



## Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate

### *Parish Life Survey* **Saint Kilian Parish** **Farmingdale, New York**

#### **Executive Summary**

The St. Kilian Parish Life Survey was designed by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University. The questions were derived from CARA's database of nationally tested questions. The parish distributed the questionnaire to those attending its liturgies over one weekend in November 2015. In all, there were 1,356 valid responses, with 1,229 responses to the English-language version of the questionnaire and 127 valid responses to the Spanish-language version.

Major findings can be summarized as follows:

#### **Respondent Demographics**

- The average age of St. Kilian Parish respondents in 2015 is 58 years old. Half of all respondents are age 58 or younger. The average age of those responding to the survey in Spanish (age 44) is considerably younger than the average age of those responding in English (age 59).
- CARA divides Catholics into four generations, reflective of the age categories used by many other social scientists. The most common generation at St. Kilian Parish is the Vatican II Generation, ages 55 to 72 in 2015.
- Just over six in ten respondents are female and almost four in ten are male. Almost two in three respondents to the survey say they are currently married or remarried. One in six has never married, almost one in ten is divorced or separated, and a little more than one in ten is widowed. A quarter report having at least one child or stepchild under age 18 living with them.
- A third have attained a high school diploma or less, a quarter have attended some college or have an associate's degree, and just over four in ten have a bachelor's or graduate degree. Examining the educational level by language of response to the survey, three-quarters of those responding in Spanish have a high school diploma or less, compared to three-tenths of those responding in English.

## Religious Characteristics of Respondents

- On average, respondents have attended the parish for 27 years, with half having attended 23 years or less. Those responding to the survey in English have attended the parish for an average of 28 years, compared to an average of 13 years for those responding in Spanish.
- Eight in ten identify the parish as their primary place of worship and say they are registered there. Just over one in three says she or he regularly attends the parish but is *not* registered there. On average, these non-registered respondents, many of whom responded to the survey in Spanish, have attended the parish for 15 years.
- Half of those responding to the survey in Spanish report living closer to another parish, compared to three in ten of those responding in English.

## Assessment of Parish Life and Needs

- Almost all respondents to the survey give St. Kilian Parish overall a positive evaluation (“good” and “excellent” combined). Nearly six in ten rate it as “excellent.”
- Efforts to meet people’s spiritual needs receive an “excellent” rating from just over a third of respondents. About four in ten rate as “excellent” efforts to nurture their relationship with Jesus Christ.
- More than half report being attracted to the parish “very much” by the following: the sense of belonging they feel there, its open and welcoming spirit, the quality of the liturgy, the quality of the preaching, and its respect for their cultural traditions.
- Children’s religious education/formation, youth ministry, visitation of the sick and homebound, developing a parish sense of community, young adult ministry, and providing opportunities for parishioners to help the needy are especially likely to receive high priority from respondents. Two-thirds or more give each “very much” priority.
- Respondents were also invited to choose from a predetermined list the three needs to which parish should give most priority. The top six identified are children’s religious education/formation, visitation of the sick and homebound, developing a parish sense of community, outreach to inactive Catholics, youth ministry, and providing opportunities for parishioners to help the needy.

## Leadership

- Almost nine in ten give a positive evaluation to the vision provided by parish leaders, with four in ten rating it as “excellent.”

- Six in ten “strongly” agree that the bulletin effectively communicates issues related to parish life. Just over four in ten agree “strongly” that they feel well informed about what goes on in the parish and that they feel adequately informed about parish finances.

### **Worship**

- Masses and liturgies in general receive a positive evaluation from more than nine in ten respondents. Half rate them as “excellent.”
- Slightly more than half rate the hospitality or sense of welcome at parish worship as “excellent.” The music and song selection in general receive an “excellent” evaluation from half to six-tenths of respondents. The homilies in general receive an “excellent” rating from just over four in ten responding parishioners.
- Nearly seven in ten attend Mass at least once a week and another quarter attend almost every week.
- When asked why they attend Mass, respondents are particularly likely to say the following “very much” explain why they do so: the Mass means a lot to them, it helps them live a Christian life, and receiving Communion weekly is important to them.
- About four in ten give “very much” priority to the parish providing more small group prayer opportunities and more opportunities for devotions such as rosaries and Eucharistic Adoration. About two-thirds of those responding to the survey in Spanish give “very much” priority to such opportunities, compared to about a third of those responding in English.

### **Sense of Community**

- The sense of community within the parish receives a positive rating from nearly nine in ten respondents. Four in ten give it an “excellent” rating.
- Being a part of a parish community is “very” important to two-thirds of respondents.
- Developing a parish sense of community receives “very much” priority from seven in ten respondents.

### **Formation**

- Parish efforts to educate parishioners in the faith receive a positive evaluation from almost nine in ten respondents, with just over four in ten giving these efforts an “excellent” rating.
- Efforts to foster spiritual growth receive an “excellent” rating from almost four in ten respondents. About a third rate as “excellent” efforts to offer a Catholic view on current issues and to help them practice gospel values in their daily life.

- Children’s religious education programs and youth ministry receive an “excellent” rating from just over four in ten. Just under four in ten give as high a rating to family-centered religious education programs.
- A third of those responding to the survey in Spanish say they have attended adult faith formation classes at the parish in the past five years, compared to one in ten of those responding to the survey in English.
- Faith formation for adults receives an “excellent” rating from a little more than a third.
- Children’s religious education/formation and youth ministry receive “very much” priority from more than three-quarters of respondents. Nearly six in ten place “very much” priority on adult faith formation.
- Half of those of the Millennial Generation say the parish should give “very much” priority to providing retreat opportunities, compared to roughly a third of those of the other generations.
- Just over a third report being “very” likely to spend time learning more about their faith in the next year. Those responding to the survey in Spanish are about twice as likely as those responding in English to say they are “very” likely to do so.

### **Stewardship**

- Nine in ten agree at least “somewhat” that they understand the concept of stewardship, with almost six in ten agreeing “strongly” that they do.
- Parish efforts to encourage parishioners to share their time, talents and treasure with the parish receive a positive evaluation from nine in ten respondents. Half rate these efforts as “excellent.”
- Three in ten indicate they are “very” likely to volunteer for a parish ministry in the next year.
- Nearly four in ten report being involved with at least one ministry or activity at the parish. More than six in ten are not involved with any ministries or activities.
- A quarter or slightly fewer “strongly” agree that they would volunteer more if personally invited and that they would volunteer more if they knew parish needs. Those responding to the survey in Spanish are about twice as likely as those responding in English to “strongly” agree with both of these statements.
- One in six agrees “strongly” that they are interested in the option of giving to the parish every month with an electronic fund transfer.

- Just over a third agree “strongly” that they prefer to give to specific projects rather than a general fund and that they would help support a fundraising program for the needs of the parish.

### **Evangelization and Parish Outreach**

- Efforts to spread the Gospel/evangelize receive a positive rating from almost nine in ten respondents. Four in ten give these efforts an “excellent” rating.
- On average, responding parishioners have invited someone to attend a parish worship service or activity 2.5 times in the past year. Almost half have invited someone at least once in the past year.
- When asked to evaluate parish service to 11 groups, respondents are most likely to give an “excellent” rating to parish services to senior citizens, families, and those sick or homebound. They are least likely to give the same rating to service to inactive Catholics and those divorced or separated.
- Respondents were asked to choose the top three groups to which the parish should give most priority for outreach. The most commonly selected groups are families and those sick or homebound, followed by teens, senior citizens, inactive Catholics, and young adults.
- Parish services to inactive Catholics receive an “excellent” rating from a quarter of respondents. A third give an “excellent” rating to the parish’s services to new parishioners.

### **Social Justice**

- Outreach to and advocacy for those in need or distress receive a positive rating from more than nine in ten respondents. Six in ten rate these efforts as “excellent.”
- About four in ten rate parish outreach to those sick or homebound as “excellent.” Visitation of the sick and homebound receives “very much” priority from more than seven in ten.
- Nearly half of those who are unmarried and have a child or stepchild under age 18 living with them say parish services to single parents are “excellent.”
- Providing opportunities for parishioners to help the needy receives “very much” priority from two-thirds of respondents. Those of the Millennial Generation are particularly likely to say the parish should give “very much” priority to such opportunities.