



**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.

APRIL 17 / 18, 2010



## Summary

### 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.

This 2009-10 Year of Renewal has provided us a time to read, think, share and celebrate who we are as believers. We had – and still have – the opportunity to step back from our usual Church participation and take a look at some fundamentals of our faith.

All SJF community members were urged – and are still invited – to set aside quality time to consider a few aspects of our faith. Hopefully, you have – or still will – discover some ideas to think or talk about. You may – or still will find – that you are called to set aside some ideas you have held for years.

The Year of Renewal continues in a real way thanks to the wonderful world of digital communication. Most of the Year of Renewal elements – its documents, video and audio – remain available to all who wish to use them anytime at <http://www.stjohnfisherparish.org/yearofrenewal/index.htm>.

As always, we ask that you pray before and after your Year of Renewal reading, viewing or listening experience and approach it with openness and expectation in the hope your personal faith will be deepened and enriched.

## Weekend DATES

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

2009 Fall theme was:  
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.

2010 Winter theme was:  
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.

# Year of Renewal SUMMARY

*Where have we been?  
What have we done?  
Where are we going?*

**Starting** in October 2009, the St. John Fisher Chapel University Parish community set aside portions of six weeks through March 2010 for a unique journey in faith entitled “A Year of Renewal.”

We set out with a clear mission, vision and value statement to guide us.

Throughout the experience, we sought feedback from the people who took part in the topical Tuesday sessions and in small group discussions. The latter were the gatherings of six to a dozen or so Faith Family members – often at someone’s home – that allowed more in-depth exchanges about our faith.

At the core of the six weeks was the concept of “call and response”: how do we as individuals and as community discern a call, a need, a mission to be addressed and respond through the touchstone “Servants’ Entrance” that we re-encounter at the end of every chapel liturgy.

Our goal of the feedback notes? To get a written indication on where this pilgrimage of mind, spirit and vision was taking us.

This 7th booklet is an attempt to summarize what and how the Year of Renewal’s vision, values and mission were

approached by those who participated in all or some of YOR activities. It is also a way of beginning the process of our Pentecost Weekend (May 22-23) – the traditional birthday of the Church and an ideal time to set sail on a faith journey.

Five major areas emerged as key points:

## *1. Our Experience of God:*

**For** our Year of Renewal participants, the experiences and understanding of the Divine, while varied and personal, were also surprisingly very similar. The commonalities:

- ❖ God is a part of us all; relationships and the way those relationships with others evolve are essential to experiencing God.
- ❖ God is good and loving; our relationship with God can change over time as we grow.
- ❖ There are key moments in life – moments of joy and consolation or moments of pain and desolation – when the presence of God feels very real and apparent. The power of people witnessing about those moments is critical in helping understand God’s love.

**SUMMARY: For many, the experience of God opens us to relationships....**

## *2. The Power of Prayer and the Word*

**It** was apparent that there is a deep understanding of how prayer – and community prayer in particular – is a critical element

in forging the St. John Fisher community. There is a widespread sense that deepening those connections – through our sharing of the Eucharist, our prayer groups and other approaches (quiet reflection after Communion, communal penance services etc.) leads to a deeper experience of God. Some feedback highlights:

- ❖ The homilies and scriptural reflections regularly relate to real life in our current times. Again, the call and response is evident in what we hear from the ambo.
- ❖ The diversity of the pastoral team is appreciated and important in helping the community see Christ through different eyes.
- ❖ Newcomers and visitors have positive experiences.
- ❖ The witnessing from parishioners in Tuesday presentations from Week 1 (Personal testimony on God in our lives) and Week 5 (Work in the marketplace) was a very understandable and important example of response to God’s call. People found strength in hearing those experiences and are moved to join and/or act similarly.

**SUMMARY: For many, prayer and the Word clarify God’s Call.**

### *3. Experience of and in Community:*

**As** one Tuesday night participant put it: “We cannot just believe; we must trust and follow God, sharing our love and talents by working for justice and helping others. Making the lives of others better truly matters.”

But there was also a thread that we cannot rest on laurels and the genuine good feelings our sense of community engenders.

The input cited several challenges:

- ❖ Attention is needed on how we relate outside of the parish, to other Catholics and other believers in our increasingly less-Christian environs.
- ❖ Where do we fit in the Catholic world vis-à-vis the Church at large and in the Archdiocese of Detroit, noting signs of the times that seem to emphasize a return to a hierarchical, authoritarian, male-dominated church model over a participatory one that includes the laity.
- ❖ Yet the spirit and truth in God that is exhibited by our faith community must be spread. And the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the participation and determination of the faithful must be sources of hope for us as we move forward. It was a challenge first heard last spring when Father Michael Crosby urged us to become more than a unique island amidst the more monolithic church world.

**SUMMARY: For many, community experience deepens God’s Call.**

### *4. Conscience Formation:*

**The** Week 4 Tuesday session on this issue was our Year of Renewal’s most-talked-about evening.

“Well done,” “Excellent job,” “Inspirational,” “Great presentation,” “Affirming,” “Challenging,” “Grounding,” “Uplifting” were the audience’s verdicts. Clearly, many were moved and inspired by Father Jerry Brzezinski’s presentation on the difficult but essential task of forming personal conscience so that it stands as the ultimate and true measuring stick for personal responsibility.

But consider the following:

- ❖ On one level, yes, it was a positive reminder how the practice of call-and-response and seeing, judging and acting is part-and-parcel of authentic Catholic ethical thinking. It is lived out in many facets of our parish's life.
- ❖ On another, it was a sobering reminder of the lingering need to help some move beyond "a second-grade level of faith," recognizing how humbling and difficult it is to enter into the process of conscience formation. It requires both prayer and willingness to enter into a dialogue.

**SUMMARY: For many, conscience formation is the link between God's Call and response.**

## 5. *Connecting to "The Real World":*

**Virtually** every feedback session cited the difficulty of living our faith in the daily reality of life. Some key samples:

- ❖ On social issues, when do our good works become band-aids for problems that figuratively require transplants and/or major surgery? How do we make the link between our works of charity and the demands for a just world?
- ❖ On American society, how can we practice the gospel values of our faith in a world where increasing workplace and family responsibilities make participation in our call-and-response legitimately difficult for many and practically impossible for some? How can we practice the Beatitudes in a world where money and power are dominant?

**SUMMARY: For many, connecting to the real world opens opportunity for response – in effect, an equation: Response = Relevancy + Action.**

 *The Final Signpost*  
**So** in a sense, St. John Fisher Year of Renewal journey has ended.

Amidst all the feedback notes and reports, some wondered "What was it all about? Where was the 'A-ha!' moment?" Were they looking for something akin in a modest way to St. Paul's God-smacked conversion – or maybe one of those emotional Billy Graham Crusade altar calls?

Perhaps the feedback also generated the answer for the "A-ha" searchers: The "A-ha" moments were there – but by looking at what the participants said, they were intensely personal, perhaps different than expected in nearly every instance but yet faith-inspiring and faith-changing in ways we'll only know in days to come.

For as with many completed journeys, we are just on the brink of another one.

As our parish leaders and ministers look back on the fruits of the Year of Renewal, may the Holy Spirit guide us as we navigate the future of our singularly-blessed, inspired and creatively challenged branch of the Universal Church. Amen.

# YoR Survey Results

A total of 65 surveys have been received to date. Of this total, 68% were completed by female parishioners, 32% by males.

As defined by those who completed the survey, 40% of All Year of Renewal participants are 66 or older; 85% are 51 or older. Further, 18% have belonged to the parish 26 years or more; 66% have belonged to St. John Fisher for more than 16 years.

Regarding participation, survey respondents indicate that they have taken part as follows:

- Weekend YoR Liturgy: 91%
- Read YoR bulletin inserts: 80%
- Read some of the YoR booklets: 28%
- Read all of the YoR booklets: 72%
- Accessed the YoR website: 35%
- Attended some Tuesday sessions: 57%
- Attended all Tuesday sessions: 22%
- Participated in a small discussion group: 62%

When asked to assess the Year of Renewal and its various components, survey respondents are, for the most part, very positive. The following average scores are based on a 5 point rating system, with 1 representing “not at all” or “poor” and 5 representing “very” or ‘excellent.”

- Was the theme “call and response” clear?: 4.28
- Was the theme “call and response” relevant?: 3.65
- If used, were the booklets helpful?: 4.16
- Were the Tuesday evening sessions meaningful?: 4.04
- How would you rate the small group experience?: 4.17
- Overall rating of the YoR experience: 3.85

In summary, most of the survey respondents are very positive about all aspects of the Year of Renewal. Unfortunately, we do not know how those who did not respond feel about their participation. Hopefully, the experience has been positive for all.

## A Faith to Believe In

Song for the St John Fisher Year of Renewal

Terry Gonda & Kirsti Reeve

*♩ = 114*

The musical score is written for a single melodic line in treble clef, 2/4 time, with 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):

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Like little children, we come to You<br>Help us to open our hearts<br>To notice Your presence in all that we do<br>Make us aware of Your call           | 4. Like Simon Peter, abandoning all<br>Help us cling only to You<br>Here we are, ready to answer Your call<br>Leaving our nets on the shore                    |
| 2. Like Bartimeus, we want to see<br>Help us to open our eyes<br>Finding Your call to community<br>In every part of our lives                              | 5. Like the disciples, in awe and in fear,<br>As Your glory transfigures all<br>It is indeed good for us to be here<br>May we respond to Your call             |
| 3. Lord, when uncertainty hits from all sides<br>Help us keep trusting in You<br>Keep us alert to the signs of the times<br>For only Your call will endure | 6. Just like the Pharisees, we're quick to judge<br>Help us to put down our stones<br>And walk a new road of forgiveness and love<br>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