

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL UPDATE

February 2025

Since the arrival of Fr. John as our Pastor in July 2021, Parish Pastoral Council has been working to better understand who we are as a Parish and how we are called to grow so that we can become a more alive and vibrant faith community.

Initially, members of Parish Pastoral Council were engaged in two book studies (The Purpose Driven Church by Rick Warren and Rebuilt by Fr. Michael White and Tom Corcoran). Both provided insightful reflections on the nature of the Church, the Parish, and the role of Parish Pastoral Council.

From these insights members of Parish Pastoral Council worked collaboratively through a process to develop a Parish Mission statement to help guide the future direction of the Parish. Our Parish Mission statement reads:

St. Anthony of Padua Cathedral Parish is a welcoming and diverse family of dedicated Catholics that strives to live the Gospel message. Utilizing our gifts we endeavor to evangelize by growing spiritually, making disciples, developing committed leaders, and reaching out to our brothers and sisters in need.

In May 2022 Parish Pastoral Council held an open Parish Meeting and invited parishioners to participate in a session reflecting on journeying together as a synodal church. About thirty parishioners participated in the session sharing their joys, sorrows, and hopes as a Church.

To further get a pulse of parishioners, members of Parish Pastoral Council undertook to do confidential one on one interviews with parishioners. We had hoped to interview fifty plus parishioners, but sadly only about twenty signed up to do so despite our best efforts to encourage more. Though we had hoped for more participants, the insights of these parishioners were shared and discussed at length afterwards by members of Pastoral Council.

As a follow-up, members of Pastoral Council decided to conduct a needs assessment survey of parishioners, during a weekend Mass in January 2024, in the hopes of getting further input and direction. Fr. John preached about the initiative and the survey was published in advance in the bulletin so that parishioners would be prepared to complete the survey on the given weekend.

A total of 182 surveys were completed and the data was collated and analyzed over several meetings. There were five key priorities identified by parishioners through the survey:

1. Spirituality and Prayer
2. Music at Mass
3. Youth Ministry
4. Teaching the Faith
5. Outreach to the Lonely

In May 2024 Parish Pastoral Council hosted a second Open Parish Meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to share the results of the Needs Assessment survey and then to brainstorm ways to flesh out these key priorities. Sadly, there were only fifteen parishioners who participated in the session and there were not a lot of concrete new ideas generated.

This past fall members of Parish Pastoral Council reflected on the input from the Open Parish Meeting as well as the whole process of these past few years.

As we move forward, we will continue to look at ways to address the five key priorities as identified in the January 2024 Needs Assessment survey. Progress has already been made in some of these areas and there is still room for further advancements as time, resources, and volunteers permit.

At the present moment we are focusing our time and energy in two directions. First, we want to focus on working to strengthen the work of the CWL (Catholic Women's League) K of C (Knights of Columbus), and the recently formed Legion of Mary in our Parish. These are vital organizations to assist in nurturing the vibrancy and mission of the Parish. Working more closely together with these groups, we hope to build a greater sense of community, belonging, and shared mission.

Second, we want to focus on supporting our young people in their journey of faith. Through our children's program at the 9:00 A.M. Sunday Mass, our revised and updated sacramental preparation programs for Baptism, Reconciliation, Communion, and Confirmation, and Fr. John's involvement and sacramental ministry with our three area Catholic schools (Pope Francis Elementary, O'Gorman Intermediate Catholic School, and O'Gorman High School) we hope to encourage our young people and their families to grow in faith.

As we look ahead, we recognize that one of the greatest challenges we experience today is the lack of volunteers in the Parish. Quite simply, we need more hands to assist in the work of nurturing and growing our Parish. Parishioners are encouraged to step forward to share their time and talent with the Parish. If you'd like to become involved in some way, please speak to Fr. John. Many hands not only make the workload lighter, but also more joyful as we work together to build the Parish.

Fr. John Lemire
Gordon King
Suzanne Sorochan

John Mc Donald (Chair)
Michele King
Deacon David Smith