



CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOSEPH

PARISH PASTORAL PLAN REVIEW REPORT FOR JEFFERSON CITY: CATHEDRAL OF SAINT JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH IN SEE CITY DEANERY

Parish Pastoral Plan Review Report that was considered and approved by the Parish Council along with the input of other various leaders of the parish.

Rev. Louis M. Nelen, Pastor

November 2021

PARISH PASTORAL PLAN REVIEW REPORT FOR JEFFERSON CITY: CATHEDRAL OF SAINT JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH IN SEE CITY DEANERY

A. Active stewardship:

- a. Programs that currently exist to bring families together in sharing their time in prayer and fellowship include Eucharistic Adoration for youth and adults, small group reflection programs, doughnuts after Sunday morning Masses, and school sponsored fun activities in the evenings. There is a concerted effort to promote parish-wide engagement in activities, regardless of age, to eliminate perceived boundaries between church and school. We are now intentionally explaining that stewardship isn't a concept that can be forgotten once children have graduated from high school.
- b. There is room for improvement in opportunities for families with younger children to be involved in the Mass, such as restarting a children's choir. This could help to correct the noticeable absence of many school families at Mass. We still have too many families that see stewardship as only a financial issue. It would also be beneficial to offer more lay witness talks, both at Mass and on social media, which provide real-life examples of active stewardship. Until this year, the only time parishioners were formally invited to consider their stewardship was in the fall when they filled out the time, talent, and treasure forms. Stewardship needs to be encouraged and reflected upon throughout the entire liturgical year.

B. Hospitality and welcoming:

- a. The Cathedral is welcoming by providing a sense of comfort, consistency, and tradition to the many families who have called this parish their home for generations. We show that we are glad to see even those families who only join us during the holidays. Restarting the Welcome Committee to reach out to new members is a positive, along with having greeters to open the doors and welcome people who are attending weekend Masses.
- b. We need to continue our efforts to make new families welcome in our school, and ensure that the communications they receive from the school are truly informative. New families need detailed information about what is happening in both the school and the parish if we want to grow more active members.
- c. We may be too lethargic in contacting folks who were once registered under their parents' names, but now have become adults and don't realize the importance and benefit of registering in a parish.
- d. Instead of relying upon general, blanket requests for volunteers, it would be more effective if we could find ways to identify the strengths and skills of our parishioners, and offer more personal invitations to get help with various projects, and so promote greater participation among those who are just another face in the crowd.
- e. Printed bulletins and announcements for Mass may be good for some, but we also need to make better use of the power of digital age, such as emails, text messaging, and Facebook postings.
- f. We need to do more to encourage couples who get married at the Cathedral to make this parish their home. Some get married here because it's where they grew up, but then drift away from the Church because there isn't any explicit invitation to remain.
- g. Although automated attendants can be a great asset for handling after-hours phone calls, it may be more beneficial to allow incoming calls to go directly to a staff member whenever they are available.

C. Diversity:

- a. Our parish would likely not identify itself as a "shared parish" with more than one language or cultural context. As the mother church of the diocese, we are mindful of diversity at diocesan liturgies, such as proclaiming the readings in different languages or providing confessions in both Spanish and English. The Cathedral renovation will include a devotional shrine for Our Lady of Guadalupe, and will honor Fr. Augustus Tolton and St. Isidore the Farmer, to celebrate the diversity within our local community.

- b. We still struggle to be open to new ideas at times, which can discourage families who are trying to find ways to be more involved in their parish. There can also be a sense of skepticism toward newcomers' commitments due to a lack of follow-through in the past. This can lead to people volunteering and then never getting contacted, which results in personal frustration and loss of interest in parish events.

D. Communications:

- a. The parish tries to use a diverse array of communications. It would be helpful to have some metrics regarding how many parishioners rely upon our website for information, versus printed bulletins or verbal announcements at Mass. Information on the website can become cumbersome to sort through, unless outdated material is periodically removed or archived. Any online forms need to be fillable and able to be submitted via email. There doesn't appear to be a way for families to register online with a fillable form, and if there is, it is too difficult to locate on the website. Parish Council and other council minutes are not always posted in a timely fashion on the website. Recall that a certain percentage of our population isn't necessarily proficient in using computers and social media, and so they would benefit from seeing printed council minutes as bulletin inserts as in the past.
- b. There was good initial communication regarding the parish's transition to a stewardship parish, but not enough follow-up information was given, perhaps due to disruptions caused by Covid. There is a need more information on the stewardship process from both the diocese and the parish, especially in the area of financial contributions.
- c. Additional communication regarding the current requirements related to VIRTUS training and background checks will be appreciated.
- d. Regular updates on the Cathedral renovation will be appreciated.
- e. Given our current demographics, there doesn't seem to be an issue regarding how we present information in Spanish.
- f. During the annual discernment of Time and Talent, we should invite feedback from parishioners to determine their areas of need. We should also publish canonical requirements for candidates for Parish Council or School Advisory Council, and encourage more qualified individuals to step forward so we can return to having elections.
- g. The three-fold expectation of active stewards, prayer, participation, and sacrificial giving, should be printed in each bulletin. Make it clear that the parish will hold all families accountable for their stewardship commitments. A portion of our communication needs to be catechetical. The school cannot survive without the support of the entire parish, and the entire parish would be missing a vital component without a school.
- h. We can make better use of community gatherings, such as coffee and doughnuts, as opportunities for communication with parishioners.
- i. Livestreaming of the Cathedral's Sunday Mass is available and appreciated by many, both in our area and those who live some distance away.

E. Formation for members of Parish Councils and Committees:

- a. New School Advisory Council members are introduced to their roles and responsibilities upon joining that Council. The SAC occasionally uses part of its meeting time for professional development activities. Finance Council members are all highly skilled through their jobs in the financial sector, but will still benefit from the publication of a diocesan finance manual, coming soon. Parish Council members have been informed of their canonical role to assist with pastoral planning in a consultative or advisory manner.
- b. One notable concern among parish committees in general is the lack of a clear procedure to replace an ineffective chairperson. The chairperson is often the one who either makes members feel welcome to contribute, or drains the life out of the committee by simply dictating what is to be done.

F. Fiscal responsibility:

- a. The Cathedral sends a financial report to the diocese at the end of each fiscal year, and also publishes an annual financial report in the bulletin. Interim contribution statements are available to any parishioner at the end of the calendar year or upon request. The Cathedral recently had a successful financial audit, performed by a local accounting firm, in fulfillment of diocesan requirements.
- b. The Cathedral publishes its monthly income and tithing to the diocese. People miss the weekly offertory numbers, and would like to see more frequent budget updates in the bulletin. A regular summary of expenditures is needed for greater transparency, but a full report could be reserved for those who have specific questions.

G. Sacraments:

- a. Periodic training is offered for those engaged in liturgical ministries, sometimes in a group setting, and sometimes on an individual basis. Both the theological significance and the practical techniques particular to each role is covered in these trainings. Special training sessions are offered for those who fill the role of altar servers, usually through the Cathedral school. The music ministry is overseen by a full-time music director, who ensures that music selections are appropriate for a given liturgy, and who provides sufficient practice time with our musicians to help them be successful in their roles.
- b. The parish has a youth and young adult minister, but would benefit from hiring a Director of Education to oversee catechesis at all levels, and to promote ideas for prayer in the home. Parents who are seeking the Sacrament of Baptism for infants and young children are required to receive catechetical training from a member of the parish clergy (usually an assigned deacon). The program provides training on the theology of the Sacrament as well as instruction on the roles and responsibilities of the participants.
- c. Children in the parish school receive instruction and preparation for Reconciliation, First Communion, and Confirmation. Parish children attending public school receive special instruction in evening classes during the school year. All children celebrate these sacraments together, to bring school children and other parish children together as one spiritual family. Parents are asked to be involved in these two important sacraments, as a way to reinforce their own faith.
- d. The parish has a dedicated RCIA coordinator, and is working to strengthen its marriage preparation process, in line with the new marriage policy recently promulgated by the diocese. Sacramental preparation for adults can be performed outside of the normal RCIA schedule, with the approval of the pastor. By moving the start of confessions on Saturday afternoon from 4:00 pm to 4:30 pm, it is easier for engaged couples to schedule their weddings on Saturday afternoons, without having to rush through their photos after the liturgy.
- e. Regular opportunities for Reconciliation are available Saturday afternoon, prior to the Sunday vigil Mass, as well as 30 minutes prior to all Sunday Masses. It is also available upon request, by appointment. This schedule was developed in response to the feedback from the “Better Together” small group sessions.
- f. Anointing of the Sick is available anytime upon request. There is a desire among some parishioners to celebrate Anointing of the Sick with a special Mass on a periodic basis. The parish makes every effort to accommodate funeral requests, and only asks for a modest contribution if the deceased is a member of another parish. The parish has a long tradition of offering funeral lunches for families after Masses of Christian Burial. The Covid pandemic interrupted this practice, but we expect it to resume following the renovation of the Cathedral undercroft.
- g. Prayer opportunities outside of Mass include: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Stations of the Cross during Lent, daily communal recitation of the rosary, Centering Prayer, book studies and Women’s Bible Study, Men’s Prayer Groups.

H. Holy Orders/Consecrated Life:

- a. The parish does not understand the barriers young people and their families face when considering a priestly or religious vocation. It would perhaps help to form discernment small groups where young people can voice their thoughts, experiences, and suggestions for creating a more friendly vocation atmosphere.
- b. Young people need to be invited to detach from the noise of the world and spend quiet time listening for God's voice. Young people and families also need to see their priests as "normal" persons who have hobbies, car payments, etc., while striving to live a holy life. Families could develop more personal relationships with their priests by inviting them to dinner in their homes, for example.
- c. The Cathedral can celebrate the fact that it has an active Vocations Committee, and prays weekly for vocations through the sharing of the Christ the High Priest icon among families. The Vocations Committee supports current seminarians and encourages youth through cards, letters, prayers, and financial support.
- d. The Vocations Committee has pointed out the following concerns that can prevent someone from considering a priestly or religious vocation: worries about paying off college debt, anger and disappointment from the sexual abuse scandal in the Church, lack of support or even discouragement from family and friends, fear that the academic work is too difficult, no one has ever invited them to consider a priestly or religious vocation, or fear that they are not holy enough.
- e. "Adopt a seminarian" efforts in school help to make connections between our youth and future priests, and participation in diocesan vocation events helps to keep the idea of priestly and religious vocations in front of our youth.

I. Marriage:

- a. The parish is struggling to fully implement the new marriage preparation policy. We have couples who have been trained to assist the pastor in this process; however, there is still uncertainty as to how they should perform their duties as couple-to-couple mentors. The lack of an in-person Pre-Cana program, due to the pandemic, has added to the challenges. Obviously, couples with strong Catholic roots tend to be more open to the new policy and to working together with the clergy and staff of the parish.
- b. Another obstacle is the strong influence of secular society, which has created certain expectations of how marriages are to be planned and celebrated, and Catholic couples are not immune from that influence. Much patience and exhortation will be needed to change hearts and minds in this respect.
- c. The Cathedral strongly supports the John Paul II Young Adults group in Jefferson City, which provides regular opportunities for young families to enjoy fellowship and spiritual enrichment.
- d. There is room for significant growth in reaching out to families who may feel isolated from the parish. A commitment to co-responsibility on the part of all is needed to accomplish this expectation, because of the limited number of priests and deacons.

J. Wounded marriages:

- a. The parish generally handles several annulment cases each year, and follows the process required by the diocese. Most of the petitioners go directly to the pastor, perhaps due to a sense of greater confidentiality in working with him. But again, the pastor can only do so much by himself, and a greater number of trained lay advocates would be good for all involved.
- b. A major weakness in our area is the lack of available marriage counselors for couples who need long-term counseling. There is also a frequent misunderstanding by those who are divorced or separated regarding the Church's teachings about the reception of Holy Communion. Occasional catechesis about this subject in the bulletin or on the webpage would be useful.

K. Children, Youth, Elderly, Suffering:

- a. Students participate in liturgical roles at our parish school Masses, and at weekend Masses, parents can also choose to allow their children to volunteer for age-appropriate ministries.
- b. Our parents actively support the school through volunteering of their time and financial giving. The school will invite our elderly parishioners to be involved in school activities from time to time. The prospect of having Masses in the gym during the Cathedral renovation should further encourage our parishioners to see the school facility that they are supporting with their stewardship.
- c. As a stewardship parish, our school is available for anyone who is a child of active parishioners. Non-Catholics also enroll in our school for a fee. The school has worked to add resources for children who need additional assistance with learning or with human formation.
- d. Our parish has responded well to the call for everyone to become VIRTUS compliant. It is considered an integral component of active stewardship.
- e. Our parish has a bereavement committee to provide gentle support in the months after the death of a loved one, and also a committee to serve funeral lunches. We have groups that provide ways for our retired parishioners to spend time together, such as quilting or the 50+ club. Several of our parishioners bring Communion to the homebound or to the local hospitals.
- f. Our parish is active in supporting local charities, for example through food collections, gently-used coat collections, monetary donations, and the annual Giving Tree campaign for Christmas.

L. Facilities and Environment:

- a. The renovation of our Cathedral provides us with the opportunity to make our church more accessible and friendly, both to those with disabilities and to those with newborn or infant children.
- b. The renovation of the undercroft will definitely improve the ambiance of the space, and make it more likely that people will want to gather there.
- c. The area to the west of the parish office could be a place for future construction according to a master site plan that is being developed. The school and church grounds need more parking and perhaps another driveway for ingress/egress.
- d. The volunteers who help to beautify the interior and exterior of our buildings are to be commended for their wonderful work!

M. Care of cemeteries:

- a. Our parish does not have its own cemetery. We are represented on the Board of Directors for Resurrection Catholic Cemetery, which is situated within our parish territory.

N. Disaster responder teams:

- a. We had individuals who were ready to assist following the tornado in Jefferson City in 2019, and during the height of the Covid pandemic in the spring of 2020. However, the Cathedral does not presently have a dedicated team of volunteers who are organized and ready to respond immediately to a disaster in the community.
- b. During liturgies, the ushers are to be the first ones to respond and direct people in the event of an emergency, such as a medical emergency during Mass. But the Cathedral would be well-served to develop a formal disaster response policy, especially in light of the fact that we live in an area prone to severe storms or even earthquakes. Also, consideration should be given to recruiting and training ushers who are physically capable of handling a disorderly intruder, an active shooter, or attempted theft.

O. Catholic Charities:

- a. The Cathedral has had a positive collaboration with Catholic Charities. Some examples include Dan Lester, Catholic Charities executive director, presenting at various classroom and faculty functions at St. Joseph Cathedral School, and Cristal Backer, Catholic Charities director of development and outreach, speaking about Catholic Charities Refugee Services work to the School Advisory Council.
- b. Areas for growth include: having the parish get involved with the various opportunities listed on our Catholic Charities menu of engagement and/or Catholic Charities Refugee Services program menu of engagement; inviting Cathedral parishioners to tour and volunteer at the new Catholic Charities site; serving as host site for Catholic Disaster Preparedness Program (CDPP) training; inviting Sr. Kathleen to present to various groups regarding Catholic Social Teaching; and sharing social media posts from Catholic Charities on the Cathedral's website or Facebook page.