

St. John Fisher Year of Renewal Small Group Report Summary

Feedback from the Year of Renewal small group facilitators regarding key insights, surprises and suggestions for parish renewal continues to be provided after each session.

Key Insights and Experiences

Listed below are the key insights expressed during the fifth discussion sessions as provided by the group facilitators.

- Everyone has a unique comfort zone and moving outside that zone can be difficult. Finding a way to break from your comfort zone can be uncomfortable in part because there are so many options for meaningful service to others. Also, it is difficult to predict or understand the impact your actions will have on someone else. You could help someone and never feel or see the benefit you have provided.
- Taking on large causes (illegal immigrants for example) seems impossible to many. Sometimes it helps to focus on an individual. The desire to help others is strong but getting started is the biggest hurdle of all.
- Don't expect gratification or "points" for doing the right thing.
- We are influenced by our St. John Fisher Community to reach out and seek God in the marketplace. Often, if we have friends who volunteer, we look at their example and join in to do things for those in need. It can spark a chain reaction to get involved.
- We see the face of God, not only in the needy, but especially in those who work by volunteering with those in need.
- We can help others get involved in outreach work that is outside their comfort zone by being very specific about the work that is to be done.
- Working for justice can at times seem overwhelming, but we each need to do what we can and feel at least some satisfaction in the effort.
- In society, money concerns override the quest for justice. For example, many do not want to spend money to help those in need of mental health care. The irony is that the state spends more in the long run to incarcerate those with severe mental health problems.
- We will not reach registered parish members who do not attend Mass until someone personally reaches out, via phone or physical visit to invite them back...it's time to stop talking about it and time to do it.
 - None of us wants to evangelize or preach to those who do not attend, but we would be willing to invite them to attend for a specific liturgy. We discussed the possibility of hosting a liturgy specifically to be offered as a "Prayer for the Recovery of the State of Michigan." With the help and cooperation of others in each small group, or from the PRCV Committee, parish members could be invited by phone to attend this specific liturgy and to stay for a social gathering after the Mass. We would like to invite each family or individual who attends to bring a loaf of bread to share after Mass; we would need to provide a beverage and then open opportunity for small group attendees to extend fellowship to parish members who are present. We would like to invite elected officials, auto executives, labor representatives to attend our liturgy. By inviting missing members of our parish to attend for a specific purpose...one that is relevant to all Michiganders...we have an opportunity to renew their interest in being part of our community. At the very least, Michigan needs our prayers, and at the very best, we regain interest in our parish and in community from inactive members while praying for our State.
 - We talked about individual expressions of help and support for others being as important as partaking in large, organized efforts.
 - We talked about the need to include parish youth, especially the senior youth group through college-age, in any organized effort to do community outreach instead of always separating the kids from the adults' efforts.

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Small Group Report Summary – Session 3 (continued)

Surprises

These are the items that the small group facilitators reported as surprises from their discussions:

- The novel "Tortilla Curtain" was recommended.
- When we offer to help people, for example, the people of Haiti, we should inquire about the help they want rather than forcing our assumptions on them.
- SOS opportunities - we treat our guests like we would treat them in our home. However, if someone asks to help clean up or do dishes, we should encourage this. This is not us (church members) versus them (guests). Rather, this is about all of US together.
- Some participants were surprised at the reaction of silence heard at the Tuesday night meeting when Fr. Jerry asked about the link between charity and working for systemic change. Most of us are very willing to volunteer at soup kitchens, CCRT, SOS, etc, but very few are willing to take a stand or get involved politically to make changes that could improve the plight of those in need.

Suggestions for Parish Renewal

Facilitators were asked to provide suggestions or recommended values that would benefit our parish. The following item was submitted after session four:

- Several participants said they would like to see our small discussion groups continue even after YoR has ended.

