

Notes from the Parish Assemblies

1. What was/is your experience as a youth in church? Would youth today engage in the same way? Or – what motivates you to engage in the church and your faith in that way?

- Enjoyed sitting in church quietly during childhood visits. Forced daily mass super structured alienated many youths. Latin masses were common. Girls excluded from being altar servers. Attracted by rituals. Generation after Vatican II did not have same experience. Contemplative prayer is needed. In high school progressive priests passed on Vatican II ideas and got the youth excited about religion. Benedictine nuns at St. Ben's were also influential with the youth. Many of those in our table group were active in choir which helped them be involved in the church. Different people have different religious needs growing up in a small town where you went to Catholic church you were a small safe community. Everyone in our group attended Catholic elementary school.
- I am 16 years old and was raised attending St. C's. I engage in church by attending mass and participating in youth group. What motivates me to engage in church is my parents, other youth, and the worship through song. I feel that music is more powerful than just spoken word and is how I best engage in church.
- Lower middle class community, NY. Ethnic. Not enough kids at traditional church service – was involved in altar boy, etc.
- Readings, petitions, gifts – would like to see a more clear place in church, homily, music, petitions, readings for youth.
- More opportunity for youth – more engagement for what is relevant to youth in their lives.
- Talk about what really is relevant in the lives of youth – like Quakers, where youth would be able to have their own meetings, whatever they wanted to talk about.
- Issues with institutional church, where the leaders are not open to real conversation – be a Catholic in spite of that.
- Adult domination makes it harder for youth to speak.
- Being connected with school helped develop philosophy, ideas.
- Kids being able to participate in mass, go to Wednesday CCD until confirmation, then that was it – there wasn't engagement beyond that.
- Being able to participate in Mass is so important.
- Catholic schools gave kids more outlets for experiencing faith.
- Service experiences really helps connect youth.
- Mission trip is so important to connect youth with each other.
- Music has been important to engage youth. It would be helpful to have youth involved in music -more modern, e.g. KTIS. Music diversity during Masses; songs with different languages, more engaging.
- Mission trips are important. Habitat.
- Youth choir (such as at Ascension).
- Nativity scene, when youth would sing.
- Blessing children after mass (e.g. 10:00)
- Connect spirituality with struggles of youth would be helpful.

- Confusing when you're going through a lot and you don't know how your faith is relevant (e.g. addiction, sexuality, gender identity).
- In reference to Quaker experience – everyone comes together and then afterwards pray together.
- Breaking of bread together and sharing (experience in the world or more discussion about lives).
- Generational differences in community.
- Amira shared her experience of community.
- Church as social center (small town – Protestant).
- Strong religious program for youth.
- Mentorship program?
- Influence of special people.
- Speaker to inspire youth/call to action.
- Good at showing up when given a task to do.
- Lack of tasks/support after confirmation.
- Community needs to directly invite youth to remain involve, give them something to do (ex. Whole Community Wednesdays – there is nothing for post confirmation students to do)
- Need to ask parents for involvement too.
- To get youth to show up for activities, need to call them and remind them – bulletin announcements don't work.

2. Looking at the parish mission statement, are there things that we don't do that you want to do? Are there needs that are calling you to respond out of your understanding and experience of your faith? How are you able/not able to act on that calling at St. Cecilia's?

- On Easter and Christmas, when people hold places in pews and say, "you can't sit here." We need ushers to help people find a place to sit. Unwelcoming. People who come to join St. C's after long term membership at other churches. We do a lot of charity and justice given the small size of our parish. Doing justice is harder than charity. Over the years we have seen the population of the parish decrease and maybe we need to do small groups for 6 weeks again to mix people and retreats to lower barrier between new people and long time parishioners. Some week you want to talk to new people. Parish picnic at Newell Park would be a good mixer. Community involvement is needed. St. C's does great liturgy. Maybe advertise a summer activity we can do together. Have youth get involved in Habitat. It doesn't have to be the parent. Add to growing in faith community in mission. Permanent people who are always active vs. temporary people who are just passing through. Ask Lisa at St. Anthony Park Nursing Home for people to adopt a grandparent.
- I think the things that are being done at St. C's are awesome, but some things could also be done to get you more willing to get youth to engage. One thing that may be helpful is a discussion or support group for LGBTQ and youth and how to understand and explore your sexual orientation and gender identity in relation to religion. With the amount of controversy around this topic and the increasing number of LGBTQ youth, I think it would be helpful and make youth feel more included/accepted.

- We have “welcoming packets.”
- Reading novels and talking together – reading together while together.
- Getting information out about what is going on.
- Educational part – stimulate interest (David Penchansky’s presentation).
- More conversations about cultures.
- Peace – encourage more time.
- Faith sharing once/twice a month.
- Survey a couple years ago – what happened with that? Difficult to transcribe the results.
- We don’t really know what faith journey people have?
- Habitat has been really powerful; coming together to do work for someone else.
- World is different from the neighborhood parish, so a destination parish is different.
- Outreach – go to camps.
- Church was a center (movies)
- Body of church should be welcoming and open to support parents of youth.
 - Be a mentor
 - Sign up as a youth member with a mentor.
- More options for youth involvement?
- Ask each other to get involved.
- Phone trees become emails/connection.
- Opportunities
 - Dorothy Day
 - Salvation Army Food
- Sign up for ministry and never get called.
- Phone bank at St. C’s to recruit.
- Text messages of what’s going on (e.g. Habitat)
- Kids will do anything
- Survey monkey to solicit interests
- Loaves & Fishes
- Salvation Army (East Side)
- Feed My Starving Children
- Re-enforce youth involvement by expressing appreciation.
- College age through 30’s? (Miriam)
 - I would like some sort of bible study or faith sharing group with people around my age (multigeneration things are great, but I also want to connect with people my age more).
 - Emelda says I should volunteer to lead a group of high school age kids.
- Short term programs may be better than long term (social justice programs get interest, tend to be short term).
- Variety to keep people interested.
- Easier for people to commit to.
- Flexible time – varies from week to week or determined by group.

3. What response to your faith and/or the mission of St. Cecilia's has been the most fulfilling for you?

- Just getting people to show up regularly. You can be yourself here, comfortable in your self. It is a safe place to express your opinions. The talent show was such a great community event. People singing, great liturgy.
- To me, the wonderful music and the community of people has been the most fulfilling. Outreach and service, such as the Red Lake Mission Trip and dinners at The Family Place have also been extremely fulfilling in helping me grow in my faith.
- Being able to do different within the church.
- Empowerment in different ways (Want to do something? It's probably possible!)
- Offering petitions from community.
- Longer Peace
- Reflections before Mass/after Mass.
- Reflections in bulletin.
- Being a destination means it may be harder for people to be involved.
- If the church feeds us, we will come.
- If people want to be involved, what do we do? Who do we call? (Call Office?)
- Holy Thursday, ritual participation song.
- Appreciate not being taught the Catholic party line – respect that everyone is welcome where they are.
- People are living the parish statement.
- Focused meetings like this.