

Summary Report of Parish Survey Responses and Comments

March 17, 2019

Our Community

The majority of us who responded to the survey have been with the parish for 11 years or longer and we are predominantly over age 50. However, 25% of us are age 50 or younger and we pointed out the increasing demands on our time for children's education and engaging them in more social and spiritual activities.

From a broad viewpoint, we are generally happy with the parish, as many of us commented on a strong sense of welcome and spiritual connection. This is supported by the fact that 30 new families registered last year alone.

However, some of us felt differently. For example, one of us said, "When I spoke to people and asked why they no longer came to church, they said they felt they were not welcomed by the parishioners." Many of us asked for more opportunities to socialize as a parish through coffees, breakfasts and soup dinners.

Our Worship

Overall satisfaction with our worship was high with 76% being highly satisfied and 19% somewhat satisfied. More reverence (less talking) before the start of Mass, and less commotion before Mass were requests that many of us made. We are also interested in more moments of personal reflection at Mass.

Many of us are interested in day-long retreats, three-evening missions and more special prayer opportunities such as the recent "Praying the Mass" and more Adult Faith Formation opportunities.

We commented frequently on our Mass schedule, suggesting both earlier and later (evening) Masses on Sunday, and the return of a weekday Mass.

We placed high value on the work of our Christian Services ministry especially for Thanksgiving/Christmas Food Baskets, the Food Pantry, our Eucharistic Ministry to the Sick and Homebound, our Clothing Drives and the Blessing of the Backpacks.

Several of us asked for more traditional music, while others said our music is too somber. A number of us commented that Fr. Sean gives excellent homilies, while an equal number of us say the homilies are too long or boring.

Our Programs

Those of us who have been involved in the Children's Education and Confirmation program said that there have been great improvements overall. Our suggestions included looking at different class times for younger children, as well as a financial assistance program.

Overall, we want to know more about what our parish community offers. Several of us commented that we were not aware that the parish offers transportation for the homebound, cards for the sick and the prayer chain for example.

There are strong feelings that we need to find ways to get our young people involved in services they can feel good about. We see our new prayer blanket efforts and the blessing of backpacks as steps in the right direction.

Immediate Next Steps

There are many more initiatives that we suggested in our survey responses, and while all of them are not mentioned in this high-level report, they are being evaluated and prioritized for their potential overall benefit, the cost involved, and the likelihood of success.

However, our responses highlighted several areas where immediate action could be taken. The creation of a more welcoming and connected parish community is being addressed through our revitalized Ministry of Welcome. And, during our recent pancake breakfast, we began a special effort to reach out to those of us who are new to the parish, all in an effort to improve our connections with each other.

Greater involvement of our youth in the spiritual and social work of the parish is being addressed through our Youth Ministry. With new leaders in place we had a (jubilant) pizza and games night and our youth are looking forward to continuing to build on this reinvigorated ministry.

Because some of us were unaware of the multiple ministries that serve our extended community, we also have developed a Ministry Brochure. This brochure describes each ministry's purpose along with a contact name and number to take advantage of the service or to volunteer for that ministry. Copies are available at the Church entrances.

In Summary

A number of us appreciated the opportunity to provide candid feedback on our parish and to offer suggestions on improving the community of St. Paul's. As an example:

It helps us to remember our "church" is the parishioners and other people, and not the building.