

Parish Talk about OneParish for 1 October 2017

Father Adam asked me to speak a little bit today about the how parishes grow and then I will caveat by talking to you about a new innovated method we are going to implement to keeping this faith community connected using today's modern technology.

A startling statistic was recently released that indicates 76% of Catholics do not attend mass on a regular basis.

Now, we as Catholics aren't the lone ranger when it comes to declining numbers in the pews. This is a trend across all denominations in the United States.

So, what we see in the majority of churches communities across this great nation is not an overcrowded emergency room of sinners, nor streets full of people crying out for God's caring mercy.

Rather, we see a population of basically healthy people and families who are drifting farther away from our Lord Jesus. And they feel no compelling reason to return because they are fairly content where they are.

Sure, life still has it difficulties and can be extremely challenging and traumatic at times. But for the vast majority of middle-class people... we get through the tough times and life remains pretty good.

The majority of the nation have careers, opportunities, cars and houses. We feel secure with high quality health care and professional emergency services... and enjoy big screen TVs, entertainment and vacations.

Basically, we live in a time and place where, practically speaking, we think we don't need God.

This lack of need of God results in lack of church attendance, lack of prayer, and lack of knowledge of our faith... which can cause people to not only doubt but to be infected by false beliefs and teachings.

If we cannot motivate and excite others in realizing that we need God... for our eternal salvation... then we're just offering another feel-good option to people who already feel pretty good... and therefore our church will continue to shrink.

Our challenge then is to find new ways to bring the faith to our communities... to evangelize... which by the way... we are all called to do. So, how do we make our parish grow?

Modern research has determined that parish development evolve around four fundamental “pillars” which are: Prayer... Involvement... Service... and Giving.

Now for the sake of time, I will not elaborate on all four of these pillars but instead Father Adam asked me to speak about a new mobile App... called OneParish... that we are launching here at Saint Stephen First Martyr Catholic Church today... that encompasses all of them.

This App will foster better communication with our Saint Stephen families and allow us to more easily connect with each other, be informed about events, and strengthen our faith journey.

Pope Francis has called upon the Church to utilize technology to further engage all of its Catholic community.

By the way, did you know that Pope Francis has been recognized as the most influential world leader on Twitter and has over 14 million followers?

St. Paul tells us, we need to go out and evangelize where the people are (not just in our church).

And what better way to reach our youth and the 76% of Catholics who do not attend mass on a regular basis or engage in their Catholic community?

We reach them where they are, and that’s on their smartphones. So today, we introduce you to the OneParish App.

So what is OneParish? It is private network that includes:

Daily Mass readings... Saint of the Day content... Catholic talk radio broadcasting from Relevant Radio... our most current parish directory... a Mass times finder... even Pope Francis’s tweets... and also safe and easy mobile donation tool.

Now, I'm no salesman... nor am I trying to squeeze the last dime out of your pocket... but without monetary contributions from our congregation this church... nor any other can survive.

It is our hopes that this App will help to make donating to your favorite charity... Saint Stephen First Martyr Catholic Church... easier and more efficient.

In turn, we hope that this App helps everyone stay connected to this parish... and increase contributions that we use not only to support this church but also our fellow Catholics throughout the Diocese.

This App also puts at your fingertips the information that will help to build a strong personal relationship with God as well support the four pillars for parish growth.

So how does it work? First down load the App. Then click on your parish, find your family profile and update your information. You can even add a picture of your family!

Saint Stephen is one of the first parishes in the country to be using this product so we are excited that we are leaders in bringing relevant Catholic content via today's technology to our community.

Once you begin using the App...You can even give your feedback on OneParish by simply tapping the icon button stating "Send Feedback".

Our ushers will hand out the OneParish App card to you after collection.

After mass today, we will have several folks in the back of the church to help you download the FREE OneParish App.

It is our hopes and prayers that the OneParish App will help to build a stronger more connected parish community.

So let's get started... let's get connected!

Amen