



THE ST. ALPHONSUS CHRONICLE

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YOUNG PEOPLE WHO CARE

A Week of Christian Service for High School Students

Over the years, there have been many things that have shaped my life as a Christian. Of all those things, the one that most profoundly formed me was my participation in direct service to the poor during week-long service projects.

The first time I took part in a project like this was during my sophomore year in college. Our group of roughly 25 students went down to McKee, KY, and spent the week in service, prayer and community. In my senior year, our schedule required that we find a new place and we stumbled upon Young People Who Care in Frenchville, PA. YPWC is a rural Catholic Mission that was founded in 1976 by Sr. Therese Dush and a group of recent high school graduates. They had done some great service work as a youth group (which was called Young People Who Care) and wanted to continue their service. It started with the purchase of a small farm and is now a multi ministry mission with two retreat centers (Bethany Adult Retreat Center and Bethany Youth Retreat Center – we stay at the latter) and has hundreds of volunteers and supporters from around the area. It is currently managed by three sisters of the Community of Anawim. Sr. Suzanne Thibault is the director of the summer program.

After I graduated from college, I spent a year and a half there as a full time volunteer helping with their Summer Service Projects. Youth groups from around the country came in for a week at a time over the course of the summer to do direct service to the poor. While I have lost count, I have led college and high school groups on well over 20 weeks such as this.

During weeks like this I learned what it means to serve, to be a disciple of Jesus, to more deeply appreciate the Eucharist and the Word, treasure the priesthood of all believers as well as develop many of the skills and gifts that led me to the ordained priesthood.

Now, I would like to share this experience with St. Alphonsus. The St. Alphonsus Summer Service Project will take place this July 10-16, 2016. It is a project for high school students currently in their sophomore, junior, or senior year (students must be at least 16 years old by the beginning of July). We also need adults who are at least 25 years old, can provide and drive a reliable car, and who are willing to work hard to make this week a great experience for the students. We have room for 15 students and 5 adults.

By the church front doors you will find information. Online, stalphonsusauburn.org > Youth Ministry > YPWC, is the source for applications, medical/permission forms, Participant Packets, etc.

Anyone interested must attend one Information Gathering and students must attend with a parent.
Thursday, May 5, at 6:30 PM in the Parish Rectory (This Thursday!)
Wednesday May 18 at 6:00 PM in the Parish Rectory
Sunday, May 22 at 11:15 AM in the Parish Rectory

Applications for students and adults are due Tuesday May 31, 2016

GROWING IN WITNESS, SERVING IN LOVE

~~A Strategic Planning Process~~ A Process of Discerning our Mission

Information at stalphonsusauburn.org

I recently sent out my first parish-wide letter to announce an exciting venture in which I hope you can all become involved – strategic planning for St. Alphonsus Parish.

I was talking with some parishioners the other day and they mentioned that they liked the idea and were going to join one of the teams, but they thought the term “Strategic Planning” sounded too institutional and corporate. They preferred the idea of “mission”. So, I have reworked the subtitle above.

Under any title, the process will include prayer, dialogue, scripture, and working hard to recognize the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

During my first year as your pastor, I have moved with you through the holy seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and now Easter and have experienced parish events like Bingo, the Parish Picnic, coffee hours, and dish-to-pass dinners. Together we have weathered our transitions, shared our griefs, and gotten to know each other. I have learned about your love for our parish, your dedication and your faith.

I have also observed ways in which we can build on our strong foundation. This brings up questions: What is our vision for our future? What should our priorities be? Every parish has the mission of making and growing disciples and loving our God and our neighbor with all that we are. How will St. Alphonsus grow in living out this mission? What is the plan? Who should be a part of answering all of these questions?

The answer to this last question seems clear: Developing the vision of our mission - making a plan for the life of our parish - needs to be done by the parish as a whole. No single person can do this, rather, the Holy Spirit gives us all gifts and talents that, together, give us what we need to take such bold steps.

Before we can begin this conversation, we have to take the first step of strengthening our foundation and organize and develop some of the key ministries in our parish. So, through prayer, conversation and experience we have elected to focus Phase I on creating or strengthening six Councils and Teams: Parish Council, Finance Council, Buildings and Grounds Council, Prayer and Worship Team, Faith Formation Team, and the Pastoral Care Team. These were described in some detail in the letter and this description is also located on our parish website. You will notice that all of these teams are “working” teams with active ministries and hands-on efforts that are a part of the life of our parish.

Here is what I am asking of you. There is no initial commitment to becoming a member of any of the teams. I am asking you to prayerfully look at the teams and their descriptions. Then, attend one of the Launch Summits* on Thursday May 19 at 6:30 PM to 7:45 PM or on Saturday May 21 at 9:00 AM to 10:15 AM. At those Launch Summits you will receive more information about each team, may ask any questions, pray about your involvement, and prayerfully decide if the time is right for you to join one of these teams.

I am very much looking forward to these Summits and to meeting even more of you. You are welcome to come to a meeting without letting me know ahead of time, but if you do RSVP it will help me better plan the Summits: niven@dor.org

* I have to admit that the name “Launch Summit” was initially used as a “placeholder” until we came up with a better name for these gatherings. We never did. 😊

Follow Fr. Tim Niven on Facebook

