a discussion about what age group and where we would have this program. The general feeling was that infants aren't the issue. The class would be for toddlers to kindergarten. Father mentioned that St. Joseph's in Chatham had a program for kids up to pre-k. Some mentioned that they will investigate that program.

**SO FAR** we have agreed to work on starting the following programs: Parking Ministry, Information Ministry, and Nursery Ministry.

**Then we talked about the café.** We were reminded that it couldn't be "open" before Mass for obvious reasons. Where do we have it? Historically, events after Mass held in the lower level are generally poorly attended. The plaza and the plaza lobby are the best locations. Refreshments—cookies, doughnuts, coffee, water--can be on a rolling cart or two. It would basically be self-serve finger food at a stand-up-and-socialize event. This Café Ministry will be responsible for setting up as well as for clean-up afterwards.

Cindy C brought up an important issue in all of our parish ministries. That is changing the cultural mindset. "I'm coming to *this* Mass to be a steward for you, and you come back to steward so I can *go to* Mass, too." What is our goal with this ministry? Besides the fellowship aspect, stewardship increases the community aspect—we all have a part in propagating the greater good. As a result we become more welcoming especially to new parishioners and maybe, even, to TT. Father also suggested having some of our Café events in the lower level of the church and to make them catechetical experiences.

Rebuilt talks about starting small. Sister Anna mentioned that some people are reluctant to commit because it's one more thing they have to schedule their lives around it. Mary said we could remind people that they could initially sign-up as substitutes and work their way into a more frequent schedule. That can apply to any ministry. Sister Ann had an idea that at our fellowship gatherings we should have people there whose specific function is to hobnob and get people engaged—a social steward, if you like. So often at our past fellowship events the same people showed up and stayed in their own little groups. A social steward could keep an eye out for loners and draw them into the community—keep things mixed up.

Father pointed out that some prime opportunities are being missed before and after Masses. He wondered why different organizations—sports teams, K.C.'s, etc.—aren't handing out game schedules or fliers or pamphlets INVITING people to join them at their different events. This could also be a function of our Information Ministry. Speaking of this ministry, these stewards will need some really intense and comprehensive training so they will be able to answer all kinds of questions especially those that pertain to coming on board—how people join the different ministries; how are they trained; how often will they be scheduled, and; what will their responsibilities be. We discussed the need to schedule regular training sessions for all the different ministries. We hope to have a Ministry Fair in February 2015 which will include presentation and sign-up opportunities followed by a couple of training sessions in case someone wants to sign-up for multiple ministries. Currently our most needy ministries are our greeters and our ushers.

**FUND RAISING.** We switched gears a little and talked about another area of stewardship--fundraising and tithing. Father talked more on his experience in Wichita at their Stewardship Conference. Rebuilt also addresses this issue. Our ultimate goal is to support ourselves with tithing and eliminate fundraisers and campaigns—including Bonifest. However, that day is a long way off. Some are concerned with the impact of the loss of exposure that we have with the community at large if we no longer have Bonifest.

We talked about the need for a Stewardship Coordinator who would promote discipleship and keep all the ministries walking with each other towards the same goals. Father talked about Wichita's success in providing free Catholic education. With that planting of seeds at an early age the number of young men

attending seminaries has increased. When tithing is increased to cover all parish expenses then fund raisers are no longer needed. When fund raisers are no longer needed there is more time available to be stewards of the church and for ministry.

Catholic schools are the mission of the church—the mission of each individual parish. It's not just the responsibility of the parents of the students attending Catholic schools to "take care of the school." Visitors to our parish have commented on how they can see and feel the Spirit in our school. Mary attributed that phenomenon to our Sisters. Before Sister Anna and Sister Kathleen Ann came, our school was run more like a private school than a Catholic school. Their teaching and guidance has brought a deeper spiritual basis to the learning process.

People have the idea that because everything looks good and sounds good that we are a rich parish. We are asked about the purchase of land around our campus. If we didn't buy the Schlemmer property when it became available, we would be landlocked again for probably another 50 years, and as they say in the book, Rebuilt, "parking is everything."

Father Jeff stated that we *need* to teach stewardship. It's not magic. It's work—hard work—to bring people to God and a personal relationship with Jesus. Once you do that everything else will happen. But it is also a continuous process. Lacey suggested a game for Bonifest—if you ask a question about our faith or about St. Boniface parish, you win a prize. Sounds like Lacey has a booth for our next Bonifest.

Father thanked Robin BR for preparing and presenting. He thanked everyone for coming and participating. Benna expressed her appreciation that the staff was invited to participate. It helps them to understand our goals as a council. It's important that we all work together and do all our parts to get the word out. Father commended the staff for their hard work and good customer service.

He also reminded us that our Party on the Plaza will be in October. The parish will provide chicken and a DJ. Parishioners can bring side dishes and desserts and, hopefully, many family and friends.

*INVITE, INVITE, INVITE!!*

At our next meeting in October we will begin planning and organizing our new ministries: Information Desk, Baby Church, Parking Ministry, Café Ministry, and working on our usher/greeter ministries.

He reminded us to take a look at our new website.

Father ended our meeting with prayer and blessing for the meal we were about to receive.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Georgann Lautner