

RENEWAL 2013
FR. JOE'S LISTENING SESSIONS

We continue our results by considering the theme of spiritual life/faith formation. Here are three summary statements of sentiments shared in regards to this. The numbers in parentheses reflect the number of times a similar response was given.

- There is a deep appreciative memory for programs of spiritual renewal and retreats held in the past, as well as a thirst to rekindle similar programs in the future to foster spiritual growth at St. Joseph parish (28).
- Opportunity for Eucharistic Adoration in our peaceful chapel is considered a cherished part of parish life (16); and gratitude was expressed for additional avenues of Catholic piety with hope for expanding them further (17).
- While Bible Study groups are a prized source of faith formation at St. Joseph Parish (12), additional programs to enlighten participants in their knowledge of the Catholic faith are strongly desired (19).

Another theme that rose to the top as I heard parishioners at my Listening Sessions was the value of *Faith Formation* and the *Spiritual Life*. They are in good company, because here is what some of our saints in heaven have to say about the importance of prayer upon which our spiritual growth is dependent:

- "True prayer is nothing but love." – St. Augustine
- "Prayer is the inner bath of love into which the soul plunges itself." – St. John Vianney
- "Every one of us needs half an hour of prayer each day except when we are busy – then we need an hour." – St. Francis de Sales

-United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, page 463

So much so was this theme believed to be important, that the message was clear from those who attended that there is a need and a desire to add more programs providing faith formation and spiritual renewal.

- "We need lots and lots of educational programs at all age levels. Our faith is so rich, such a treasury that no one opens!"
- "We hope in the future we can revive some version of renewals, retreats, and prayer groups!"

-Parishioners at St. Joseph Listening Sessions

Both elements of this theme: faith formation – to better understand how our Catholic teaching applies to our lives; and spiritual growth – emptying ourselves through prayer for the sake of being filled with God and entering into a deeper relationship with him (*Catechism*, page 477), are foundational to our Catholic lives. Let's keep that in mind when **I invite you to meet with me again on March 13th at 7pm to begin Renewal 2013. United with Christ's presence among us, our future is in our hands – together – as a parish community!**