



Year of Renewal Tuesday Evening Gathering Participant Insights to Share with the SJF Community

The St. John Fisher Year of Renewal continues to gather momentum! At the third Tuesday Evening gathering on November 17, our good friend Sr. Mary Ann Dixon presented and led a spirited discussion on “Our Church, Our Future.” Once again, the session was well attended, with over 100 faith family members participating. Based on the input received so far, all found the session to be both informative and inspiring.

Upon completion of the session, attendees were asked to submit a brief survey that asked for reactions to the material presented, list any surprises and respond to the question “What ideas do you want to carry away with you?” Following is a summary of the 70 responses received.

Reactions

- Many of those in attendance commented that it was an excellent session. Sr. Mary Ann was recognized for her insights, knowledge, humor and candor. Many felt it was both inspiring and energizing.
- There is hope for the Catholic Church. The guidance of the Holy Spirit and the faithful participation and determination of members are what give us hope.
- Some appreciate the spirit and trust in God as exhibited by the St. John Fisher Faith Community. We need to spread this to others.
- “No action leads to no action” – we must not be stagnant. We must learn more about our faith and put it into action.
- Eventually, the Church will go in the right direction because Christ promised to “always be with it” and because of the guidance of the Spirit.
- It will be difficult to change 2000 years of authoritarian style leadership.
- Change comes very slowly for the Church, especially in the area of women’s involvement. We all can play a role in bringing about change.
- Even with the problems and mistakes of the past, the history of the Church reveals that it is moving forward to meet the needs of members.
- The emphasis for the future should be on community growth and nurturing one’s own spiritual growth.
- Some participants felt motivated to become a part of a church involvement group as a result of this session.



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Surprises

- Despite the challenges facing Church members, the fundamental beliefs are strong and consistent.
- Many people share common “hurts” regarding the behavior of some church leaders (child abuse and cover up, etc.) These actions were a breach of trust and duty to our church and its members.
- It is easier to do charity than to address injustice. The world needs both.
- As members of the Church, we do not need to be passive. We must be involved and willing to question. We must be the Church - the “sense of the faithful” will eventually be felt.
- Some were surprised by the openness of the discussion and recognized that it is “OK” to question what is going on in the Church.
- There were many insights with great depth expressed during the evening. These words were spoken by Sr. Mary Ann with boldness and courage.
- We must accept the beliefs and ideas of others – even if they are different than our own.
- The Church respects the conscience of the individual on matters of morality.
- Most of the people in attendance were “older.” We need younger people to participate and learn from these opportunities.
- The treatment of women in the Church continues to be a concern. The investigation by the Vatican of female religious orders is a concern and a surprise to some.
- The doctrine that papal infallibility requires input was also mentioned as a surprise.

Ideas to Carry Away

- There is hope for our Church.
- We, the faithful, are the instrument of change. The spirit will move us in the right direction.
- If we work together, we can make a difference, even if some changes may not take place in our lifetime.
- Many individuals plan to get involved in support groups to work to bring about the change needed in the Catholic Church.
- We must accept the ideas and faith journey of others. We are all “at a different place along the path.”
- It should be kept in mind that we all have the gift of the Holy Spirit – we will be guided.
- There is hope that we will see a Church that appreciates the gifts of all members.
- Believing is seeing.
- The Church is a living organism that grows and changes. The sense of the faithful will keep it alive. We must learn more about our Church, including its history, as members of the faithful.
- Through Sacramentality, God is revealed to us in everyone and everything.
- The concept of the pendulum is worth remembering. Over time, change will move in opposite directions, back and forth.
- The primacy of conscience is an important doctrine that needs to be recognized by individuals.