



# Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate

## *Parish Life Survey* **Our Cluster of Catholic Churches Parish Conklin and Ravenna, Michigan**

### **Executive Summary**

The Our Cluster of Catholic Churches Parish Life Survey was designed by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University. Most of the questions were derived from CARA's database of nationally tested questions, with some questions designed specifically for the parish. The parish distributed the questionnaire to those attending its liturgies over one weekend in June 2019. In all, there were 435 valid responses.

Major findings can be summarized as follows:

#### **Characteristics of Respondents**

- In calendar year 2019, the average age of valid respondents to the in-pew survey at Our Cluster of Catholic Churches Parish is 57. Half are 58 or younger.
- For purposes of analysis, CARA divides Catholics into three age groups: those ages 35 and younger, those ages 36 to 64, and those ages 65 and older. Those ages 36 to 64 (45%) are the most common age group at the parish, followed by those ages 65 and older (39%).
- Nearly three in five (57%) respondents to the survey are female and 43% are male. Seventy-seven percent say they are currently married or remarried. Some 11% have never married, 3% are divorced or separated, and 9% are widowed. Twenty percent report having at least one child or stepchild under age 18 living with them.
- Respondents report different relationships to the Cluster. Forty percent say they are registered at St. Joseph's, 37% at St. Catherine's, and 12% at St. Francis Xavier's. Some 5% say they regularly attend at the Cluster but are not registered at any of the Cluster locations, with 6% self-identifying as visitors on the weekend of the survey.

#### **Assessment of Parish Life and Needs**

- Nine in ten (89%) give Our Cluster of Catholic Churches overall a positive evaluation ("good" and "excellent" combined). Some 28% rate the Cluster as "excellent."
- Some 56% "strongly" agree that they are made to feel welcome at the parish. In a related finding, 26% agree "strongly" that the Cluster has come together as one community.

- Some 88% at least “somewhat” agree that they feel included in parish life, with 43% agreeing “strongly” that they do.
- Efforts to invite parishioners to participate in parish/Cluster life receive an “excellent” rating from 23%.
- Responding parishioners were asked what times of the week they are regularly most available to participate in parish activities, such as committees and adult education. While the different age groups report somewhat different times of availability, 57% report being most regularly available on weekday evenings and 30% report being most regularly available on after the Mass they attend.
- Efforts to foster spiritual growth receive an “excellent” rating from 20% of respondents.
- The following needs are especially likely to receive “high” priority from respondents: youth ministry (58%), children’s religious education/formation (52%), visitation of the sick and homebound (51%), Divine Providence Academy (51%), young adult ministry (46%), ministry to those grieving (45%), and developing a deeper sense of community at the Cluster (43%).
- Respondents were also invited to choose from a predetermined list the three needs to which parish should give most priority. The top five identified are children’s religious education/formation (38%), visitation of the sick and homebound (38%), Divine Providence Academy (35%), youth ministry (34%), and developing a deeper sense of community at the Cluster (32%).

### **Leadership**

- Nearly three in four (73%) give a positive evaluation to the vision provided by Our Cluster leaders, with 23% rating it as “excellent.” The pastor receives an “excellent” rating from 47%, with 36% giving the Pastoral Associate as high a rating.
- Some 46% “strongly” agree they would feel comfortable talking with the pastor.
- Some 50% give an “excellent” rating to the friendliness of the parish office staff at St. Joseph, with 47% rating the friendliness of the parish office staff at St. Catherine/St. Francis Xavier as highly.

### **Worship**

- Masses and liturgies in general receive a positive evaluation from 86% of respondents. Thirty-four percent rate them as “excellent.”
- Some 42% rate the hospitality or sense of welcome at weekend Masses as “excellent.” Among those self-identifying as guests, 65% give the hospitality or sense of welcome at weekend Masses an “excellent” evaluation.

- Forty-one percent give an “excellent” rating to the music in general at the parish. The homilies in general receive an “excellent” rating from 42% of respondents.
- Some 72% attend Mass once a week or more frequently and another 23% attend almost every week. Mass attendance varies some by age group, with those ages 65 and older (89%) most likely to attend at least once a week and those ages 35 and younger (54%) least likely.
- Having more opportunities for devotions such as rosaries and Eucharistic Adoration receives “high” priority from 21% of respondents. Nineteen percent give “high” priority to the parish providing more small group prayer opportunities.

### **Sense of Community**

- The sense of community within the parish receives a positive rating from 74% of respondents. Some 25% give it an “excellent” rating.
- Social activities receive an “excellent” rating from 21% of respondents. Efforts to help respondents meet other parishioners receive as high of a rating from 12%.
- Developing a deeper sense of community at Our Cluster receives “high” priority from 43% of respondents.

### **Formation**

- Efforts to educate parishioners in the faith receive a positive evaluation from 76% of respondents, with 23% giving these efforts an “excellent” rating.
- Twenty-one percent rate as “excellent” efforts to offer a Catholic view on current issues.
- Divine Providence Academy overall receives an “excellent” rating from 35%. Some 45% give as high a rating to the principal of Divine Providence Academy and 44% give as high of a rating to the quality of the teaching at the school.
- Divine Providence Academy is given “high” priority by 51% of respondents. In related findings, 59% “strongly” agree that they support having Divine Providence Academy continue being one of Our Cluster’s major priorities and 47% (of those for whom the question is applicable) agree as strongly that they are considering sending their children to the school.
- Some 28% rate sacramental preparation programs for children and youth an “excellent” rating. A quarter (25%) rate the RCIA process as highly.

- Children’s religious education programs receive an “excellent” rating from 26%, with 46% giving as high a rating to the youth ministry program. Twenty percent give an “excellent” rating to the Director of Religious Education, with 51% rating the Director Youth Ministry as “excellent.”
- About half (52%) place “high” priority on children’s religious education/formation and 58% place as much priority on youth ministry.
- Some 12% say they have attended adult faith formation classes at the parish. Faith formation for adults receives an “excellent” rating from 19%.
- Thirty percent place “high” priority on adult faith formation.

### **Stewardship**

- Ninety-one percent agree at least “somewhat” that they understand the concept of stewardship, with 55% agreeing “strongly” that they do.
- Parish efforts to encourage parishioners to share their time, talents and treasure with the parish receive a positive evaluation from 82%. Some 28% rate these efforts as “excellent.”
- Parish efforts to invite participation in ministries receive an “excellent” evaluation from 18% of respondents.
- A third (33%) report *not* being involved with any ministries or activities at the parish, 30% are involved with one, and 37% are involved with two or more.

### **Evangelization and Parish Outreach**

- Efforts to spread the Gospel/evangelize receive a positive rating from 62% of respondents. Some 17% give these efforts an “excellent” rating.
- When asked to evaluate parish outreach to 15 groups, respondents are most likely to give an “excellent” rating to outreach to teens (38%), children (25%), those sick or homebound (25%), those grieving (25%), and senior citizens (22%). They are least likely to give the same rating to outreach to single parents (14%), those divorced or separated (12%), and single adults (12%).
- Respondents were asked to choose the top three groups to which the parish should give most priority for outreach. The six most commonly selected groups are teens (45%), young adults (44%), those sick or homebound (28%), children (26%), new parishioners (26%), and those grieving (22%).
- Parish outreach to visitors and guests receives an “excellent” rating from 16% of respondents. Some 15% give an “excellent” rating to the parish’s outreach to new parishioners.

## **Social Justice**

- Outreach to and advocacy for those in need receives a positive rating from 67% of respondents. Twenty-one percent rate these efforts as “excellent.”
- Some 25% rate parish outreach to those sick or homebound as “excellent.” Visitation of the sick and homebound receives “high” priority from 51%.
- Parish outreach to those in financial need receives an “excellent” evaluation from 16% of responding parishioners. Providing opportunities for parishioners to help the needy receive “high” priority from 35%.

## **Parish Communications**

- Communication with parishioners receives a positive evaluation from 76% of respondents, with 23% rating these efforts as “excellent.”
- Ways of communicating related to the weekend Masses are particularly likely to be seen positively. Six in ten or more “strongly” agree that they listen to the announcements at Mass (76%) and that the bulletin effectively communicates issues related to parish life (61%). Fewer “strongly” agree that they have visited the Cluster website at least once in the past year for information (55%), that they feel well informed about what goes on in the Cluster (35%), and that they use parish social media as a source of information (32%).