

# Neighbor to Neighbor

*Compilation of Priorities*

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Pastoral Council  
2006

## **QUESTION ONE**

***What do you like best about our parish and what makes you continue to come back?***

1. Parishioners appreciate the strong sense of community at SEAS, both social and spiritual.
2. The opportunity to develop small group, community based activities is important.
3. The wide variety of activities and ministries at SEAS allow parishioners several ways to become involved.
4. The location of SEAS is convenient.
5. Music, Art and Environment, that touch the people spiritually, are appreciated.
6. It is important to have a solid connection between the school and the parish that includes a strong faith formation component in both.
7. Parishioners feel connected to particular clergy members and are grateful for their ministry and service.
8. The variety of activities and ministries at SEAS is important to meet the diverse needs of our large community.
9. There is a desire to maintain a family atmosphere with diverse family-centered activities offered at SEAS.
10. Perpetual Adoration is a wonderful anchor of prayer for the parish and has enriched lives of individuals and families.

## **QUESTION TWO**

***What would you like to see different?***

1. Rapid change in clergy and parish leadership is emotionally difficult and disruptive to the life of the parish; there is a strong desire for greater stability in the parish via longer terms for the clergy.
2. It would help the parish if the turnover of priests occurred less frequently in order to eliminate the abrupt disruption of relationships.
3. There is a desire for greater involvement of children and youth throughout the parish including activities and homilies focused toward this group.
4. Provide catechesis to help the people understand the issues that have emerged during the N2N process.
5. Develop more opportunities for adult education, specifically Bible study groups.
6. There is a need for open communication and trust building on a variety of topics from the sex scandals and finances to changes in our worship space and practices.
7. There is a desire for shorter, relevant, focused homilies.

8. There are those who are concerned about the church environment including the noise level, décor, placement, holy water fonts and reserved space for those with special needs.
9. Since music is such an important part of the liturgy, there is a desire for greater diversity in the music at all of the masses.

## **QUESTION THREE**

***How often do you participate at Mass? Weekly? Almost weekly? Other?***

1. There are people who try to come regularly, but circumstances (sickness, divorce or a spouse practicing a different faith) sometimes prevent it.
2. The majority of respondents attend weekly or more often.
3. Holy Spirit Center addresses need for a quieter, smaller community with more personal interaction of clergy and people.
4. A more welcoming atmosphere with ushers to greet and seat people might help more to bring people back.
5. Opportunities should be offered to those who need assistance getting to church.

## **QUESTION FOUR**

***What have you enjoyed or experienced at other parishes that you would like to see or experience at SEAS?***

1. Music (great, more exciting, larger choir)
  - Form a children's choir
  - Various types of music at Mass.
  - Greater variation in the types of music offered at each Mass
  - Music geared towards children
  - Concentrate on developing a more comprehensive, advanced adult choir focused on a variety of music: Gospel, traditional and some more "fun" music.
2. Education (Bible Study, Religious Education, Vacation Bible School)
3. A majority of respondents want more, regularly scheduled social events for all age groups (a monthly potluck was suggested).
4. Develop a program for greater outreach to marginalized and/or alienated parishioners by forming groups for Senior's, grandparents, widow's, women and Catholics who have left the church which will result in greater community spirit.
5. Provide opportunities for more involvement in social outreach.
6. Provide more accommodations for disabled parishioners.
7. Support a well-organized Youth Group, more active in the community and more personal.

8. Several parishioners are interested in having a place for votive candles in a quiet place to pray, grieve, etc.

## **QUESTION FIVE**

***What forms of communication would be best for you to know what is going on in our parish?***

1. Bulletin
  - Bulletin was a preferred form of communication and announcements from the pulpit.
2. A usable website would help a lot, especially with communicating last-minute changes.
3. Electronic (E-mail and Website)
  - Several indicated that posting the bulletin to e-mail should be considered.
  - Parish bulletin (well laid out) with diverse methods of distribution including a web based element with links to the readings. Some asked to have the bulletin send by e-mail.
  - Bulletin seems to be the most common request.
  - Perhaps e-mail could reach more people.
4. Announcements
5. Better utilization of the sign outside the church building.
  - Better usage of the new outdoor sign to include announcements pertaining to the entire church not just the school was wanted.
  - Consider using the marquee to advertise more than just school events. Add Bible verses?
6. Use a variety of ways to disseminate church information

## **QUESTION SIX**

***A. Has anything occurred in our parish that alienated you?***

***B. Is there anyway or anything we could do to help reconcile?***

1. There is a need to provide reconciliation for the abuse scandal. The Archbishop and the pastor should address the parish directly.
2. Regarding the matter of alienation, many respondents said: “no, they had not really been alienated” but some said: “they did not feel welcome.”
3. There is a need to provide reconciliation for the abuse scandal.

4. There is mistrust of the institution, which includes the diocese, on how sexual abuse lawsuits are being handled as well as a need to have an explanation of how the financial and social implications of the abuse are being dealt with.
5. Change without a reason, or a clear understanding of why the change occurred, does alienate people.
6. 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 the change as well as how and when it will be implemented.
7. There is a need for better communication regarding parish debt and finances. Many have expressed a concern about money.
8. Signs and symbols in the sacred space are a concern.
9. There is a concern regarding ongoing conflicts at the school, particularly since some there has been no resolution for some. It appears there is a need to heal the division between the school and the parish.

## **QUESTION SEVEN**

***Is there anything we can do to help you remain an active participant of this parish?***

1. It is important to focus on becoming a more welcoming community.
2. It is important to continue to offer a variety of activities and programs to reach people.
3. Continue to offer a variety of activities/programs, social events, Mass, the rosary and good homilies to support the social and spiritual life of the people.
4. Give an overview of ministries and volunteer opportunities, periodically/monthly, throughout the year as certain ministries are highlighted.
5. Develop a process for acknowledgement/appreciation/recognition of parish volunteers.
6. Make the Youth focus as a priority. Include elements that help develop their enthusiasm for the reality of the faith.
7. The majority of respondents are as involved as they can/want to be.
8. Amazing numbers of responders indicated they were already active, many felt their involvement was limited by other obligations.

## **QUESTION EIGHT**

***Would you like to be contacted personally by our clergy and if so, how would you like this arranged?***

1. The majority is comfortable with the current avenues of staff contact.
2. Many said they would contact the church office for a visit with clergy if they needed to.
3. There is a desire to clarify the proper location for the Tabernacle.
4. Some indicated they had a need for counseling; help with a teen, sacraments or information.
5. Arrange an evening to discuss the topic of “a safe environment” for children.

## **QUESTION NINE**

### ***Additional Comments***

1. Provide an N2N summary to the parish
  - Share the N2N information with the general body of the church
  - Very pleased that a personal visit was made. Wants the N2N results published for all to see.
2. Requests were made to address the following clergy issues: rotation, sexual abuse and leadership.
3. Concerning Catechesis/Adult Faith Formation: requests were made to provide credentials for catechists, provide Bible study, small groups and faith sharing.
4. Focus on being inclusive, open, and welcoming.
5. Deacon Ken is appreciated and considered a real gift to our SEAS community.