



Toward a Pastoral Plan for St. Margaret Mary Parish

Introduction

The parish survey which we initiated in mid September, reflects a deep love for our faith community and a shared hope for renewal. Parishioners' express gratitude for a strong sense of belonging, inspiring liturgies, and dedicated volunteers, while also recognizing areas where growth and greater connection are needed. The following themes, drawn from parishioner comments, highlight our community's priorities and offer direction for a pastoral plan that seeks to build a vibrant, faith-filled, and welcoming parish centered on Christ and inspired by St. Margaret Mary's devotion to the Sacred Heart.

1. Community and Welcome

A consistent theme throughout the survey is the importance of **hospitality and belonging**. Parishioners value the warmth of greetings at Mass, opportunities to socialize, and a strong sense of parish identity. Many emphasized the need to move beyond seeing one another only in church, to **deepen personal relationships and spiritual friendships**. There is a call to ensure that **no one feels like an outsider**, especially newcomers, immigrants, and those from diverse cultural backgrounds. Suggestions include more social gatherings after Mass, parish-wide events, support for new parishioners, and recognition of those who serve quietly behind the scenes. Parishioners also asked for **greater appreciation for groups such as the Catholic Women's League, Outreach and the Knights of Columbus**, who help weave together the fabric of parish life.

2. Faith Formation and Evangelization

Parishioners desire to **grow in their knowledge and confidence in the faith**. There is strong support for **Bible study, adult faith formation, and catechesis on Church teaching**, including how the Church engages with modern moral and social issues. An important part of this vision is **evangelization**, reaching those who are occasionally connected, inactive, or searching for faith. Parishioners recognize that evangelization begins with welcome, but must also include **ongoing formation, spiritual renewal, and witness**. Opportunities for **bible study, adoration, reconciliation, spiritual talks and devotion to the Sacred Heart** were frequently mentioned as essential sources of grace and renewal.

3. Youth, Young Adults, and Families

One of the most urgent concerns is how we **bring young people and families back to church**. Parishioners long to see more children, youth, and young adults active in parish life. Many called for a **strong youth ministry, children's liturgy at multiple Masses, programs for parents and grandparents, and faith-based activities for teenagers and young adults**. There is also a recognition that young families need **support and encouragement** in raising their children in faith. **Workshops on parenting, family spirituality, and intergenerational faith formation** were among the ideas proposed. Parishioners see this as vital for the future of our community.

4. Liturgy, Prayer, and Spiritual Life

Our liturgies are seen as a source of pride and strength. Parishioners appreciate **inspiring homilies, uplifting music, and reverent celebration**, but also note areas for improvement, particularly **sound quality, silence, and sacred space**. Many wish to deepen their prayer life through **bible study, adoration, devotion to the Sacred Heart, and adoration**. A recurring theme is the need for **consistency and stability in pastoral leadership**, so that spiritual life can flourish under sustained guidance and vision.

5. Outreach, Service, and Social Concern

Parishioners are proud of the parish's generosity, especially toward the **Haiti** mission, but feel called to **strengthen local outreach** to those who are poor, lonely, or struggling. There is a desire to understand and respond to **local poverty, reconciliation with Indigenous peoples**, and other social issues in light of Catholic social teaching. Several comments spoke of creating **support groups for those grieving, separated, or in crisis**, as well as continuing to celebrate the hidden service of parish volunteers. Parishioners want the parish to be a **visible sign of Christ's compassion** in the wider community.

6. Communication, Stewardship, and Parish Administration

Many parishioners expressed the need for **clear, consistent communication** between parish leadership and the community. Regular updates, whether through newsletters, email, or the parish website, help keep parishioners informed and engaged. Stability in staffing and priestly leadership was mentioned as essential for continuity, vision, and trust. **Parishioners also noted the importance of technology in strengthening outreach and connection across all generations**.

7. Financial Accountability and Care for Parish Resources

A recurring theme is the call for **greater transparency and accountability** in parish finances and administration. Parishioners want to be **regularly informed about the financial health of the parish**, how funds are spent, and how audit recommendations are being implemented. Clear, consistent communication about stewardship builds confidence, encourages generosity, and deepens a shared sense of responsibility.

There is also a strong awareness that **financial stability and sound management** are vital for sustaining ministry, supporting staff, and maintaining programs. Parishioners highlighted the importance of **responsible care for parish buildings and property**, both as sacred spaces and as gifts entrusted to the community's care. Regular maintenance, thoughtful improvements, and open reporting on facility needs all contribute to a culture of good stewardship.

Finally, parishioners emphasized that investing in technology, transparent communication, and prudent financial planning are not just administrative necessities, they are **expressions of faithfulness**, ensuring that the parish can continue its mission with integrity and confidence.

A Vision Forward

Drawing on these themes, St. Margaret Mary Parish seeks to become a **Christ-centered community of welcome, faith, and service**, a parish that nurtures discipleship, celebrates reverent worship, reaches out in compassion, and grows in unity through the love of the Sacred Heart.

Our pastoral plan will focus on **seven key priorities**:

1. **Strengthening community and welcome**
2. **Deepening faith formation and evangelization**
3. **Renewing youth and family ministry**
4. **Enhancing worship and spiritual life**
5. **Promoting outreach and social concern**
6. **Building strong communication and leadership stability**
7. **Ensuring financial accountability and stewardship of parish resources**

Together, we will work to make St. Margaret Mary Parish a vibrant, welcoming, and faith-filled community—alive in Christ and responsive to the needs of our time.

Daily Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation

In preparing this report, every comment and suggestion from the parish survey was read carefully and taken to heart. Parishioners gave their time and prayerful thought to express what matters most to them, and this reflection is offered in that same spirit of honesty and gratitude. The request for the return of **daily Mass at 7:15 a.m., Monday**

to Saturday, and for regular celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation before each Mass was noted by many and is a clear sign of deep faith and devotion within our community. It is important to say clearly that the fact these requests do not appear in the main body of the report does not mean that they were ignored. They were read, appreciated, and respected. This response is offered to be faithful to the survey process and to the sincere faith of those who made these suggestions.

Many parishioners long for more frequent opportunities for Mass and confession out of a **genuine love for the Eucharist and for God's mercy**, which are indeed the heart of our Catholic life. Their devotion is a beautiful strength of St. Margaret Mary Parish.

At the same time, we must recognize the reality that our parish is now served by **one priest who carries the many responsibilities of pastoral care, liturgy, administration, and spiritual leadership**. These duties are both a privilege and a profound demand. To expect a full weekday schedule of early Masses and daily confessions would place an **unrealistic and unsustainable burden** on a single individual, especially as he continues to serve faithfully at the age of sixty-eight.

In this context, it is important to remember the words of the late **Pope Francis**, who often cautioned the Church against forms of **clericalism**, that subtle expectation that the priest alone must carry the full weight of the Church's life and mission. The vitality of a parish depends on the **shared responsibility of all the baptized**, each of whom is called to bring their gifts of faith, prayer, and service for the building up of the Body of Christ.

Therefore, while the parish cannot at this time restore a daily early morning Mass or daily confessions, we will seek **creative and prayerful ways to deepen the community's access to the sacraments and the life of prayer**. This could include occasional early morning liturgies, expanded opportunities for communal reconciliation services, and encouragement of prayer gatherings, Bible reflection, or Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament as ways of sustaining daily devotion.

Our hope is to foster a **balanced and sustainable rhythm of parish life**, one that nourishes the spiritual hunger of parishioners while also safeguarding the health and well-being of those who serve. By recognizing both the sacred and the human dimensions of ministry, we live more fully the Gospel's call to compassion, mutual care, and shared discipleship within the Body of Christ.

This report is based on an invitation to parishioners in mid September to participate in a survey that will be used as a first step in developing a pastoral plan for St. Margaret Mary Parish. 125 replies were received by October 18 and collated in two stages for this report.