

RENEWAL 2013
FR. JOE'S LISTENING SESSIONS

We continue our results by considering the theme of participation. Below 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.

- A Christian spirit of generosity and “willingness to work for the Lord” is noted as characteristic of many parishioners at St. Joseph (25).
- In fostering stewardship as a way of life, St. Joseph Parish provides a variety of opportunities for participation – resulting in ministries that contribute to building parish community and also many that provide care for those in need (63).
- There is a call for expanding opportunities for involvement in our parish life through
 - reaching out to a wider diversity of people – youth, seniors, singles, marrieds, widowed, divorced,
 - encompassing a wider breadth of interests – family activities, men’s group, women’s group, spiritual, social, ...
 - utilizing various means of communication – web, social media, newsletter with story and ministry focus, ... (53)

It is no accident that this theme on *Participation* from my Listening Sessions follows the themes of *Liturgy* and *Faith Formation/Spiritual Life*. Just as St. Paul teaches that “the love of Christ urges us on” (*2 Corinthians 5:14*), Pope Benedict XVI tells us, “‘Worship’ itself, Eucharistic communion, includes the reality both of being loved and of loving others in turn. A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented” (*Deus Caritas Est 14*). In other words, if we only perform our religious duties without following them by serving others, they become empty gestures – proper, but without love.

We know that each one of us is gifted in some way so that the Body of Christ, us, can work together as a whole. In a later Encyclical Letter, *Caritas In Veritate*, Pope Benedict goes on to say that “The human being is made for gift....It takes first place in our souls as a sign of God’s presence in us, a sign of what he expects from us” (*CIV 34*). Those words, “what he expects from us”, have a bit of a haunting tone, don’t they? We should pause and ask ourselves if I – we – are using all the gifts God gives us – our time, our talent, and our treasure – in a way that he expects; in a way that “contributes to the building of the universal city of God, which is the goal of the history of the human family” (*CIV 7*). Are we using our gifts in a way that we take care of each other – binding each other’s wounds, washing each other’s feet?

It is clear that many of our parishioners value the opportunities currently offered at St. Joseph to be involved and praise those who already generously participate. Yet, they also expressed a great need to expand this vital aspect of parish life – and I agree! In knowing that, I hope you will join me in discussion as to how we might make that a reality. **I invite you to meet with me again on March 13th at 7 p.m. to begin Renewal 2013. United with Christ’s presence among us, our future is in our hands – together– as a parish community!**