

Parish Summary Report



MAY 2023

Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church
Fr. Rob Howe

Compiled by Kristyn Russell



Contents

Parish Process Overview	3
The Fundament Question –Where the Church Succeeds	3
Blessed Sacrament	3
Diocese & Wider Church.....	4
The Fundamental Question – Where the Church Could Improve	4
Blessed Sacrament	4
Diocese & Wider Church.....	5
Final Thoughts	5

Parish Process Overview

Blessed Sacrament held three listening sessions in March 2023. The listening sessions were in response to “Enlarge the space of your tent” (Is 54:2) Working Document for the Continental Stage. The listening sessions invited participants to prayerfully consider the questions:

- Where do you think the Church has been welcoming and hospitable?
 - At your parish
 - In your diocese
 - In the wider Church
- Where do you think the Church can improve being welcoming and hospitable?
 - At your parish
 - In your diocese
 - In the wider Church

We had 44 people attend the listening sessions. They ranged in age from 11 to 90.

Age	# of Participants
10-19	18
20-29	0
30-39	1
40-49	0
50-59	5
60-69	9
70-79	5
80-89	5
90+	1
Total:	44

The following report has been put together to capture the main themes of the listening session, but is in no way an exhaustive list of the discussion that took place.

“The only way to see the Church you want is to be the Church you want.”

The Fundament Question –Where the Church Succeeds

Blessed Sacrament

Blessed Sacrament is a welcoming and hospitable parish. That is the consensus of the participants. Specifically, people enjoy how we brought back introducing and greeting one another before Mass. This was a direct result of our listening sessions from 2022. One of our goals from the first round of listening sessions was to bring back greeting one another before Mass. Participants also mentioned that Fr. Rob is a welcoming priest that truly believes all are welcome.

Coffee & Donuts was a positive across all age groups. Opportunities to gather with fellow parishioners, specifically around food for the 10-19 age group, helps to bolster and strengthen the community by building relationships with one another. Family events like *Encanto* family movie night, family game night, and the talent show are also examples of welcoming events that are fairly low risk, especially for families or parishioners who might be slowly getting back into Church and participating in the life of the parish. We also do Faith Formation well. The 10-19 age group spoke highly of the youth ministry program and how welcome they feel coming to Sunday night programming, retreats, and fun events that youth ministry hosts. Adults spoke highly of the Christ Renews program for men and women. This program encourages participants to dive deeper into their faith and relationship with God through building relationships with others. Participants also indicated the Small Faith Group initiative as a welcoming highlight of the parish. One participant noted, “Two people are in my small faith group because I invited them, but I do not know them except for seeing them at Mass, funeral luncheons, etc.” The personal invitation is key to being welcoming and hospitable.

Our parish adopted electronic communication via Flocknote in the fall of 2019. This set us up for a communication foundation when the COVID-19 pandemic shut down in person meetings. We continue to communicate electronically and via social media, as well as through a print bulletin. Several participants noted how our communication is welcoming to new people and potential parishioners.

Diocese & Wider Church

The conversations mostly focused on the parish level, however, there were a few positive remarks regarding the diocesan and wider Church. Highlights from the diocesan level included televised holiday Masses, Faith Magazine (now Great Lakes Bay Catholic Magazine), and the occasional interesting offering for enrichment. Pope Francis is the highlight of the global Church. His pastoral leadership and his willingness to listen to the marginalized speak to people.

The Fundamental Question – Where the Church Could Improve

Blessed Sacrament

Blessed Sacrament has room to improve their hospitality. The young Church and adult Church alike want to see more youth involvement in liturgical ministries. The youth want to feel like they belong in the liturgy, and the adults want to see the young Church in action. Other suggestions for making liturgy more welcoming included introducing more contemporary music at Mass, including diverse instruments, and having informative worship aids that help the congregation participate more fully in the liturgy.

Many participants from the youngest to the oldest want to see ecumenical prayer and fellowship opportunities. These opportunities will help to foster bridges between different denominations and religions. In the past, ecumenical prayer services took place after tragedy. It would be nice to hold prayer services in thanksgiving and blessing with our neighbors.

Participants had many practical suggestions for being more welcoming, inclusive, and hospitable. One suggestion was to bring back welcome dinners for new parishioners. Another suggested that Blessed Sacrament host outdoor Mass at a local park followed by a community picnic.

Many participants suggested having an electronic sign. This sign would allow for announcements of programs, prayer opportunities, and general parish happening to a wider audience. An electronic sign allows us to be present in the community and neighborhood, but also advertise our programs and events.

Diocese & Wider Church

Participants discussed ways for the diocese and wider Church to improve its hospitality. Many noted that they do not feel connected or any welcoming from the diocese. One participant wrote they only hear from the diocese if it is a request for money. Another said that they did not appreciate the letter from the bishops of Michigan instructing them how to vote. Several participants noted that it would be nice to see Bishop Gruss more than once a year at the parish.

At the wider/global Church level, participants would like to see more inclusion for the LGBTQ+ community as well as divorced and remarried Catholics. There were many calls to give women a meaningful role in the Church. The faithful can see and feel the pinch of a diminishing clergy. This will also affect the hospitality of the Church. Some participants mentioned the diaconate should be open to women; others went as far as to encourage ordination for women. Women need to be given more of a role to make decisions, to participate in the life of the Church, and in the pastoral life of the Church. Participants noted that letting qualified women preach is a step in the right direction to speak to more people and be more inclusive and welcoming.

Participants looked at low-risk entries for people into the Church. One suggestion was Communal Reconciliation with general absolution as a way to invite people back to the Church. For people who have been away from the Church for years or who are not comfortable going to confession face to face this rite could be a way to invite people back into the fold.

Final Thoughts

Enlarging the space of our tent means creating spaces where people feel welcome. Being a welcoming and hospitable parish community means everyone plays a role. One participant wrote, "Parishioners need to reach out to those at Mass and parish events to welcome and invite them." Another wrote, "The only way to see the Church you want is to be the Church you want."

The responsibility rests on the *whole* people of God. There are certainly times when the parish is at its best. One middle school participant wrote, "I think the Church is very kind during Christmas." Those big holiday liturgies are important because we have visitors and attendees who may not join us often. However, the call to hospitality is present in the ordinary as well. Another middle school student wrote, "This is just normal for me to come, so I don't really feel welcome." Normal cannot become complacent. The table regular and the guest must all feel welcome in this space. There is always room for more, but we must also remember those who are already here.