

## From Fr. Michael

*In 2008-09 our parish undertook a process of strategic planning. At the conclusion of that work, we had developed a series of broad goals for the church and school to pursue over the next three years. In 2009-10, each ministry area took those goals and established more specific objectives and strategies to advance their mission. Since that time, our staff and volunteers have been working diligently to implement the plan. This summer, I've asked the directors of our various ministries to update us on their progress. This week's update is written by Kari Elsen and describes the advancements made in Youth Ministry.*

It has been an exciting year in our Youth Ministry and Middle/High School Faith Formation Programs! The support shown by parishioners and various volunteers has been extremely encouraging, resulting in abundant growth and positive changes! I would like to paint a picture of our strategic plan which has been developed and implemented by not only myself but also a strong team of individuals who make up the Faith Formation Commission, Youth Ministry Committee and volunteers. I will be touching on the goals and strategies of implementation that affect those at the Middle and High School level.

### **Goal:**

#### **Growth in participation/Evaluate programs and implement alternatives - Faith Formation:**

Part of growing a program requires a closer look at the programs already functioning. If our goal is to reach more families and teens, we must look to see where our program is lacking. Part of making this goal a reality involves program evaluation and alternative options to help grow this ministry.

The Middle School curriculum has changed to a different publisher which now ties in to the Elementary School curriculum making for a more stream-line introduction to the Middle School curriculum. The High School program has also been restructured with classes and new text. High School curriculum is based off of the four pillars of the Church: Christian Prayer, Liturgy and Sacraments, Creed, and Christian Morality. There is a class dedicated to each pillar. Parents and students have stated they have really enjoyed the new program and felt that they have learned more about the Church than in past years. There has also been a change made to the timing of registration for Faith Formation. Instead of registering in the fall, families will now be encouraged to register in the spring allowing our Director of Faith Formation, Jim DeShane, and myself sufficient time to recruit the appropriate number of catechists. There is a continual dialogue between Jim, myself, catechists, parents, and those who serve on committees regarding the effectiveness of programs and events. Positive changes have been made due to these conversations. An additional aspect of Faith Formation/Youth Ministry in which I am actively trying to develop and promote is Family Education. This last April was our first attempt at bringing teens and parents together for an event on the subject of Sexual Morality. A professor from the University of St. Thomas spoke on the issues that Catholics are faced with on a daily basis, and how we are called to stay steadfast with our convictions, and how to do so. Youth and parents were then divided into small groups (male and female groups for the teens) and were led in a discussion and Q/A session. The Pope John XIII room housed 120 people for this new event!

### **Goal:**

#### **Growth in participation/Evaluate programs and implement alternatives - Youth Ministry:**

New Middle and High School programs have been introduced and implemented to try to pique the interests of students with a range of backgrounds. High School students enjoy attending LifeLine, a monthly event put on by NET (National Evangelization Teams) in West St. Paul. LifeLine is a praise and worship evening consisting of Mass, a speaker and Eucharistic Adoration. This year, we hope to increase the number of teens attending and also invite families to join us on the first Saturday of each month for this special event. Teens have also experienced an event called "Theotokos" which is held at the University of St. Thomas. Unlike LifeLine, Theotokos is very traditionally based with Night Prayer, Confession, Mass, Eucharistic Adoration and a Rosary. The youth are being exposed to many forms of Catholic prayer and devotion. This year, we chartered a bus to Winterblast, bringing 63 kids (in comparison to last year's number of 12). A Christmas party was put on for Middle School students on a Wednesday night during Christmas break; 25-30 youth attended, not including High School students who helped chaperone.

Our summer programs have also been off to a great start. This year we brought 14 High School students (in comparison to last year's number of 6) to our annual mission trip, Christpower, which takes place during the third week of June in north Minneapolis. Teens worked at the homes of parishioners of Ascension parish; weeding gardens, painting fences, building homes for Habitat for Humanity and preparing food. Each teen walks away with a deeper faith and a renewed sense of what it means to be a Catholic in today's world. The Middle School program, Summer Stretch, is currently in its 4<sup>th</sup> week with 23 registered participants. This program would not be possible without the help of many parent volunteers and our Summer Youth Ministry Intern: Hannah Roe. There has been a major effort to promote these events to the St. Bart's School 6<sup>th</sup> graders by visiting their classroom and posting information to our facebook site (St-Barts Youth-Ministry), website and bulletin.

**Goal:**

**Innovation and Development: Implementation of ad hoc youth committee**

We have a strong core of individuals who care deeply for the future of our children and the development of Youth Ministry at our parish. By meeting on a monthly basis, strategies are developed to recruit volunteers (they are the only way Youth Ministry will take off and survive!) and develop inclusive plans to invite teens and preteens to partake in events and Faith Formation. In addition to an all-adult committee, a goal for this upcoming school year is to form a Youth Committee. The goal for this group will be to hear directly from the youth what they would like to see in their parish.

As stated before, the only way we can make Youth Ministry and Faith Formation happen is if we have the support from our parishioners. If you are feeling called or have interest in the areas of Youth Ministry or Faith Formation, please contact Kari Elsen at (952) 473-6601 or [kelsen@st-barts.org](mailto:kelsen@st-barts.org). The future of our Church is in our youth!

**Stay tuned next week for an update on Elementary and Adult Faith Formation in part two written by Jim DeShane, Director of Faith Formation!**