

# ST. JAMES CATHEDRAL

January, 2016

Dear Friends,

Back in September, about 1,200 of our parish households were invited to participate in a survey about our Cathedral parish. We are grateful for the large number (over 600) who responded. It has taken some time and effort to sift through the data but we are now in a position to share some of the results with you.

If I had to sum up the survey in a sentence, it would be this: you like your parish, you support it, and you feel that you are a part of its life and ministry. And even though we are a very large parish and pray in a very large building, by far the majority of you feel that St. James is a welcoming and warm community, *your* community; you know that your presence and participation are vital to the life of this community, and you are happy to be part of it.

In my view, that is no small achievement, nor is it typical of cathedral parishes across our country.

There are several reasons for this – and they emerge quite clearly in the survey responses. You love the way the Church's liturgy is celebrated in the Cathedral, you value very highly the service, outreach, and social justice orientation of the parish, and you appreciate the many opportunities provided for growing in the understanding of your faith.

The survey instrument we used was identical to one we conducted in September, 2010, so it is especially helpful to see the areas where we've grown, and the areas where we still have some growing to do. In the past five years we've begun new ministries to our teens and families, and our progress in those areas is reflected in the results of the survey. But there are still challenges. Because we are such a large parish, sometimes it can feel too big, even impersonal. And many of you, who come from long distances to pray here on Sundays, find it difficult to get back during the week and take part in all the other activities that make this place what it is.

Our Pastoral Vision Council, as well as our parish staff, are in the process of reviewing all the data and the feedback which you provided, and the results will shape a new five-year vision for the parish. Your response to the survey will be a good starting place for some honest self-evaluation as well as an opportunity to grow.

I hope you will take some time to review the results. And I hope that doing so will make you want to become even more involved in the life of our unique and wonderful parish!

  
Father Michael G. Ryan

## SURVEY RESULTS

The main portion of the survey invited respondents to respond to 20 statements. Respondents agreed or disagreed with the statement, or remained neutral. The results of this portion of the survey are in the bar chart on the facing page. In addition, each respondent was invited to reflect in writing on the strengths and weaknesses of the parish. Hundreds of you did so. Here is a digest of what you identified as our strengths and weaknesses, as well as some more general comments.

## WHAT IS OUR GREATEST STRENGTH AS A PARISH?

We received hundreds of written responses in addition to the numeric data. The strengths of the parish were identified as follows:

- **FATHER RYAN'S LEADERSHIP.** "Father Ryan is inspiring, down to earth, kind, spiritual, energetic... so many qualities I admire." "He is accepting of everyone, does not use language to offend." "Our pastor has established a model of faith and worship that avoids digression into ideology and focuses on service and personal growth. Father Ryan does everything possible to make each of us feel valued and valuable to the life of St. James."
- **OUTREACH TO THE POOR.** "Serving the poor and marginalized and truly making each person feel welcome." "St. James takes to heart Pope Francis' message of living the Gospel authentically. It takes Jesus seriously when he says that we are obligated to reach out to those in need." "The kitchen serving almost 200 people a day. I'm not sure everyone who walks in the doors to St. James realizes this fact." "St. James Cathedral's outreach to the poor, homeless, low income is exceptional and a role model for many other churches, regardless of faith, across the Puget Sound."
- **LITURGY AND MUSIC.** "I deeply appreciate our beautiful, Spirit-filled liturgies which so enrich my life." "The music program is a wonderful way of reaching people in prayer and giving many musicians an opportunity to learn and grow." "The heart of love shining through all aspects of St. James make it a gem of Catholic tradition. There is love in

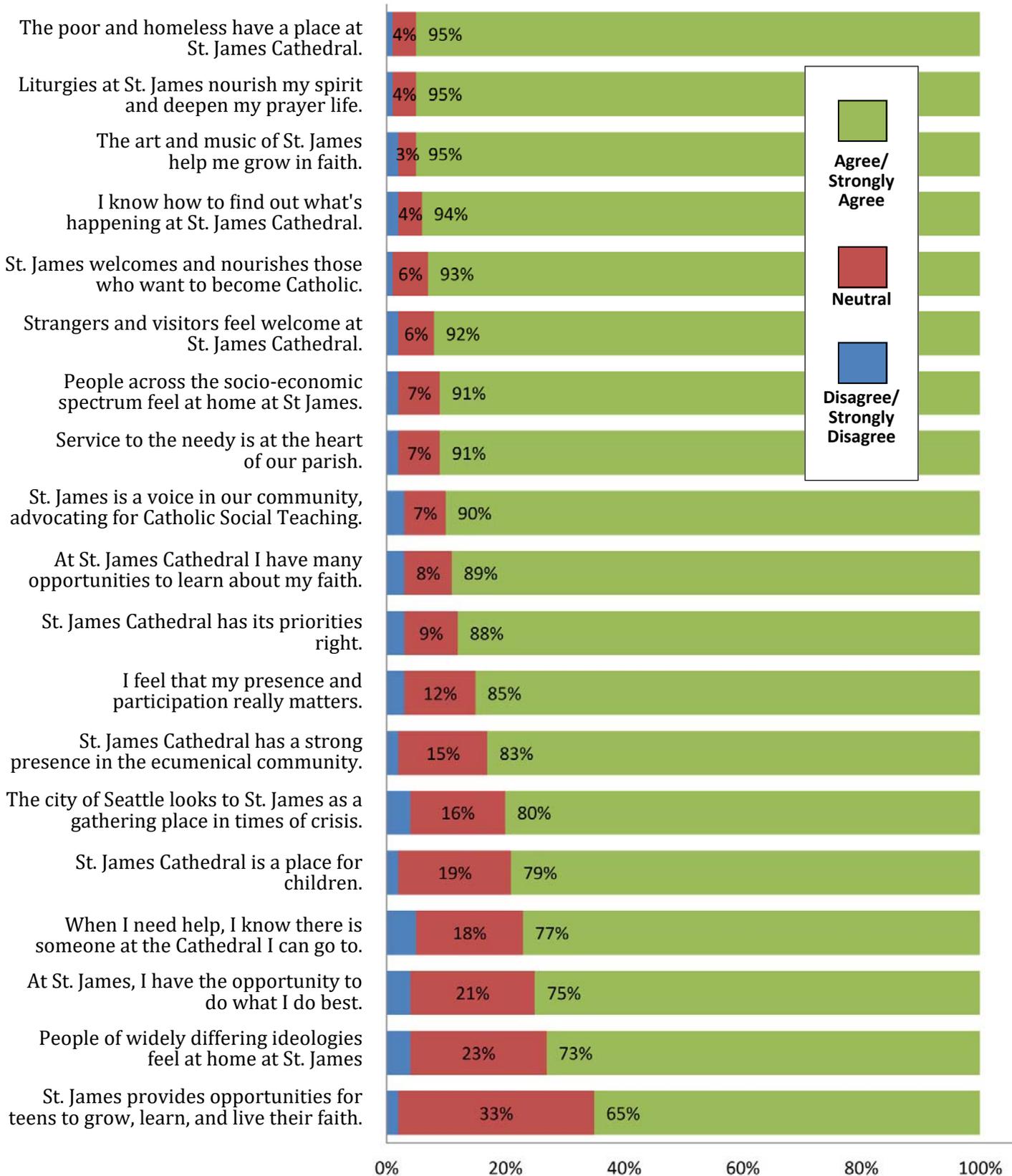
*"A vibrant community that worships God in beauty and serves in the midst of the community"*

the attention to beauty in the place and the celebrations of music and liturgy." "The most beautiful music in the world is right here at St. James."

- **SENSE OF WELCOME.** "It is truly a communion of the faithful. All are genuinely welcomed. And it inspires!" "Welcoming without judgment." "Welcome to those who come through its doors. Openness to needs of the folks who have special needs." "A feeling of openness. All are welcome. No judgment." "I think everyone has a home at St. James Cathedral and feels 'at home' when they are there." "A welcoming environment with ministers who make you feel at home regardless of your background, ideology, etc."
- **DIVERSITY.** "The open-mindedness and acceptance of all people of the community." "The diversity of the parish is a huge strength." "Our greatest strength is our diversity. In any Mass, you can find homeless and rich, gay and other minorities. It adds a lot." "The diversity of the parish, its willingness to embrace new people and people who have been away for a while. There is a sense of warmth here at this parish."

Other strengths identified included the breadth of the ministries, the involvement of so many volunteers, and the beauty of the Cathedral itself. These comments capture what many expressed: "While the building and the mass are ornate, Father Ryan and the parish staff feel warm and approachable." "Modeling for the world of Catholics—indeed the world at large—how to welcome, how to inspire, how to motivate those seeking motivation, inspiration, solace, and community!" "Focus on humble service, leading by example, rather than judging and condemning." "St. James is a family, a community that welcomes diversity, that takes care of the poor and those in need, that elevates faith and fosters spiritual growth." "St. James is a wonderful balance of traditional liturgy and a more progressive social ethos."

Back in September 2015, we conducted a survey of 1,200 parish households, inviting them to respond to 20 statements about the Cathedral and also to offer their comments on our strengths and weaknesses as a parish. The survey was a duplicate of the survey we conducted in 2010, and provides a helpful glimpse into the ways we've grown as a parish. Results of the 2010 Survey are available at our parish website. This report offers some highlights of the survey results for 2015.



## WHAT IS OUR GREATEST WEAKNESS AS A PARISH?

There were hundreds of responses to this question as well. These are some common threads among those identifying our greatest weakness as a parish (beginning with the most commonly identified issues):

- **SENSE OF WELCOME.** “Although emphasis is put on welcoming guests and newcomers, the people in the pews are not very open or friendly until you become known by many in the parish. I try to go out of my way to smile and greet others because many did not do that for me when I was new.” “Being more friendly... People seldom say good morning when you enter the pews. Some actually appear annoyed when you enter the pews.” “The coldness of the parishioners to new, and visitors.” “Visitors are warmly invited to go to coffee hour, but then, when they get there, nobody takes any notice of them.” “It seems like there are those on the inside and those on the outside.”
- **TOO BIG.** “We need more intentional ways to build connections and a sense of community with one another. We are big enough that most of us don’t know many others with whom we worship. There is a sense of disconnection at times.” “It is not easy to get to know other parishioners, many of whom come from long distances. Overcoming this will take the parish a lot of imagination and creativity. But it is worth the effort.” “Our size demands that we figure out ways to gather in smaller groups. I realize we have tried many things, and some have responded, but it’s the most connected ones. We cannot stop striving for this.”
- **NOT ENOUGH YOUNG PEOPLE.** “We need to ensure that the young people of the community—and there are a lot of them in Seattle—are somehow reached.” “Encourage the youth to become more active in the parish and in ministries.” “We need to attract younger people (which for me means anyone under 40).”
- **DISENGAGEMENT OF PARISHIONERS.** “I think there is a core of active parishioners who serve on all the committees and attend all the events, which can lead to some people feeling like there’s an ‘in-crowd’ that is difficult to penetrate.... I do think we could be even more vibrant as a community if we

*“most of us don’t know many others with whom we worship. There is a sense of disconnection at times”*

involve those who are currently sitting on the sidelines.” “Another weakness is the relatively small percentage of parishioners who do the vast majority of the giving, both financial and otherwise.”

- **NEED MORE PRO-LIFE EFFORTS.** “Need stronger, positive pro-life outreach, such as support for women in crisis pregnancies and for poor parents with infants and young children.” “Our pro-life ministry needs to be more visible and advertised in the bulletin every Sunday, too.”

Some other areas identified included: a sense of there being a liberal bias; a desire for more programs for families with young children; requests for a ministry to divorced persons, ongoing bible study, more innovative outreach opportunities; concerns about the lack of parking and ongoing issues with the sound system.

## GENERAL COMMENTS

The general comments offered were very wide-ranging. One common theme was the pride parishioners take in belonging to St. James. The following are a few comments that capture the spirit of many others:

- “Our commitment to serving as a herald for the best of what the Catholic church can look like, sound like, feel like, act like. Do we always hit the mark? No, but we are on the journey, and giving many many much hope.”
- “I come away a better person every time I leave there, for either Mass, meeting, community service, or whatever.”
- “As for me, I love St. James Cathedral. Every time I enter the Church, I feel that I am blessed, holy, and have peace.”
- “I am an itinerant parishioner, but always return to St. James. It is home.”

We are grateful to all who completed the survey and took the time to offer their comments, suggestions, and criticisms. The results of the survey will be invaluable to the Pastoral Vision Council and Pastoral Team as we develop a new five-year plan for the parish.