

Parish Pastoral Council Survey Feedback Phase (2018)

Feedback Topic 3: Q4 How would you judge St Mary's Parish in terms of the first part of our Vision Statement: To Be A Vibrant Christian Community ...? and related comments.

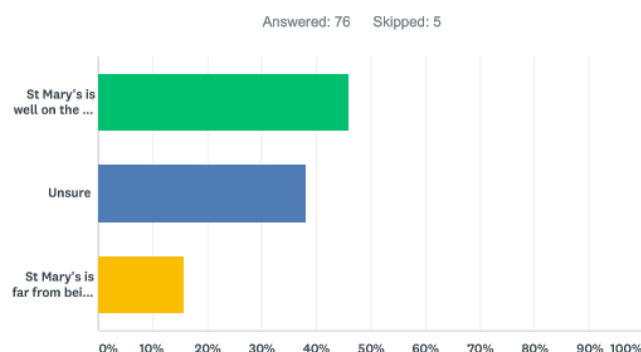
SUMMARY INFORMATION ON Q4 - First Part of our Vision statement:

This question has two parts. The first asked for a response to the question "How would you judge St Mary's Parish in terms of the first part of our Vision Statement: To Be A Vibrant Christian Community ...?" Almost all respondents (76 out of 81) gave a response. The second part to the question asked for comments so that the response might be better understood. Again a large number (60 out of 81) recorded comments.

Our vision statement, which you see displayed each week on our Parish Bulletin, in our Parish Directory and on our webpage, was adopted by the parish, following an extensive consultation process, in 2000. Since then initiatives in our parish have been guided by it and it is pleasing that so many respondents were motivated to give their opinion on how we are in relation to this vision. A later feedback topic will look at the second part of the vision (... engaging with the world) which was explored in Q5 of the survey.

Although not the purpose of the survey questions (Q 4 & 5), a few respondents voiced their ongoing concerns about the words "Christian community" rather than "Catholic" being used in the vision statement. These concerns were addressed at the time the vision statement was proposed and the decision of the parish was to use the vision statement we now have. For those who might not have been part of these discussions, the intention of our vision statement was to focus on our fundamental orientation as Christians rather than suggesting that we were not Catholic. Our place as Christians in the world, along with other Christian churches, is possibly even more important today than it was when our vision was chosen.

Q4 How would you judge St Mary's Parish in terms of the first part of our Vision Statement: To Be A Vibrant Christian Community ...?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
St Mary's is well on the way to being a vibrant Christian community	46.05% 35
Unsure	38.16% 29
St Mary's is far from being a vibrant Christian community	15.79% 12
TOTAL	76

COMMENTS GIVEN IN RESPONSE TO Q4

ST MARY'S IS WELL ON THE WAY TO BEING A VIBRANT CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

#3 *There is so much on offer on a weekly basis for parishioners if they take note of what is promoted in the Parish Bulletin. There are also many groups within the Parish that people could consider joining. Alas they are not attracting the numbers they once did. Both parents working full time would allow very little left over time for extras and this is the situation in many families. At the other end of the scale, a lot of those who retire move away so this also impacts on those available to fill the ranks.*

#4 *We still have very many community clubs and associations - tennis club, footy club, ladies' auxiliary, liturgy committee and many others who all still do their jobs and engage with the wider community regularly. Also, we share the Lenten Stations of the Cross with other denominations, and the Christmas Carols, and there are regular inter-faith dinners around Greensborough.*

#7 *Feel like the community is Christian and energetic.*

#11 *There are many who are ready to help and participate. Also the offerings are very generous compared with other parishes.*

#18 *St Mary's is a beautiful Parish. Our Priests and parishioners are a wonderful group of people as far as I have had contact. Primarily I know what is missing. It is that Jesus Christ and His grace, forgiveness and Love are not spoken enough about. Our identity in Christ is not explained clearly and simply. A strong foundation of who we are in Christ for all believers needs to be established. Explain why Jesus is the Lord of our lives, our Saviour and all that He has done for us by choosing to go to the cross. I believe the next generation coming through needs to be taught these fundamentals and we all need to be reminded. Faith, what is it and what is it to walk in faith is not explained enough. The blessing, inheritance we receive by faith in Christ are not explained enough. The foundations need to be set in all of us. Christ Jesus is our rock and it is not God Our Father's best that believers do not know this. If good changes are to be made they have to be by the leading of the Holy Spirit, otherwise they are man made and will not prosper.*

#19 *The welcoming and hospitality program is the very heart of ensuring the Parish continues to be a vibrant christian community*

#20 *The individuals who are involved do a great job, but eventually they tire and future is clouded as to for how long someone will be there to replace them*

#21 *There are a range of people from different backgrounds, experiences etc who share their stories during mass throughout the year*

#22 *Mass goes are pretty friendly towards each other.*

#26 *St Mary's seems to be embracing the changes required to move forward into the "new" tomorrow and is not so much embedded in the past and has the courage to speak out and be a leader. I give credit to Fr. Steven as he does not sit on a pedestal but is very approachable and involved and willing to acknowledge the mistakes of the past. I think the pastoral council can reach out and make a difference with the courage and conviction that their leadership towards the future is so important. The only thing constant in life is Change and I believe we, as Christians, are being led to change in many ways and it will be for the better I believe. There is a lot of ground to make up but St. Mary's is headed in the right direction. Well done.*

#27 *I think the community is very vibrant. We have many devoted people that are willing to serve our community and get right into it. Although I feel we're beginning to lose that vibrancy with circumstances such as Fr Steve's absence, people leaving, our aging parishioners and a wide range of other reasons. Our community was like a line of marching ants, marching along, knowing our place*

and what's going on. Then someone disrupted the line and we're in chaos, trying to find our way back. But is the way back in the same line or is there another path for us to take?

#29 *St Mary's is on the way, not necessarily "well on the way". The parish has a lot of people engaged in parish-matters; some of which have application outside the church as in the Social Justice Group and St Vincent de Paul Conference; many others help to keep the parish going, like fete committee, MADS, Liturgy group and many more. St Mary's participates with other local Christian Churches with Good Friday Stations and Christmas carols, and from time to time, has welcomed speakers from other religions to speak to us, as the series of 'women of faith' speakers some 18 - 24 months ago.*

#30 *Those involved in parish activities are 'vibrant', but they are too few and will not last forever. Younger people now need to work as well as raise their families and so don't have much spare time.*

#32 *We particularly enjoy that there is usually live music.*

#34 *I think its the people who create a vibrancy and the fact of being able to pray and worship together as a community*

#36 *The Parish acknowledges changes and seems to move with the times. For example I noticed we now have volunteers to welcome people before the masses.... The Parish has several ministries catering to Needs of parishioners (youth ministry, bereavement, RCIA etc)*

#41 *The key in my opinion is to engage families possibly through the school environment. At special events such as first communion the church is full half an hour before the start.*

#46 *This Vision Statement was adopted in 2000, and to a large extent, St Mary's has been faithful to it. The ministries and outreach programs at St Mary's, the programs at the school and the general acceptance by and involvement of people of the Parish, are testament to this. And yes, this is starting to wane.*

#55 *There are programs throughout the year to interest and challenge parishioners to learn and share with others their faith.*

#59 *THERE ARE MANY GOOD PEOPLE WHO STRIVE TO ACHIEVE OUR VISION, AND MAKE LARGE EFFORT TO DO SO. PERHAPS MORE PEOPLE COULD OFFER A LITTLE WHEN THEIR SPARE TIME IS LIMITED.*

#69 *Our hope is always to be what we would like to be, aim to be, but mostly "we are on the way" to this! !*

#70 *Still engaged with the school*

#80 *We have great people with great vision, taking us towards what I believe would be what Jesus' might have imagined "Church" to be.*

UNSURE given as response to Q4 "How would you judge St Mary's Parish in terms of the first part of our Vision Statement: To Be A Vibrant Christian Community ...?"

#2 *I used to think we were a vibrant Christian community, but I feel the 'heart' of the Parish is strained, volunteers cop a lot of criticism and I wonder whether we are less 'Christian' than we used to be - or maybe after being a volunteer myself for 40 years I'm just feeling a little tired*

#6 *In some respects, St Marys is vibrant. However, compared with some other Christian Churches, we are not doing well, especially in attracting people to the Catholic Church and in engaging them in what we believe. Rarely do I hear people talking after Mass about Scripture, the Homily or even Catholic ethics and morals; there appears to be little will to learn more about or explore our religion, eg. the relatively poor attendance at the recent Alpha Course.*

#14 *I chose St Marys as my child's parish & school cause of the wonderful acceptance from Fr Steve & beautiful Jacinta. But unfortunately ... [Further comments about parish staff have been noted, but not included here because of their sensitive nature.]*

#17 *It is a great parish but there is a discord between the parish and families at the school. The school appears to be thriving but not the parish.*

#24 *Some regular parishioners are indeed true to this. Not sure exactly what is meant by vibrant. I think being 'effective' is probably a better word. If that's what is meant, what is the definition of an 'effective Christian?' One who is faithful to Jesus. They will live a Christian life (or why shouldn't we say Catholic? True to the teachings of the Catholic faith?). They will be a witness, their love will be seen and they may even be hated because of this witness. They may even be very 'hidden' people who spend less time in visible works but who live lives of intense prayer. So how are we doing? Hard to say.*

#25 *A number of St Mary's people appear to have lost interest in continuing to build and strengthen our community spirit. I feel the personal call to be part of a 'vibrant Christian Community' i.e.. our apostolic call, seems to have faded somewhat. It seems such an effort to stimulate others at times.*

#28 *With a few exceptions the active community is age skewed. Very few young adults are engaged. This is common for most Catholic churches and a comparison with AOG and Hillsong is concerning.*

#33 *I am not sure what a vibrant christian community looks like.*

#37 *I just turn up to Mass occasionally and don't help out in any way; so I don't feel I can really judge how vibrant the parish is as I'm not making a supreme effort to be involved -which I'm sure would lead to more friendships thus noticing the vibrancy.*

#39 *I think that the school at St Mary's is a vibrant, Christian community. I do not attend mass at St Mary's so I can't comment on the parish.*

#43 *Although there are many vibrant individuals in St Mary's parish I feel there is a lack of community feeling in the parish. A failure to unite everyone towards the vision and engage them to interact and be a true community.*

#45 *I think to be vibrant you need to be welcoming of all differences - and this should be reflected in the celebrations. For example I still find the music to be old fashioned - I love the hymns but feel they could be modernized in how they are performed. I think there could be more events or meetups that are inclusive of diversity, not just in terms of country of birth but those who have found themselves to be, or chosen to be, in non- traditional family situations (eg single mothers by choice) and that this would bring vibrancy through warmth and welcoming of all.*

#47 *Not aware of Vision statement.*

#48 *It is staid and somewhat stuck in a paradigm*

#49 *The same older parishioners are active and always offer themselves. But any calls to replace them fall on deaf ears. We need more school parents to be active in their faith.*

#50 *It is some time since it has been publicly acknowledged as to what groups are or still are operating in the Parish*

#51 *Somehow the priests need to be understood by the parish. perhaps by the use of deacons? I am not sure. There should be a common cultural connection between the priests in the parish and the parishioners.*

#54 *THERE HAS TO BE ANOTHER WAY TO JOLT PEOPLE INTO REALISING THAT UNLESS EVERYONE IN OUR COMMUNITY DOES THEIR LITTLE BIT BY JOINING IN, IN SOME SMALL WAY THEN IT MAY BE TOO LATE TO DO ANYTHING IF WE LOSE WHAT WE HAVE BECAUSE OF INDIFFERENCE*

#57 *Compared with some smaller places where knows each St Mary's has a way to go*

#58 *St. Mary's has the capacity to be a vibrant Christian community. Unfortunately the leaders of community are becoming old and less able to provide leadership.*

#60 *We could perhaps have more activities to include and attract the youth of the Parish?*

#75 *We have been parishioners since the days of Fr. Ashe when the parish was a vibrant cohesive community. We have seen those enviable qualities sadly dissipate over the years. There is a son of loss of spiritual & community soul.*

ST MARY'S IS FAR FROM BEING A VIBRANT CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

#8 *No encouragement or requirement from school principal or priest catholic school to attend Sunday mass every week Kids not even to about it*

#13 *Hypocritical*

#15 *Not a lot happening & when something is on, poor attendance. Maybe more things need to be made mentioned at Mass*

#16 *I find the opportunities to engage outside of Mass to be minimal. There is no playgroup, no activities for youth within the Parish - ie a choir, gospel plays, Sunday school, youth masses. Most of the community activities are done within the school community. I'd love to be more involved in assisting the community - feeding the homeless, providing food/help/service for families in need.*

#31 *Keep on doing the much the same as has been done for years. It's not working, but no a lot changes. A regular Sunday Mass is not what I would invite someone to to show them the attractiveness of the Catholic faith. Having said that, I've only come across a few parishes in the diocese were I would feel I could invite a stranger to come and be confident that they would see the beauty of our faith. I come because I know the value of the Sacraments. But to a stranger who doesn't have a deep faith in what is taking place, I'm not sure our liturgies would to very uplifting.*

#35 *I think that much of St Mary's problems are to do with the malaise of the Church and its inability to acknowledge the deep problems it has and its lack of desire to become what Francis Sullivan said a gospel based community.*

#38 *The 8.00am Mass has mainly old parishioners & very few children.*

#42 *This is more due to lack of lay participation and could also be due to a lack of motivation.*

#76 *I have long been surprised and very concerned about a smugness of the St Mary's parishioners about their parish being the "best" parish and a limited view that vibrancy is about looking after ourselves. By contrast, I have at times felt on the outer of parishioners who are good friends and happy to be in each other's company but not welcoming to others. For me vibrancy would mean that we would shine out as an open, welcoming and wonderful place to be not just for those who "belong" but for all.*

#77 *I see no vibrancy; so few volunteers, even in assisting at Mass with communion or welcoming. I see no leadership from the Archdiocese, only a focus on institutional "administration".*

#78 *Vibrant (vibrant underlined) - adjective meaning animated, energetic lively, spirited, vivacious, intense, striking. None of these words described St. Mary's in the community at Greensborough or the world. No practical footprint made.*

Q4 Category not chosen or comments about “vision” given elsewhere

#68 *St. mary’s is still vibrant; but aging*

#73 *I have already answered this a few times and I still remember the meeting in the James Kierce centre when we were discussing and probably voting for our Vision Statement. When I saw the Vision Statement that they wanted to run past us I asked those who seemed to be running the show if there were Christians throughout the world who weren’t Catholics, they replies yes, then I suggested to change it to “To be a Vibrant Catholic community engaging with the world.” They didn’t want the word Catholic to be in the Vision Statement under any circumstances. What has changed*

#73 [Elsewhere in a general survey response] *Recently I asked you Fr Steve if we could have at Mass, as one of the Prayers of the Faithful “For marriage in Australia to always be between a man and a woman.” You thought quietly for a while then you said “It’s inevitable.” With no further comment you walked away and I quietly thought “boy if we are supposed to be a Vibrant Christian Community, why does our priest let Satan have his way without putting up a fight for Jesus?” If we can’t speak or act with faith, how can we become a Vibrant Christian Community?*

#73 [Elsewhere in a general survey response] [re Liturgy of the Word, not Mass, on a Monday] *A chain is only as strong as its weakest link and likewise we cannot be a vibrant Christian community when things like this are happening, or I should say not happening.*

#74 *The Mission Statement should read CATHOLIC. To be a vibrant community, and in many ways we are, we must get our spiritual offerings right and many of these I have dealt with.*

#79 *A vibrant Catholic Parish (not Christian and not community) is one where Mass and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is well attended.*