

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



Report

Key Findings: Faith and Practice Survey June 2010

The Archdiocesan Strategic Planning Steering Committee, overseen by the Vicar General, Very Reverend John Canary, offered parishioners an opportunity to participate in a “Faith and Practice Survey.” This survey was designed to help the Archdiocesan Strategic Planning Steering Committee in their work of developing a strategic plan for the Archdiocese. The survey generated over 8,000 responses, enabling the committee to draw important and helpful insights into the thinking of the people of the Archdiocese.

The survey findings shared below are only those that pertain to two specific themes of the strategic plan: Evangelization and Formation. These early findings suggest directions the Archdiocese should take, but more work needs to be done to gather input and to translate these findings into specific decisions and actions. In addition, a more complete survey of the survey results (beyond findings specifically related to Evangelization and Formation) will be prepared and shared separately (including factors instilling and detracting from pride in the Church, reasons for attending or missing Mass, etc...)

Strategic Planning Process

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee has recently received reports from our consultants about the material on the online survey, plus their review of other research, as well as their work on a financial analysis of the budgets of the Archdiocese, parishes as well as Pastoral Center.

The Steering Committee is reviewing all of these reports, as well as sharing them with the Presbyteral and Episcopal Councils. The Steering Committee will continue to meet to decide on next steps. In the mean time, the Steering Committee wishes to share some of the highlights of the reports, which focused on three of five subject areas: Evangelization/Parish Vitality, Formation, and Finance/System Planning. More work needs to be done to gather input and to translate these findings and implications into specific decisions and actions.

Evangelization/Parish Vitality

Key findings:

- Most Catholics who leave the faith do so by age 24. Further, **in our survey, the one factor** that correlated by far the most strongly with the frequency of Mass attendance as an adult was regular Mass attendance as a teenager. **Those who regularly attended Mass as teenagers** were the most likely to regularly attend Mass as an adult.
- The majority of self-identified Catholics are not attending Mass every week, but the majority of this group still want their children to receive the sacraments.
- That being said, there are still large numbers of Catholics – even some who are regular churchgoers – who do not adequately understand and appreciate the meaning and the value of the sacraments.

Implications:

- With respect to evangelization, keeping our teenagers engaged in the faith has to be a high priority in our efforts of evangelization. We know that youth groups have shown to be a good way of keeping teenagers engaged, and the survey gives us some insights on what teenagers liked and disliked about Catholic youth activities, as well as what sorts of things might make them more interested in participating. Giving teens real responsibility in the life of the Church and providing significant service opportunities seem to be important ways to keep them involved in the life of the Church.
- Parenthood is a big opportunity for us to evangelize families who are not fully participating in the life of the Church. Parents still value highly having their children participate in the sacramental life of the Church, especially with respect to baptism & first communion. We need to find ways to take even better advantage of the preparation for these sacraments, and follow-up after them, to evangelize the families as well as to better help parents understand what is expected of them in forming the faith of their children, and to assist them in doing so. We understand that many parishes already make efforts in this way, and we should learn from the best of them and to see how we can adapt their practices in more parishes across the Archdiocese.
- We need to find ways to help Catholics – active, semi-active, and inactive – to better understand and appreciate the meaning and value of the sacraments.

Formation

Key findings:

- The majority of Catholics feel at least somewhat ill equipped regarding the passing on of their knowledge of the faith, although most Catholics seem to understand the basic concepts.
- Even more significantly, gaps occur for Catholics in the transition between knowledge and conviction – in other words, they know what the teachings are but they do not necessarily believe them.
- Catechists (in Catholic schools and in Religious Education Programs) are committed Catholics, but there are gaps in their knowledge, beliefs, and practice as well.

Implications:

- We need to find ways to foster lifelong learning about the Catholic faith through more active inclusion of faith concepts in the forums accessed by most Catholics (e.g., homilies, adult sacramental preparation, etc.).
- We should identify opportunities to engage the hearts of Catholics as they mature in their spiritual lives and assist them in appropriating their beliefs.
- We should identify ways to improve the consistency of our teaching and formation about the life of faith (possible examples including better training and online modules).

The Steering Committee's other three subteams (Finance/Systems Planning, Vocations/Leadership Development and Social Justice) were not directly affected by the survey. However, updates on this work will be given at a later date.

More updates will follow as the survey is summarized and the Steering Committee decides on next steps.