

A Message from Fr. Joseph

As you all know we had our Strategic planning meeting with the full Archdiocesan team last Friday. I first of all want to reiterate my thanks to so many of you for attending. It was an absolutely beautiful evening outside and your presence on a Zoom call was a testament for your real desire for the continued success of our community here in North Everett. At the meeting the data from our particular communities around Finances, Facilities and other info including Sacramental trends were shown with similar data from around the Archdiocese and throughout the nation. We saw from this data exposition that our trends over the five years, before the onset of Covid, showed us faring slightly worse than national trends. We are trending downward in several of the categories. It is important to note that, as I have stated before while we are two parishes our data is compared together because we are seen as a common unit for the proclamation of the Gospel in North Everett.

The presentation brought to light that this planning process has been the culmination of decades of work throughout the Archdiocese. Bishop Mueggenborg made mention that this is not the first time that our parishes have been brought up in discussion at the Archdiocese as possible participants in this process and after the last go around had been recommended by the Deanery to be evaluated because of our proximity to one another. The team then explained the full process, of which we are still only in the initial stages of data gathering and assessment. I think the explanation was helpful for many people but still the main takeaway of the evening was that we are not working to our full capabilities here in North Everett and whether the Archbishop asks anything of us or not we need to undergo some shifts to Evangelize a little better.

The Archdiocese laid out a six point model for a thriving community. 1) **Discipleship**: Attracts and forms disciples. 2) **Growth**: grows the local faith community. 3) **Liturgy**: engages the faithful in the Liturgy. 4) **Leadership**: enjoys a strong staff and lay leadership. 5) **Finances**: has financial stability. 6) **School**: embraces a vibrant school community. Out of these six only our parish school hasn't seen a dip over the last period of time. That is not to say that we are failing only that we have a lot of work to do. Over the last three years that I have been here we have seen a rise in many of our areas sadly a rise at one parish is often offset by a concurrent decline at the other, just reinforcing that it is only working together that we can truly thrive. Still with all this being said I am not in the least down hearted. It was good to see so many rising to the occasion on Friday saying that now that they realize what the real issue is they are going to get out and start evangelizing. That's certainly the attitude we need! At the end of the meeting the representatives from the Archdiocese said that it would be between 1-6months before we enter into

the next phase, that of receiving a direction from the Archbishop as to what he would like to see. I know a number of people would like to know what we can do and the answer is not to sit around and wait to see what our future might hold but rather to get out there and start making disciples.

Upon being assigned here I was informed that at some point we would be entering a process such as this. At that point Archbishop Etienne wasn't here and the potential process was not the same but I was told that we would most likely be entering a process of some sort within the next six years. With no particulars and nothing really to share I set to work preparing for whatever this might look like but with our success in mind. Whether you have agreed with everything I have done thus far or not I can assure you that the large majority of my decisions have been made with this moment in mind. We are currently in a unique position to seize the opportunity of Gospel proclamation right in front of us. If we each take on something in at least two of the categories in the next 1-6 months we will be in a far better place to take on whatever the Archbishop might ask of us. After all his primary care is that we become the center of evangelization he knows we can be. His concern is that we may be unduly burdened with other cares that get in the way of that core mission which we all received at baptism. I wanted to ask that everyone take on something in each of the six categories but realized that it might be an unreasonable request, after all Christian conversion can be hard.

An example of growth in **Discipleship** might be to join one of our Alpha programs or help lead one if you have already gone through. For **Growth** you might literally invite your neighbor to join one of our outreach programs or come to Mass with you. Our Social outreach Center promises to be a source of real vibrancy should we choose to foster its growth. **Liturgy** is often interpreted as Mass but it actually is any public worship of the Church and Adoration has been our biggest hit so far. During Lent we hosted expanded Adoration hours and by the end had people flocking from all over the area to attend. What you can do is sign up for an Adoration hour at OLPH. If we have at least 4 consecutive hours covered by at least 2 people I'll make sure the Eucharist gets exposed. If this takes off we will have tons of new parishioners because God never rations His Spirit. **Leadership** is starting something new like a renewed stewardship board or stepping up into a leadership role at one of the masses, like running the camera, helping people be seated or becoming an altar server for all you kids out there. **Finance** is easy to conceptualize, if every family gave \$20 more each week we literally would triple our income. That's because statistically less than 25% of people give anything. Think about that if you haven't been giving and started at \$20 a week the church might triple what it brings in, even if you gave \$5 we still are that much closer to financial stability. The point being there is room for everyone. Finally **School**, which as I noted before is the one area we are doing really really well. The school is stable financially, offers a solid education and provides the care for each child that our faith proclaims. I'm proud to be their pastor but there is always room for growth there as well. I know there are openings in every grade but 2nd for next year.

Overall the presentation from the Archdiocese was an eye opener for many. The results of our studies show that we have some work to do but as I stated before we don't need to wait for our marching orders from the Archbishop because we already have our marching orders from the Lord. There may still be a number of unanswered questions but they will become clear with time. Until then we will maintain as people of hope trusting in the resurrection of Jesus, which means whatever our future holds it will only bring us closer to God.

The whole study can be found on our website along with all of Deacon Duane Schireman's presentations and the presentation from the Archdiocese should be up by next weekend, after they send it to me. If you didn't have a chance to attend and would like to ask the Archdiocese any questions you can send them directly to Elijah.morgan@seattlearch.org or Strategic planning c/o Leigh Stringfellow 710 9th ave Seattle WA 98104