

Phone Interview Summary

Summary

All respondents agreed that the parish is currently doing a good job of welcoming newcomers. While this was consistent with the parish survey it was not consistent with the independent observations done at the parish Masses. Respondents were much more emphatic that welcoming the newcomers was important to them. This validated the findings of the parish survey.

Almost all the respondents placed responsibility for making St. John a more welcoming community squarely upon the shoulders of parishioners, while a few add with proper guidance from the pastor and staff. Two of the respondents struggled when asked for Biblical examples of hospitality while two were able to offer some examples.

Respondents offered many suggestions as to how St. John can become a more welcoming parish. They are listed below.

Purpose

There were several reasons for conducting this phone survey. The first reason was as a consistency check on the results of the parish written survey. Also, to determine the extent to which catechesis relative to welcoming the stranger might be needed in the parish community. Additionally, to elicit suggestions for how the parish could become a more welcoming community. Finally, like the surveys, it was also hoped that we could get a glimpse of God's will for this parish in terms of welcoming the newcomer, since one of the ways God speaks is through the community of believers.

Description of Respondents

Four active parishioners were interviewed by telephone. They were given assurances of confidentiality, that their responses would be shared but not attributed to any one individual. They ranged in age from 30 to 72. Two were males and two were females. The number of years they were members of the parish ranged from 8 years to 63 years. Two respondents were married, one single, one engaged.

Questions Asked & Responses

1. How well does St. John welcome newcomers?
 - a. Hard to tell because I've never been a newcomer. I was baptized there. Over time it hasn't been as important to welcome newcomers as it is now.
 - b. I think they are doing a pretty good job now that Fr. Peter is there. Only know, not before then.
 - c. From my point of view I would say they did a very good job. I was made to feel very welcomed by the former pastor and by the present one as well.

 - d. Very well. My fiancé went through RCIA. Very quickly she got to feel

comfortable in the parish. She even invited her friends to the Easter Vigil and they felt comfortable.

2. How important is welcoming newcomers to you?
 - a. Very important. That is the life blood of the parish.
 - b. I'm a lifelong member and I want to see the parish survive. I have a strong commitment to my parish and my faith. I reach out to my neighbors and I feel it is a very important ministry.
 - c. I think it is very, very important.
 - d. From my experience it is very important, people come here with different languages and different cultures.

3. Can you think of a story in the Bible which features welcoming the stranger or extending hospitality to a newcomer?
 - a. God tells us that when we are welcoming the stranger we are welcoming God and not just the stranger.
 - b. The story of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal son.
 - c. Drawing a blank.
 - d. Can't think of one.

4. What would you see as the benefits, if any, of St. John becoming a more welcoming parish?
 - a. Bigger parish, more people contributing toward the parish. People getting more involved.
 - b. If parishioners knew other languages, that would help.
 - c. More parishioners, more people in the pews, more expertise available.
 - d. Increased membership, greater sense of community. More active practice of the faith and more social activism. More talents and abilities.

5. Ultimately who is responsible for St. John becoming a welcoming community?
 - a. The parishioners along with the leadership. Need to have staggered goals: immediate, intermediate, ultimate.
 - b. Fr. Peter.
 - c. The parishioners themselves who attend Mass and extend a welcoming hand to newcomers.
 - d. Begins with the leadership then trickles down to the parishioners.

6. Do you have any suggestions for how St. John can become a more welcoming community?
 - a. More informal gatherings after Mass, coffee & donuts.
 - b. Welcoming committee, a family Mass, afterward monthly cake and coffee. Welcoming committee then integrate newcomers with old timers. Continue CYO outreach to youth, outreach to parents of new student in the school. Engage CCD parents more. Address the problem of teens leaving the church after confirmation.
 - c. Only suggestion I have – I'm a convert – coffee & tea after Mass. Sometimes

Masses are very cold. Designate one Mass as having a social time after the Mass.

d. No suggestions. In a small parish it is easier to get to know everyone.