

Parish Meeting
February 23-24th, 2008

Attendance: Saturday: 16 Sunday: 60

Introduction: Father Ray's focus questions for the Parish Meeting dealt with identifying areas in need of healing; places where pain is felt acutely; and how to begin the healing and transforming processes. Lent is an inner journey to explore healing and transformation within one's self, the community and the world. Finding tools to aid the healing is important.

Saturday parishioner responses

- Concerning healing, it is easier to offer help but harder to ask for it. It is a struggle.

- With the recent homicides it's clear that our youth are in need of healing and transforming. We need to pray that they get the right examples. They need to see Christ's love in others. We need to set good examples.

- We need to display greater sensitivity. A parishioner's well-intended actions were received with criticism that caused that individual to feel unwelcome and wishing to no longer worship with the community.

- We need to pray first before criticizing. We can't afford to do otherwise as a Christian community that wants to grow.

- Proposed a pastoral response to the criticism situation involving a visit.

- There needs to be a Spirit of Prayer in the way we relate to one another. This calls us back to our Mission.

- Offered to pray on behalf of healing for the person who felt alienated.

- An area of healing involves our Catholic schools and the families affected. We need to pray also for the Bishop and the school advisory committee who went through pain themselves as part of the school closing process.

- The healing process ripples outward to the "bigger picture".

- Recalled how mockery of a peer's "differentness", years ago, caused that person great pain. Be aware of others' feeling before you say something. Don't judge. Make others feel at home. What can we do to reach out to others?

- As we attempt to "grow the parish", we need to be aware of how we reach out to each other. It's important to love and not judge.

- It's important to evangelize in the streets. Don't be afraid to reach out to "*the least of My people*". There is power to change institutions if people become mobilized around an idea.

- “Does St. Monica parish have it’s own soup kitchen?
(Clarification: St. Monica Parish supports the efforts of St. Peter’s Kitchen with volunteers and supporting efforts to gather toiletry items and blankets.
- Appreciates efforts to keep other parishioners, unable to attend the Parish Meeting, informed by means of printed summaries.

Sunday Parishioner Responses

- Last’s week’s presentation by Roslyn Karaban on *Illness, Dying, Death and Grieving* was worth repeating and expanding. The breadth of the presentation was appreciated. It pointed out how much more needs to be addressed.
Note: The book Roslyn Karaban has written on this topic is available in the parish library in the bookshelf in the vestibule. Sign it out and take home for further learning.
- A major area in need of healing and transforming involves the parish school which will close. Healing involves a renewal of hope. The restructuring of the Monroe County Catholic Schools years ago led to a “divorce” between the parish and the school. The school is now ‘given back’ to the parish. What does it mean to heal and renew this relationship?

Response Father Ray is composing a letter to parishioners asking them how the school building will continue to be a part of parish life in terms of its Mission. Parishioners will be asked to submit scenarios of what this would look like. A meeting, lasting longer than the 20-minute format of the Parish Meetings, will be announced soon. “Blue Sky” dreaming is encouraged.
- The school closing presents an opportunity to consider the children’s day care needs and those of seniors living in the neighborhood.
- Looking at the school as a transformational opportunity, it could become a community place where we come together to meet each other’s needs. Be the community that “looks out for” and tries to help. It will make us stronger as a parish and could serve as a “sign” to the Diocese as a positive response to school closings.
- People living in isolation need healing. Consider joining the parish’s Legion of Mary and visit the homebound, persons in nursing homes and people in hospitals. Go in pairs or as individuals.
- The church and school closings continue to be areas in need of healing. Perhaps it would be helpful to try to treat these situations in advance of their actual happening. Transformation is a way to get people to come together. We need to recognize that grief comes in many forms.

- As a way of coming together, is their support for a parish night at a Red Wings baseball game like last year? *(Received an enthusiastic response in favor).*
- The Diocesan 3-year retreat process focusing on renewal should be starting soon.
Has the parish begun this process?

Father Ray: It begins with a prayer service (listed in the bulletin) on February 26th at St. Pius Xth parish. We do plan to participate in the renewal but have not yet received the informational material from the Diocese. It does look as though the parish will have some input in how it takes shape.

- The Parish 40-Week Club presents an opportunity to come together to support the parish and have fun. Membership fees bring \$6,000 to the parish. The 40 Week Club Dinner is a great community-builder. Others are welcome to join.
- Some persons may find it difficult to find healing in large-group situations. Please consider addressing healing and transformation in smaller contexts like the Monday homily preparation group, soup suppers and small Christian communities within the parish.

Closing: This weekend's Parish Meetings were an intentional effort to show that this forum is not just for "business" issues. There will be a return to the "parish business" format, however, in the months ahead as the parish addresses the Building Renovation and School-related concerns.