

# **Parish Needs Survey Results**

## **Cathedral of St. Catherine of Alexandria – St. Catharines, Ontario**

### **Executive Summary**

The Diocese of St. Catharines is conducting a parish discernment process “to assess the needs of our parishes to help them to become more effective instruments of the new evangelization” (from Bishop Bergie’s letter of Jan. 15, 2015 to the entire diocese). A Parish Needs Survey is being implemented in all parishes as part of this process.

The Cathedral of St. Catherine of Alexandria Parish participated in this survey. It was distributed in the pews at all Masses on one weekend in November, 2017. There were 356 valid surveys. The characteristics of the respondents are described first.

#### **Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Nearly three in five respondents are female. The average age of respondents is 59 years. The age of respondents ranges from 14 years to 93 years. More than one in three respondents are 70 years of age or older. Three in five respondents are married or remarried. For respondents’ highest level of education: one in eight respondents completed some high school or less; one in seven respondents completed high school; and nearly three in four respondents went beyond high school to college or university.

#### **Activities of Respondents in the Parish**

More than two in three respondents are registered at Cathedral Parish and more than four in five consider this parish as their primary place of worship. Respondents have been attending this parish on average for 21 years; range in length of attendance is from 1 year or less to 85 years. Nearly two in three respondents attend Mass every week or more often. Overall, more than two in five respondents are involved in one or more ministries or activities. One in six respondents is involved in two or more ministries or activities. Over half of the respondents are not involved in any ministries or activities with the parish.

**Major findings** can be summarized as follows:

#### **Aspects of Parish Life**

- More than four in five respondents evaluate leadership provided by the pastor as “good” or “excellent”, and a little more than nine in ten view the service provided by priests and deacons as “good” or “excellent”.
- More than four in five respondents agree “somewhat” or “strongly” that they would feel comfortable talking with the pastor.
- Just over nine in ten respondents rate the quality of music as “good” or “excellent”.
- Greater than four in five respondents view the quality of liturgies as “good” or “excellent”.
- Nearly three in four respondents consider parish efforts to manage parish finances as “good” or “excellent”.
- More than seven in ten respondents evaluate the vision provided by parish leaders as “good” or “excellent”.

## Parish Strengths

### *Faith / Spiritual Development*

- More than four in five respondents evaluate parish efforts as “good” or “excellent” to:
  - nurture your relationship with Jesus
  - foster spiritual growth
- More than three in four respondents view parish efforts as “good” or “excellent” to:
  - help you practice gospel values in your daily life
  - educate parishioners in the faith
- More than seven in ten respondents rate as “good” or “excellent”:
  - parish efforts to offer a Catholic view on current issues
  - faith formation for adults

### *Sense of Community and Parish Involvement*

- Seven in ten respondents evaluate the sense of community within the parish as “good” or “excellent”.
- Just over four in five respondents agree “somewhat” or “strongly” that:
  - they feel well informed about what goes on in their parish
  - they feel included in parish life
- More than seven in ten respondents view parish efforts as “good” or “excellent” to:
  - communicate with parishioners
  - invite you to participate in parish ministries

### *Parish Outreach*

- The top three priority groups for parish outreach are: youth (ages 13 to 17), young adults, and those sick or homebound.
- More than three in four respondents evaluate outreach to and advocacy for those in need or distress as “good” or “excellent”.
- Three in four respondents view parish outreach to senior citizens as “good” or “excellent”.
- Seven in ten respondents rate parish outreach as “good” or “excellent” to:
  - families
  - those grieving

## Opportunities for Improvement

- Just over seven in ten respondents agree “somewhat” or “strongly” that they want to volunteer more for the parish. (*See Table 7 for further details about this result.*)

### *Parish Outreach*

- Three in five respondents evaluate parish outreach to inactive Catholics as “fair” or “poor”.
- More than half of the respondents rate parish outreach as “fair” or “poor” to:
  - youth (ages 13 to 17)
  - children (ages 4 to 12)
  - young adults
- More than two in five respondents view parish outreach as “fair” or “poor” to:
  - single adults
  - those divorced or separated
  - single parents
  - new parishioners

### *Faith / Spiritual Development*

- Half of the respondents evaluate youth ministry as “fair” or “poor”.

## Overview of Survey and Report

The Parish Needs Survey contains questions developed by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). Founded in 1964, CARA is a non-profit Georgetown University-affiliated research centre in Washington DC. It conducts social science studies about the Catholic Church and has given permission for the Diocese to utilize or adapt its widely used questions.

The remainder of this report has two parts. **Part 1** focuses on the demographic characteristics of the respondents and their activities in the parish. Full details of this information are provided in the Appendix. **Part 2** provides the results on the evaluations and opinions of parishioners on various aspects of parish life and efforts, persons and programs, and outreach.

### Part 1: Characteristics of Respondents and their Participation in the Parish Summarized Results

The survey contained nine questions (Questions 47-55) that asked about the demographic characteristics of the respondents and their participation in the parish. Most respondents answered all of these questions; however 6% to 20% provided no response for certain items. The responses to these questions have been summarized below. Tables with full details on the responses are found in the Appendix.

#### Summary: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

- Nearly three in five respondents (58%) are female.
- The average age of respondents is 59 years. The age of respondents ranges from 14 years to 93 years.
- More than one in three respondents (36%) is 70 years of age or older.
- Three in five respondents (61%) are married or remarried.
- Highest level of education:
  - One in eight respondents (12%) completed some high school or less.
  - One in seven respondents (14%) noted completion of high school as their highest level of education.
  - Nearly three in four respondents (74%) went beyond high school to college or university.

#### Summary: Activities of Respondents in the Parish

- More than two in three respondents (69%) are registered in this parish and more than four in five respondents (84%) consider this parish as their primary place of worship.
- Respondents have been attending this parish on average for 21 years; range in length of attendance is from 1 year or less to 85 years.
- Nearly two in three respondents (64%) attend Mass every week or more often.
- Involvement in ministries or activities at the parish:
  - Overall, more than two in five respondents (43%) are involved in one or more ministries or activities.
  - One in six respondents (17%) is involved in two or more ministries or activities.
  - Over half of the respondents (57%) are not involved in any ministries or activities with the parish.

## Part 2: Parish Life, Efforts and Outreach Tabulated Results

This section provides the results in table format for Questions 1 to 46. These questions asked about aspects of parish life, persons and programs, parish efforts and outreach. The values in the tables show the percentages of responses for each item, calculated out of 100 percent and based on the number of parishioners who answered the question. Sometimes these values (in the first four columns in most tables) may not add exactly to 100% due to rounding.

In addition, the percentage of all respondents that did not complete a question is determined separately for clarity of comparison. It is calculated out of 100 percent and is based on the total number of valid surveys completed. The column for these percentages is marked NR for No Response. It is important to remember that parishioners could leave a question blank if - it was not applicable to them or the parish; they did not know; or for other reasons they could not provide a response.

For most questions, the response options ranged from 1 to 4 and the meaning of these options is provided in the tables. The results in each table have been re-ordered based on the highest to lowest percentage in the column marked "Exc" which refers to the "Excellent" response option for Questions 1 to 37. For Questions 41 to 46, re-ordering is based on column 4, Strongly Agree.

The information in the following tables may be used to determine parish strengths as well as opportunities for improvement. For example, looking at the percentages in the columns for Excellent or Good, or those two in combination, gives a positive perspective on parish life; i.e., parish strengths. The same applies to those responses that are Strongly Agree and/or Somewhat Agree. Conversely, areas where the parish may view the results as opportunities for improvement are found by looking at percentages in the columns for Poor and/or Fair, and Strongly Disagree and/or Somewhat Disagree.

Statements that represent major findings have been included in the Executive Summary. These are generally based on ratings for strengths that are equal to or greater than 70%. For those that may present opportunities for improvement, the ratings range between 44 to 60%.

**Table 1. Percentage of Respondents for Questions 1 to 7**

*“Please evaluate these aspects of parish life.”*

<b>% Poor</b>	<b>% Fair</b>	<b>% Good</b>	<b>% Exc*</b>	<b>% NR*</b>	<b>Question # and Description – Re-ordered</b>
2	7	25	66	7	7. The quality of music
2	12	48	38	8	6. The quality of liturgies
3	20	46	31	17	5. Outreach to and advocacy for those in need or distress (social justice)
5	19	51	25	10	3. Efforts to educate parishioners in the faith
4	30	43	23	13	4. Encouragement to share your time, talents and treasure with the parish
6	22	51	21	13	2. Vision provided by parish leaders
5	25	49	21	9	1. Sense of community within the parish

\* Exc = Excellent; NR = No Response (don't know, not applicable)

NB: “No Response” ranges from 7% to 17% for these items.

**Table 2. Percentage of Respondents for Questions 8 to 13**

*“Please evaluate the following persons and programs.”*

<b>% Poor</b>	<b>% Fair</b>	<b>% Good</b>	<b>% Exc*</b>	<b>% NR*</b>	<b>Question # and Description – Re-ordered</b>
2	6	40	52	20	10. Helpfulness of the parish office staff
2	7	46	45	12	9. Service provided by priests and deacons
3	11	44	42	12	8. Leadership provided by the pastor
5	22	47	26	38	13. Faith formation for adults
22	28	28	22	58	12. Youth ministry
20	22	37	20	55	11. Children's liturgy

\*Exc = Excellent; NR = No Response (don't know, not applicable)

NB: “No Response” ranges from 12% to 58% for these items.

**Table 3. Percentage of Respondents for Questions 14 to 21**

*“Please evaluate parish efforts to:”*

<b>% Poor</b>	<b>% Fair</b>	<b>% Good</b>	<b>% Exc*</b>	<b>% NR*</b>	<b>Question # and Description – Re-ordered</b>
2	9	51	38	11	15. Nurture your relationship with Jesus Christ
2	16	51	31	14	16. Foster spiritual growth
4	17	49	29	11	14. Communicate with parishioners
4	20	49	28	15	18. Help you practice gospel values in your daily life
5	24	43	28	15	19. Invite you to participate in parish ministries
6	19	48	26	29	20. Manage parish finances
5	21	49	25	13	17. Offer a Catholic view on current issues
11	31	42	15	19	21. Provide opportunities for you to meet other parishioners.

\*Exc = Excellent; NR = No Response (don't know, not applicable)

NB: “No Response” ranges from 11% to 29% for these items.

**Table 4. Percentage of Respondents for Questions 22 to 37**

*“Parishes may reach out to meet the needs of many different types of parishioners.  
Please evaluate parish outreach to these groups.”*

<b>% Poor</b>	<b>% Fair</b>	<b>% Good</b>	<b>% Exc*</b>	<b>% NR*</b>	<b>Question # and Description – Re-ordered</b>
6	23	40	31	46	28. Families
11	21	41	27	44	32. Those sick or homebound
7	18	49	26	38	25. Senior citizens
9	21	44	26	51	33. Those grieving
12	28	40	21	44	37. Visitors and guests
6	27	47	20	47	27. Married couples
10	26	44	20	51	34. Those in financial need
17	27	37	19	49	36. New parishioners
19	30	35	16	52	26. Single adults
18	30	36	15	60	31. Single parents
21	30	34	15	53	22. Children (ages 4 to 12)
27	33	24	15	54	35. Inactive Catholics
11	30	45	14	56	29. Widows or widowers
19	32	35	14	51	24. Young adults
18	28	41	13	57	30. Those divorced or separated
20	36	31	13	53	23. Youth (ages 13 to 17)

\* Exc = Excellent; NR = No Response (don't know, not applicable)

NB: “No Response” ranges from 38% to 60% for these items

**Table 5. Percentage of Respondents for Questions 38 to 40**

*“Using the numbers for items 22-37 above,  
to which three groups should the parish give most priority for outreach?”*

Parishes may reach out to meet the needs of many different parishioners. Of the 16 types of parishioners to whom the parish may provide outreach (that were listed in Questions 22 to 37), respondents were asked to indicate three of these groups to which the parish should give most priority.

Respondents were not asked to rank their three responses so data were combined across the three sets of responses for Questions 38 to 40. The maximum number of responses could have been 1068 (i.e., total number of survey respondents  $n = 356 \times 3$  choices per person = 1068). Many did provide three responses but others only one or two. Some ( $n=93$ ) did not respond to these questions.

The percentages below are based on the total number of responses ( $n=770$ ) provided by 263 respondents.

<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Percentages based on all responses</b>	<b>Names of Groups Arranged by highest to lowest</b>
113	15	23. Youth (ages 13 to 17)
96	12	24. Young adults
74	10	32. Those sick or homebound
72	9	35. Inactive Catholics
71	9	28. Families
64	8	22. Children (ages 4 to 12)
51	7	25. Senior citizens
39	5	33. Those grieving
36	5	36. New parishioners
33	4	34. Those in financial need
25	3	30. Those divorced or separated
23	3	26. Single adults
21	3	27. Married couples
21	3	31. Single parents
18	2	29. Widows or widowers
13	2	37. Visitors and guests

Based on the results in Table 5, the three groups to whom the parish should give most priority for outreach are:

- Youth (ages 13 to 17)
- Young adults
- Those sick or homebound

There were several questions about parish life (Questions 41 to 46) that used a different set of response options. These were based on degrees of agreement with statements. The response options are:

1 = Strongly Disagree                      3 = Somewhat Agree                      NR = No Response  
 2 = Somewhat Disagree                    4 = Strongly Agree

**Table 6. Percentage of Respondents for Questions 41 to 46**  
*“Please respond to the following about parish life.”*

% Disagreement		% Agreement		NR*	Question # and Description – Re-ordered
1	2	3	4		
6	10	36	49	13	44. I would feel comfortable talking with the pastor.
3	15	46	36	13	42. I feel well informed about what goes on in our parish.
5	12	48	34	13	41. I feel included in parish life.
8	20	46	26	29	46. I want to volunteer more for the parish.
9	24	41	26	17	43. I feel adequately informed about parish finances.
11	26	44	19	31	45. Parishioners are encouraged to give input to decisions in the parish

\* NR = No Response (don’t know, not applicable)  
 NB: “No Response” ranges 13% to 31% for these items.

The following table looks at the information from two questions about:

1. the number of ministries or activities that respondents are currently involved in at the parish (see Q48 in the Appendix)
2. wanting to volunteer more for the parish (see Q46 above)

If the parish considers “wanting to volunteer more” as an area for improvement, then it may be useful to look at the breakdown of how parishioners responded to volunteering given their current involvement in the parish. Table 7 below displays the results of this analysis. It is based on data from 70% of respondents (248 out of 356) who answered both of these questions. The information on volunteering more combines the responses of “Strongly Agree” and “Somewhat Agree”.

**Table 7. Breakdown of Respondents’ Current Involvement vs. Volunteering More for Parish**  
*Data from Question 48 in relation to Question 46*

Number of Ministries / Activities Involved in at the Parish	% Wanting to Volunteer More for Parish Combines Strongly Agree & Somewhat Agree Based on data from 248 respondents	
None	39%	(n=97)
One	19%	(n=47)
Two to four	13%	(n=31)
Five or more	1%	(n=3)



**Appendix: Cathedral of St. Catherine of Alexandria Parish**

**Tabulated Results for Characteristics of Respondents and their Participation in the Parish**

Each question as presented in the survey is provided with the results for all its response options. The calculations of percentages were done for the various response options and for the “No response” group as outlined in Part 2.

47. About how *frequently* do you currently attend Mass?

<b>%</b>	<b>Response Options</b>
<1	Never or rarely
3	A few times a year
4	Once or twice a month
28	Almost every week
49	Every week
15	More than once a week
6	No response

48. How many *ministries or activities* are you involved with at the parish?

<b>%</b>	<b>Response Options</b>
57	None
26	One
16	Two to four
1	Five or more
9	No response

49. Years you have attended this parish?

<b>%</b>	<b>Years in Parish</b>
30	Less than 10 years
23	10 – 19 years
20	20 – 29 years
12	30 – 39 years
6	40 – 49 years
5	50 – 59 years
3	60 – 69 years
2	70 years or more
20	No response

- The average number of years that respondents have been attending this parish is 21 years.
- The minimum number of years attending this parish is 1 year or less; the maximum is 85 years.

Questions 50-51 – Please answer “yes” or “no” to the following questions

% Yes	% No	% NR	Number of Question and Description
69	31	12	50. Are you registered in this parish?
84	16	14	51. Is this parish your primary place of worship?

52. Year you were *born*: Year of birth was used to calculate Age of Respondents.

%	Age of Respondents
4	Less than 20 years
7	20 – 29 years
6	30 – 39 years
8	40 – 49 years
16	50 – 59 years
23	60 – 69 years
24	70 – 79 years
12	80 years or more
13	No response

- Ages range from 14 years to 93 years.
- Average age is 59 years.

53. Gender

%	Response Options
42	Male
58	Female
8	No response

54. What *best* describes your current marital status?

%	Response Options
21	Single, never married
61	Married or remarried
7	Divorced or separated
11	Widowed
10	No response

55. What *best* describes your highest level of education?

%	Response Options
12	Some high school or less
14	High school diploma
20	Some college
17	Completed college
27	Bachelor’s degree
10	Graduate degree
8	No response