



## **INTERPRETING the signs of our times: The Fourth Step on our Discernment Journey**

On October 3<sup>rd</sup> our parish Leadership Community gathered to continue their process of discerning God's call for our parish. At the same time they continue to provide resources and service opportunities in response to our current parish theme and calling, "Hearts on Fire: Come Encounter Jesus & Embrace His Kingdom." A new video series on what it means to encounter Jesus, along with regularly published "tips" for living out our parish calling have started to appear in the bulletin and in social media. In addition we will be adding a new "Creating Mercy Moments" in the coming weeks. Finally the Leadership Community is organizing a parish wide service day on November 18<sup>th</sup>.

This past August the Leadership Community spent a day reflecting on the results of over 70 interviews and on-line surveys seeking to identify the signs of our times. They identified a deep concern about the growing political and social polarization in our community, our nation and our world that have given rise to social unrest, racism, exclusion and deepening isolation. They also heard from parishioners a growing anxiety about the future of their families; financially, spiritually as well as their access to healthcare. At the same time, our parishioners find hope in the actions of individuals and communities who reach out beyond their own in order to help those in need.

At their October meeting they sought to interpret these signs of the times through the lens of Catholic teaching, theologies and spiritualities. In preparation for this prayerful reflection they studied excerpts from the Catechism, papal encyclicals, documents from the Vatican II Council and writings from Catholic theologians.

From their study they identified the following insights that were important for interpreting the signs of our times:

- ◆ **Our faith calls us to look for the commonality. Issues are not black and white but various shades of grey. There is more that unites us than divides us. We are called to be in community.**
- ◆ **Our faith tells us that working for the common good is sacred. We can know God**



From left to right: Leadership Community members Mary Oliphant, Julie Lomax, Don Wenig and Adult Formation member Adrian Jaworski.

**through acts of love and service. God is found in service. Our faith reminds us that there must be balance between society (the common good) and the individual.**

- ◆ **Our faith shows us that fear and "ignorance" are key contributors to polarization. Public opinion exercises power; growing anger is nourished by media and feeds our fears. Our faith reminds us that the media and technology have responsibility to serve humanity and report accurately.**

- ◆ **Our faith teaches us to "Be not afraid." The opposite of fear is love and prayer. We are called to be aware, not afraid.**

**As in the past our Leadership Community is seeking your input on the work done so far. You are invited to take part in our on-line survey which is available on our parish webpage at [http://www.smp.com/info/discerning\\_parish\\_calling.php](http://www.smp.com/info/discerning_parish_calling.php)**