

Blessed Sacrament R.C. Church
152 W 71st St, New York, NY 10023
SWOT Analysis for Pastoral Planning
July 2016

Strengths

- Welcoming and inclusive parish community
- Overall satisfaction of 95% in the celebration of the Mass
- Relative youth of parishioners (evidenced by survey respondents and 15% increase in baptisms in 4 years)

Weaknesses

- The 10 AM Family Mass is not currently meeting the needs of some families. The liturgy, homily and music should be more oriented to children and the length of the service should recognize the young age of many attendees
- There is not a widespread commitment to giving in the parish as evidenced by a significant number of parishioners who donate less than \$500 annually
- Turnover of parishioners is notable as close to 50% have joined since 2010
- Low attendance at the Spanish Mass (this weakness was based on those indicating it was their primary mass...soul count indicates otherwise; however, that was conducted prior to Fr. Alexis' departure.)
- Lower participation rate of men vs. women, based on survey responses
- Lack of integration between church and school

Opportunities

- High percentage of parishioners would recommend Blessed Sacrament
- High percentage of those in 30s/40s interested in charitable activities
- High interest in activities to help adults grow in their faith
- Orient each mass toward the needs of the majority of those attending (e.g. homily length or content, type of music, length of overall mass)
- Undercroft of church is a major asset to be developed

Threats

- Significant number of parishioners could be disengaged (evidenced by high number of "n/a/neutral" responses)
- Donations fall short of meeting weekly operating costs by a large margin
- Limited number of priests to serve a rather large parish
- Low awareness of Parish Outreach Programs, Blessed Sacrament School and religious education
- 40% of respondents indicate that they do not attend Blessed Sacrament Church for Mass on a weekly basis

Pastoral Planning Survey Results
Blessed Sacrament Roman Catholic Church
152 W 71st St, New York, NY 10023
July 2016

Pastoral Planning volunteers distributed the survey at Mass over the weekends of May 14/ 15 and May 21/22, 2016. In addition, the survey was available online via the church's website from May 14 – June 2.

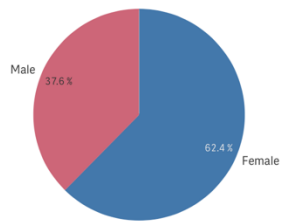
In all, there were 710 survey responses, 686 in English and 24 entered in Spanish.

NB: The below graphs include the surveys from the Spanish Mass which were completed in English. The graphs do not include the 24 surveys entered in Spanish.

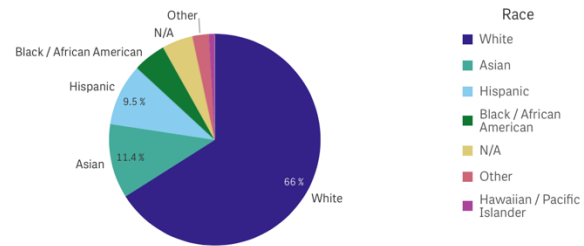
Part 1: Demographic Information

Demographics

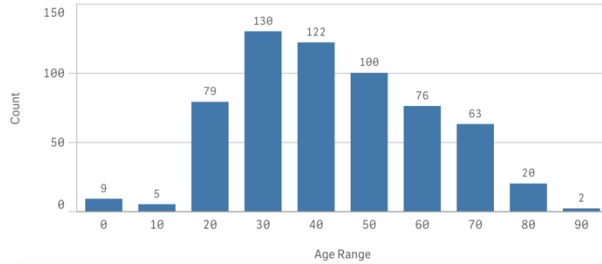
Gender Breakdown



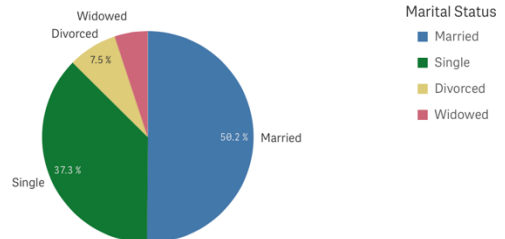
Race Breakdown



Age Distribution



Marital Status Breakdown



Part 2: Attendance Information

46% percent of respondents joined since 2010

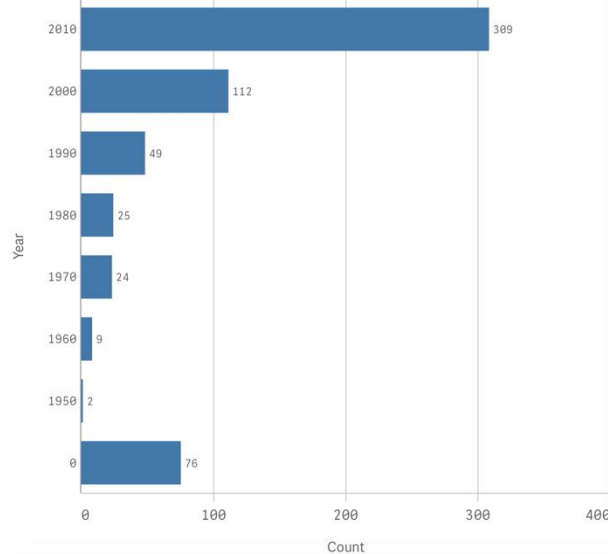
70% attend at least 1x per week

10% of those attend more than once weekly, and 18% of those identified as Asian, compared to 11% Asian in overall survey respondents)

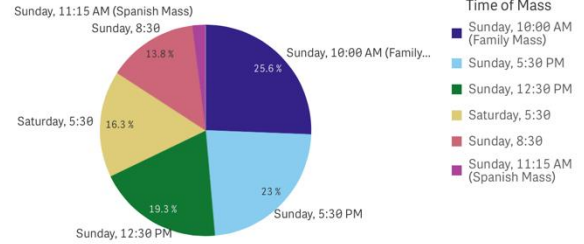
Primary Mass: The two Masses with the highest attendance rates are the 10am Family Mass (26%) and the Sunday 5:30pm Mass (23%).

Attendance

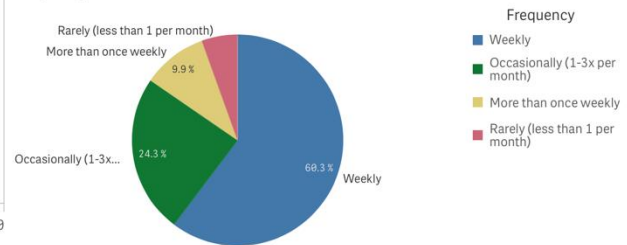
Year Joined Distribution



Primary Sunday Mass



Frequency of Attendance



Part 3: Celebration of Mass

95% of respondents were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the celebration of Mass at Blessed Sacrament. While satisfaction is extremely high, some dissatisfaction was expressed in 3 areas: Post-Mass Announcements, Music, and Homily.

- **Post-Mass Announcements:** 16% of all respondents were “unsatisfied” or “very unsatisfied” with the post-Mass announcements. The dissatisfaction was evenly distributed by Mass time.

The main theme of the comments was that the announcements are too long, and largely a repeat of information in the bulletin. Several commenters felt that asking visitors after each Mass where they are from should be eliminated or limited to special occasions or holidays. Sample comment: *More attention to the Word and its Application. Too much extraneous stuff - not enough worship. Feels more like a community center than a church.*

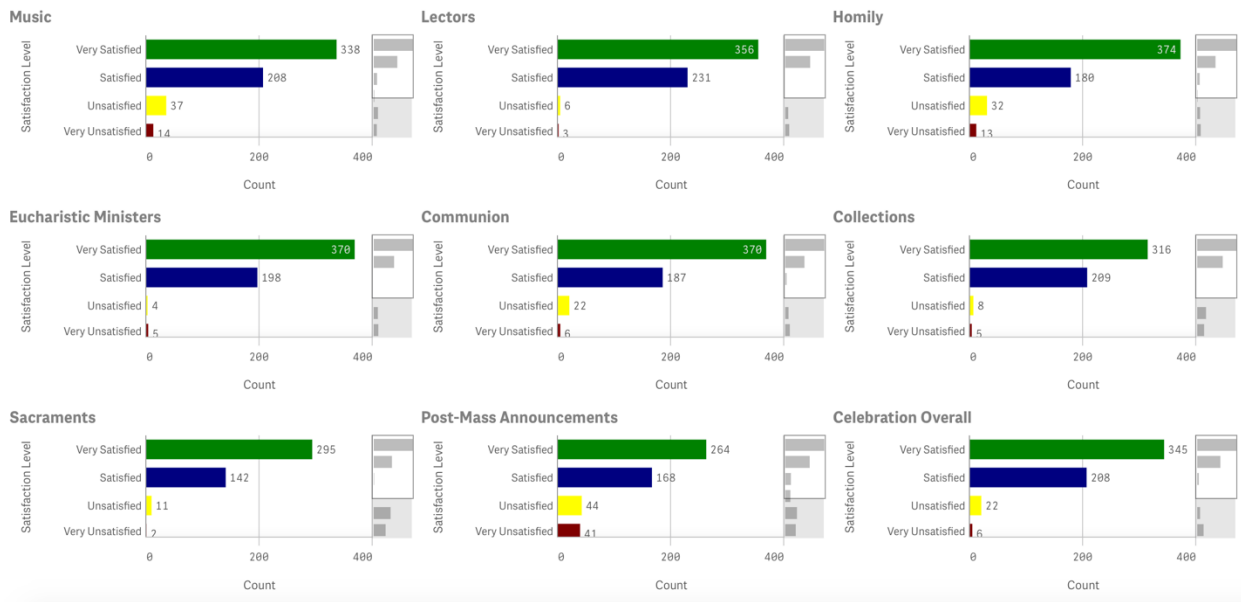
- **Music:** 9% of respondents were “unsatisfied” or “very unsatisfied” with the music. The most complaints came from the 10am and 5:30pm Sunday Masses. Many felt that the musical repertoire should be expanded, with a greater selection of hymns, and more energetic and uplifting music.

Many also mentioned the need for more silence in Mass, that they “need a more calm, prayerful, spiritual focus.” Another theme was that music should be in support of worship at the Mass, and we don’t need to sing every verse of every song.

- **Homily:** 8% of respondents were “unsatisfied” or “very unsatisfied” with the homily. 50% of those dissatisfied were attending Family Mass as their primary Mass.

The main themes were that the homily should be more applicable to everyday life, more spiritually inspiring, and that the homilies tend to be too politically liberal. Sample comment: *Homilies are very insightful and enjoyable but please keep your politics out of it. One can be a good Christian without being a liberal.*

Celebration of Mass Satisfaction Levels



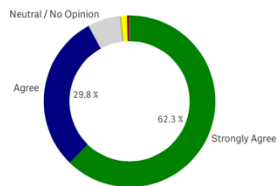
Part 4: Community

Over 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Parish is welcoming and inclusive, and are likely to recommend it. Over 80% agreed or strongly agreed that the Parish fosters an ongoing commitment to community and provides active ministries available to all, and encourages parishioners to share their faith. And while over 70% agreed or strongly agreed that there are a sufficient number of programs to help parishioners grow in their faith, that question had the highest number of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing at 5%, and the highest “neutral” response in this section, with 23% answering neutral/no opinion.

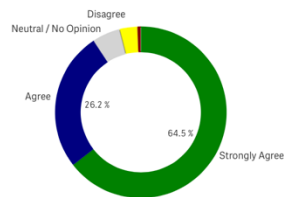
Community

14. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

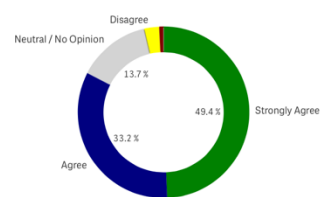
Parish is a welcoming and inclusive place



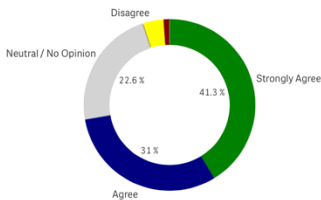
Likely to recommend Blessed Sacrament



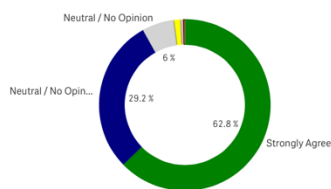
Fosters an ongoing commitment



Offers programs to help grow



Encourage parishioners to share



Outreach

The response rate was very low for this question, with 66% of respondents either marking neutral / no response or choosing to skip the question. Possible interpretations are survey fatigue, lack of awareness of various programs, general lack of engagement among parishioners, and lack of programs to serve the groups mentioned (e.g. youth group/teen life).

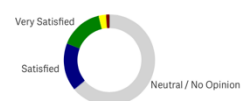
Outreach

15. Please rate your level of satisfaction with Blessed Sacrament's effectiveness in meeting the needs and / or fostering outreach to the following groups:

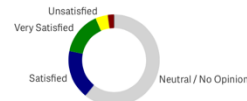
Youth (12-18)



Young Adults



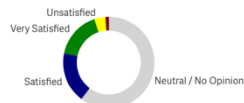
Elderly (65+)



Women



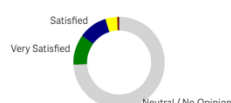
Minorities



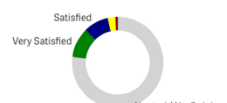
Singles



Divorcees



Widowers



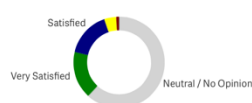
Families



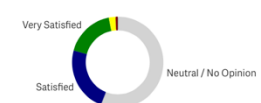
LGBT



Non-Practicing



Married Couples



Part 5: Charity and Social Justice

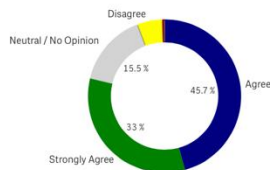
Charity

- 41% of respondents said they would be likely to increase donations to charitable organizations in the parish if given the opportunity.
 - 45% of those in their 30s said they would increase donations
- 56% would increase participation in charitable activities in the parish.
 - 65% of those in their 30s would increase
 - 52% of those in their 40s would increase

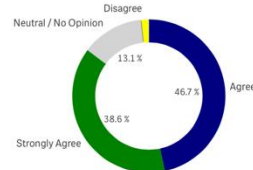
Charity

16. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

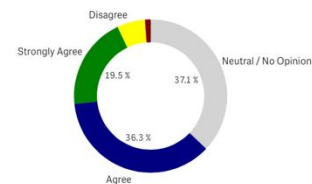
The parish offers sufficient opportunities for those interested in giving of their time for charitable activities



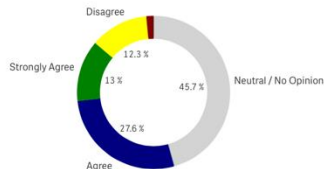
The parish offers sufficient opportunities for those interested in donating funds toward charity organizations.



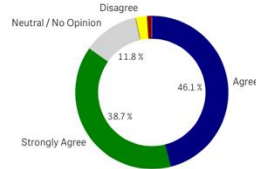
I personally would be likely to increase my participation in charitable activities in the parish if given the opportunity.



I personally would be likely to increase my donations toward charitable organizations in the parish if given the opportunity



Overall, I believe the Blessed Sacrament administration is truly committed to fostering charitable support in the community.



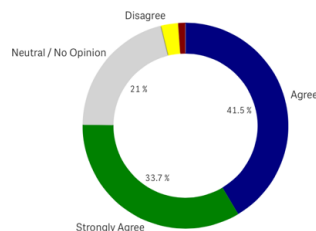
Social Justice

- 75% strongly agree or agree that the parish is sufficiently focused on social justice.
 - Those who marked neutral/no opinion skewed older than overall.

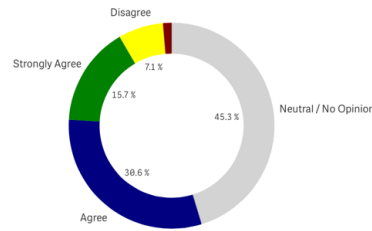
Social Justice

17. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

The parish is sufficiently focused on social justice issues and advocating for the rights of disadvantaged peoples.



I personally would be likely to increase my participation in social justice ministries in the parish if given the opportunity.



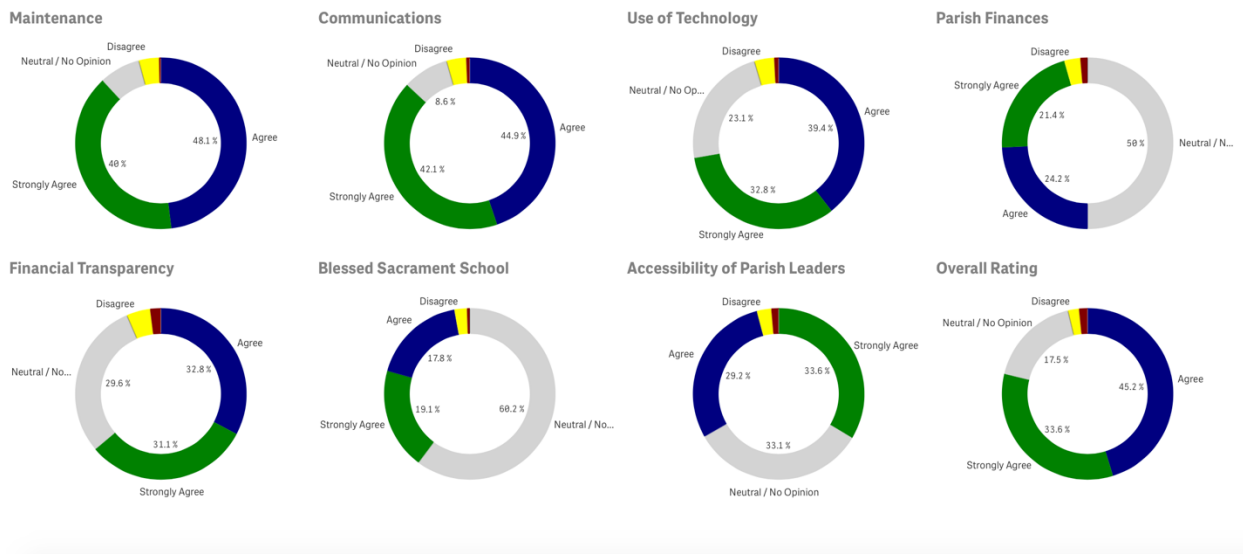
Part 6: Parish Administration and Finances

Administration

- 50% marked neutral/no opinion on administration's effectiveness dealing with finances (pay bills on time, send tax documents to donors).
- There is an opportunity to increase financial transparency since 30% marked neutral/no opinion on the administration's effectiveness in making parish aware of resources and obligations
- There is an opportunity to highlight the school's role in parish – respondents marked 60% neutral/no opinion on administration's effectiveness as relates to school

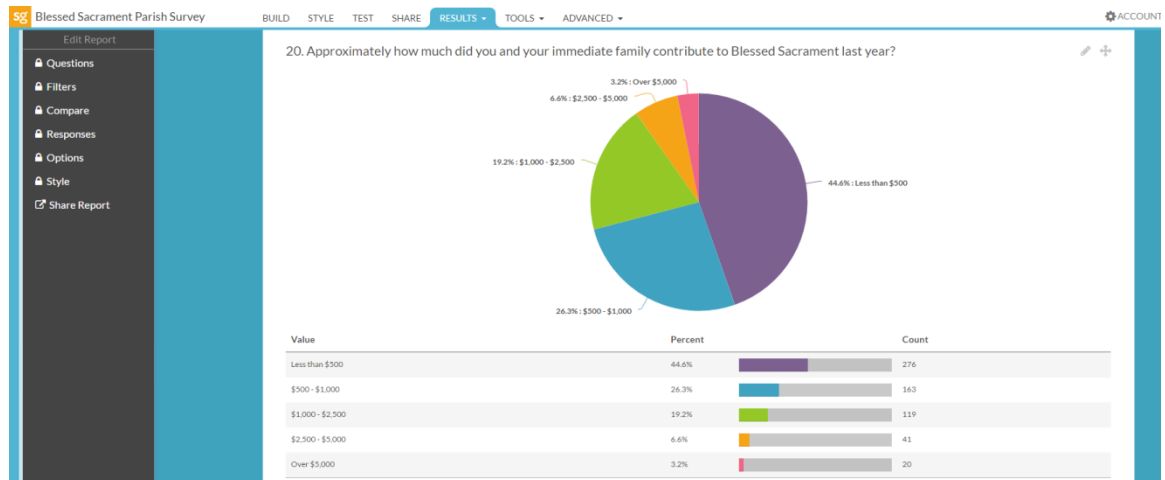
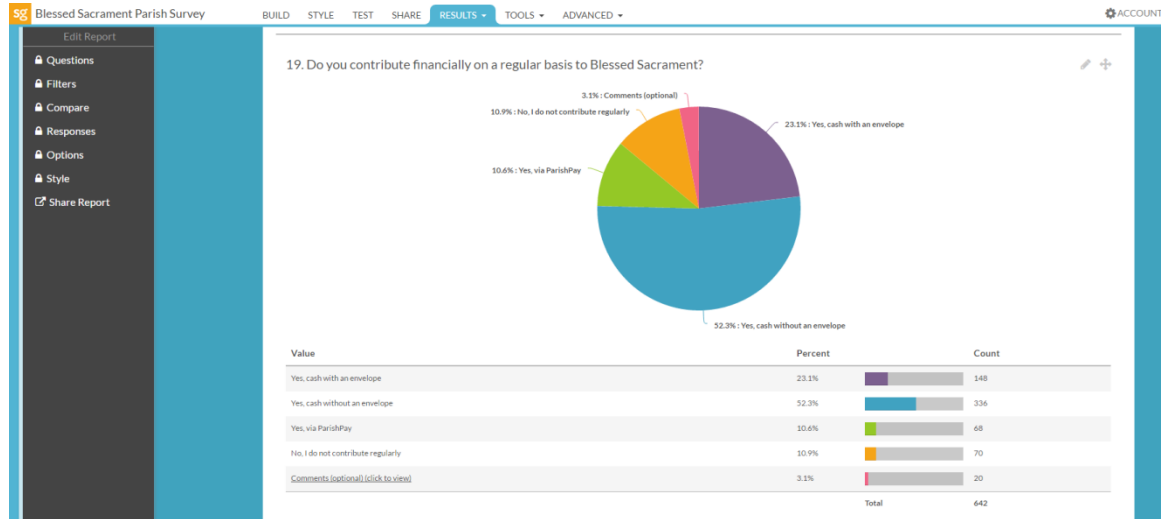
Administration

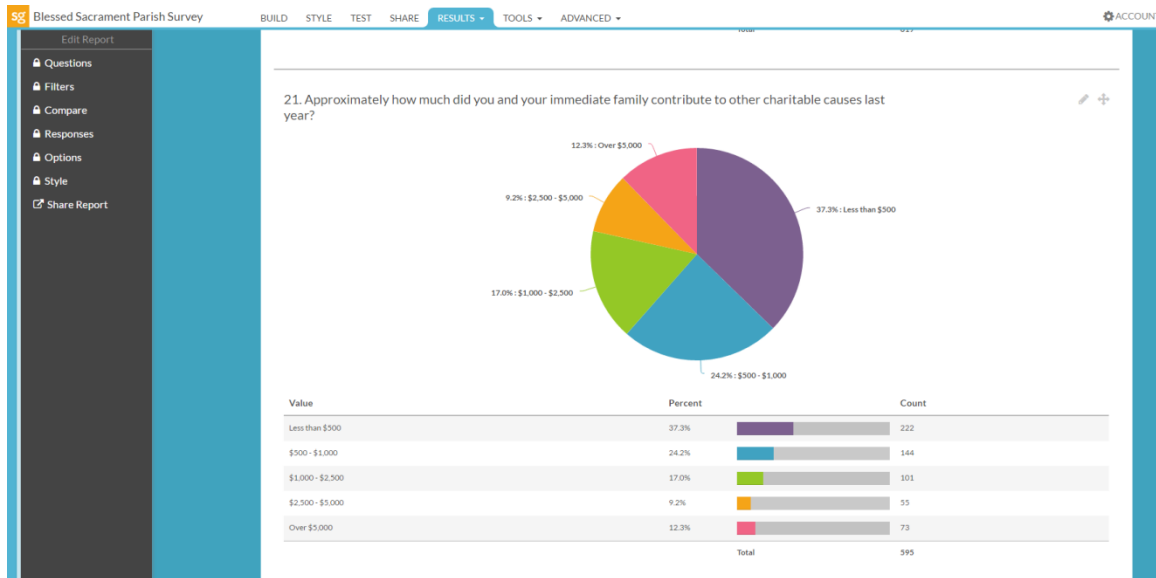
18. Please indicate your level of agreement that the parish administration is effective in handling each of the following:



Financial Support

- 11% do not contribute regularly
- 45% give less than \$500 annually
- 52% give cash without envelope
- 10% are on Parish Pay
 - We have an opportunity to remind those are on Parish Pay to increase contributions annually
- Parishioners give comparatively more to other charitable causes. While 29% give over \$1,000 to the church annually, 38.5% gave more than \$1,000 to other charities.





Increased Giving

The top 3 reasons that would make respondents likely/highly likely to increase weekly giving:

- 56% - better transparency around the financial needs of the church and how funds are used
- 52% - community-oriented fundraising activities (picnics/bingos)
- 41% if given a recommendation from the church based on the person's financial circumstances

45 respondents wrote in suggestions that would increase their weekly giving. In addition to the above, the main themes were:

- To do more for the homeless and poor (particularly in our parish)
- Community events like bake sales, rigatoni or potluck dinners, etc. to bring together parishioners and raise funds.
- A few suggested "auto-pay" programs, which indicates that Parish Pay (an auto-pay program) is not fully understood.
- Less political discussions in homily would cause some parishioners to give more
- Providing tax receipts for donations would increase donations for some respondents.

22. Increased Giving: Please rate how likely each of the initiatives below would influence you to increase your weekly giving to the parish (Please provide additional suggestions for initiatives that will increase your weekly giving in "write in" row.):

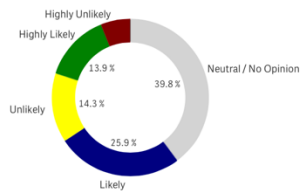


	Highly Likely	Likely	Neutral / No Opinion	Unlikely	Highly Unlikely
Improved awareness / understanding of ParishPay	82 13.7%	152 25.3%	244 40.7%	85 14.2%	37 6.2%
Receiving Blessed Sacrament donation envelopes	56 9.4%	105 17.7%	258 43.5%	129 21.8%	45 7.6%
Better transparency around the actual financial needs of the parish and how funds are used	108 18.2%	222 37.1%	195 32.8%	57 9.6%	12 2.0%
Recommendations from the church on how much to give based on my financial circumstances	68 11.5%	173 29.2%	225 37.9%	105 17.7%	22 3.7%
Community-oriented fundraising activities, such as parish picnics, church bingo, or events/galas.	122 20.4%	191 32.0%	190 31.8%	81 13.6%	13 2.2%

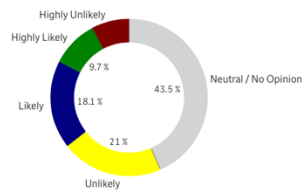
Parish Finances - Part 2

23. Increased Giving: Please rate how likely each of the initiatives below would influence you to increase your weekly giving to the parish:

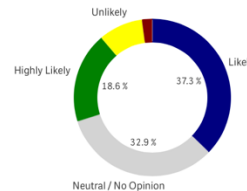
Improved awareness / understanding of ParishPay



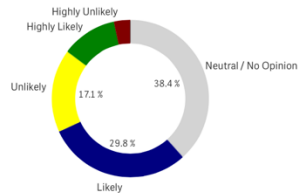
Receiving Blessed Sacrament donation envelopes



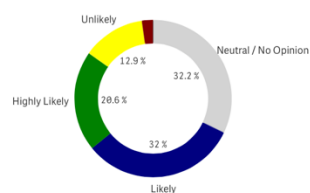
Better transparency around the actual financial needs of the parish and how funds are used



Recommendations from the church on how much to give based on my financial circumstances



Community-oriented fundraising activities, such as parish picnics, church bingo, or events/galas

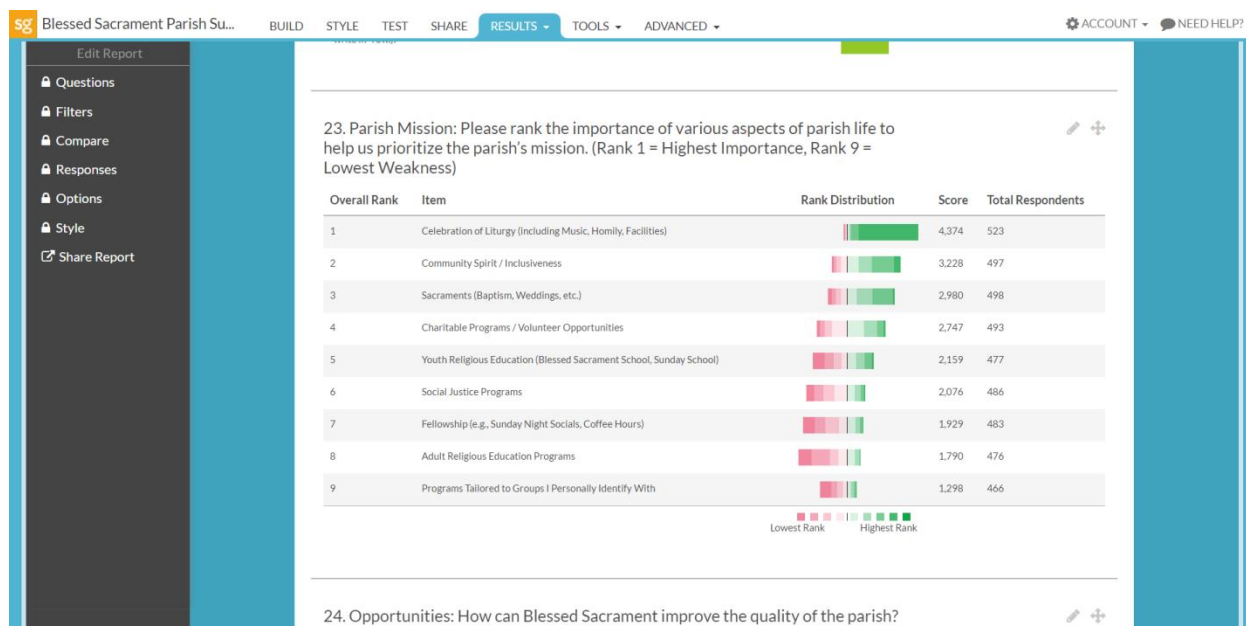


Part 7: Mission and Priorities

Ranking of Parish Mission

There was a low response rate to this question and some confusion about assigning a ranking among parishioners who did answer it. This graph should be interpreted with caution.

All of the items listed stayed in the same place as originally presented in the ranking except "Youth Religious Education" which moved from 8th in the list to 5th based on priorities.



Two open-ended questions asked the respondents the following:

Opportunities – How can Blessed Sacrament improve the quality of the parish?

Themes:

- Father Duffell has made the parish more alive and inclusive and we need to get even more parishioners involved in growing parish ministries
- We need more priests
- Faith formation/religious education for adults
- CCD options for children during the week, not only on Sundays
- Music ministry could be more varied

10 sample comments:

Father Duffell is doing a fine job in reviving the spirit of the parish which felt like it was dying on the vine. Continue to stress fellowship and parish inclusion. I feel we need more than a single priest to service the needs of the parish. It would be nice to have different priests leading Sunday liturgy.

The quality of the parish could be improved through further community building. There are groups that are well connected but across groups and people the parish does not feel connected.

1. Hire one or two good priests to help Fr. Duffell and let them take over some of the ministries. 2. Encourage parishioners to start groups that they would like to see formed and then encourage others to join. 3. Have more social, fun events where people can just enjoy themselves without an agenda. 4. Create more spiritual development evenings or two-hour programs on weekends

Place more emphasis on spiritual growth & fulfillment since few other organizations address spiritual needs; leave social justice to advocacy groups and politicians

Keep making us aware of ways we can serve God in our daily lives. I love that the parish is globally focused and that Father Duffell cares about the homeless, the environment, and the disenfranchised

We need more permanent clergy staff (as we currently have only one Father Duffell serving the entire parish). We have had quite a few passerby priests; but they never stay long. We need varieties of priests to spark the interests of the diverse groups that this church serves.

Improve facilities. Use pre-k years of BSS as primary tool to raise funds. PK3+PK4 is well attended, and should be used as a tool to "remind" parents that the school is part of the parish. Priority placement for PK3-PK4 students who belong to parish, or part of interview questions for PK3+PK4??

Prayer groups, bible fellowship groups, pilgrimage travel, religious films

Involve parishioners more fully in coming to know each other's faith - small scripture study groups; need for small parish groups; more involvement of parishioners in sharing faith

Great resource to the community. Doing an excellent job. Many are alone. Could have more social programs for older groups (i.e. single or widowed).

Challenges: What are the primary obstacles that interfere with Blessed Sacrament's ability to effectively serve the community? Please also share any suggestions to address these challenges.

Themes:

- One priest is not sufficient
- Parish finances are weak
- The homeless are an obstacle to parishioners who would otherwise wish to come into the church to pray during the day
- Parish leadership transition was difficult
- Preaching is too liberal and drives parishioners away
- There needs to be greater co-ordination among ministries

10 Sample Comments:

We don't have enough permanent priests to serve this community. For the Sunday 10am family mass, Father Duffell may wish to simplify his sermons during homily and speak in a way that even grade level kids can easily understand. Currently the kids do not feel the Father is speaking to them directly and therefore cannot internalize the experience.

Father Duffell is amazing but he is only one person and can only do so much. It would be wonderful to have another permanent priest who shares his spirit of inclusiveness and social justice.

It is a large parish and we need more people taking responsibility to make positive changes and create community. Maybe hire a few people on a contract basis to establish various groups that would really take action and develop more of a hands-on community.

It's clear that our physical facilities need a lot of attention. I wonder if we should do a dedicated fundraising drive? I also wonder if there are gifts of service that anyone in the parish could offer. Is anyone a contractor or a carpenter or anything that could help? Is there work that people could volunteer to help with or is it all specialty work?

Homeless people threatening safety or perception of safety of mass attendees is a problem

Professional and social distractions that besiege everyone. Schedule semi-annual parish Retreats (week-end retreats or 3-day retreats) to counter-balance our hectic schedules.

Not enough programs around faith and prayer. I would like to participate in prayer groups or programs that were about my faith and a break from my family and my job in prayer.

Mass has become a test of endurance. So many people leave after Communion because after that it is endless chatter and disruption to any sense of prayerfulness we might have found. Fr. Duffell works very hard to bring people in but the frenetic atmosphere has downgraded our Parish prayer and shut people out. We need a variety of prayer/Mass leaders and that is the opportunity for Fr. Duffell to take a break and let the gifts and leadership of others shine. Family Mass needs greater consideration for needs of families and presence of children. More caution needs to be taken with language used: Readings, prayers, homily. Stop focusing on the alcohol served at events and encouraging people to go because of it. It's a bad message especially to kids and youth. Also, we are being divided into groups instead of being brought together in unity for prayer, social justice, and fellowship.

It is my belief that not all parishioners and parish groups are in agreement on where the parish should focus its resources. This can lead to ineffectiveness or selective effectiveness. We should have different groups performing different ministries but across the groups greater coordination and possible addressing consistent themes would help.

Maybe we could engage the community more by holding like a street fair. My childhood parish did this annual event they called the "[name of church] County Fair" that gave the church and its services more exposure. It was great for the grade school (and general fundraising) as well.

Part 8: Parish Trends

Overall, the results of the Blessed Sacrament Survey are positive.

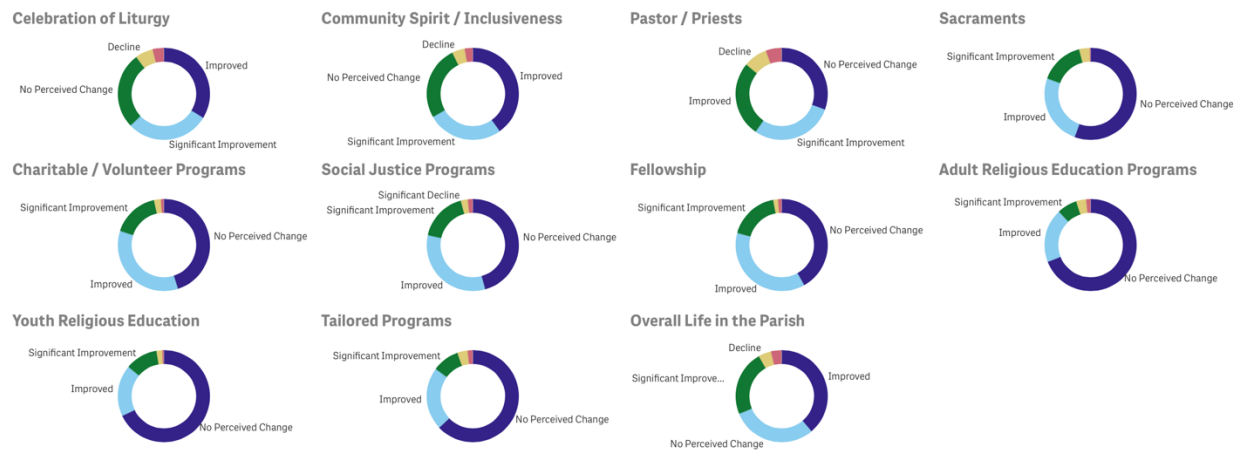
- 67% see improvement or significant improvement in community spirit/inclusiveness.
- 47% see improvement or significant improvement in liturgy.

However, 14% see a decline in parish priests

- Skewed toward long-tenured parishioners
- Skewed toward older parishioners
- Could be related to lack of quantity and variety of priests

Parish Trends

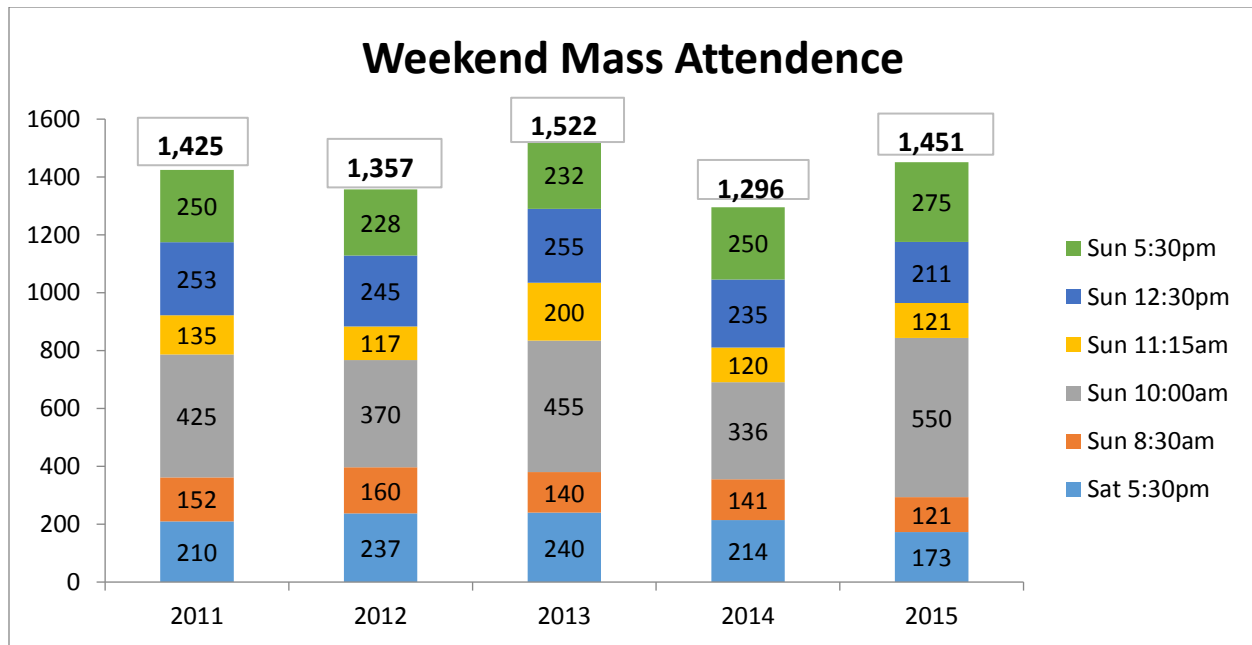
26. Please indicate your view of how Blessed Sacrament has changed in the last 2-3 years with regard to each of the categories below.



Data from sources other than the survey

Mass Attendance

Weekend Mass attendance has averaged 1,410 over the last 5 years with a notable 15% decline in 2014. The specific counts at the 11:15am in 2013, 10:00am in 2014 and Saturday 5:30pm are off trend. We should be cautious using those data points to make decisions since it may be unique to a given day rather than indicate a trend. Having said that, one possible explanation for the decline in 2014 could be the transition in Pastors. Such changes can often create upheaval particularly for long-term parishioners. The good news is that the numbers for 2015 are up 12% overall. However, we should continue to examine survey feedback for opportunities to make changes to specific Masses that address the congregations' concerns.



Daily Masses total

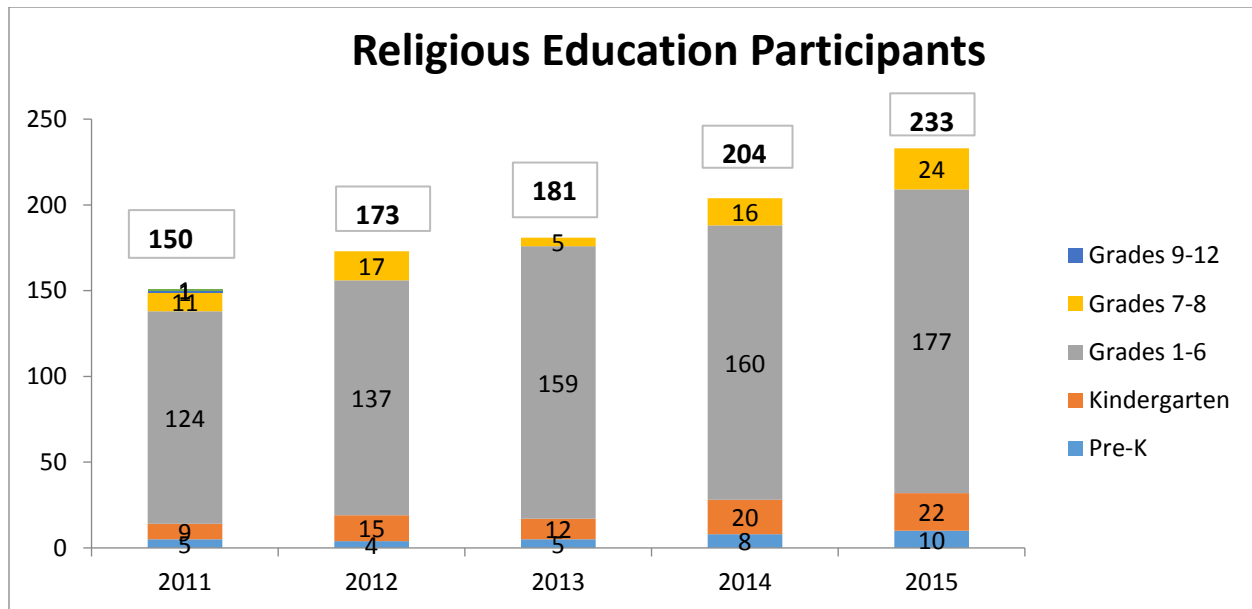
<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
131	128	125	125	131

Religious Education

Religious Education participation averaged 188 over 5 years. In the last two years, the average was 219, with growth in all age brackets. The largest numbers are in grades 1-6 (average 30 per grade in 2015) with a significant decline in grades 7 & 8 (average of 12 per grade in 2015). This most likely reflects preparation for Confirmation which takes place in 7th grade.

Numbers for all other categories, while growing, are small and potentially represent an opportunity for youth religious education programs not specifically related to confirmation. The need for such education was mentioned in the surveys by several respondents. This could also increase Mass attendance by parents.

Participants in RCIA programs has grown from 7 in 2011 to 15 in 2015. There are 6 participants in Youth Ministry and 2 in Young Adult Ministry in 2015 as compared to none in prior years. (not sure if we just do not have numbers or those programs did not exist).



Sacraments

Overall Sacraments are up during the last 5 years. While some counts fluctuate (i.e. confirmations) others are pretty consistently up. Importantly, Baptisms are up 20% in the past 2 years. Funerals (while not a technically a sacrament) were down by half in 2015.

Communion pretty much tracks Mass attendance but an important category to point out is Monthly Communion Calls – Institutions which has grown from 40 in 2013 to 250 in 2015. This reflects the addition of Riverside Home in 2014 where we serve 50-75 communicants each week. We should consider what other ways we can serve this segment of our parish.

It appears that after receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation in 7th grade that participation in religious education drops off. This may lead to a drop off in Mass participation of parents as well.

Weekly confessions are stable but low. The 5-year average is 30 per week.

Lastly, it is also important to note that in the last 5 years there has been at least 3-4 priests assigned to Blessed Sacrament at all times. Currently, we have one!

SACRAMENTS

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Baptisms	149	153	142	166	171
First Communions	52	69	53	41	47
Confirmations	11	36	44	22	57
Marriages	44	32	34	34	39
Funerals	29	26	32	29	15
Anointing of the Sick					
At Home	16	20	12	16	15
Institutions	0	0	40	6	7
TOTAL	16	20	52	22	21
Communal [2 x per year]	150	170	175	150	150
Communion					
Weekly Sunday at Mass	1450	1350	1450	1100	1250
Daily Weekday at Mass	118	120	120	118	121
Monthly Communion Calls- -					
Home	20	24	60	122	64
- Institutions	80	32	40	308	250
Confession - Weekly Average	30	25	25	30	35

Recommendation for communicating results of survey to our parish family

During the survey weekend, several people refused to accept surveys upon entering the church, stating that they participated last time and never found out the results from the Making All Things New survey.

In the interests of full transparency and regaining trust, we ask the committee to consider making the final version of the full report available in the parish office and online. A brief summary page could be included in a bulletin in September thanking everyone who participated and presenting high-level data in advance of the small group interviews in autumn.