

Diocese will survey parishioners in November

As part of the Diocesan strategic planning process, every parish in the Diocese of Madison will be conducting in-pew parishioner surveys in conjunction with weekend Masses for three weekends, beginning November 5-6. Individuals 18 years or older will be asked to complete the surveys. Hopefully, based on the number of households per parish and the estimates of parishioners who attend Mass, approximately 70,000 surveys will be completed and returned for analysis.

Here are some questions that have arisen regarding the process:

Why are we doing this strategic planning process?

We are compelled to do it in order to ensure the future of Christ's Church in the Diocese. We are facing very real challenges as the number of faithful increase, the centers of population shift, and the number of active priests decline. The planning process is intended to identify how we can best serve the People of the Diocese of Madison in the future.

Why do an in-pew parishioner survey?

The survey provides an opportunity for every adult in every Catholic parish in the diocese to weigh in on the issues and concerns that we face as a local Church.

What information will be gained?

The survey, designed in consultation with diocesan leadership by CARA (an independent Catholic research center based in Washington, D.C.) will take approximately 12 minutes. It is an instrument to help the parish better serve those who attend Mass. It is designed to survey those who attend parish liturgies, rather than all parishioners of record. It contains questions concerning:

- The importance of various aspects of faith to the individuals;
- The level of support for various ministries of the Diocesan Church;
- The level of support for ways of providing for ministry and worship in a time of fewer priests;
- The level of satisfaction with various aspects of parish life and parish programs; and
- Personal demographic information.

How will the information be used?

The data will provide information on the vitality of the parishes as well as the needs and concerns of the parishioners. The rankings by parishioners of diocesan ministries will help to identify the diocesan resources necessary to not only support the ministry of the Bishop but also the health and vitality of the parish communities. Hopefully, the data will not only show us where we are as a Church today but where we need to go as the Church of tomorrow.

How will parishes in the diocese benefit?

Parishes will receive the data collected from the surveys completed in their pews in the spring of 2006. This information will help the parish leadership to begin strategizing for the individual faith community's future. The data will be an indication as to which programs are working well and which need improvement. The demographic information will also help parishes to better understand the needs of their membership based on age, ethnicity, education, and income.

***It will be most helpful to your own parish if you take the survey at your own parish.
Because St. Joseph's and St. Mary's are linked, each will have a few copies of the other's survey.
Those who are unable to take the survey next weekend will have two other opportunities after
Mass on the following two weekends.***