

St. Frances Cabrini Parish Community

Parish Pastoral Plan

Part Six

Priority: Fully Informed Laity Through Education and Formation

In January 2021, I was asked to be a member of the Parish Envisioning Team. I felt truly blessed to be asked by Monsignor McCormac and Audrey Wilson but also a bit anxious about the task at hand. What I found was an amazing group of people with various backgrounds and experiences who came together with a common goal of shaping a vision for the next generation of the Parish. It is an honor and a blessing to share with you some thoughts and ideas put forth by the Envisioning Team.

Our Parish Envisioning Team was given a wonderful opportunity to take a long hard look at our parish's strengths and weaknesses and develop a series of priorities and goals to ensure that our Parish will continue to thrive well into the future. In conducting this self-evaluation, we found St Frances Cabrini Parish to be a loving, welcoming community with many positive attributes, but what can we do to become even better?

After much prayer, reflection, and discussion, the three areas that have been identified for action in the immediate future are **fuller engagement in the Mass, better education and formation programs**, and **renewed commitment and involvement in parish life**. My reflection highlights the goal of attaining a fully informed laity through education and formation.

The Envisioning Team defined this priority as...

"The desire that our parishioners know and understand the beliefs, doctrines and practices of our Catholic faith so as to live in accordance with our Catholic faith."

The rationale behind this goal is, as a Parish, *"we are committed to nurturing and developing spiritual growth through a deeper knowledge and understanding of God, and His Presence in our lives. We are also committed to forming intentional disciples of Jesus Christ and to equip them to go out into the world."*

Education and formation are ongoing processes throughout our lives. We should always be thirsty for knowledge in all aspects of our lives, especially our spiritual life. Our Parish is committed to fostering the personal and spiritual growth of all parishioners, regardless of age.

It is recognized that parents play the most important role in establishing a strong spiritual foundation. Of all the people you will ever influence, your children are the most impressionable and attentive. Of all the people your children will be influenced by, the strongest influence is that of their parents. Children want to be like their parents and do what they do. By regularly attending Mass and being actively involved in the religious education process, parents are the best role models in the practice of their faith.

It is also recognized that education and formation should not end when we reach adulthood. How many of us routinely say prayers at Mass and have no clue who Melchizedek is, or the purpose of ringing the bells at consecration or why King Herod was so troubled about the Magi coming from the "East"? We could always "Google it" to find the answers but how much more could we learn that we never dreamt of, by attending an adult formation program.

The Envisioning Team believes that as we take part in the opportunity for spiritual growth through the programs offered by the Parish, we can develop a deeper knowledge and understanding

of God's presence in our lives. Our Parish already has a Parish Religious Education Program for children and offers Adult Faith Education and formation opportunities such as in-person programs including the Biblical Walk Series and on-line opportunities on the FORMED platform. Although we already have these opportunities within our Parish, the Envisioning Team believes that we can offer more and increase attendance in these endeavors!

Through our Parish's participation in the **Next Generation Catholic Parish** initiative, we now have the opportunity to make improvements to the existing programs and implement new and exciting ones to help us reach a better understanding of our Catholic faith and deeper knowledge and understanding of God and His Presence in our lives. When we come to church, we are visiting God's house. However, would you only talk to a friend when you were at their house? Is it not true that we would want to have an ongoing relationship where we get to know them on a more personal level, so why wouldn't we want this type of relationship with God?

God Bless!

Terri Smart