

Prayer and Spirituality Focus Group

Notes from May 19, 2009

Members present: Wayne Braith, Tanya Shorter, Pam Weber, Kathleen Hobday, Wendy Cichanski, Danielle Bunting, Matt Kehrer, Warren Christi, S. Loretta Denfeld, Mike Ernst, Mary Helen Montgomery, Rita Lange, Michelle Bechtold, Mitchell Bechtold, Teresa Bernu, Fr. Aaron Kuhn

Opening Prayer: This is our group opportunity to be calm, and to invite the Holy Spirit to guide our hearts, our thoughts and our words. **Mitchell Bechtold

1. General Business:

A. Long Range Plan update: Pam, Wendy, Mike and Warren explained some of the process and challenges to developing the new survey. Mike Ernst will be compiling the results and hopes to have them ready by mid-July. The task force will begin to set long range goals to present to the parish council with the information they receive from the survey results. The plan is to have the first draft available in September. There was good student response to the survey this time.

B. Update/discussion about our outreach to the Holy Myrrh Bearers community: This item was in response to the animal head being placed on the steps of the HMB church last month and our desire to express our concern and allegiance to them for this great insult. The various ideas our Focus group the other groups arrived at were presented to the parish council for discussion. The following action was taken: Fr. Tony phoned the pastor of Holy Myrrh Bearers and expressed his concern and sympathy. Staff sent a letter on our behalf telling them we were holding them in our prayers. Intercessions were made during the May 2nd Mass and one of our group members placed a bouquet of flowers on their steps as a statement of love. There was also a small article of mention in our bulletin. We discussed sending this community a card next year during their Easter season and possibly sending flowers in advance of the holiday.

2. Faith Formation:

A. Student and Permanent member Faith Formation activity reports

Fr. Aaron and the students present told of a great camping trip with the usual rain, there were 16-22 students in attendance.

Summer programs:

Wendy asked for brainstorming ideas on summer opportunities with PM's. We discussed the possibility of having a few speakers come in during the summer, concern was expressed that if we bring in a speaker we have to have an audience; this is difficult to do in the summer months. The conversation turned to playing the SCSU documentary film of St. Mary's Cathedral's removal of the swastikas and having Rabbi Joseph come in to give a talk.

We also talked about another outdoor Mass; this was a tradition years past.

Fr. Aaron offered to host a men's spirituality evening or overnight.

B. Fall new student initiation to Newman; should we offer an event to explain who we are as "Newman" and why we do what we do to incoming students? This topic is based on the "after meeting" conversation with several students last month. Our students led tonight's conversation asking many questions such as:

- Could we begin a mentor couple program for our students; a safe couple to possibly have dinner with occasionally, who would offer a good Catholic role model for our students. This could utilize single persons as mentors also. Our group discussed several possibilities and concerns such as training needed, availability of PM's to participate. No action was taken.
- The students enjoyed the busy student retreat and the availability of a spiritual director, could we offer more of this and more opportunity to meet with a spiritual director?
- The original idea of this line item was to discuss the possibility of a fall "initiation" for our students on who, what and how Newman is. Hopefully this would limit the cultural shock some students experience when they transition from their home churches to our Newman community. This could be done at the first student meal.
- Our students asked why we do not advertise the Eucharistic Adoration and Rosary to our permanent members; they would like the interaction with the PM's.
- Our students then began expressing their concerns about our Newman traditions such as: Why we do not use the word Catholic in our mission statement, what is the spirit of Vatican II, how we say the Creed, our use of inclusive language and more. And finally asking; do

our programs help students to grow in relationship with Jesus. These students expressed their fear of discussing these issues with our permanent members.

It was suggested that these students read the history of our Newman Center.

C. REP report: *Amber Christie visited with us for a few minutes and stated the school year went well. We had 60 students involved in 789 which was taught by our college students. There were 17 of our members confirmed on May 17th, and 130 students in P3 through 6th grade REP. The program had great parental involvement this year, and she's grateful for our model of faith formation!*

3. Liturgy Planning:

A. Summer Mass Times and ministries: *The parish council could not reach a consensus about which Masses are needed so for the time being all three Masses will continue into the summer months. The decision may be further evaluated after observing the Mass attendance this summer.*

THANK YOU ALL FOR A GREAT, BUSY, NEWMAN FILLED FALL AND WINTER! BECAUSE YOU TAKE TIME TO SUPPORT NEWMAN WE ARE A DYNAMIC FAITH COMMUNITY; HERE FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD AND FORMATION OF OUR NEXT GENERATION!

Respectfully Submitted by,
S. Loretta Denfeld and Pam Weber