



ST. JOHN XXIII
PARISH

Welcoming

Fellowship, Inclusivity and Diversity,
Community Outreach, Operations

Summary

The responses around welcoming focused on fellowship, inclusivity and diversity, and community outreach. There is a perceived need for creative ways to nurture connections among parishioners, among the various groups within our parish, and with the larger local and interfaith community. Participants stressed the importance of feeling part of the parish community and having meaningful ways to get to know one another. Specific groups named were families with children, teens and young adults, seniors, and people new or marginally connected to the parish. Suggested activities included hosting social hours after Masses, holding parish-wide events, forming smaller niche groups, and organizing activities and events that attract parishioners of various ages and cultural backgrounds.

Parishioners place a high value on St. John XXIII Parish being an inclusive, welcoming community. Diversity and the attitude that all are welcome were highlighted as two notable strengths. Comments included the importance of supporting people of all backgrounds and involving them in leadership roles: women, the LGBTQ+ community, those of varying abilities, young families, teens, seniors, and lay ministers. The general feeling was that embracing diversity and learning about each other's cultures makes for a stronger parish.

Participants want the parish to be engaged in the broader community, through more local and accessible service projects and more engagement with interfaith activities, including the presence of clergy and leadership in such events to represent our parish.

Diversity is also addressed in the Unification and Diversity section of this report. Community outreach is additionally covered in the Faith Formation section.

Welcoming

Detail

Fellowship

- There's a strong desire to have more ways and opportunities to get to know people, including all the priests who say the Masses.
- There's a desire to have some form of hospitality (social hour/Coffeecake Sunday) after Mass as a way to meet with people. Could have specific coffee time for new parishioners to meet each other. This could also be done for parents during Religious Ed classes.
- Host events, social hours, and small group meetings to encourage connections among parishioners.
- Have more parish-wide events.
- There's a sense that there's no community building at St. Mary's. There's not a lot of talking with other people, and those who do tend to stay in their own groups.
- Young adults, distinctly separate from teens, long for community.
- Hosting activities that unite youth and adults and involving teens and young adults in ministries beyond retreats.
- Emphasize the importance of collecting contact information and following up with visitors. Commends St. Marks for its effective visitor follow-up system.
- Seek ways to involve people who are marginally connected to the parish, such as helping with sales or festivals, and drawing them closer to the faith.
- Explore ways to create smaller, niche groups within the large parish to foster a sense of belonging.
- Form a new members group, like the monthly meetings previously held at St. Nicks, to educate about parish ministries and opportunities.
- Allow different groups within the parish to organize their own events.
- Creating small worship groups that stay connected and ensuring that everyone's voice is heard, along with bringing cultural groups together for dialogue.
- Have a parish-wide cookbook sale and a 'Taste of St. John XXIII Parish' event as fundraising and engagement tools, along with sign-up sheets to encourage involvement.
- Hosting events that offer free food, sponsored by different groups within the parish, with donation jars to offset costs or make the food events potluck.
- Organize fellowship opportunities such as Project Unity to pair Spanish, Haitian, Anglo families for better cultural integration.
- Considering visits to other parishes to learn from their community engagement strategies.
- Highlighting the importance of personal outreach and questioning if the absence of a parishioner would be noticed and who would reach out.

Welcoming

Inclusivity and Diversity

- Many members are drawn to our parish because they want to be drawn to a diverse community. We need to find programming that speaks to our shared values.
- Strive to be a Synodal parish, focusing on listening and inclusivity, especially for marginalized groups like LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, and women.
- LGBTQ+ people, their allies, families, and friends have found that the Risen Jesus has welcomed us into the heart of the church as equal disciples through transforming liturgy at St. Nick's. We need to practice this hospitality inside SJ23 at both campuses so that we can together make more of an impact outside. Since the 1990s, the LGBTQ+ ministry is called to invite and attract all people, especially those oppressed, vulnerable and at the margins of church and the world, to experience what we have.
- Promote learning from one another and bridging cultural divides within the parish.
- Engage with and integrate all cultures within the unified parish.
- Get the whole parish together, including the Hispanic community. We have opportunities such as the Pilgrimage. We need more immersive events.
- Continue knitting together diverse communities, focusing on progress in integrating cultures with the Hispanic community and St. Mary's parishioners.
- Consider using faith-sharing groups to build relationships and develop a strategy for dialogue between Hispanic and Anglo communities.
- Get more women in positions of dignity and authority.
- Calls for shared leadership, especially involving women, and open communication with pastors.
- Suggestion to add statues on the back lawn that celebrate figures like Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Martin de Porres (patron saint of social justice, racial harmony, and mixed raced people) so that all church communities are celebrated. We are still a divided parish after all these years of welcoming Assumption's parishioners, and that will happen with St. Mary's too if we don't take strong visible action.
- Have DEI conversations as the unification goes forward. There must be recognition of cultural and other differences that are present: significant number of Latinos and Haitians, as well as smaller numbers of individuals and families from other countries; Comboni missionaries regularly present from various parts of the world; a largely older population at St. Mary's and a disproportionate number of families with children at St. Nick's. In the past year, comments have been overheard that suggest ignorance, insensitivity, real bias, and judgment directed towards individuals within these groups, if not judgments of entire groups. To move forward effectively, there has to be recognition and understanding of differences that leads to genuine acceptance and sometimes that requires agents of change to make that happen. Differences should also be recognized and celebrated in liturgies and other parish events.

Welcoming

Inclusivity and Diversity, continued

- Make liturgies more accessible, have more contemporary music, get parents and children more involved.
- Suggestions for experience-based homilies and involving lay people in preaching.
- Make more effort to unify activities with the kids.
- Have joint Masses, events, and activities to bring parents together.
- There's a desire for more French/Haitian culture in the Masses.
- More programs for older parishioners, such as forming a group for seniors and addressing their concerns, is desired.
- Offer spiritual retreats and formation programs for all age groups.
- Desire for more events and activities for young kids and families.
- Focus on engaging and retaining young people through relevant programs and events.
- Address the decline in attendance and make the Church more relevant, especially for the younger generation.
- Use technology, social media, and personal testimonies to encourage participation.
- Improve the music program, make it more enjoyable, and tap into the talents of younger members. Note the underutilization of the music program and the talent of the music director, who has performed with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.
- Inclusivity in Volunteering: Making it clear how people can help and ensuring they feel directly reached out to.
- Encouraging Father JP to be more involved in discussions about women in the Church, promoting a women's diaconate for greater inclusion.
- Supporting existing committees like Peace and Justice and advocating for inclusive language and practices without excessive concern for pleasing higher church authorities.
- Utilize the parish bulletin effectively, including reflections that resonate with all community groups, including Hispanic parishioners.

Community Outreach

- Desire for more local and accessible service projects including, but not limited to, ones that would be of interest to families, teens, and young adults.
- More project-base ministry opportunities for men
- Desire for the parish to engage more with interfaith activities, participate in collaborative ideas and dialogue with other faiths, and ensure the presence of clergy and leadership in such events to represent St. John XXIII Parish.
- Interest in addressing the climate crisis and incorporating eco-spirituality into the parish's mission.
- Desire for more emphasis on addressing human rights issues.
- Acknowledge the need for people to volunteer and step up to help organize and run these initiatives.

Welcoming

Operational

- Reduce duplicate ministries to avoid reinforcing separateness and make it easier to attract volunteers.
- Address disparities in committee/group operations and create ways to build relationships through combined ministries and outreach.
- Encourage better communication and participation in events on both campuses to enhance volunteer engagement.
- Concerns about the lack of communication from the parish office.
- Ensure Masses and programming are virtual and online for wider access.
- Have bilingual representation in ministry programs and important meetings and better communication with the community, especially in leadership roles. Not having translators creates isolation, inability to reach the wider community, and results in persistent segregation within the parish.
- Make a bulletin page dedicated to each ministry, detailing activities and contact information, presented as part of a cohesive community rather than as separate entities.
- Make it clear how people can help and ensuring they feel directly reached out to.
- Propose that the ministry fair be held every weekend for a month to ensure everyone has a chance to attend.
- Propose establishing a Volunteer Coordinator for all Ministries to encourage broader involvement.