

Report to Parish Pastoral Council on Progress of Parish Census and Focus Group Survey

December 14, 2021

Introduction:

In September, the PPC determined to develop an annual pastoral plan for the remainder of the fiscal year. Basically to identify areas of concern to the parish and then how to address those concerns in short- and long-term planning.

As Chairman, I formed a special committee with Ruth Adamczyk, Myra Fox, Pat Rossman and Jean Weaver as members to organize and take on these tasks. The Planning Special Committee (PSC), as it has come to be titled, initially formulated a PPC Annual Plan FY21-22 which was introduced to the PPC, and approved, at the November meeting. That annual plan, among other tasks, calls for providing a needs assessment of the parish in the fulfillment of its mission and vision. In the five meetings of the PSC since its inception much discussion, fact finding & research has been accomplished utilizing expertise & resources from the Archdiocese and from professionals such as Amy Bigna.

All this has led the PSC to conclude and recommend that two key actions be undertaken. First, to conduct a Parish Census to get accurate data on the makeup of the SR parish community, including a determination of the best methods of communication going forward. Second, to design and conduct a survey of that community to identify needs, opinions, trends, etc to be acted upon through tactical and strategic planning,

Parish Census:

It has been determined by the PSC that for the parish survey to be effectively conducted it is necessary that we complete a fresh census of the SR community. This census effort will focus on household demographics to give us accuracy of names, residence and contact information. We intend to use this data to learn the best and preferred means of communication with each parishioner and to help us identify the most valuable participants for the survey which is to follow.

It has further been determined that the questionnaire form will be held to one page and likely must be distributed via US mail. Methods of collection of the completed forms are expected to be collection basket /ushers at Mass, mail (paid by respondent), drop at office, &/or drop box. Consideration is also being given to possible use of the parish website.

Several concurrent steps are underway by members of the SPC:

- Formulation of the actual questionnaire and accompanying letter from Fr Michael.
- Promotion of the event to include a postcard advance notice, bulletins, and mass announcements.
- Coordination with the parish office for the collection of completed forms and data transfer into the parish system.

Focus Group Survey:

With the guidance and assistance of parishioners like Amy Bigna whom have expertise in this field, and the archdiocese Office of Missionary Planning and Leadership, the PSC is organizing efforts to conduct face-to-face discussions with small groups comprising the variety of demographics representative of the SR parish today. All members of the PPC will be expected to assist, in some form, in the organizing, conduct, or evaluation of the survey.

These efforts include:

- Recruiting and training “facilitators” and “note takers”.
- Defining the focus groups to be surveyed and the discussion starters to be used.
- Recruiting and scheduling group participants.
- Communicating the need and process of the survey to the parish while promoting participation in it.
- Coordination of the entire survey effort with parish staff, PFC, and all Commissions; via Fr. Michael’s guidance & approval.
- Evaluation of the findings and their application in short-term (tactical) and long-term (strategic) planning.

Timeline:

Announcement of the census will need to be started at all Christmas masses to reach those parishioners not otherwise seen. Announcements from the pulpit and in the bulletin Dec 24 – 26th followed by a postcard mailing on Jan 6th to ensure people understand the forthcoming census is not a fund solicitation and that their participation is absolutely needed. Jan 9th & 16th will continue with announcements at mass and in the bulletins. Promotion will also be added to the website.

The census to be mailed the week of Jan 17th. Reminder announcements, bulletin coverage and website comments to solicit participation per household and identify the several ways to return responses: Jan 23rd and 30th. Tabulation of the results to be done the 1st week of February with data transfer to follow thereafter.

The organizing and preparations needed for the focus survey to run concurrently with the census. The results of which are to offer additional ways in which to contact parishioners and to help identify willing participants. Consequently, February/March will see the culmination of organizing & scheduling the focus groups to include participants and facilitator teams. Actual conduct of the survey currently anticipated to be during the month of April 2022.

Conclusion:

These efforts to determine “What creates community at St Rita?” are not taken lightly and the volunteered time and treasury to be involved are not trivial. But it is the determination of the current Parish Pastoral Council to find answers and solutions that can be acted upon for the betterment of the entire parish community and set into action future enhancements of consequence.

Respectively submitted,

William P. Greinke

Chairman