

## **Response to Comments/Questions Evangelization (Spiritual)**

- **We received comments regarding the downward trend in Mass attendance and religious vocations. Commenters wondered what could be done to reverse the trend.**

During the Town Hall Meeting, Father David Sizemore presented information showing the downward trends. He indicated that parishes that have focused on experimenting with ideas for evangelization and faith formation have reversed the trend and grown.

Bishop Fernandes has indicated that his two priorities are to increase vocations and promote evangelization. As a result, the Real Presence Real Future (RPRF) process requires parishes to develop an **Evangelization and Faith Formation Plan (EP)** that contains strategies for faith formation and outreach. An **EP** that makes use of both the St Mark and St Mary campuses will be developed and implemented.

- **Commenters expressed fear over change.**

The **EP** will present strategies for faith formation and outreach. Change is inevitable, but scripture reminds us that God is in control, is with us always, and wants what's best for us. We can trust Him! Given this, whatever change occurs will present opportunities for us to grow in faith – the very thing we must have to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

The task before us is a difficult one – one that will require us all to trust in God, hope in His goodness, and love each other during potentially stressful times. But without faith, hope, and love, we are nothing and life is merely a toilsome drudgery. Through the challenge put before us, God is giving us all the opportunity to grow in faith and become the best version of ourselves. We must learn to be thankful for the opportunities the Lord gives us to grow in faith, hope, and love.

- **Commenters noted that elderly parishioners might find it difficult to participate in evangelization efforts, and that younger**

**parishioners should be included in the development of evangelization and faith formation strategies to better ensure strategies effectively reach the youth. Such strategies should include effective social media outreach.**

Father Craig is seeking to hire a staff person to oversee the development and implementation of an **EP**. It is envisioned that the **EP** will develop strategies that present opportunities for all parishioners, regardless of age, to participate in activities involving faith formation and outreach. It is also envisioned that the development and assessment of the **EP** will include input from all affected groups, including youth. Finally, it is envisioned that the development of an effective social media effort is integral to reaching the youth as well as young adults. The St Mark campus may increasingly be used for faith formation and outreach activities, including youth-related activities.

- **The EP should include strategies to strengthen families.**

One of the root problems in the decline of vocations concerns the deterioration of family life. Consequently, in order to meet the Bishop's goal of increasing vocations, Catholic families need to be strengthened. The **EP**, therefore, will include strategies for strengthening families.

- **Commenters stated that clergy and laity need to be empathetic during this transition process and take steps to promote reconciliation of broken relationships, tolerance of differences (including prayer and worship), and acceptance of those who "feel left out."**

The Church has from its very first days tried to heal broken relationships, reach out to those who feel alienated, and provide acceptable means to manage differences in prayer and worship styles. We plan to draw on this collective experience and rely on scripture in confronting these issues in our own time. The successful resolution of all the issues noted will involve becoming like Jesus and following His commands in all our interpersonal relationships, especially the command to do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

- **Commenters noted the need for improved catechesis regarding the Eucharist, more Catholic Bible Studies, and apologetic programs.**

Improved catechesis regarding the Eucharist, which is the source and summit of our faith, more frequent Catholic Bible Studies, and apologetic programs will be provided as part of faith formation. The St Mark campus may be increasingly used for this purpose.

- **Commenters questioned how all the ministries and efforts will be unified and tied together. Who will have the final say?**

The Transition Team and Father Craig agree that the existing ministries of both parishes need to be maintained and strengthened through combining efforts where that makes sense. Plans are being developed for the ministry heads of both parishes to meet and explore ways that they might work together to better fulfill the goals of strengthening worship, evangelization, and outreach to those in need.

- **Commenters stated the need to return to an active sacramental life, which includes the frequent use of confession, in order to renew the Church.**

The Lord has blessed his Church with His presence in the sacraments. Frequent participation in the sacraments, especially Holy Communion and Reconciliation, are key to growth in Christ. It is envisioned that the St Mary campus will be the primary locus of sacramental life following a formal merger. The St Mark campus will be used primarily for faith formation and outreach activities.