Over the past couple of months, we have been collecting responses for the “Seek the City to Come” initiative from the Archdiocese of Baltimore. There was a list of five questions, and we chose one. The question we presented to our parish for reflection and discussion is:

 **If you could change one thing in your parish, neighborhood, or community, what would you change and why?**

Here are the responses…

-I would wish for more participation from the community

-Better communication promotes better participation. Better police presence so it’s safer to be more active in the church. We need to lower the crime rate.

-Better communication, verbal other than e-mail. Try knee mail! Let no one be left out.

-I would like to invite parishes from the suburbs to visit the beautiful churches in our city. Especially, St. Benedict’s. These churches have so much to offer in community outreach and beauty of the liturgy. Other churches are so stale and plain. The beauty of our churches reflects our need to make all for His glory.

-I would not change anything about my parish other than to see it grow in number of parishioners. I feel we are a loving, caring, and giving parish to our members within as well as to strangers and members of the community. What I would like to see changed about the community and neighborhood would be a way to clean up the area of drugs and vandalism. There are many boarded up dwellings, vacant and vandalized homes, drug needles, and trash strewn about. As a teen, I attended Seton High School @ 2800 N. Charles Street and my route to and from school each day was along Wilkens Avenue, and it was a beautiful, tranquil ride. Today, it is nowhere near that. I would like to see it returned to its former beauty of the longest block in Baltimore and the owners feel pride where they live.

-I go to St. Benedict’s. I went to school her in 1979-1982 and St. Joseph. I turned Catholic at St. Joseph but always bounced around and I walked in 20 years ago to get a card, went to RCIA and became a part of this amazing community. They do so much for the parish community and the individual. Mass is glorious and I wish there were three more Fr. Paschal’s. He always makes time. St. Benedict’s saved my life and my soul.

-The worry about crime. That may restrict those wanting to come. We do not live nearby but love coming to St. Benedict’s for the togetherness.

-I would like to see an article in the Catholic Review on “Mary’s Home”, a maternity home in Maryland. The absence is deafening over the last five years! I am happy to see some Archbalt parishioners focus on spiritual renewal in youth ministry. NET coming to Archbalt is most encouraging. Our youth need the spiritual perspective to navigate their secular and pagan culture.

-St. Benedict’s does an excellent job! However, the neighborhood surrounding it are crime filled- still drugs and entertainment ladies. Try to persuade our new Mayor Brandon Scott and our do-nothing city Counselman, John Bullock District 9, to visit our church and listen to the people and their needs. We do have an excellent fire department #14, Hollins Street Capt.Puence.

-Keep our St. Benedict’s open! Encourage more prayers, fun loving games instead of violence. Continue evangelization especially getting youth involved. Adoration needs to continue in all churches in Baltimore. More T.V. shows centered on faith building. Encourage Christian movies in churches especially for youths during summer.

-I would have Fr. Paschal be 35 years younger so he could continue his holy work and keep the parish invigorated.

-I am at our parish because of its inviting warmth, friendliness, and caring. I wish that our previous parish would have appreciated the openness and presence of religious values that I have found at St. Benedict’s Church. If I could change one thing it would be to make Baltimore as a whole. I do feel safe at St. Benedict’s Church but not in the communities surrounding it.

-Millington in SW Baltimore was always safe and welcoming neighborhood. Would that we could return to those days- free of drugs and stabbings or even worse shootings and death in the streets.

-If you close St. Benedict’s, YOU LOSE!

-Why does the question use the verb “change”? Why isn’t the question, “how does St. Benedict’s enrich your life”? As follows: the availability of Fr. Paschal. Always there for the poor of spirit. His devotion to “Mary of the Street”. His love of God and how he instills our faith. How Fr. Paschal brings unity to the Parish.

-More devotion to the Holy Eucharist among all things Catholic. Coordinated times between parishes for adoration (so that every day of the week has adoration across parish churches.

-I would have more priests like Fr. Paschal! His homilies tell it like it is and he is always available to listen. Thank you Father Paschal.

-It would be nice if the masses were all celebrated reverently. If there was no clapping, joking, or any other behavior/actions/words that take away the focus of worshipping God. If it was announced prior to mass that the church is a sacred place/ holy ground and for everyone to remain quiet while in church. To respect the real presence and the allow others to pray. To continuously guide the people to focus on God and not on themselves. People can be honored and celebrated but before and after mass and outside of the church.

-I would have the archdiocese pressure and appeal to the civil authorities for public safety. A climate of murder, drugs, and lawlessness is the biggest obstacle city parishes face. Many are too scared to come near any urban facility, churches included.

-I started holding back money when all of the abuse lawsuits were going on. Why should my donation go to pay off bad priests instead of helping the people in the parish? Now I hold back because you might shut down the church. Why would I invest in you if you don’t invest in me?

-The deacon serving this church need more training. Stop flying their arms in the air and screaming “Alleluia” and “Praise the Lord”. We are Roman Catholic, not Protestant “Holy Rollers”. I was offended and thought maybe I should change churches or not go at all and try to pray myself at home.

-Safety! There is an image of murder and terror in the city. Yes, it happens, but in St. Benedict the area is safe. Fences keep trouble out and the church more protected. We need more police protection.

-More adoration days.

-Well trained altar servers in every parish like we have at St. Benedict.

-I would not change anything at St. Benedict’s. I love it here. Their liturgy has probably saved my soul and my life. I appreciate the manner and respect that is taken.

-I would like to reiterate that people must come to Mass. This might include a “family catechesis” model for next year’s PREP class.

-We need our neighborhoods to be safer. It feels unsafe to come to the nighttime events.

-I think we should invite more neighborhood children to Sunday school. Maybe a vacation bible school during a week in the summer.

-More light in the church. Sometimes it’s hard to see.

-Less incense.

-I am upset to hear that the city churches may close. I think if the Catholic Church moves out, it won’t be long until the other ones close too. That would take away any resources left to people that don’t have cars or any family support. Where would people go for AA meetings? Where would people go for hope? Where would people go to just have a safe interaction with a person? How can this even be considered? I don’t believe the Catholic Church is really in touch with Jesus’ mission if they think this is the right thing to do.

-I would not change a thing at St. Benedict! I think everyone here is so welcoming and they do a lot of work for the community. If I could change anything, it would to make copies of this church all over the city.

-I wish we could go back in time. I don’t think the leaders of the city know what they are doing. I have seen a lot of things, but nothing like the last few years. It just keeps getting worse and worse with the drugs and the guns. We need new leaders that are going to enforce the laws and get all the bad guys off the streets.

-Whenever I walk into St. Benedict’s, I feel at peace. I love the way it smells and that they recite the rosary before Mass. I like the music and the choir is really good.

-I think the Archdiocese needs to stand up more to our city leaders. Baltimore is the gateway to Catholicism and is in shambles. I can’t believe that Maryland is pro-abortion and thinking of end-of-life services. How is that Catholic? Maybe if they stopped picking on the churches that are doing things for the community and focused more on keeping Catholicism in our community, we wouldn’t be having a crisis.

-I would like even more interaction with the neighborhood.

-I think we need more priests. Fr. Paschal is wonderful, but we need more like him. Priests used to come from conservative catholic families. The church used to help fund those families in the schools. Now, it feels like conservative Catholic’s are under attack. Maybe the archdiocese could see they made a mistake and start nurturing the conservative side.

-To be honest, the archdiocese ran everyone out with abuse and now wants us to do something? I pray every day for healing, but I feel like closing down churches is just ripping open that wound.

-I’d like to see St. Benedict showcased in the Catholic Review or on archbalt.org. The radio station has been up and WVTO92 has been running since 2017 and is still not mentioned or advertised on archbalt. We are an oasis in the city of Baltimore and Fr. Paschal is a model of giftedness in using every resource possible. All volunteer operated because we know what we do matters. I don’t see the support from “downtown”!

-I don’t want to change anything about St. Benedict’s, but I do wish the Archdiocese would stick up for Catholic matters. Why haven’t they taken more of stand about abortion or euthanasia matters? The Arch. Of Balt. is focused on the wrong thing and has been for a while. That’s why people have given up on coming.

-Go woke. Go broke.

-I love our parish community. I think St. Benedict’s keeps the neighborhood better than it would be without it.

-I always love hearing the bells! You always know when it’s time to pray.

-I wish we had more priests like Fr. Paschal. A lot of times, I feel like the priest is talking down to me, but Fr. Paschal always makes me feel welcome-like he’s glad to see me. Thank you Fr. Paschal.

-I wouldn’t change anything. We love our parish and enjoy coming to our church each week.

-Everything is good.

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