

Parish Pastoral Council Survey Feedback Phase (2018)

Topic 2: Survey Responses that can be immediately addressed (May 2018)

The following contains parishioners' responses to the Parish Survey, with, corresponding answers and explanations to parishioners' questions or comments. Where parishioners have made suggestions for improvements in the parish; indications about how such initiatives might be addressed in the future and invitations to those interested in engaging further in parish life, are provided. The comments made by the Parish Pastoral Council in response to parishioners' contributions are in no way exhaustive. The PPC will be considering all responses, more completely as soon as this feedback phase is complete.

One of the survey aims was to ask current parishioners to engage with people who no longer attend Sunday Mass our parish. The PPC has no way of knowing if parishioners took up this challenge, or if those approached chose not to respond. However, the percentage of responses from those who no longer attend Sunday Mass was very small. The PPC is open to hear from parishioners with suggestions as to how we might best engage this group, so that we receive their feedback.

Responses

(Note: Parishioners' comments are in italics)

There was a response from a person aged 40-60 who although they attend Mass weekly made the following comment

#40 (Q3) *I haven't attended St. Mary's Parish for 2-3 years now, but when I used to attend I found it hard to find an activity/ministry group to join. e.g. bible study*

For people looking to become involved in a parish group, please refer to the Parish Directory or call the Parish Office, so that we might best assist you to approach the groups in which you may be interested. If there is not a particular group of interest and you would like to establish such a group, we could help parishioners with that endeavour, or perhaps refer you to a relevant group nearby. All Parish groups will be encouraged to promote their activities regularly, so that people can become aware of what is available. PPC will consider how we might enable a greater awareness of parish activities.

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The survey respondent's identification number. All responses assigned to, for example, #1 are from the same respondent. Italics used to indicate these are respondent's words. Where #numbers are in bold, this indicates their first comment under the category of Sexual Abuse. Respondents subsequent comments, under this category, are not bolded.

(Q1. What, if any, changes have you noticed in particular, at St Mary's in the last few years?

(Q2. What have you found to be the positive, life-giving experiences associated with the changes?

(Q3. What have you found disappointing, concerning, challenging or off-putting?

(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...?

(Q5. How would you judge St Mary's Parish in terms of the second part of our Vision Statement: ...Engaging with the World?

(Q6. Overall, St Mary's Parish is going well.

(Q7. St Mary's Parish is important to me.

(Q8. How often would you go to Mass?

(Q9. Do you think it would be helpful to have a facilitated, consultative review, which would determine the priorities of the three partnered parishes: Sacred Heart, Diamond Creek, St Mary's, Greensborough and St Thomas' Greensborough North?

(Q10. Do you have any (Questions or comments for the Parish Pastoral Council?

Feedback Topic 2: Survey Responses that can be immediately addressed (cont.)

| Survey Comment | PPC Response |
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| #30 (Q1) <i>I've also noticed that the parish office isn't open as frequently as formerly</i> | Funding prevents us from having the Parish Office open every day. Our office hours are published regularly in the newsletter; Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Fridays from 10.00 until 4.00. However, Frs Steven and Dong regularly check their emails and the Parish phone is diverted to the parish house of an evening and on weekends. Email: Greensborough@cam.org.au Phone: 9435 1543 |
| #21(Q3) <i>Maybe there is a way to do it but it would be great if the Parish newsletter could be emailed to me every week. I know it is available in print at the church, or online but if it was emailed it would be easier to access.</i> | The Parish newsletter is available to be emailed each Friday afternoon. Just contact the office greensborough@cam.org to add your name to the circulation list. |
| #22 (Q3) <i>Parish still doesn't feel as welcoming as it could - e.g. Sunday morning needs a 'core group' to facilitate use of the Kitchen for cuppas - no one avails themselves of this opportunity.</i> | The PPC would be interested in assisting such a core group to be established. If you are interested to participate, please contact the Parish Office Email: Greensborough@cam.org.au Phone: 9435 1543 |
| #24 (Q2) <i>The church being open every day is the BEST thing for me. Being able to come and spend time in (Quiet prayer before Mass and especially in the afternoon before school finishes has been absolutely imperative to my life and I am so very grateful. It has also been the instrument of meeting some new people (other parents too!) who are doing the same. I cannot thank St Mary's enough for this.</i> | The PPC is conscious of the need for people to find peace and to have opportunities to pray in a quiet setting. We encourage all parishioners to avail themselves of the church for this purpose. |
| #38 (Q6) <i>I have never volunteered for anything in the parish, but would probably help if asked personally.</i> | The PPC tries various ways to engage parishioners in the activities of the parish. Personal approach is known to be the best way, but we are not always aware of whom to approach for what ministry. Some time this year, the PPC will launch an appeal/invitation for people to join groups or engage in various ministries. We |

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| | <p>encourage you to consider in what way you might contribute, through a ministry or group, to the life of the parish. We would hope any involvement will be a life-giving experience for you.</p> |
| <p>#2 (Q10) <i>Are the school families getting the same questionnaire??</i></p> <p>#66 (Q10) <i>Is there a survey of some kind going to the parents of the school as they are the future of the church & you really need to know their thoughts & what they are looking for, be it for them & also the needs for their children.</i></p> | <p>School families were invited to participate in this survey, from the beginning. Of the 81 respondents, 14 were school parents. The responses from school parents will be made available at a later stage. All responses to this survey, provide material for serious consideration for the parish, today and in the future.</p> |
| <p>#50 (Q4) <i>It is some time since it has been publicly acknowledged as to what groups are or still are operating in the Parish</i></p> <p>#78 (Q3) - <i>Do not know what groups exist or their purpose</i></p> | <p>Each Pentecost the members of all Parish groups and ministries are asked to stand to be commissioned for the following year. Our Parish Directory is updated regularly, providing information about parish groups. However, we can always look at new ways of providing this information. Currently, PPC has called together a group of parishioners that is working on a new Parish Website. Parish groups will be identified on that website. There will also be an appeal/invitation, some time this year, by the PPC for parishioners to be engaged in various ways.</p> |
| <p>#77 (Q6) <i>Attendances are down, fewer families are to be seen. What percentage is 600 from the overall Catholic population of the parish</i></p> | <p>The latest information available is from the 2011 Census. From this, 17 938 in our parish area identified themselves as Catholic. Of these around 600 (3.3%) attend Mass at St Mary's on a weekend. This is low and it is concerning, and reflects similar attendance rates across the Archdiocese.</p> |

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The following represent contrasting views on some issues.

#32 (Q6) *We like getting to see all the new babies introduced to the parish and all the wedding anniversaries celebrated each month.*

#75 (Q1) *Mass is segmented by group blessings- these could be held before or after Mass.*

#76 (Q3) *I find the non-inclusive language in the liturgy off-putting and representative of the bigger issues of women in the Church. I would not be part of or accepting of any other organization that openly professed such an attitude to women and remaining in our Church is for me a very difficult experience.*

#79 (Q3) *off putting - The constant changing of the words of Scripture to eliminate any references to "mankind" etc. Do we really have to change the words after 2000 years?*

Although it is sometimes very difficult to hold in tension, the contrasting views held by members of a community or organisation, this is indeed our particular challenge as Catholics. Not only does the term catholic mean universal, but more importantly than acknowledging the meaning of a term, as followers of Christ we are entrusted to be people who reconcile, not divide. We are called to listen deeply to what all are saying, however what grieves one is a joy to another.

There is no black and white answer to some concerns; however, it is a matter of considering appropriate actions and words that best reflect the Gospel imperatives today. In relation to the comment about Scripture, it might be helpful to realise that there always have been various translations of the words of the Bible; one example being the parallel stories in the Gospel, where one evangelist will relate the story with a particular emphasis and another with a different emphasis. Since the evolution of printing presses, various translations have been made available, such as the King James Version, the Jerusalem Version, the Good News Version and the New Revised Standard Version – all using different words to relate the same stories. What remains constant is the Church's faithfulness to rigorous scholarship which demands the interpretation of Scripture according to authentic means.

In recent years efforts have been made to use inclusive language in official translations of the scriptures to avoid any sense that the teaching in the passage is for men only, rather than for men and women alike. So, where older translations have used terms such as "man or men", "brothers" and etc., the texts use terms such as: "people", "humanity", "all" or "brothers and sisters". At St. Mary's we have for a number of years used the New Revised Standard Version as our Lectionary for weekend Masses. It is gender inclusive and is the official Lectionary used in Canada. The official Lectionary in the USA (The New American Bible), which is gender inclusive, was approved for use in 2011. The New Jerusalem Bible and the New International Version also use inclusive language. For well over 25 years the Church in Australia has been intending to authorise one of these inclusive language texts for use as our Lectionary in Australia, but to date it has not done so.