

*From the June 13, 2021, Bulletin*

## St. John Neumann's Mission Corner

Our Parish Mission: To make disciples by encountering Christ, growing in Christ, and being sent by Christ.

### **Talking Faith in the Backyard**

Summertime means backyard BBQs, neighbors meeting over fences, and sharing a beer on the back patio. *This* summer 2021 means reconnecting after months of isolation from each other or perhaps months of intense work on the COVID frontlines. This is the perfect time for those conversations and that reconnection to touch upon our faith.

#### *Why talk faith?*

Jesus Christ tells us in Scripture to make disciples. In John 28:19-20, he tells his disciples -- and he tells all of us -- to go to all the nations to make these disciples. For most of us, our mission territory is the east side of St. Charles and particularly this summer our backyards, front yards, and side yards.



Our specific invitation to others is to share faith so that we can be a doorway to a (deeper) relationship with Jesus and the Church he founded. It is an invitation to encounter Christ.

#### *Where do we begin?*

We do not always know where our neighbors and friends are at with their faith. Talking faith cannot be accomplished in a flowchart manner, but [HERE](#) is a good online description of five stages or thresholds that most people walk through as they become more committed disciples of Jesus. Do know that the pandemic has given us a good opportunity to raise faith questions with friends and family.

Such conversations, though, carry risks because we most often must be vulnerable first without necessarily knowing how our friends and neighbors will respond. A good place to start is by sharing your own pandemic experience. A conversation starter:

- “I couldn’t have gotten through this past year without ... online Mass ... daily prayer ... my knowledge that Jesus Christ was walking with me ...” Share with your neighbor whatever helped you through COVID from a faith perspective, and then see how he or she responds.

If you do not get shut down completely, or if your neighbor does not change the subject outright, consider posing the question: “How did you handle the rough parts of the COVID craziness? Did your faith help at all?” This question is open ended enough to

allow a wide range of answers. Your friend may share about their own faith or lack of faith.

It is also certainly okay to share if you struggled in faith this past year. Reconciling an all-loving God with the levels of suffering and death in the world in the last year is certainly a valid part of a faith journey. As a disciple of Jesus, we do not always have the answers. If you are still looking for these answers, you can share where you are looking: “I know that the Catholic Church teaches that suffering can be redemptive. I am still trying to figure that idea out, but it brings me comfort to know that one day I may.”

Many folks have emerged from the last year feeling that life is that much more precious. We encourage you not to waste one of those backyard opportunities to share what is perhaps the most important part of life: a relationship with the author of life, our God.

Photo credit: Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA-NC](#)