

Notes from Priest Deanery Meeting Discussions on the Convocation of Catholic Leaders (2017, Orlando FL)

January 9, 2018	East DuPage (David Spesia, Pete Newburn)
January 16, 2018	South DuPage (Sheila Stevenson, Carlos Briceno)
January 23, 2018	North Will-Kendall (David Spesia, Sheila Stevenson, Dcn. Gerrie Mempin)
February 6, 2018	Joliet (Pete Newburn, Sheila Stevenson)
February 8, 2018	South Will-Grundy (Pete Newburn, Sheila Stevenson, David Stejkowski)
February 12, 2018	West DuPage (Pete Newburn, Sheila Stevenson, Alexandra Fedosenko)
February 21, 2018	Kankakee (Pete Newburn, David Stejkowski)
March 1, 2018	Ford-Iroquois (Pete Newburn, Sheila Stevenson, David Stejkowski)

EAST DUPAGE

Comments

- Need formation: What does it mean to foster missionary discipleship?
- Identify real needs in the daily lives of our people—and then respond to those needs?
- Need to clarify and prioritize what our mission is as a Church
- Be more aware of what is happening among the various groups within our parish communities and neighborhoods - accompany them and respond accordingly
- How can we more effectively respond to the deep hunger for the transcendence in an age of radical materialism?

Suggestions

- Deanery-wide Reconciliation (8 to 12 hours in one location)
- Advertising in coffee shops, train stations, public places.
- Monthly marriage enrichment opportunities for younger/newly married couples
- Focusing on the beauty of the liturgy
- “Evangelization Teams” – examine activities of the parish through pastoral/missionary lens



SOUTH DUPAGE

Comments

- Important to expect excellence and accountability from staff and volunteers – these are important hallmarks of effective parishes (and avoiding dysfunctional teams)
- It is important to be welcoming

Suggestions

- Some things that have worked at Our Lady of Mercy, Aurora
 - They have people stationed at all the doors, opening the doors for people



SOUTH DUPAGE (continued)

- Some things that have worked at Our Lady of Mercy, Aurora (continued)
 - Children make homemade welcoming signs on small whiteboards.
 - Some parishioners to comment on how welcoming the church is now.
 - Over the Christmas break, the priests at OLM invited college students over for a meal. About 40 college students attended.
- Staff could be present at the parish on Sundays since it's such an important day of the week. (sometimes impractical)
- Leadership teams could help relieve some of the burdens from pastors' shoulders.
- Activate a "ministry of presence"

NORTH WILL-KENDALL

Comments

- What can we learn from parishes which have been uniquely successful in connecting with young adults, such as Old St. Pat's in Chicago?
- Regarding the landscape, people no longer feel connected to parishes; they are not identifying with the Church, even if they still "self-identify" as being Catholic
- What's missing? Why are people not practicing the faith?
- What does the Church look like in a "post-parochial" era?
- How can we promote multi-parish and/or deanery-wide initiatives?



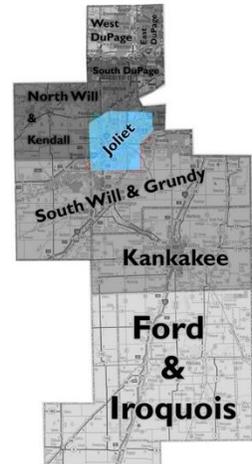
Suggestions

- St. Francis of Assisi reported that they had trained parishioners to do door-to-door evangelization-planting seeds.
- St Francis Xavier shared that they acknowledge accomplishments of young people.
- Discussion of post-card campaigns before Christmas and Easter (rather than sealed envelopes with letters), as well as other direct-mailing efforts.
- Reclaim sacramentals and devotions; promote traditions such as the blessing of the bambino and the sharing of nativity scenes from around the world at Christmas time.
- Encourage pastors and parish staff members to get to know the names of any young adults who are in the parish-intentionally (!); keep in touch with college students, and try to hire millennials onto the parish staff ??
- Use data from parish website and facebook/social media to chart the parish's online presence.
- Look to Totus Tuus and other pockets of excellence for examples of what's working.
- Think of parish and Church "branding" and help people feel proud to be Catholic in public settings.
- Look to ideas like the "1% Challenge" (a.k.a., "Project Passion" at SMI), to dispense not only Ashes on Ash Wednesday, but also postcards with an invitation to pray 15 minutes per day.
- Consider something like a diocesan "singles" club with monthly concerts or dances.
- Address questions of faith and science with junior high and high school students.

JOLIET

Comments

- One common problem - "At my parish, I don't have some sort of associate that I can hand this task to and say 'go'." Lacking executive support needed to move things forward and develop initiatives from conception to implementation.
 - It helps to have ready-to-go templates
 - Actually, it helps to have several available templates - a "menu" - if possible
- Several of the Joliet parishes are 'older' communities; some have been separated demographically from the rest of the community. This limits options.
- Sometimes even some of our parishes are on the 'peripheries'
- In the Joliet area, multi-parish ministries are a 'must'. It's impossible to organically grow a program with existing human resources.



Suggestions

- 12 hours of Confessions ("Hours for the Lord") was held during Advent - over 600 Confessions were heard.
- Be My Witness is being employed at the Cathedral
 - This is a model that works (groups have grown from organizing team to a couple dozen, and they hope to have over 120 participants in the faith-sharing groups)
 - Opportunity to grow deeper in faith
 - Raises new leaders

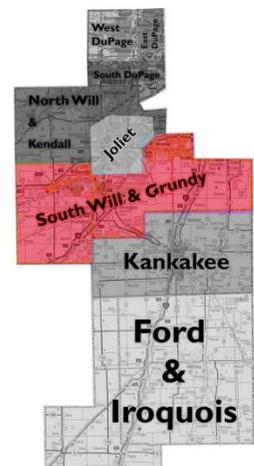
SOUTH WILL-GRUNDY

Comments

- "No more business as usual." Need to be willing to try, make mistakes.
 - Be creative, try "something new."
- Need to be joyful, authentic, sharing the rich treasures of our Catholic faith.
- Fundamental is identity, identity in Christ. Otherwise it is determined by the world.
 - We are a Eucharistic people.

Suggestions

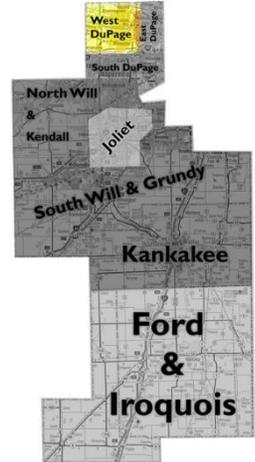
- Plan and budget for *fun!* – community building (especially for teens and millennials).
- Evangelize, form, and engage those who come for sacraments.
- Importance of *radical hospitality*.
- Use technology to share the faith, applicable to real life. Use mobile phone apps.
 - Flocknote was noted as a positive tool.
- Mentoring suggested, examples of FOCUS, sports initiatives, Catholic Missionary Disciples



WEST DUPAGE

Comments

- Have to find disciples, form them, and then send them. [Win, build, send] or [Encounter, grow, reach out].
- Need to move from maintenance to mission.
- People aren't used to the notion of reaching out to others.
- Lay people are the key to extending the Church.
- Need to "smell like the sheep." Accompany people; genuine encounter.
- Need to have focus on what is priority for us, as a diocese. Give up doing something in order to take up other ways of ministering.
- Sunday Mass is not always the most effective entry point, or place to welcome. Church campuses can be confusing to the newcomer. Need other creative models, especially for millennials.
 - Go to the peripheries!



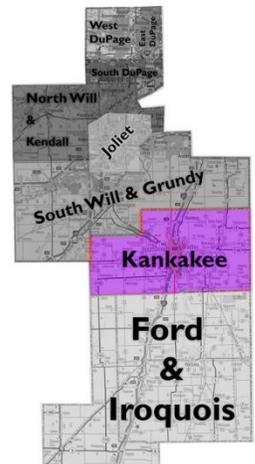
Suggestions

- Recommendation of Patrick Lencioni's book for pastors, as well as "Amazing Parish" conferences.
- "Be My Witness" and "Landings" as examples to energize the faithful and call them to be missionaries.
- Provide storefront, or coffee-shops, as places to gather. (Could place parish information inside grocery bags at food pantries.)
- Connect with other denominations. Some are doing Christian outreach to public schools.
- Upper Room Crisis Hotline for clergy and religious
- Welcoming children—and their parents—example of establishing a children's Mass.

KANKAKEE

Comments

- We need more priests! We need more personnel!
- Two parishes in the deanery (St George in Bourbonnais and St John Paul II in Kankakee) seem to be successful (in terms of numbers). What can we learn from them? It was noted that they have younger and more energetic pastors.
- Emphasis on [B]ehave-[B]elieve-[B]elong
- Sense of welcome is of primary importance. (E.g. "You're here to get your child baptized—great!")
- Many people feel that they don't measure up or meet the standards.
- Need to learn from the evangelical churches. For example, the emphasis on personal testimonies, hospitality, small groups, and outreach.
- Though priestly ministry is obviously very important and necessary, there needs to be more emphasis on the laity. There is great power in the "ask," seeking and inviting people to share their gifts and to be leaders.
- Big challenge to fund Catholic schools, which is important, and provide the necessary resources for ministerial outreach.



KANKAKEE (continued)

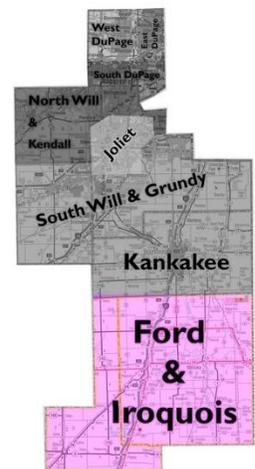
Suggestions

- Maternity BVM has a strong outreach to Young Adults, with Brother John Eustice on staff (and Sr Magdalena on the campus). Two types of YA's—Olivet Nazarene University students and others.
- Recommendation of “Be My Witness” which has helped meet people where they are, being welcoming, developing community, and calling to mission.
- Some key components to a successful parish: radical hospitality, caring for people (provide food!) and activities such as sports, Zumba (dance exercise) and *Family Bridges* (a “non-religious” outreach to parents, couples, families).

FORD-IROQUOIS

Comments

- Need formation on what it means to be a ‘disciple’
 - Especially a ‘missionary disciple’
- There is a hunger for Bible study and a need for formation.
- Distance is an issue in Ford-Iroquois counties
 - Difficult for staff/volunteers to attend DOJ events
 - New Confirmation guidelines are difficult
 - Difficult to do CMAA without DOJ presence being felt
- The Liturgy must be both beautiful and intelligent. If only beautiful it is shallow; only intelligent, then cold.
- Baptisms, weddings and funerals are prime times for evangelizing
- Hispanic population growing
- Evangelizing Catholics who have been away would be a good start, while recognizing that some in the pews need to be evangelized too!



Suggestions

- A diocesan-wide focus on Discipleship (example: a whole month-long focus)
 - The Bishop could record a message for the first week.
 - Each week could have a sub theme.
 - Diocese to provide outlines/guides/tips for activities/discussion.
- Mom’s groups very supportive of each other and the parish
- A diocesan-wide mission
- More dynamic speakers go to parishes – bring them to the South!
- Create comfortable areas in parishes, food
- Focus on making disciples (3 people at a time) who are:
Faithful, Available, Contagious and Teachable
- There is interest in the idea of some live formation delivered electronically.
- A visit by the Bishop once a year.
- Be persistent when someone says no—the power of an invitation to ministry from the priest should not be underestimated.
- Sending Gift cards to students away at college; young children make greetings cards.