



St. John Fisher Year of Renewal Small Group Report Summary – Session 4

The Year of Renewal small group discussions are once again underway. As with the first three sessions, we have asked the facilitators to report back to the parish any key insights, surprises and suggestions for parish renewal. The input provided follows.

Key Insights and Experiences

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

- There **is** good guilt and that good guilt is like God's call for us to take action. It's God knocking on our door.
- We are serving God and the community through many small deeds every day. We need to give ourselves credit for those things we do.
- SJFC motivates us to serve by presenting us with many diverse opportunities. However, it is much more difficult in our community to deal with and be open to discussion about the systemic issues.
- Giving is actually part of human nature – we feel better when we give.
- It is true that guilt is a motivator, but giving without guilt is much more desirable.
- Working for justice goes beyond giving but is more difficult because it tends to go against societal values and disrupts personal comfort.
- Justice issues are not only national and global; they are local – for example, school system inequities.
- We've all felt the "where are you God?" experience in seemingly hopeless or hard times.
- Even little actions we do make a difference in our families or even in the larger community.
- Most (in one group) felt like the booklet made them feel guilty, as if they aren't doing enough. Several expressed anger at that. The question "What difference can one person make?" was brought up several times.
- Each of us must recognize the "gifts" we have to share.
- One person can make a difference.
- God suffers too.
- Each individual can make a difference.
- We simply need to "observe;" "judge" and "act."
- Applying our conscience to discover insight into each element, e.g., "observe;" "judge" and "act," we apply conscience through Scripture, as part of Church teachings, as part of our living (everyday) experiences, seeking guidance in the area and exchanging our findings with a trusted person, or group of trusted persons. Best results come when all of this occurs.

Continued

St. John Fisher Year of Renewal
Small Group Report Summary – Session 3 (continued)

Surprises

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

- Some of us were surprised at the diversity of how our community understands and interprets the call to justice in the gospel.
- The Catholic Church teachings seem so well-spoken but why aren't we as a church family more aware of them? Why don't we hear of the Church acting locally and globally on them? It seems the church is more involved in charity rather than justice issues.
- We talked about the importance of art and the beauty it brings to this world. Our discussion did not just focus on "politics".
- Many are struggling to get in focus and have not been able to "observe;" "judge" and "act" in what they view as a meaningful way. Several key reasons, different than the "But For" described in the literature for the meeting, were noticeable. These are:
 - o Some are experiencing major life changes, such as "just retiring;" "loss of traditional job;" "children, once the main focus, are no longer at home;" "health issues." In each instance, the "But For" if this is a proper name for this phenomenon, is very real, very time consuming and is in need of being addressed in order to stabilize each person's home situation.
 - o There was a common sense of frustration centered on the above. This led to the observation that the situation each person faces takes away from the sense that one can act and one can make a difference.
 - o This group offered an interesting forum to place this into perspective, so that one can take steps to apply the opportunity to properly "observe;" "judge;" and "act."
- We concluded our discussions with a seven minute video clip from "Sport Center" and how one person used his job as a platform to "observe;" "judge;" and "act" as a part of his day to day work experience. Each person saw a glimmer of hope, that despite the many frustrations, each person can still make a difference. Seeing how, by example, made the solution "attainable, e.g., each person, despite these real challenges, can still focus upon making a difference."

Suggestions for Parish Renewal

Once again, facilitators were asked to provide suggestions or recommended values that would benefit our parish. The following were submitted after session four:

- We need to continue to work at making known to the parish family all the opportunities that do exist for serving the needy in our community, in the surrounding areas and in the world. The opportunities are available thanks to our hard working commissions, but not all our parishioners are aware of them.
- Work together for justice – address specific issues.
- We would like to see more awareness preached about Catholic Social Teaching connected to our daily lives. WE want to learn how to apply Jesus' life and Catholic Social Teaching to our every day interactions, personal and political.
- Find ways to empower people to feel they can make a difference.
- Look at the things we can do – even the little things make a difference.
- The Year of Renewal meetings are helpful. Do we have to wait for every 7 years?
- The Parish can be an additional platform to help each individual be part of making a difference.
- We need to emphasize the role of Parish in our lives. It can become a personal force, which takes away the impersonal settings that our world provides.
- The Tuesday presentations that preceded our Group Meetings have been a real blessing.