

Talking Paper Concerning Religious Education Report to the Pastoral Committee at its meeting on March 18, 2014

Parish Youth Educational Effort is formed around the school year. This means that the programs are in the process of winding down.

Jan Padone is working with Beth Butler in planning an 8 mile walk-a-thon for the youth of the parish to raise money for Nicaragua. What the youth do in support of the walk-a-thon can be credited for service hours, which is a program that is aimed at educating the kids about volunteerism and the need to support people and the community.

The youth effort at SJV is broken down into several areas that are aimed at education and providing youth with church related activities.

The CCD program is a religious education program structured around classes held once a week during the school year for kindergarteners through 8th graders.

A part of the CCD program includes classes, again held during the school year for 9th graders who are preparing to be confirmed.

Both are working well as reported by Jan Padone. She notes though that the issue of finding good and knowledgeable teachers is very difficult and that this is compounded by how the Archdiocese training program works. Teachers are usually parents who have volunteered and they are putting in a couple of hours a week preparing for classes and then conducting them. This makes adding additional training time difficult particularly when the Archdiocese certification and training process is an online process that requires face time on the computer. Jan stated that it would be helpful if the Archdiocese would identify books that could be read and tested about, but this is not likely to happen.

Jan also spoke at some length about what she saw as a parish wide issue of a tension between people who emphasize the rules and people who are less rule oriented because they are sensitive to how application of the rules can sometimes be unloving. This issue plays out in SJV's many activities, service venues, and worship in different ways. Related to CCD, Jan noted that our programs are structured and have certain rules. They are applied lovingly, but every so often some parent chafes at a particular rule and wants it waived in relation to its application to their child. As a for instance, the 8th graders take a test to allow the program to assess their knowledge of the Catholic Faith and Church History so that we can assess their readiness for entering the confirmation process. Some kids last year failed the test and were upset because the failures were not waived away. They eventually left the parish. There are more details to the cases I am talking about here, but for our purposes we don't need to address them here. The important thing for us to take away from this discussion is that the tension exists between rule application and how we show our love for others and that we need to think some in terms of this whenever we approach change or work programmatically in the parish.

The SJV youth group activities and the work associated with running it is overseen by Beth Butler. The walk-a-thon in April for Nicaragua is one of their activities. They have run things in the past like lock-ins, ski trips, car washes to raise money for trips, work camp activities, etc.

While the youth group's aim is not principally education, it is a program that provides opportunities where our youth can learn about volunteerism and become more socially aware of the needs of the poor, parish needs, and the importance of involvement in a vibrant community life.

The pre-school program and Vocation Bible School are two other youth programs that have programmatic educational components. Deacon Ed and Marie are both involved with these programs and in so far as I have been able to ascertain both have been traditionally highly successful in what they do.