

Saint Christopher Transition Report

April 30, 2010

On October 1, 1951 Archbishop John J. Mitty established St. Christopher Parish in the city of San Jose, specifically in a neighborhood called Willow Glen. The first church, on Lincoln Avenue, was a simple fruit drying shed. Fr. John Healy celebrated the new Christian community's first mass on Sunday, December 9, 1951. Three hundred twelve families registered in the fledgling community. Soon, in 1952, a temporary church building was erected on the present property with the school opening in September of 1955, staffed by the Sisters of the Presentation. The church, as we know it today, was built and later dedicated in June 1957. The Parish facility grew exponentially between 1959 and 1999 adding Healy Hall, a gymnasium/parish hall, the convent building, a second school building, a science building, computer lab, library, additional office space and the Nano Nagle Center.

After serving at Saint Christopher's for twenty-four years, in 1975 Monsignor Healy passed away. On September 13, 1975 the Reverend John Norman Allen was installed as pastor of Saint Christopher. On July 23, 1976, Pope Paul VI conferred the title of Prelate of Honor upon Father Allen. By doing so he bestowed a special recognition upon both the pastor and the parish of St. Christopher.

Monsignor Allen served the parish until July 1989. He then retired and remained in residence at Saint Christopher until he passed away on November 1995.

In 1989 Rev. James Walsh, who had served Saint Christopher parish in 1973 as a Parochial Vicar, was then appointed Pastor of Saint Christopher Parish. In the year 2000, Pope John Paul II conferred the recognition title of Prelate of Honor upon Father Walsh.

In the words of Rev. Msgr. Walsh, "It [St. Christopher Parish] has a valid reputation of being a very strong, unified, active community. St. Christopher School is a very important part of the parish, and a strong Religious Education Program brings the educational element to completion. It is the parishioners, through their great involvement and active participation in Religious and social activities, who make St. Christopher Parish what it is." Please see Attachment A for an organizational chart of the parish and the list of current parish ministries.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ST. CHRISTOPHER IN YEAR 2009-2010

The boundaries of St. Christopher Parish mainly extend to the Willow Glen area from Foxworthy Avenue to Leigh Avenue, to Hamilton/Pine, to Almaden Road. 3003 families are registered members of St. Christopher Parish with 140 new families registering in the

parish this past year. 1 Fulltime and 11 part-time individuals are employed by St. Christopher Parish and 60 faculty and staff employed by the school.

With regards to school and parish religious education enrollment, 614 children are enrolled at St. Christopher School from kindergarten through eighth (8th) grade, double classes. 499 children are currently enrolled in parish religious education programs. 60 adults are enrolled in the RCIA program this year.

160 children will receive first communion this year. 25 weddings, 75 funerals, 153 baptisms were held this year and 130 individuals participated in first reconciliation this past year at St. Christopher Parish.

COMPILING THE PARISH REPORT

Members of the transition team addressed the congregation at each mass on a dedicated weekend to explain the pastor transition process and encourage parishioners to complete the six question survey. The six questions requested by the Diocese were made available at the vestibule in the church, at the parish office, and online from March 4, 2010 to March 31, 2010. Email communication was sent to the school parents and parish community (for whom email addresses were available) regarding the transition process and the six questions. Parishioners were provided the opportunity to submit their responses to the questions either via an online survey or by delivering hard copy response to the parish and/or school offices.

All parishioners and school parents were invited to attend a meeting, wherein the transition team members facilitated discussions regarding the six (6) questions. The responses from these meetings, as well as all responses that were received in hard copy, were entered into the survey so that they could be included in the final summary.

Approximately 225 responses were received to the six (6) questions. The transition team summarized the responses to each question and has attached those summary responses.

Respectfully Submitted,

Members of the Transition
Team for St. Christopher Parish

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Question #1 – *What did you feel when you first heard that Monsignor Walsh is leaving?*

The main recurring themes in the community's responses to this question

- Sadness
- Sense of Loss
- Happy for Monsignor

Other topics addressed within the community's responses to the question

- so much we will miss
- hard to replace
- Monsignor's compassion
- Monsignor's friendliness
- support of the school
- knew everyone's name
- a community builder
- a dedicated priest
- a spiritual leader
- a unique style of leadership

Summary

Many parishioners were very sad to hear the news. They will miss Monsignor's spiritual leadership as well as his compassion as a confessor. They will miss this dedicated priest, a great listener, his friendliness, his constant support of the school. His unique style of leadership will be missed.

Parishioners are very happy for Monsignor, happy he will be returning to his beloved Ireland and his family.

Some are concerned about our future but ready to meet the challenge of change and a new perspective. They are ready to support our new Pastor.

Question # 2 – *What parts of our parish life do we need to keep?*

The main recurring themes in the community's responses to this question

- St. Christopher Parishioners feel a very strong sense of community; they feel welcomed as a part of a family.
- The positive relationship between the Parish and the School is a significant benefit to the community.
- Parish and School events, including fundraising and social events, are very important to the community.
- The community values opportunities for spiritual growth and faith formation for adults and youth.
- Many respondents addressed a strong preference to keep the way in which the Ladies Guild and Holy Name Society operate and the many good works they make possible unchanged. The same is true for the many other parish and school groups and organizations.

Other topics addressed within the community's responses to the question

- Parishioners feel a very strong spirit of service, volunteerism, and outreach within the community.
- The community values the visiting Jesuit Presiders and would like to see that continue.
- The community values the diversity of our parish and the diversity of Mass “personalities”.
- The community values the current mass schedule including both daily masses and post-mass daily Rosary.
- The community values the emphasis on the importance of the youth in our parish, and would like to see that emphasis increased.
- Some respondents offered suggestions for improvement to our community.
- Many respondents expressed a strong preference to have no major changes (other than the pastoral change, of course).

Summary

St. Christopher Parish is a vibrant community blessed with many parishioners who are very involved in the spiritual and social life of the Parish. The Ladies Guild and Holy Name Society are two very active organizations which provide opportunities for fellowship as well as significant fundraising efforts. These organizations have operated autonomously for many years, and there is a strong preference that they be allowed to continue to do so. Aside from these two organizations, there are many other opportunities for parishioners to get involved, including Liturgical, Catechetical, and Outreach Ministries. Many of our parishioners take advantage of these opportunities, giving freely of their time, talent, and treasure.

The relationship between the School and the Church is very positive and is an important part of who we are. There is a strong preference to maintain this positive relationship. Respondents to the survey value the rich tradition of the Parish, the diversity of the parishioners, the inclusive and welcoming atmosphere, and the opportunities to get involved in such a wide variety of ministries, organizations, and events for spiritual, social, and personal growth.

Monsignor Walsh is a much beloved Pastor, and the community recognizes his warm and outgoing personality, his ability to remember names, his focus on the children, and his ability to delegate as among the best qualities he has brought to his role as Pastor.

Question #3 – *What do we, as a parish need to let go of?*

The main recurring themes in the community's responses to this question

- A number of respondents felt that the parish and the school are hesitant to keep up with the times. Parishioners feel that changes should be encouraged and the status quo questioned.
 - Key areas to be considered for change include:
 1. Reducing # of fundraising events and amount of fundraising efforts.
 2. Volunteering. Not enough parishioners are volunteering. Too much volunteering required.
- A number of respondents were concerned about the overall reputation of the parish. Some respondents feel there is a perception of elitism between the school parents and others both within the parish and the community. As a result, some parishioners believe that new parishioners are not welcomed and/or turned away.
- A large percentage of respondents did not have any specific area they felt needed any change or expressed their belief that the status quo was sufficient.

Other topics addressed within the community's responses to the question

- Social justice group. It is believed that this group is given too large of a platform. Some feel that this group is not in concert with what they feel is St. Christopher's purpose and doctrines.
- Evaluate music options
- Eliminate handshakes during mass

Summary

In summary, we recognize that this group of respondents is just a small percentage of the parish. The respondents represent a strong passion for this community and earnestly want what is best for St. Christopher. Some have very specific and minor changes they would like to see and many see no reason to change the current landscape. However, there clearly is a perception that the pride parishioners feel for this community might be misconceived by others. Others who have tried to become involved have felt brushed aside or intimidated by the closeness and strong bond many parish members already have with one another. In addition, there is a prevalent theme that these respondents would like suggestions of change not to be dismissed because "it is a tradition". The respondent community would like to see a review of all the events and requests for fundraising and volunteering so that everyone's time and energy is used most effectively.

Question #4 – *What do we, as a Parish, need to develop, begin, create for the future?*

The main recurring themes in the community's responses to this question

- A refreshed, comprehensive and robust variety of program(s) that seek to recruit, enrich, and deliver more faith based content to the youth of the Parish. The ultimate goal is to have St Christopher Parish be more of a faith oriented learning and activity destination for youth defined as high school – late 20's. An updated Parish website with a page or section dedicated to the youth is needed to provide a modern portal of information for the youth of the parish.
- Create and support a team from within the parish that is solely responsible for welcoming new parishioners through a variety of activities. These activities would range from fun singles events, Bible study, lectures with guest speakers, greeting worshipers at mass, post mass gatherings.
- Encourage and incorporate the involvement of the youth of the parish across the entire range of parish activities. This would include assisting at mass services throughout the year, greeting worshipers at masses, actively planning and working at parish social activities, having a voice in the parish as either a council or entity.

Other topics addressed within the community's responses to the question

- Would like to know if we have a vision as a parish and what it states exactly.
- Would like to have the Church lighting, sound system, and crying room updated.
- Consider updating the music at 9:30am Sunday mass to a more contemporary variety.

Summary

The overwhelming message that came through was that the youth of the parish are not as visible and involved as they can or should be. The respondents identified their desire to have more opportunities for our youth to gather as a group, participate in the Mass, Outreach, participate in Bible study, and generally be more visible. The suggestions recommended a variety of approaches for nurturing our Youth: children-friendly and teen and preteen Masses, support groups, more active youth groups, more activities, speakers, a children's choir, a progressive 5th-9th grade faith-based group, Confirmation, and developing spirituality of children. Recommendations were made for young adult singles groups for different age groups, such as 18-24 and 25-35 year olds.

Several responses also referred to a perceived sense of diminished spirituality and reverence across the congregation. Recommendations included investing in proper facilities, increasing Mass attendance, retreat days, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, confession, challenging parishioners in homilies, staying dynamic and relevant with the times, meditation/contemplation group, more reverence at Mass, appropriate attire, a men's spirituality group, and occasional challenging speakers.

In addition the term "diversity" came up a few times and that is an indication of the cultural mix assorted in the parish and that we should encourage these groups to participate in fund raisers, large group events, etc. The history of the parish and the cross section of people that make it up would benefit from some type of project oriented team that will work on projects. Some suggestions were for a garden, Spring Clean Up Days, Blood Drives, etc.

Question # 5 – *What gifts, qualities, talents do we need to help us move toward our vision?*

The main recurring themes in the community’s responses to this question

- Many of the Parishioners who responded to this question felt that it would benefit the Parish for the new Pastor to possess many of the gifts, qualities, and talents of Msgr. Walsh including:
 - an excellent administrator of the Parish and a careful financial steward;
 - a “people person” who is outgoing, fun, friendly, and who knows the names of nearly all parishioners and school students;
 - humble, approachable, and compassionate;
 - visible to the community at Parish events and with students at school;
 - trusting and a good delegator, but not a micro-manager; and,
 - someone who cares about the lives of our Parishioners and who is wonderful with children.
- There is some fear/apprehension about what the change of Pastors may mean to aspects of our community that are important in the lives of Parishioners, particularly preserving and strengthening the relationship between the Parish and the School, the autonomous operation of the Holy Name Society and Ladies’ Guild, and the Parish’s events and traditions.
- The new Pastor will need to be a bridge-builder, someone who can connect with and reach out to the groups within our community that have different needs, interests, and goals and maintain them as part of our community:
 - those who have young families, particularly those with children in the School, as well as those who are older whose families are already grown;
 - those who identify themselves as “progressive” Catholics as well as those who identify themselves as “traditional” Catholics;
 - those who are financially secure as well as those who are economically disadvantaged; and,
 - those who promote change as well as those who prefer the status quo.

Other topics addressed within the community’s responses to the question

- Several respondents are looking for a charismatic spiritual leader who can inspire us with homilies that deepen our faith, motivate us to service, and keep us coming back for more. A number of respondents mentioned that it is important to them to be able to easily understand the new Pastor.
- A Pastor who is able to relate to our Parish youth and who is committed to building up our youth program is important to a number of respondents.
- Some respondents believe that the new Pastor needs to be a visionary, collaborative leader, who can provide the context for us see the “big picture” and who helps us understand the operations and finances of the Parish.

Summary

Our community clearly loves and admires our Pastor, Msgr. Walsh. In fact, many of the respondents indicated that they would like our next Pastor to be just like Msgr. Walsh. Based on the responses to this question, the St. Christopher Parish Community is

looking for a strong leader: a Pastor who inspires, guides, and motivates us, who supports and participates in Parish and School events, who understands our Parish and School community and the importance it has in our lives, who initiates change only to make our Parish better, who trusts our capable lay leaders and allows them to continue to fulfill their responsibilities, who cares about all of the groups in our Parish and finds a way to keep them all a part of our community, and who is able to involve the future of our Church—our youth—in the life of our Parish. Our community sincerely appreciates that our current Pastor cares enough to get to know us as individuals and families, to be physically present to us at events and meetings, and to greet us before and after Mass, and is looking forward to a new Pastor who will care about us and treat us in the same way.

Question # 6 – *What gifts, qualities, talents do the people of this parish bring to realizing our vision for the parish?*

The main recurring themes in the community’s responses to this question

- St. Christopher Parishioners feel that there is an extensive and diverse pool of gifts, qualities, and talents within our community.
- There is a culture of volunteering and ministry within our community that keeps parishioners involved.
- Parishioners at St. Christopher have a strong willingness to share their time, talents, and treasure with the community.
- There is a strong sense of commitment to the parish which can enable the parish to realize its vision.

Other topics addressed within the community’s responses to the question

- Many respondents are not aware of the vision for the parish.
- Some respondents cautioned against too few doing too much, which could lead to burnout.
- Many respondents cited strong faith and spirituality as valued gifts within our parish.

Summary

Our community seemed to have some difficulty articulating the gifts, qualities, and talents of the people of the parish. There is no question that we have a significant amount of volunteerism and ministry within the community, and the diverse talents that are brought to these efforts are appreciated. There is some concern within the parish that the “workload” is unevenly distributed, and that some of the talent in the parish is not being tapped into. Some expressed a desire for a “better system” to recruit, inspire, and retain more volunteers.

The school likely plays a large role in the amount of involvement, as parents of young children wish to demonstrate that they are involved in the parish. Again, there is concern that, as children get older and move into high school, the willingness of parents to “pitch in” diminishes. On the whole, though, the responses about the gifts, qualities, and talents were very positive.

A number of respondents either did not answer this question or responded that they were unaware that “a vision for the parish” exists. Although it may seem obvious that the vision of a Catholic Parish involves living Christian values, being more Christ-like, and bringing about the Kingdom of God on earth, they seemed to be asking for clarification on this topic.

**St. Christopher Parish Ministry
2009-2010**

<p>Bible Study</p> <p>Community Ministry Outreach Office Volunteers Skip-A-Meal Community Ministry Group Meals at Homeless Shelters Donations of Food or Clothing Holiday Food Baskets Adopt a Family</p> <p>Divorced & Separated</p> <p>Holy Name Society</p> <p>MOM'S Group</p> <p>Over 50's Group</p> <p>Just Faith 8 wk orientation to Catholic Action regarding Social Justice</p> <p>Ladies Guild</p> <p>Liturgical Ministry Eucharistic Ministers Lectors/Commentators Altar Servers Ushers Music Ministers Altar Society Church Environment</p>	<p>Pastoral Care Grief Ministry Eucharistic Ministers to the Sick Visiting the Homebound Christian Funeral Ministry Counseling Convalescent Hospital Ministry Marriage Preparation</p> <p>R.C.I.A. How to Become Catholic Adult Confirmation</p> <p>Religious Education Religion Classes, Grades 1-8 Early Childhood Education Liturgy of the Word Babysitting CO-OP</p> <p>RENEW Christian Life Communities</p> <p>Sacramental Prep First Eucharist Program First Reconciliation Program Rite of Christian Initiation of Children (RCIC) Baptism Preparation</p> <p>The Christopher's</p> <p>Youth Ministry Youth Group High School Confirmation</p>
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