

## **Mission Readiness Report**

### **Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, Edgewater**

After receiving the result from the phenomenal response of our parishioners to the Archdiocesan Survey, including our Hispanic and younger members, we announced a summary of the findings and posted them on our website. A representative of the Pastoral Council gave a synopsis of the report at all Masses in late April and invited parishioners to a meeting on Pentecost Sunday to discuss the two questions posed by the Archdiocese, as well as some questions of our own:

1. What is it about coming to OLPH that energizes our faith?
2. What are the challenges we face to being “mission ready”?
3. Why do we join our ministries?
4. What lies ahead for us to do?

On May 15, 32 parishioners and staff gathered for lunch and discussion. The group included members of our Pastoral and Finance Councils, people involved in many of our ministries, and several parishioners who were energized by the survey process and wished to offer their ideas. Their names are provided as an attachment to this report.

#### **What is it about OLPH that energizes our faith?**

In both our survey results and our May meeting, three factors that energize our personal faith kept resurfacing:

- We are a welcoming parish that works to make people feel at home.
- Our adult education program is helping parishioners grow in their personal faith.
- We have a variety of opportunities to serve where a person can see the impact of

I only come here when I visit my daughter and her family but I like this parish more than my home parish. It is so warm and welcoming.

*A visiting Sunday worshiper*

The fact that 202 parishioners, of all ages and races, took the survey was a sign of our enthusiasm for this parish and for our faith. It gives us great hope and a tremendous amount of data which we are still mining, to learn all we can about how we can better serve our parish, each other, and our community.

## **What are the challenges we face to being “mission ready?”**

We recognize that we face a number of challenges to our ability to move parishioners from faithful learner to active minister. They include:

- While 51% of Mass attendees are over 50, 65% of those taking the survey were in this age category.
- While we are building a middle school ministry, we don't provide a comprehensive ministry to young families, high school and college age parishioners.
- We need to explore opportunities for fellowship and socializing that would help extend and strengthen our view of the parish as one family.
- We must improve the ways we publicize our ministries, which would both educate our parishioners and encourage people to join.

We recognize the need to reach, connect with, and retain our young people, parishioners, and new families. We recognize also that while many feel our physical facilities are adequate, many also feel they do not provide a spiritual appearance or provide an area that is conducive to prayer and worship.

We also recognize that we must contend with the reality that many of our families commute long distances to work, which takes them away from the parish community for much of the week and leaves them little time to participate. When they are home, they are rushing to address the various demands of families and personal needs.

Finally, our youth faith formation program is in need of a review to more appropriately engage and evangelize our youth. We also need to create high school and young adult ministries.

I would take 18-20 teens to Catholic Heart Work Camp and they were excited to serve, but when they returned to our parish, there was not a way for them to readily identify ways to serve and to keep up that service and spirit.

*A young ministry volunteer*

Serving on the altar fulfills a lifelong dream. I grew up wanting to be an altar server, but being told only boys could serve. Coming here and seeing that a woman could serve – I jumped at the chance.

*A female parishioner*

## **Why do we join our ministries?**

We next turned to why our active parishioners are motivated to serve. The common factors were:

- A desire to share blessings, faith, and talents.
- They can see the impact of their efforts on the lives of others
- They are actively meeting a need and are fulfilled by helping others.

To see these kids (in Haiti) eating the meals you helped fundraise to buy. To see them learning in the school you helped get built. You really see how your efforts are changing lives.

*A member of our Haiti Committee*

We see these as common elements in all our ministries. In the most successful ministries there is the added element of publicity – especially parishioners talking about the work they do. People can see and hear the impact our efforts are having on others, and on the members of the ministry, and it has motivated others to join.

## **What lies ahead for us to do?**

From the surveys and our discussions, we have learned several things we need to start to focus on – some large and some small -- to help grow our parishioners' faith and motivate them to service.

- We need better signage so visitors can more easily find their way around our facility.
- We need to work more aggressively at integrating our Hispanic and non-Hispanic members into one parish, so we can share each other's strengths and support each other's needs.
- We need to increase our opportunities for fellowship to continue to foster our parish family, with a special focus on welcoming younger people and families.
- We need to review our religious education and youth ministry programs, to provide a more engaging faith formation program and build a high school and young adult ministry.

- We need to be more welcoming to younger people and families in ways that allow them to participate fully in our adult education and the service life of the parish.
- We need to identify, train, and prepare lay leaders to help our pastor and staff lead our parish.
- We need to do a better job personalizing and publicizing our ministries, to help people see what we do, and encourage them to join and serve.
- We want to emphasize that **WE** are the parish, and Christ is our pastor, so our parish identity is not focused solely on who is our current pastor, or dependent on a resident pastor to keep us united, vibrant, and growing.
- We need to get more people to invest, emotionally and personally, in their faith and in the life of the parish.

The challenges are many, but we have approached our faith and our community with open arms and hearts. We are making an impact on our community and our world, but we have work to do. We feel we have many parishioners who have untapped talents to be used in the service of each other, and that while we are growing in faith, more can be done to help kindle the spark of hope into a flame of faith. We feel great hope for our future, and together, we believe we are ready to move forward on our mission of faith – together.