

SUMMARY OF ST. RITA'S TOWN HALL MEETINGS, MARCH 2017

The Parish Council held two sessions of the spring Town Hall meeting. The sessions were held Wednesday, May 3 at 9:30 am and Tuesday, May 9 at 7:30 pm. The same material was presented at both sessions with a discussion period held after the presentation. You can see the [presentation here](#).

The discussions centered around three categories: education, communication, and engagement. The following is a summary of discussions grouped in those categories.

Education

Tenets of the Catholic Faith - Why do we do what we do?

One of the subjects pertained to what we do and why we do it as Catholics, and how we can become more knowledgeable.

Overall the view is there is a desire for increased education. Everyone agreed that we have a wonderful faith formation and youth ministry of which we are very proud, but we can benefit from more adult opportunities for education. Some ideas on how to address this are captured below.

- Have periodic teaching Masses.

Hold a Mass that provides a walk through on what is happening. Possibly a moderator or projected slides that walk through the Mass as the priest is presiding. Suggestions for them to be held on a weekend afternoon or possibly as one of the weekend Masses.

- Sacredness of the Eucharist

Have these topics discussed as part of the homily. Study groups that focus on the Eucharist. Have occasional DVDs played with this content during homilies. Make content available on the website.

- Catholic etiquette

Include some "Catholic facts" in the bulletin. Have informal question and answer sessions with the priest and/or deacons.

- Sacredness of our worship space.

There was an appreciation expressed for the changes made in the worship space, with the tabernacle along with the Corpus being the center of focus of the altar area. The addition of the statue of Joseph was also noted. Again, there was interest in why these environmental changes were done.

You will see plans going forward to implement some of these suggestions. Teaching Masses, evening chats with Fr Rick, "Jack's Facts" (educational tidbits), and other efforts focusing on what it means to be a part of our Catholic community.

Communication

Reporting on the facility and mortgage:

- Questions were brought up about the roof repair and if it is completed.

Outcome: The roof on the addition and the gathering space is new. There are some short-term repairs being completed on the old roof of Seton Hall and the new roof in the gathering area.

The Finance Council is planning the update of the old roof on Seton Hall and the worship area to bring them up to date, in line with the roof on the rest of the building.

- Questions about paying our mortgage, building fund envelopes, and the mortgage contribution funds.

Outcome: The budget data that is included within the “Stewardship Corner” of the weekly bulletin does not include the mortgage costs, however the total mortgage numbers are included as “Mortgage Update.” It is important to know that none of the offerings that are collected on Sundays go to paying off the mortgage unless they are specifically designated for such on the envelope. Similarly, building fund monies are used for specific repairs or improvements to the facility and are not utilized for mortgage payments.

The mortgage is paid with funds from our original capital campaign and the renewal pledges that have been made by our parishioners. It is important to understand the continual need to maintain a mortgage fund as we move forward in the coming years.

- Concerns as to how to maintain the mortgage fund to meet the payments needed in the future.

Outcome: There will continue to be opportunities to contribute to the mortgage fund as we have in the past, such as pledge drives and other means.

The Parish and Finance Councils will work to find ways of presenting the financial data in a way that enables all parishioners to see the complete scope of the parish’s goals, needs, and requirements as we move forward, so all may be able to easily see our current and future needs.

Media usage:

- Projector notes before Mass

These are not meant as a replacement for specific communications covered in the bulletin or website, but meant to be simple reminders. The consensus was very positive and recommended continued usage of it.

-Sainttritas.org website:

It has a lot of data on it but there was a request to add additional content specific to education, and external links for groups in which the parishioners are involved like the Knights of Columbus, etc. There was also a request to improve navigation to allow easier drilldown.

-Email blasts:

Email blasts appear to be useful and attendees liked the notifications they provided. There was a request to possibly use that method to notify parishioners of funerals or unexpected events that occur midweek. Although this is an excellent means to communicate last-minute items, anything of a personal nature such as funeral notifications must first be approved by the family.

- Understanding and following along with the readings and Gospel.

There was discussion of the use of Missalettes, leaflets or projection to follow along with the readings and Gospel during Mass. This has always been a debate through the years and was solved or decided on at the meetings, although it will be revisited in the coming year. Please remember that we do have the “At Home with the Word” booklets available that contain all the readings and gospels for the coming year. Please look into utilizing those for the current time.

Since communication is key in working together as a community, we will continue to look for improvements and new ways of bringing our Christian community together through available media.

Engagement

Getting more people involved

One of the biggest concerns is how we maintain a vibrant parish.

- How to get everyone in the different age categories engaged
Focus on each age group. What does each age group need? How do we do that? What activities do we have for that age group to bring them in, get them involved? This is one of the toughest areas to try to solve. The time constraints on the individuals in today's world often preclude parishioners from focusing their time in parish activities. We encourage you to share thoughtful suggestions on this subject.
- Encourage the youth to engage in volunteer opportunities during the Mass.
Suggestions were made that we need to get more youth involved in being not only Mass servers, but lectors, Eucharistic ministers, ushers, assistant Mass coordinators, etc. so they are involved during the Mass and not just engaged during faith formation.
- Have more events like the Living Stations of the Cross
It was suggested that we do more events of this type.
- Getting more of the Catholics in the area to register and participate at St. Rita's Parish.
Data from the Pew Research Center and Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis put the total number of Catholics in Cottage Grove at about 8,000. Of those, 3,820 are registered at St. Rita's as members of our 1,488 registered families. So where are the other half? How do we get them involved and active? These are all questions that were asked and none of them have easy answers.

In an effort to welcome new members, we have welcome packets that are presented to guests that sign in to our welcome station at Mass or visit the church at other times during the week. There is also the discussion of having a welcoming table actively managed during the weekend Masses. Another suggestion was to have welcome baskets for newcomers.

Thank you for reviewing the presentation material and the discussion points that were brought out in our Parish Council Town Hall. We have a wonderful parish with great opportunities for the future, and we should all be extremely proud of St. Rita's! We ask that you please share your thoughts and suggestions with the Parish Council as we continue to support Father Rick and the staff, but most of all we ask for your prayers as we serve this ministry.

You can contact the Parish Council at Parishcouncil@saintritas.org.

Every effort put forth by our parish requires your involvement to be successful.
God bless you. Thank you for all you do!

Your Parish Council