



Gracious God, you are our Maker, Keeper and Lover. Your goodness embodies each one of us. Help us to appreciate you in one another and to recognize that all we do flows from your generosity and creativity working in and through our lives. During this year of renewal, we ask that you will change us! Help us to BE Christ in this world, bringing light to the darkness, hope to despair, trust to uncertainty and new life to devastation. Strengthen our commitment to do your work in our homes, in our parish, in our community and in our world. We pray with sincere hearts and open minds, in your name, O God. Amen.

OCTOBER 24/25, 2009



VISION:

Finding deeper meaning in our relationships and our Catholic Faith

VALUES:

- Personal and Community Growth
- Relevancy of faith in our daily lives
- Relationship to God and one another

MISSION:

Provide opportunities to:

- Experience growth and relevancy of our Catholic faith as individuals and as a community.
- Relate the Year of Renewal experience to the entire SJF Community.
- Build and celebrate community.

ST. JOHN FISHER CHAPEL UNIVERSITY PARISH

What is the year of Renewal at St. John Fisher?

In the biblical tradition, every seven years the Jewish people celebrated a “Sabbath” year. It was an opportunity to start over, correcting the failures of the past and committing to a better future. For Christians, we have that opportunity to celebrate a Sabbath every week.

The year of renewal provides a time to read, think, share, and celebrate who we are as believers. We will have the opportunity to step back from our usual Church participation and take a look at some fundamentals in our faith.

We will invite all of our SJF community members to set aside quality time to consider a few aspects of our faith. You may discover some ideas that you want to think about or talk about. You may find that you are called to set aside some ideas that you have held for years.

We ask that you pray before and after you read these brief articles and that you listen with openness and expectation to each other. It is in this openness to the printed material and in your discussions with each other that your own personal faith will be deepened and enriched.

Finally, as a community, may we discover a renewed Word of God for our world today.

Weekend DATES

The program is centered around six weekends (plus a Tuesday follow-up) through 2010. Small groups will gather on other days after the Year of Renewal (YOR) weekends.

Fall Theme: God's Presence and Call:

Oct. 3-4: In my personal life.

Oct. 24-25: In my personal life related to community.

Nov. 14-15: In my personal life as a member of the larger community.

Winter theme: My/Our response to God's Presence and Call:

Feb. 6-7: My response as an individual.

Feb. 27-28: My/Our response as belonging to a community.

March 20-21: As individuals and as a community.

Opening PRAYER

Let us Pray ... We take a few moments of silence to ask God to open our minds and hearts and to gift us with deeper wisdom and understanding. Small sharing groups are encouraged to begin their session by reading the booklet, together or individually, before they begin sharing.

REFLECTION

Personal

When I think of the Church, do I think of myself? Have I ever been called by the community to go beyond what I perceive to be my competencies? Are there things in our world today that I simply don't want to think about? What support do I need to respond to these needs?

Introduction

In our last reflection, we focused on our relationship with God – one that is characterized by both our actions and our communication with God. We noted that our relationship with God is always new and informed by our experiences in everyday life. In this discussion we will break open God's word from the Gospel of Mark 10: 46-52, in which Jesus heals the blind beggar, Bartimaeus.

Blindness & Sight

Bartimaeus, having heard the crowd passing by, cried out to Jesus asking for pity. The disciples try to silence him, but Jesus says, "Call him." Bartimaeus is told that his faith has saved him, he recovers his sight, and, leaving his cloak (the alms he had received), followed Jesus on the way.

Here we see a contrast between the blindness of the sighted and the sight of the blind. The disciples, though able to see, missed the beggar on the side of the road. In fact, even after the blind man shouted for their attention, they tried to silence him. For the disciples, the blind man was a distraction from their following of Jesus. Truly, they were blind, disconnected from the very meaning of following Jesus.

Bartimaeus, having received his sight, gives evidence of insight as well as sight. He made the connection between the call of Jesus and his own discipleship. His ability to grasp what the disciples had missed, compelled him to follow the way. One could surmise that, in following the way, Bartimaeus would not miss, ignore, or dismiss other beggars, those on the margins, the poor, and the powerless. Having experienced his call, his sight was deepened by *insight*.

Being faithful to God's call to us as individuals and as a community requires that we go deeper than mere observation. It requires that we seek insight into the meaning of what we have seen. T.S. Eliot in *The Dry Salvages* says, "We had the experience but missed the meaning, and approach to the meaning restores the experience in a different form..."

Insight

How do we go from sight to insight, from experience to meaning? We know, for example that, in some families, a spouse can be very clear about something he or she has seen, while the other partner is able to know other things by sheer *intuition*. The two abilities work together to come to a deeper *insight*.

We can come to *insight* through a process called discernment. Discernment asks us to pay attention, pray, weigh, dialogue, study, and prayerfully wait, attending to resolutions which come into focus. The outcome of discernment is deeper than facts; it can lead to compelling *insight*, an *insight* that directs our active response.

The Church: Fellowship of the Holy Spirit

The community of the church is a fellowship bound together in the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit has convened this community, resides within the community, and guides its mission in the world. This doesn't happen in some miraculous intervention, but through the companionship of its members sincerely seeking *insight* about God's call today.

Life in this Church is sometimes messy because the Church includes everyone with all their various talents and desires. We would end up in a mess with all this if we did not have Christ to lead us... Christ leads the Church as its head, and the Holy Spirit sustains the Church as its soul.

(The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: Vatican II in Plain English)

In this messy process of discernment we seek *insight* for a preferred future – not just the pronouncements of the leaders of a community – but in the prayerful and careful efforts to hear each other articulate insights from our lived experience where God's revelation can be found.

We all know the story of the group of blind men attempting to describe an elephant. Each of the blind men is certain about his information, but the bigger truth requires that they listen carefully to each other. Only then does a fuller picture emerge. It would be folly to imagine that one loudest voice would prevail, saying, "Oh no! This (trunk) is what an elephant looks like."

Not everyone knows everything, but everyone is called to offer *insight* in the community's discernment of its call and its response in the world.

Blindness, Sight, and Insight

Who is on the side of the road in our world? Can I see them? Can I hear them? What might they see when they look at us?

Who are those who provoke me to anger or whom I just don't want to see? Who are those I would like to silence as the disciples tried to silence Bartimaeus? What might they see when they look at us? These feelings or provocations can be God's call. God invites us to *insight*. With honest *insight* we will be able to hear God's call as individuals and as a community. Bartimaeus understood that following Jesus is a logical response to being called and healed. There cannot be a separation between our relationship to God and our relationship to the community: those gathered in the community and those on the sidelines. In the ethic of the Mosaic Law, the Israelites understood that there was no way to God except *through* their neighbors.



The Community

As individuals, we do not belong to the church out of self interest. We belong so that we can be signs to the world of its salvation. We are called to see, understand, and care for the common good.

A story is told about a footrace in Special Olympics. The participants began the race with mighty determination and great joy. About a quarter of the way to the goal, one racer fell and scraped his knee, whereupon all the other runners stopped, saw the fallen runner, and came back to help him get on his feet again. They then assisted him as they all crossed the finish line together.

Reflecting on that story may show us what kind of race we are engaged in. We may only see some personal goal or we may see more deeply into a greater goal: that the fallen, those on the margin have something to teach us.

“Take courage and get up, Jesus is calling you.” (Mark 10: 49)

The Catholic Church TEACHES

The Spirit is a fountain of living water springing up to life eternal! The Spirit guides the Church in truth and continually makes the Church more holy. Working through the ordinary lives of us all, the Spirit gives the Church everything it needs both for leadership and service and thus allows the Church to keep its youthful energy. *(The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: Vatican II in Plain English)*

The Catholic Church CELEBRATES

During most of the liturgical year, the Church celebrates “Ordinary Time.” Just as other seasons focus on the life of Jesus and the early Church, Ordinary time focuses on the discipleship of believers. It continually calls us into action on behalf of the Reign of God.

Small Group SHARING

We usually recognize God's call in hindsight. How have you experienced God's call in this community? How have you felt called to change the world, to work for God's Reign in this time and place?

What are some issues in our Church about which you seek deeper insight?

What might "outsiders" say about our community? What might they see that we don't see?

Closing PRAYER

Conclude this time by reflecting on the Year of Renewal prayer. (See back page.)

A Faith to Believe In

Song for the St John Fisher Year of Renewal

Terry Gonda & Kirsti Reeve

$\text{♩} = 114$

The musical score is written on a grand staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 114. The lyrics are: We're long-ing for You to deep - en our__ faith Draw us in clo-ser through love__ and through grace. Re - new us, trans-form us, con - nect us as one. So we may con - tin - ue the work__ of Your Son__ We're seek - ing deep - er mean - ing__ And a faith to be - lieve__ in__

Verses (One for each weekend):

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| 1. Like little children, we come to You
Help us to open our hearts
To notice Your presence in all that we do
Make us aware of Your call | 4. Like Simon Peter, abandoning all
Help us cling only to You
Here we are, ready to answer Your call
Leaving our nets on the shore |
| 2. Like Bartimeus, we want to see
Help us to open our eyes
Finding Your call to community
In every part of our lives | 5. Like the disciples, in awe and in fear,
As Your glory transfigures all
It is indeed good for us to be here
May we respond to Your call |
| 3. Lord, when uncertainty hits from all sides
Help us keep trusting in You
Keep us alert to the signs of the times
For only Your call will endure | 6. Just like the Pharisees, we're quick to judge
Help us to put down our stones
And walk a new road of forgiveness and love
Knowing we're never alone |

Final Refrain:

We're longing for You to deepen our faith
Draw us in closer through love and through grace
Renew us, transform us, connect us as one
So we may continue the work of Your Son
We're seeking deeper meaning, and a faith to believe in
We're **finding** deeper meaning ... And a faith to believe in