

The following summarizes responses from attendees at the May 9, 2018 leadership meeting, synthesizing perceived obstacles and potential solutions as to Saint Andrew's discipleship strategy. This strategy incorporates the Catholic Church's "New Evangelization" approach to build, sustain and grow a firm foundation of core disciples within the church, "re-evangelizing" them and other church members in order to more faithfully draw themselves and others to Christ, in a world heavily influenced by secularization.

Responses to the proposed strategy Yes: 30 No: 0 (some attendees submitted a response as a group) Total Attendees: 40 Fr. Mark further had verbal affirmation, from all attending, of the vision expressed with a recognition that more work needed to be done. A follow-up meeting in August is tentatively planned.

**Proposed Strategy:** Develop a Core Group, to better form A Community of Discipleship

The Saint Andrew discipleship strategy will utilize an approach to form and sustain a core group of committed parishioners, effective parish groups and community partners who in a shared faith of Jesus Christ pledge to:

1. Build the Kingdom of God: with an active, purposeful, mission-oriented, externally focused
2. Here and Now: seek to act intentionally with a sense of urgency, proximate and immediate
3. Through Witnessing: justly and rightly in visible, collaborative, self-aware and humble ways
4. A Lived Faith: active, purposeful, mission-oriented, internally focused

### **Primary Obstacles and Solutions**

#### **1. Lack of specific direction**

Solutions:

- a. Complete a fully developed core discipleship program
- b. Validate and obtain subscription to the plan/program
- c. Implement and verify progress, incorporating adjustments
- d. Build a database of groups and members

#### **2. Lack of formative Catholic understandings**

Solutions:

- a. Integrate "re-evangelization" Catholic Faith Formation activities at all levels
- b. Build the kingdom through transformational formative understanding into faith in action

#### **3. Distractions of a secular world**

Solutions

- a. Educate and utilize Catholic practices of the New Evangelization
- b. Establish new normative behaviors and attitudes to create needed transformation

#### **4. Commitments and accountability**

Solutions

- a. Establish mission driven groups utilizing standardized instruments such as charters, mission statements, activity planning and communication that supports the parish vision
- b. Recognize group and individual accomplishment and spiritual growth in the community as disciples utilizing routine accountability reports to the Pastoral Council.
- c. Enable new practices to reinforce and recognize faith filled practices within the church

**Response summary and synthesis to the question:**

If you agree with the strategy, what obstacles do we need to address and how?

1. **Fear** as an obstacle to the graces of discipleship, drawing one closer to Christ for others.
  - a. **Attitude** is one internal area to address.
    - i. Action: **Put on Christ** – Loving, Caring, and Warmth in one’s personal attitude. To obtain: a) use prayer to build a more effective relationship with Jesus, b) ask for the graces of the Holy Spirit to transform your attitude to reflect more vividly your Christian dignity as desired by Christ c) employ the grace received for the benefit of others helping to build the kingdom, here and now. Recognize your exterior image will often transfer to others like a contagious smile or joy-filled personality. A negative attitude easily pushes people away.
    - ii. Action: **Accept that Christ is in others and act accordingly** – each person is created in the image and likeness of God, unique in dignity and possessing a divine soul. This choice of perspective will correct one’s perspective, one’s ability to see more clearly God’s truth, thus helping us to overcome bias – (a prejudice in sin) put upon our sight as a result of our fallen humanity.
    - iii. Action: **Works**. Be open, participate and work for our salvation and that of others in faith. Prayer is suggested as a first step, respond to God’s invitation, be open to act with a set of clear directions. Many in the CORE group do not see their clear direction to act.
    - iv. Action: **Spirit Led**. In prayer, recognize the true direction of the Holy Spirit, have confidence that things will change according to God’s plan with our acceptance of His plan and all the realities that accompany this choice. This will replace sinful attitudes that we are the only ones that do or can do anything. Further, submission to this truth will allow each of us to overcome our feeling of inadequacies to be disciples and offer a discipleship path for us and others. We can draw confidence from the Holy Spirit directing our actions in Christ as expressed in the Gospel of John 15:7.
  - b. **Sustaining momentum** over time is an area to address.
    - i. Action: **Have a plan**, follow-up and communicate to all, seek feedback, hold people to account for their actions, connect and find needed talents, keep groups visible and connect to core discipleship mission within the vision of building the kingdom here and now...
    - ii. Action: **Overcome, I am too busy!** Develop messaging strategy that shows how discipleship is not another thing to do. It is however, the primary purpose of our lives and a principle of our created nature, perfectly normal. It should direct our thoughts and actions that will resolve the “I am too busy” transforming to “I am doing the things God’s wants me to do”.
    - iii. Action: **Develop Trust**. Continue to ask for feedback and measure impact of actions that validate what the core group is doing, communicating this to the group and others to build trust and momentum. Mission statements should be developed for each group with reports to the parish on their activities and contributions that hold them accountable to the vision and mission of the parish.
    - iv. Action: **Provide Spiritual Advisors**. Faith is a personal path but one in need of guidance. It would be beneficial for CORE team members to have access to routine spiritual advice.

2. **Cooperative action(s)** of groups and individuals are potential obstacles that affect the ability to form, sustain and grow committed parishioners, effective parish groups and community partners.
  - a. **Formation** is a significant area to address.
    - i. Action: **Form a social church foundation**, bring groups together outside of Holy Mass, building liturgically upon the grace of group prayer, music and with biblical and tradition based instruction that builds outward within the Church inviting others to join and grow in faith. This will help establish, skills, abilities and practices to witnessing in faith to others in a relationship based context. This will further help all to become the CORE that CARES.
    - ii. Action: **Charism awareness and training** allowing the Holy Spirit to enable our graces to serve others, drawing forth their gifts. This will necessitate study as to what charisms are, ability to recognize that in others, and the humility to encourage others in this grace. This action is discipleship development in cooperation with and for others. It will help us progress through the different spirituality levels.
    - iii. Action: **Eucharist Adoration**. All good things start with prayer and relationship with the LORD. We could do a special adoration time just for this CORE group's discipleship development.
  - b. **Control** is one area to address. Who has it, who should have it and how should it be shared?
    - i. Action: **Humility** can be cultivated in prayer and training to help us recognize how to let go, to invite others to share their time and talent. This will allow transitions into and out of leadership roles keeping creativity and energy available for the fruits of the Holy Spirit to be made manifest. (*charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity*) Humility further helps to correct personal pride often wrapped up in a desire to "be in control all the time" or concern that "it takes longer to train someone in so I will do it myself". Transforming pride through humility enables the gifts in us and others to be utilized, creating the opportunity for involvement and leadership by others.
    - ii. Action: **Challenge ourselves** to move out from our comfort-zones and the positive feelings we may derive from our current roles. Allow ourselves to be tested and formed anew will help keep us connected to others whom are in the process of formation.
3. **Growing a CORE group** without adding new group structure is an area to address. The longer term view needs to be very clear that the desire for disciples is for everyone. The method of starting with a select core group is a process or technique to develop the capacity of discipleship and not an end in itself.
  - a. Action: **Communicate what each group does**. Further, indicate how the group's mission and activities align with the mission of the church. Also, make available member lists. These activities will make it possible for others to understand the purpose of each group, how they interrelate and support the Church and School's vision and who is involved. This allows for a matching of interests and charisms, an opportunity to connect with other participants. Lastly, it offers insights upon which invitations can be made to those not yet involved and for transitions into alternatives.
  - b. Action: **Training/education and clear direction**. This will facilitate development of a more effective and growing CORE group. This allows pathways to understand what is being implemented and why. We need to be the new builders, the new carpenters in Christ. Called to be saints.

- i. Facilitating the recognition of time and talents within a spiritual gift perspective supported with encouragement and connections to opportunities to use those gifts constructively with specific group activities or individually. For example: More opportunities like Called and Gifted.
- ii. Develop practices that ensure the activities do not become overwhelming or spread one too thin.
- iii. We are called to understand our gifts/talents and need to share our time combined with an accepted norm that saying no or not now is the correct prayer filled response if the activity is not in-line with their gifts or capabilities.
- iv. Basic faith formation is needed and being asked for by several respondents. "Catholics do not know their faith and teachings of the Catholic Church". An effective process in the New Evangelization is necessary to overcome this reality.
- v. Past church actions have left a cloud of questions. Why was the tabernacle removed from the main church? Now that it is returned to the altar, this has parishioners out of proper practice of their duty for reverence for the church worship area as a sacred space and the normative actions that should be taken; genuflection, taking conversation out to the gathering space, etc.
- c. Action: **Provide valued alternatives**. As expressed in the New Evangelization text we have great secular distractions, a negative world culture working against the Catholic Church, and misplaced attitudes in need of enlightenment "re-evangelization" of Christ's truth within our church.
  - i. Presentation of personal compelling stories (witnessing to draw people), enriching experiences (to connect and engage people), meaningful activities leading to Christ and eternal salvation.
  - ii. Establish events for the youth AND adults in this parish to get involved. (S.A.I.N.T.S. Projects) These opportunities some of which could be recurring, (grounds crew, EM, Choir, funeral help) will allow us to engage parishioners who are on the edge.
- d. Action: **Generational CORE**. This effort will need intentional inclusion of younger age members for longer term success. Inclusion of younger members is strongly represented in the respondent's views.
  - i. Generational talents are necessary for near and longer term growth. All members; handicapped, orphaned, separated need to feel a strong welcome and opportunity to participate. We must be open and listen with the ear of the heart and keep moving forward.
  - ii. The more we learn about all areas of Saint Andrew's, the more we can help those we encounter! This can start with the elderly sharing their life stories with the youth. This will provide inspiration to the youth, encourage them to grow in their faith and participate. These perspectives are not available to them on the internet and are of great value.
- e. Action: **Hospitality as a core parish activity** for everyone. Avoid missing the little ways in which we can encourage and invite people to discipleship: e.g. hospitality (recognition to all parish events and meeting) outreach to those whom you do not know providing welcome and inclusion. This does not mean knocking on doors of people's homes, but it does ask we be open and hospitable in a welcoming nature to others as we meet them at church and through our external encounters. Commitment to live our faith in our outward actions. Being open to the grace of this work.
  - i. Make room in the pew for those to share your space moving to the middle.
  - ii. Greet those you do not know in church, be welcoming and make connections.

- iii. Make people feel welcome through a set of routine weekend liturgical activities prior to mass that we as the people of God celebrate the goodness and blessings God presents in our midst by connecting and recognizing special events in people's lives; birthdays, wedding anniversaries, sacrament anniversaries. As liturgical people, we give thanks for these in our lives and in the Body of the Church. This establishes a pattern of worship, welcoming and wellbeing drawing/connecting people and their lives to Christ.
4. **Growing beyond just a core group** is a concern that the efforts will be limiting in nature.
- a. **Fallen away Catholics** in our families and community. How do we reach the people who never come to church?
  - b. **Educating/including the Youth.** Jim's presentation should be made available to others such as the youth and young adults in the parish.
  - c. **Discipleship Programs.**
    - i. Each of the leaders in the church find someone (hopefully not a really good friend who we see all the time) but someone we kind of know or don't know at all and for a THREE year commitment (how long the apostles were with Jesus) to reach out to them on a weekly basis (granted it can be more often) but let's start with once a week. A mentor in the faith. It can be as simple as an email, text, or phone call. Sharing a scripture passage or paragraph from the Catechism that builds someone up. The idea then would be for the new disciple to find another. So everyone would be a disciple and have a disciple. This could become the expectation in our parish and it could be reflected in our youth program as well, start with a few that are solid in their faith to build other up.
    - ii. CEW (Christian Experience Weekend) weekend for women followed by a weekend for men who have been identified as potential leaders in the core group.