



## St. Mary's of the Lake and St. Benedict's Initial Response to Listening Sessions



We are grateful for those who came to our listening sessions to offer their comments and suggestions. We have seven pages of ideas that we are working through. This insert is just the beginning to address them.

Many of the comments focused on what we are lacking, that all is not bad. This was best expressed by a couple new to our parish, "You are not giving yourselves credit for the foundation you have to build upon." Yes, there are things that we need to address. We are a good parish. We plan to be a *great* parish!



**The large silver Holy Water fonts have not been available since COVID for people to take Holy Water home. Can we have them back?**

→ *Both of our churches now have Holy Water available in the large silver fonts. You can find the fonts near the ambo (where the readings are proclaimed). You may bring your own container from home or we do have a few small bottles available (ask Fr. Jeff).*

**Some tourists ask for the history of our stained-glass windows**

→ *In 1996, Jean Argetsinger and Pat Ellison, with the help of others, wrote *Through the Windows of St. Mary's of the Lake: A 150 Year Reflection*. We are looking at the possibility of using some of this book to create something that can be given to visitors. We are also going to look at writing the history of our parishes from 1996-2021.*



**"We are (in summer) a tourist church—how do visitors know we are here?**

→ *Last year, we created some "rack cards" to be placed in local hotels and tourist attractions. These rack cards include our Mass schedule and locations and are designed to be put in information racks. This fall, we updated the rack cards and they were distributed to some local businesses. If you own a business, or know of one, where we could display the rack cards, please contact us.*



**"Are we ever going to return to the reception of the Eucharist in both forms?"**

→ *Bishop Matano has reserved the decision of if/when to resume distributing the Precious Blood to congregants at Mass to himself. As recently as this summer he has said it is not time to do this.*

**What happened to the old prayer teams?**

→ *The prayer teams after Mass returned post COVID this May. This ministry is now led by Deacon Tom and will be offered quarterly.*



My church is composed of people like me.  
I help make it what it is.  
It will be friendly, *if I am.*  
Its pews will be filled, *if I help fill them.*  
It will do great work, *if I work.*  
  
It will make generous gifts to many causes, *if I am a generous giver.*  
It will bring other people into its worship and fellowship,  
*if I invite and bring them.*  
  
It will be a church of loyalty and love,  
of fearlessness and faith,  
and a church with a noble spirit,  
*if I, who make it what it is, am filled with these same things.*  
Therefore, with the help of God,  
  
I shall dedicate myself to the task of  
*being all the things I want my church to be.*  
*Taken from our diocesan Joy of Stewardship Manual*

**Some parish groups have disappeared like the Catholic Daughters of America, and the St. Mary's Guild. What happened to them?**

► *These groups ceased to function as a result of declining members that corresponded to the decreased number of parishioners and an aging parish. Such groups could exist, driven by parishioner involvement.*

## **Families, Children, and Youth**

**Some people asked why we do not have a have children's Mass, Children's Liturgy of the Word, or a children's choir.**

► *The answer to all three questions is the same. There are very few children at Mass. We presently have seven families with eleven children in faith formation for grades 1-7. There are seven youth in Confirmation from six other families. They attend different Masses. We are open to having a periodic Mass for children and a choir as these numbers grow. The good news is two of the families were not parishioners last year. Growth is possible. Among our goals for the future is how to invite more families with children to join us.*

**A related comment offered at the listening sessions is “Children are taught at home by parents. We don’t see children at Mass.”**

► *It is correct that we changed our faith formation program for children from the traditional weekly Sunday school classes to monthly gatherings with parents teaching their children at home. It is important to realize cause and effect. The number of children attending went down resulting in the need to change how we do faith formation. The added plus of the new model is it brings the parents together and helps them grow in their own faith.*

**Why are there fewer children?**

1. *In the last 25 years the population of Schuyler has decreased from 19,200 in 2000 to 17,500. The number of school age children has decreased by approximately 1/3 in that same time frame.*
2. *Fewer families are choosing to come to church. Some choose to spend their time in worldly affairs. We need to find ways to help them choose to make God and faith a priority in their lives.*

## **Next Steps:**

We are working on a plan for the future with specific goals. These goals have not been finalized. Here are the present conceptions for the goals

- How do we improve people's experience of our Masses. This includes looking at new hymnals and missalettes, children's Masses, and music.
- Faith Formation for all ages that helps people grow in faith. For example, this will include helping people know more about why we do what we do at Mass so they can better appreciate Mass.
- Volunteer coordination—how can we better invite people to use their gifts to make our parish better?
- Communication—How we do make better use of our bulletin, website, and Facebook page?
- Community Building & Outreach—included here is how we minister to our homebound parishioners. This includes ways to invite those who do come to church to identify and reach out to the “missing parishioners.”

**\*For now, if you are homebound and would like a visit, please call the parish office at 607-535-2786.**