



*St. Robert Bellarmine*

## ALL THINGS NEW

STEADFAST IN FAITH • FORWARD IN HOPE

At the end of May, we received a large amount of information and data from the Archdiocese of St. Louis as part of the All Things New Strategic Planning Initiative. We've been given two different types of information: Our Parish Workbook, and the results of our DMI Survey.

### Parish Workbook

The Parish Workbook is a 41-page document, with four parts:

- Part I – Introduction – Describes the strategic planning process, guiding principles drawn from Scripture and Church documents, its purpose and goals, and the overall schedule. This information is available on the All Things New Web Site and will not be repeated here.
- Part II – Archdiocese of St. Louis – Shows overall statistics and trends within the Archdiocese over the past 20 years, including Catholic population, baptisms and marriages, church attendance, and priest population. Key information from this part is shown on pages 2-3.
- Part III – Local Planning Area – For All Things New, the Archdiocese was divided into 15 “Local Planning Areas”. Ours consists of the 6 parishes close to us in St. Charles, plus Portage des Sioux. While there is a lot of comparative data in the workbook, most of it is not relevant to our parish. This part is covered briefly on page 4.
- Part IV – St. Robert Bellarmine – Provides data collected about our parish by the Archdiocese over the past 20 years. There were a few errors in the information. We have sent corrections to the Archdiocese. This information is presented on page 4.

### Disciple Maker Index (DMI) Survey

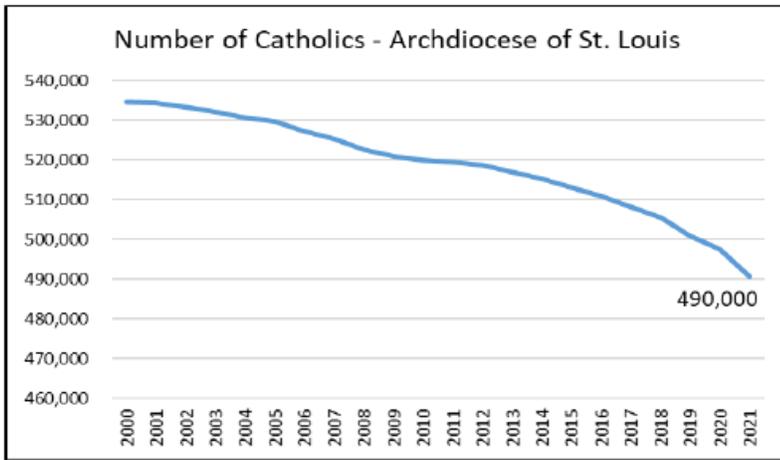
Back in March, 361 of us took the DMI Survey. Our responses are posted on a restricted access web site. Deacon Phil, our Parish Point-of-Contact, Laurie Schueddig, and our five Key Parish Leaders (KPLs) have access to this site. It has a lot of information, along with several ways of analyzing the information.

Most of this information is shown as sets of bar graphs. Some show the percentage of us who Agree / Disagree with various beliefs and spiritual practices. Others show the frequency with which we perform certain actions, ranging from Daily to Never. All of it comes from our answers to the DMI survey; it's what we said about ourselves.

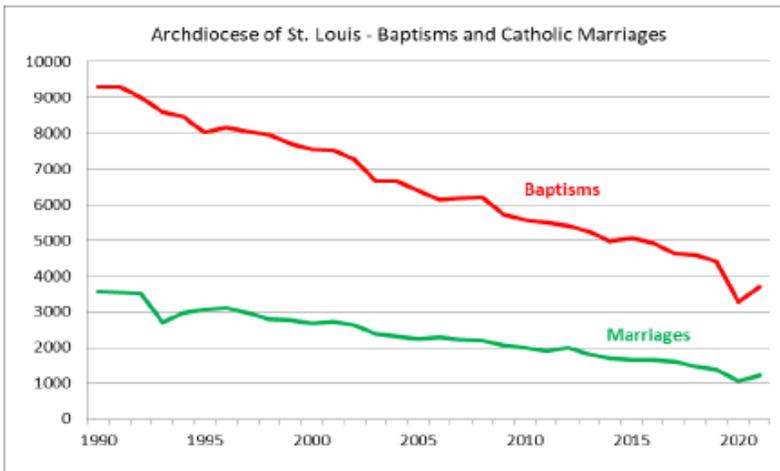
Overall, the DMI Survey shows that our parish is very similar to the rest of the Archdiocese, as well as other medium-sized suburban parishes. In some areas, we are above average. In some other areas, we can make improvements and do better. The survey results begin on page 5.

# PARISH WORKBOOK

## The Archdiocese of St. Louis

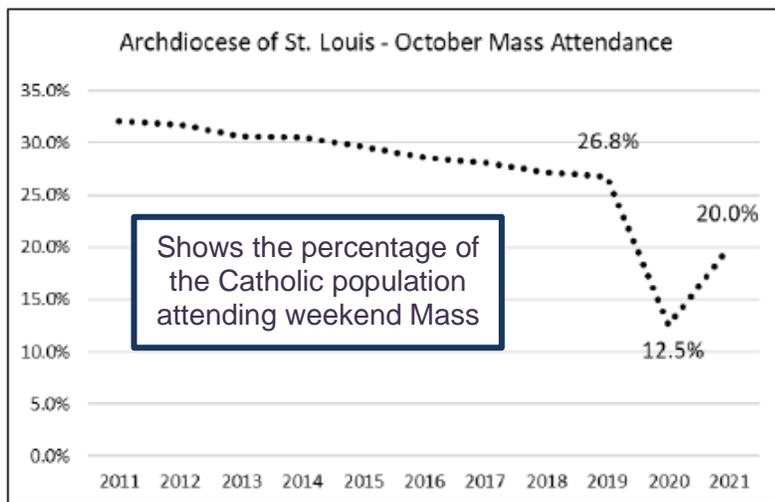


The Archdiocese of St. Louis is 178 parishes encompassing the City of St. Louis and 10 surrounding counties. It has been declining for several decades as older Catholics die and there are insufficient numbers of young Catholics to take their place. In 2021, the number of Catholics dipped below 500,000 for the first time since the 1960s. As many as 5,000 Catholics are “leaving” the Church after high school or college.



This is best exemplified by the significant decline in the number of births and baptisms in our Archdiocese. These reflect the national landscape. They are half of what they were 20 years ago.

In the last decade, the percentage of adult population claiming no religious affiliation (the “nones”) grew from 17% to 26%. Among millennials, it went from 27% to 40%



Over the past decade, Mass attendance has been on a steady decline. The chart shows the percentage of Catholics attending weekend Mass. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Mass attendance was declining 0.5% to 1% per year. It hit a record low in October 2020, due to COVID-19. While Mass attendance rebounded in October 2021, it was still 25% below the attendance in October 2019.

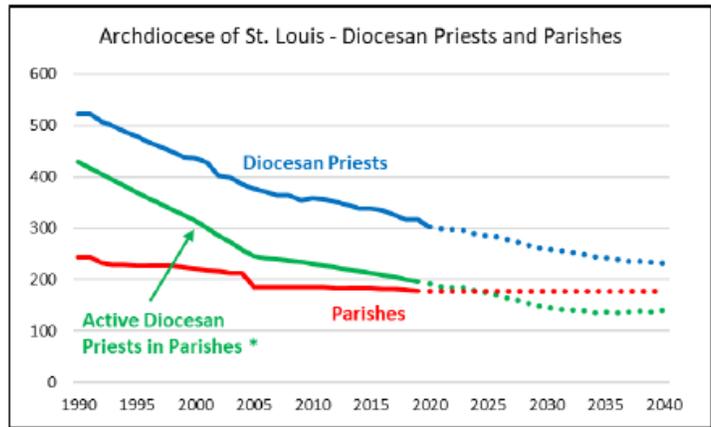
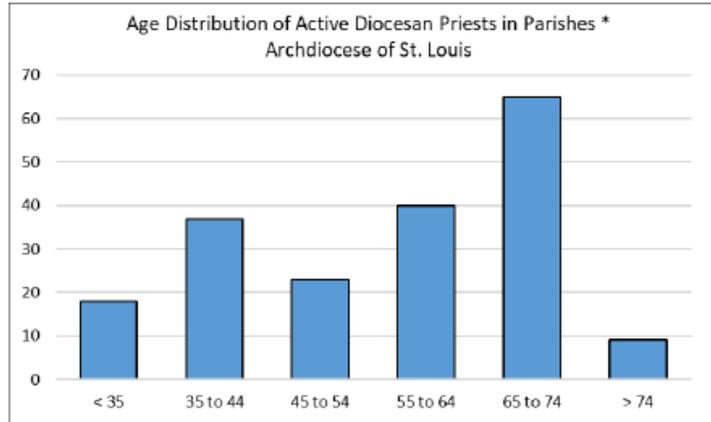
As a result, we have a lot of unoccupied space in our churches. In 2019, only 33% of our Archdiocesan pews were occupied during the typical weekend Mass. By 2021, only 25% of our Archdiocesan pews were occupied during the typical weekend Mass.

## The Priest Situation

As the Catholic population has moved from the city to the near suburbs, and subsequently to suburbs farther away from the city, this has resulted in too few priests in large parishes and too many priests in small parishes.

Our priests are aging and the number of priests to serve our population is declining. Currently, 35% of our diocesan priests who are serving in parishes are 65 years of age or older. These 74 priests can retire in the next 10 years.

Although retirement age for priests is 75, the average retirement age for our priests has been 71.

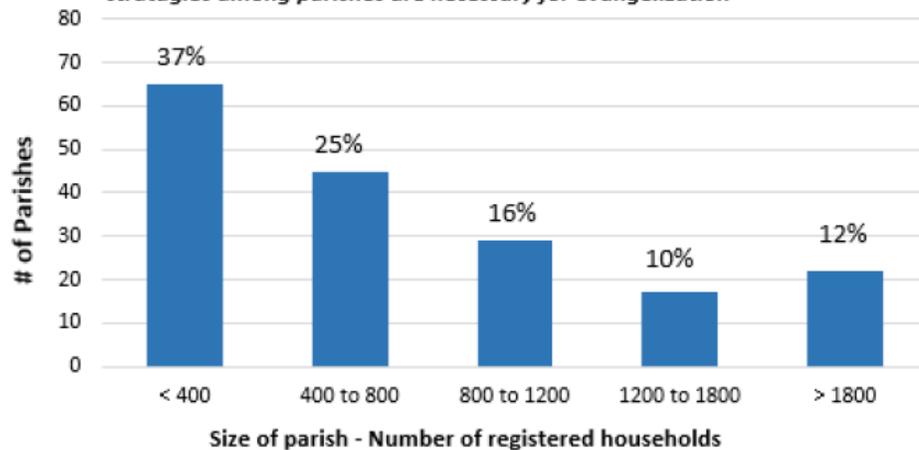


\* Excluding retired priests resident in parishes

**St. Robert has  
723 Households**

**We are  
considered a  
Medium-Sized  
Suburban  
Parish**

*Smaller parishes tend to have fewer financial resources. Collaboration strategies among parishes are necessary for evangelization*



Number of Priests *	49	46	38	27	50
Ratio of Parishioners to Priests	619	1,416	1,996	2,704	3,411

\* Includes diocesan and religious order priests

**The “bottom line” is this: Our resources need to be realigned to enable vibrant ministry. Our priest population is our most critical resource at this time.**

## Our Planning Area

The Archdiocese is divided into 8 deaneries. We belong to the St. Charles Deanery. For the All Things New initiative, the Archdiocese was divided into 15 Planning Areas which have similar demographics and living conditions (urban, rural, etc.). The St. Charles Deanery was divided into 3 Local Planning Areas. Our specific Area is in the St. Charles and St. Peters city areas, plus the eastern portion of St. Charles County. It consists of 8 parishes:

All Saints  
St. Charles Borromeo  
St. Cletus

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton  
St. Francis of Assisi  
(in Portage des Sioux)

Sts. Joachim and Ann  
St. Peter  
St. Robert Bellarmine

While much data was provided about these 8 parishes, there were no surprises. With the exception of St. Francis, we are the smallest in terms of households (723) and Sunday Mass Attendance (466 in Oct 21), followed closely by St. Peter (1,025 households, 606 Mass Attendance). All Saints was the largest with 2,355 households, but St. Elizabeth Ann Seton had the largest Sunday Mass Attendance in Oct 21 (995).

We have 5 elementary schools in our Area with 1,037 children attending. This is down 15% from 5 years ago. Three of our schools have less than 200 students. In our Area, we also have 778 students enrolled in PSR, which is down 29% from 5 years ago.

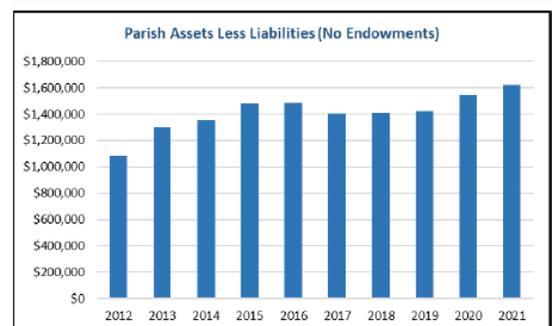
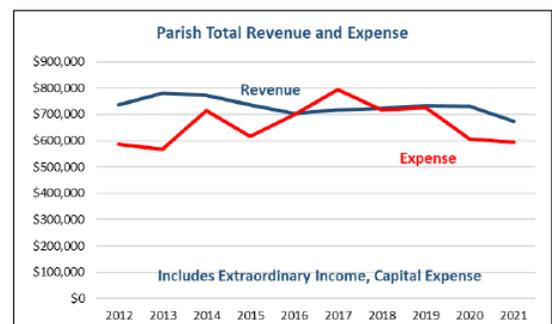
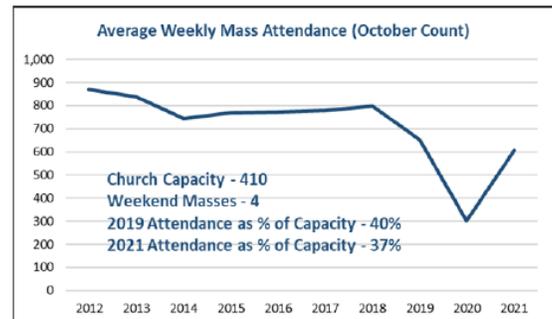
## St. Robert Bellarmine Parish

There were no surprises, although we did find some errors that needed correcting in our Parish information section. For example, there was a misunderstanding as to how we subsidize Seton Regional Catholic School. We are paying our fair share and have corrected the Archdiocese's record on this.

The workbook notes that unlike most parishes, our Pre-COVID Mass attendance was fairly stable, and our attendance, as a percentage of church capacity is higher than the Archdiocesan average. Our Pre-COVID Mass attendance on weekends was 41-48% of our population, which was much higher than the Archdiocesan average.

It is also clear that we are in excellent financial shape. For most of the last 10 years, our income has exceeded our expenses, allowing us to increase our reserves. We currently have around \$1.6 million in our Archdiocesan savings accounts to help us meet future unforeseen situations.

However, like the rest of the Archdiocese, our population is aging, we have more funerals than baptisms, and the number of baptisms and marriages have been steadily declining.

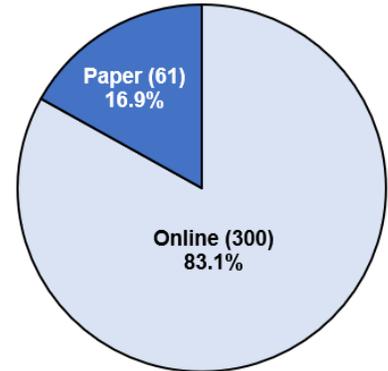


# DISCIPLE MAKER INDEX (DMI) SURVEY RESULTS

## Who Took the Survey?

361 of us took the survey. For those of us who took the survey, 82% are over age 55. 60% are married. About twice as many women took the survey as men. Only 26 of the survey respondents have school age children. Of those, half attend Catholic schools and the other half public schools.

An interesting data point – While most who took the survey (68%) have been members of this parish for 10 or more years, a sizable number (7%) have been in the parish 2 years or less. That’s a lot of new members that the rest of us need to get to know better.

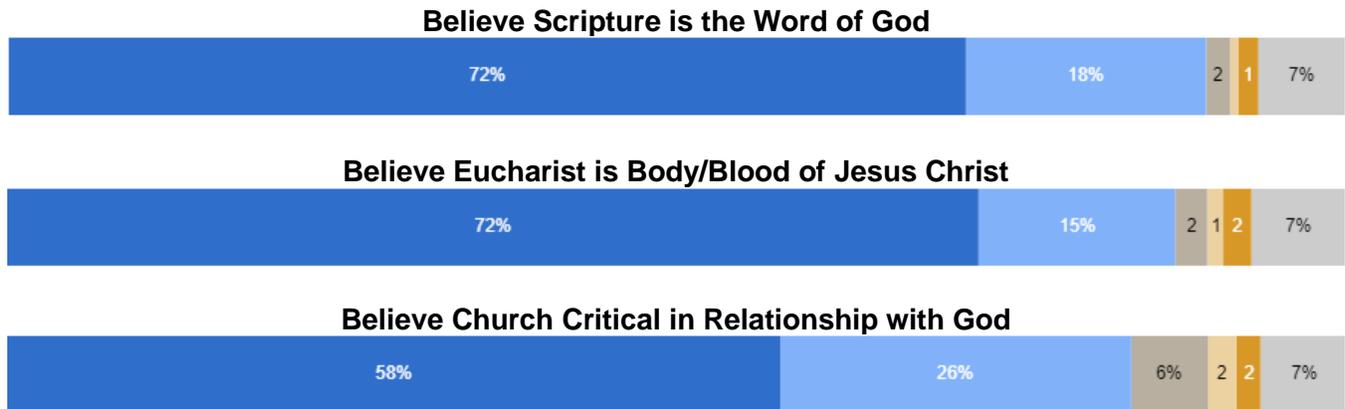


We are a VERY Catholic bunch: 98% of us identify as “Catholic”.

## Strengths

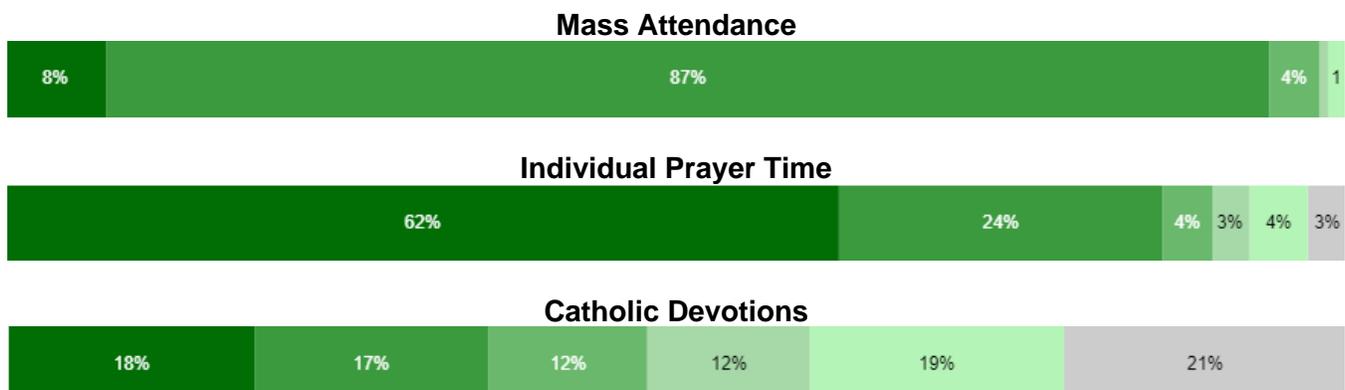
Here are our Top 3 Strengths, by highest percentage of Strongly Agree.

*The scale is Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, and I Don’t Know*



Here are our Top 3 Strengths, by highest percentage of Monthly or more often frequency.

*The scale is Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, 1-2 Times a Year, and Never.*



## Opportunities

“Opportunities” is a polite way of saying “Places Where We May Wish to Improve Ourselves”.

Here are our Top 3 Opportunities, by lowest percentage of Strongly Agree.

*The scale is Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, and I Don't Know*

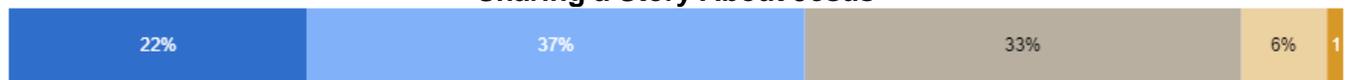
### Sharing a Personal Witness Story



### Confidence in Knowing Church Teachings



### Sharing a Story About Jesus



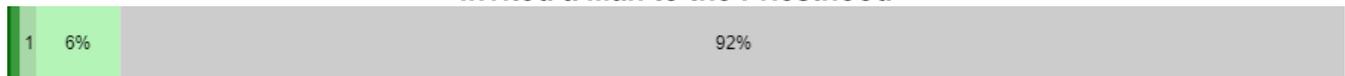
Here are our Top 3 Opportunities, by lowest percentage of Monthly or more often.

*The scale is Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, 1-2 Times a Year, and Never.*

### Invited Another to Religious Life



### Invited a Man to the Priesthood



### Made a Retreat



Note those long gray bars. They are the percentage of us who said, “Never”.

## What can we take away from our Strengths and Opportunities?

We seem to be a people firmly grounded in our Catholic faith. We believe the core teachings of the Church, and we make an effort to practice our faith. When checked against leading benchmarks that were provided, we are right up there with the best parishes.

But it appears our faith is a “private” matter for most of us. We are a bit uncomfortable when it comes to sharing our faith with others, and we are not comfortable in inviting others to consider the priesthood or religious life. We also have a comfort level with some spiritual activities: Mass, Rosary, Private Prayer, and less comfort with group activities like Retreats. Our opportunities are in the area of evangelization and special spiritual exercises like retreats.

## Sunday Experience

The “Sunday Experience” – everything from our liturgy to our music to the preaching – is important for a vital, vibrant parish. Based on the DMI Survey, we are doing pretty well:

*The scale is Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, and I Don't Know*

### Our Community is Welcoming



### Growth via: Mass



### Growth via: Music Deepens Participation



### Growth via: Preaching



## Spiritual Practices

As we've seen, we are doing good in this area, in terms of Mass attendance, private prayer, and Catholic devotions, but we aren't making very many retreats. Here are some indicators of our spiritual life, based on our survey responses (gray bars are “Never”):

*The scale is Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, 1-2 Times a Year, and Never.*

### Frequency of Attending a Bible Study or Prayer Group



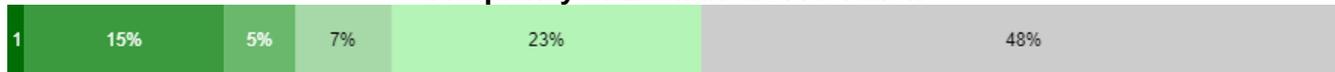
### Frequency of Confession



### Frequency of Pastoral Counseling / Spiritual Direction



### Frequency of Eucharistic Adoration

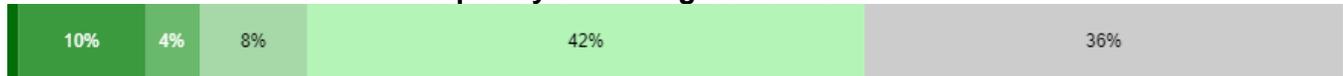


## Missionary Impulse

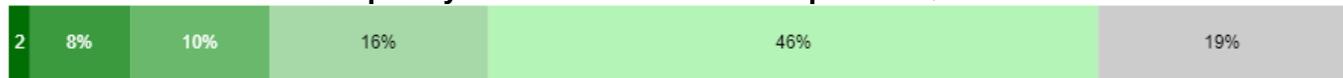
A major goal of All Things New is to improve us, as a Church, in the area of Evangelization. This section measures where we are today, based on our responses. While there are a lot of opportunities here, our parish is neither unique nor alone. For the most part, our percentages are very similar to Archdiocesan averages and the averages for medium sized, suburban parishes. In other words, we need improvement across the Archdiocese in these areas.

*The scale is Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, 1-2 Times a Year, and Never.*

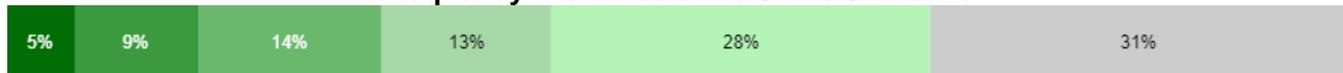
### Frequency of Inviting Someone to Mass



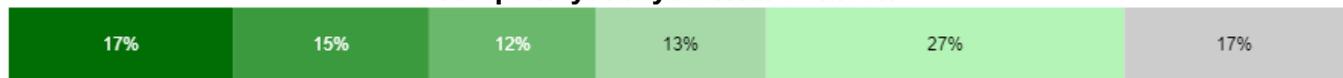
### Frequency: Answered Someone's Spiritual Question



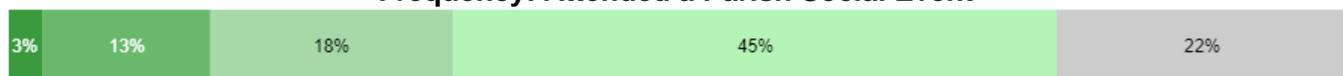
### Frequency: Volunteered to Serve Someone



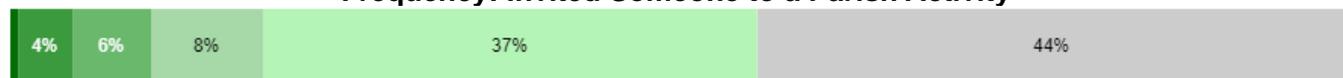
### Frequency: Prayed With Someone



### Frequency: Attended a Parish Social Event



### Frequency: Invited Someone to a Parish Activity



The last two above may reflect the impact of COVID. We, along with everyone else, have not had many social events or activities in the last two years.

## Some Conclusions

We have a solid, vibrant parish. Our Catholic faith is solid. So is our practice of our Faith. But our numbers are declining. We need to attract more younger people. Our opportunities are in the areas of evangelization and some of our spiritual practices, including reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, going on retreat, and making use of spiritual direction.

In the Fall, we are planning an Adult Faith Development series. This will help us get started on sharing our faith, beginning with each other. In February, we are planning to have a parish mission, which is a type of retreat. We are also restarting some of our former social activities: Donut Sundays, Knights' breakfasts, and our monthly Senior Citizen Luncheons.

We can always be better. This is a start.