

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish

*“Neighbor
To
Neighbor”*

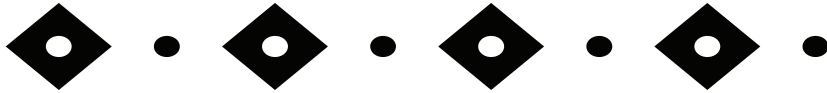
A Parish Visitation Program



What's Inside???

- The Process
- Our Strengths
- Our Pastoral Needs
- Our Short-term Action Items

November, 2006



Where Do We Go From Here?

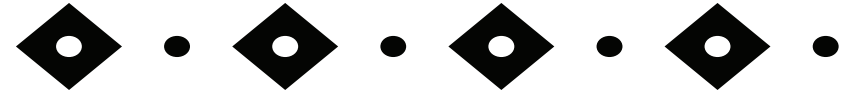
- Thoughts from Deacon Ken -

From the beginning, I was inspired that “Neighbor to Neighbor,” could develop a greater sense of oneness and belonging among us. I was thrilled to think that anyone visited would have the opportunity to experience our parish’s personal interest in them; to know someone cares to hear and respond to their concerns about a faith relationship with our Lord, or about our Church processes and sacraments, or about past hurts or obstacles to active faith and parish involvement. I was excited to help insure each person felt welcomed, helped, and sincerely invited to become a vital part of our parish family.

But beyond my hopes, we also collected lots of useful data, and a large effort ensued, of which we can all be proud. We now have assessments of many perspectives to help guide the direction of future undertakings with and for our parishioners, and some concrete short-term objectives. Now what? In reality, Neighbor to Neighbor never really ends!

We’ll need to formulate timelines to address the pastoral needs you have identified, and then report back to you when needs have been addressed. I hope this initial effort becomes, in retrospect, only the first step in fostering a sense of belonging among all our parishioners.

I hope we come to better know one another; to help and support one another; to pray and participate in our faith together; to work and play, and enjoy and grieve with one another. In short: that we may become the local fulfillment of Jesus’ prayer to the Father: “...that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they may also be in us...”(John 17:21).



“ Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body...with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body’s growth and builds itself up in love.”(Eph 4: 15,16)

November 27, 2006

Greetings!

It is after a long wait but with great joy that your Pastoral Council hands on to you the results of our parish visitation process, “*Neighbor-to-Neighbor.*”

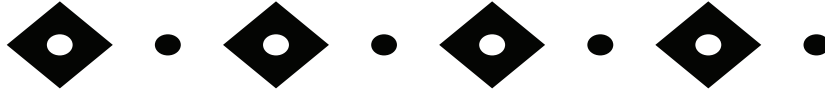
Saint Paul’s words to the Ephesians quoted above remind us of the importance of unity in diversity. We are each blessed with special gifts given by God for a common purpose. We are called to use these gifts to build up the body while striving to grow in holiness, to configure our lives ever more closely to the head, Jesus Christ. When we do so humbly, we build up the body in love.

Prior to my arrival, this faith community ardently took upon itself the admirable task of visiting each parish family, seeking to discover not only our strengths and weaknesses, but to grow closer together as the body of Christ. In the comments gathered, only a portion of which are reflected here, we see the hopes, dreams, joys and disappointments of individuals and families, all seeking the truth in love. May our Risen Lord continue to bless our parish family as we seek to sincerely grow in His grace.

Fr. Tom

Pastor





*"I am the vine, you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me and
I in him will bear much fruit..." (John 15: 5)*

A Little Bit of History...

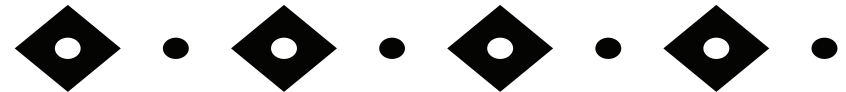
As we welcome winter, Father Tom Lilly, Deacon Ken Donohue and lay leaders of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish are pleased to present you with this final summation of our parish visitation process, *Neighbor to Neighbor*.

The process began in March of 2005, while Father Craig Loecker was Pastor. There was a desire to reach out to the community of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish and identify the needs of our parishioners.

The original "Neighbor to Neighbor" or "N2N" team consisted of Matthew Beck, Bonnie Bezousek, Deacon Ken Donohue, Angela Fleck, Father Ron Licayan and Miguel Torres. The team met for several months before launching "Neighbor to Neighbor". The goals were to:

- * Contact each member of the parish
- * Update the parish census form
- * Ask a series of questions to determine likes, dislikes, experiences at other parishes, etc.
- * Compile the results and report to the parish.

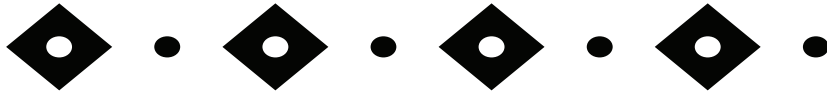
The plan was that team captains would gather at least 10 visiting team members whom would visit people in their homes. There were over seventy-two parishioners who said "YES" to this endeavor. **Phase one** began in April of 2005, with six weeks to complete home visits. Unfortunately, with a parish our size, Father Craig departing



- Our Short-term Action Items -

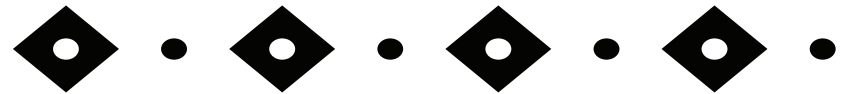
1. Install additional holy water fonts at all entrances.
2. Research feasibility of having votive candles.
3. Expand hospitality to include ushering and a more welcoming atmosphere.
4. Provide accommodations for disabled and elderly.
5. Improve ministry to the homebound.
6. Make greater use of electronic communication (e-mail and an updated parish website).
7. Provide more opportunities for outreach.
8. Provide a monthly "hail and farewell."
9. Give an overview of ministries and volunteer opportunities, periodically/monthly, throughout the year as certain ministries are highlighted.
10. Develop a process for acknowledgement and appreciation/recognition of parish volunteers.
11. Arrange an evening to discuss the topic of "a safe environment" for children.
12. Clarify the proper location for the tabernacle.
13. Better use of the outdoor main sign – need to identify someone responsible for changing the sign regularly.





- Our Pastoral Needs -

1. Grow a sense of belonging and participation among our children and youth in our faith and our parish.
2. A greater variety in music styles and selection. Maybe an advanced adult choir focusing on a variety of music to include gospel, traditional, etc., a children's choir, youth band, and music sometimes geared toward children.
3. Facilitate a process of reconciliation for the abuse scandal, with the Archbishop and Pastor addressing the parish directly. There is mistrust of the institution, which includes the Archdiocese, on how sexual abuse lawsuits are being handled, especially how financial and social implications of the abuse are being dealt with.
4. Communication between the Archdiocese, the parish, the paid staff and the parishioners is important, particularly regarding change. There is a need for everyone to have a clear understanding of change as well as how and when it will be implemented.
5. Develop a process for greater outreach to marginalized and/or alienated parishioners. Reach out to seniors, grandparents, widows, women and Catholics who have left the Church.
6. Provide shorter, relevant and more focused homilies, with occasional preaching on themes that relate specifically to children and youth.
7. Many respondents said, "no, they had not really been alienated" but some said: "they did not feel welcome." Continue to develop our parish ability to welcome new and existing members.



and summer approaching, the teams were not able to visit all parishioners.

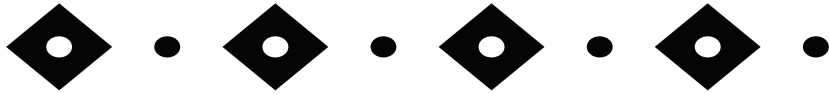
Under the leadership of Father Tom, phase two was launched at all the Masses in November of 2005. This time parishioners were asked to complete a postcard identifying their preference for either a home visit, telephone conversation or e-mail. Because the response was minimal, phase three consisted of a mail-out to parishioners who had not responded. It was important to hear from all voices in the parish, whether through a home visit, telephone conversation, e-mail or written response. During the months from January until July of 2006, the Pastoral Council reviewed the responses with a goal to prioritize and present to the parish a final report after the fall of 2006.

Many thanks to the original Neighbor to Neighbor team, team captains and visiting team members for your hours of time to contact parishioners and say "I care." Thank you to the Pastoral Council: Diane Akers, Carin Bassler, Rick Benedetti, Barbara Block, Deacon Ken Donohue, Susan Jayich, Joan Kluwe, Father Tom Lilly, Darrell Peterson, Cindy Stophlet, Miguel Torres, Bill Evans, Teri Anderson, and Howard Cleveland for your endless hours of praying, reading, reflecting and sorting through all the information gathered.

If you have any questions or concern on this Neighbor to Neighbor report, please call or e-mail.

In Christ's Peace,

Bonnie Bezousek



- The Process -

Parishioners were first asked eight questions:

1. What do you like best about our parish?
2. What would you like to see different?
3. How often do you attend Mass?
4. What have you enjoyed at other parishes that you would like to see or experience at SEAS?
5. How can we best communicate parish events?
6. Has anything occurred here to alienate you?
What can we do to help reconcile it?
7. Is there anything we can do to help you remain an active participant of this parish?
8. Would you like to be contacted by our clergy?

Comments were then compiled in three steps:

Step One:

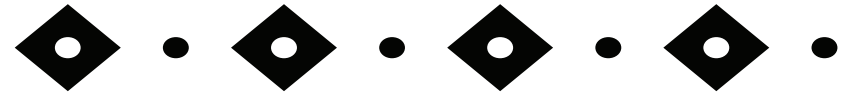
We entered parishioner comments into one single database according to question number. These comments totaled more than 80 pages. We edited for repetitive comments and have posted the results on our parish web site: www.akseas.net

Step Two:

Your Parish Council members reflected upon all comments and sought to capture the major areas of concern. Results are posted on our web site.

Step Three:

The final summation as reflected in this handbook.



- Our Strengths -

1. Parishioners appreciate the strong sense of social and spiritual community for all ages.
2. There is a great appreciation of the music and the art and environment programs.
3. We have a good faith formation program and should continue to develop stronger catechesis to include adult Bible study, family catechesis, youth ministry and a vibrant Vacation Bible School.
4. We have a strong base of active people who volunteer for ministries and social activities.
5. Perpetual adoration – a huge strength for the parish. Encourage continued involvement!
6. Sustaining and fostering a strong parish-school relationship, maintaining a strong faith formation component in both.
7. Our bulletin is an effective communication tool; continue good communication through the bulletin. Continue to offer a variety of activities and programs to reach people such as social events, the rosary, and good homilies to support the social and spiritual life of the people.