

A New Pastoral Plan for St. Anne Catholic Church

We all know that have been through an incredible year and a half. There is probably not a person in this church who has not been affected.

On the Sunday before we shut down for the Covid lock down in March 2020, 1,658 people attended Mass here at St. Anne's. For several months now we have been averaging between 1000 and 1100 people in church for Sunday Masses. From what I can gather those who have come back to church on their own have come back. Now we will have to find a way to invite the remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ of our parish to come home and open our doors and hearts to them and anyone else willing to join us. We can't just sit back and do nothing

I hope that what I am proposing to you today will help us begin to do just that.

Many of you have asked how we are doing financially.

Last year after paying all our bills, we finished the year with \$64,712.25. This is largely because we had no activities last year. There were no social gatherings, no ministry expenses, no new parishioner dinners etc. As we open back up, this surplus will be spent on re-establishing our parish life.

I have to say I was very relieved that we did so well. It was a big concern for me.

I want to thank you for your support, especially for your generous gifts to the Covid Offertory Appeal.

After a lot of prayer and conversations with parish leadership and members of the parish staff and parishioners, I am going to propose a new two-fold Pastoral Plan for this year and announce one big project.

First and foremost, there is a strong consensus that we need to redouble our efforts and outreach to the young people of our parish and our school those who go to our school and those who don't.

Last May a beautiful Korean Family who attends church every Sunday attended a weekday Mass. When I saw them, I went up to them and asked what we could pray

for. The father informed me that his two sons had graduated from Columbus High School and his daughter had just graduated from the University of Michigan. They came to church that morning to thank God for these beautiful accomplishments. I'm not sure what got into me, but after communion I went to the microphone and apologized to those three fine young adult Catholics on my behalf on and on behalf of the whole parish.

- I apologized because I think we failed them, and many others like them. Outside of the liturgy we never prayed with them or gave them an experience of prayer with their peers.
- We never took them on a retreat or service trip or gave them an experience of Eucharistic Adoration.
- We never gave them an experience of young adult Catholic fellowship.
- We don't know their names or their stories, their hopes, and their dreams.
- Truth be told, we were never involved in their lives as God would have wanted us to be.

I have known for a while that St. Anne needs a vibrant, faith-filled and fun-filled Youth Ministry Program.

Over the years we have tried to accomplish this with limited resources, and it just never worked. Several of our moms and dads have lamented to me that because our parish did not offer what their children needed or wanted spiritually, they followed their friends and went elsewhere. They went to other churches or other denominations for youth ministry and in Columbus there are lots of options. and some have not come back.

What a shame, a terrible shame.

We have to do better, and we will do better. Rest assured that a dream of this magnitude will take the involvement of many in our parish and school community. It will take a parish to accomplish this important goal. We will need core team members, logistic coordinators, publicity committees, cooks, small group leaders the list goes on and on.

Because of the size of our parish and the number of families and young people we have we believe we will need an additional \$70,000 a year to fund the program in the beginning. **I will be sending you a letter asking for your financial commitment to this very important cause, which we all know is an investment in the future of our young people and our church.** I know you will not let our kids down - you never do.

After all my consultations I have already taken the first step and I have hired a full time Campus Ministry/Youth Minister and an associate for this ministry. Major Travis Robbins recently retired from the military where he was in charge of all the Physical Therapy at Fort Benning. He has a background in education and his whole family are very faithful Catholics. After retirement he was looking for the next step in his life. He has found it as our campus ministry and youth minister.

We are also very blessed because Megan, his wife, has agreed to help in this important ministry. She also has a background in High School and Middle school education as a teacher and counselor. Both Megan and Travis love our Lord and love young adults. I am sure they will do a great job. I want you to meet them and get to know them. Please offer them your support, encouragement and involvement in this very important ministry.

I don't ever again want our young people to have to look to another church or denomination to be spiritually fed. We must serve all of our kids, those from our school, those from \ other schools and those home schooled.

I want them to be fed here in their parish and in their faith tradition with their friends and their families. And I am sure you do too.

In this same vein, we are moving Confirmation in our parish from 7th Grade to 9th Grade. Other parishes in the area are considering doing the same. Once again, we have a great team preparing our young people for this important sacrament. However, we just need more time to be with them and their families before they are confirmed. Tragically and truthfully, sometimes the last time I see a young person is when they are confirmed.

The second component of our Pastoral Plan is the formation of small group faith communities. We will plan and train leaders in the fall and begin this ministry in the spring.

We are a large but very transient community. People are always coming and going. We say goodbye in July and Hello in August. Our “Columbus core” of St. Anne lifers is getting smaller. We need to find a way to get closer to each other and support each other spiritually. I’m often amazed at how many of you don’t know each other. Several people have told me that it’s hard to break into our parish community and feel a part of it.

It is an honor and a privilege for St. Anne to serve our military families and we need to have in place structures which can welcome them and make them, and any new member, feel at home right away. For example, there should be a group for young adult soldiers in-place where they can find each other, help each other grow spiritually and have fun together. There should be small communities for men and women, moms and dads, young professionals, etc.

I know this is another big initiative, but I feel that it is an important next step for our parish. Once we get started, if this dream is from God, He will bless it, if not we will try something else

Finally, from the first day I arrived people asked me if it would be possible to bring the Eucharist into our church.

For the past several months we have been studying this proposal to see if it is possible. The original architects found a digital copy of the plans from 40 years ago. We have a Catholic liturgical architect in Colorado working with us and I have been told there is no structural obstacle to realizing this dream. They have informed me that It is possible to break through that 16’ wall and insert a tabernacle and access it from both the Church and the Chapel. Having the Eucharist in our church will enhance this sacred space we have all come to love.

It is fitting that this project be accomplished on the 40th anniversary of its dedication. I hope that you are as excited as I am about this very big step for our parish. I have written Bishop Parkes for permission to begin this project. As things develop, I promise to keep you posted.

During Mass, please ask God to help you discern your role in our pastoral plan.

There are two tents outside and interest sign-up sheets for those interested in these two important ministries. St. Anne can only be what you are willing to make it. We have lots of dreams to realize and lots of reasons to be filled with hope.

May God who has given us these dreams bring them to fulfillment. Amen.

Thank you for listening.