

2026

Parish Survey Report

CONSOLIDATED SUMMARY

READING THIS REPORT

The findings presented throughout this report reflect the views of those parishioners who chose to participate in the survey. While the survey may not represent every perspective within the parish, the number of responses provides valuable insight into the experiences, priorities and aspirations of a significant proportion of the parish community. The findings should therefore be viewed as an important source of information to guide discussion and future planning rather than as a definitive measure of parish performance.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This report presents data collected from **186 parishioners** between **1-31 May, 2026** using a hybrid online (103 responses) and paper (83 responses) survey to guide future parish planning. This represents a 226% increase in participation from the previous survey conducted at end-2022.

The survey was conducted using an online questionnaire (Microsoft Forms) and included a combination of demographic, multiple-choice, rating-scale (Likert), and open-ended questions. Quantitative responses have been analysed using descriptive statistics, while written responses have been reviewed and grouped into common themes. Direct quotations included in this report have been selected to illustrate recurring themes and have been anonymised to protect privacy.

RESPONDENT PROFILE SUMMARY

Responses represented a broad cross-section of the St Mary's community. Respondents were predominantly women and people aged 65 years and over, with most identifying as married and lifelong Catholics. Just over half lived within the parish boundaries, while the survey also captured the perspectives of parishioners from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds. Regular participation in parish life was evident, with the majority attending Mass weekly, relatively few accessing the parish radio Mass, and many having been members for more than 20 years.

KEY FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

Overall, the findings indicate that St Mary's is regarded as a welcoming, faith-filled and spiritually enriching community. Respondents consistently identified the reverent celebration of the Mass, strong pastoral leadership and the welcoming atmosphere as defining strengths of the parish. The survey also highlighted opportunities to strengthen parish life through increased community connection, improved communication and broader opportunities for parishioners to participate in ministries and social activities.

Importantly, the findings demonstrate a community that is highly engaged and genuinely invested in the future of the parish. The large number of thoughtful written responses reflects the care parishioners have for St Mary's and their willingness to contribute to its continued growth.

OUR GREATEST STRENGTHS

- Parishioners consistently described St Mary's as welcoming and inclusive.
- The celebration of the Mass and quality of liturgy are highly valued.
- Respondents expressed strong appreciation for the parish clergy and pastoral leadership.
- The parish is recognised as providing meaningful opportunities for prayer and spiritual growth.
- Volunteers make a significant contribution to parish life and are highly valued.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

- Create more opportunities for parishioners to build friendships and community.
- Increase activities for young adults, families and children.
- Improve communication about parish activities and ministries.
- Make volunteering opportunities easier to find and join.
- Continue to support faith formation across all age groups.

PARISH EXPERIENCE

The findings across the themes of belonging, relationships and spiritual connection indicate that many respondents have a positive experience of St Mary's, particularly in feeling welcomed, valued and supported in their faith. However, the survey also captured a range of neutral and less positive experiences, highlighting that not all parishioners feel equally connected to the parish community.

While the results point to many strengths on which the parish can continue to build, they also identify opportunities to strengthen relationships, foster greater participation and ensure that all parishioners experience a genuine sense of belonging and spiritual connection.

WHY PARISHIONERS CHOOSE ST MARY'S

Respondents identified a range of reasons for choosing St Mary's, with many highlighting the quality of the liturgy, the welcoming community, the leadership of the clergy, convenient Mass times, family connections and the beauty and heritage of the church. Many respondents indicated that the parish meets their faith and spiritual needs through meaningful worship, opportunities for prayer and a strong sense of Catholic tradition.

At the same time, some respondents identified opportunities to better support parishioners through enhanced faith formation, increased opportunities for fellowship and connection, greater engagement with young people and families, and more accessible pastoral care and communication.

Representative comments included:

"Because I grew up in this church, I think it is a beautiful basilica and I feel a sense of home and peace whenever I'm present."

"Great priests and wonderful homily."

"Originally, I chose to attend St Mary's because I was returning to the faith and wanted a church that physically felt a 'Church'. The grandeur, craftsmanship, artwork and classical design of St Mary's called to the traditionalist in me. Now that I've been attending St Mary's for a several months, I chose to come because the priests and services are welcoming, traditional and true to the Church."

"Love the connection with Viqueque."

"I like the concept of Cafe Light where you can talk to parishioners after mass and socialise. There should be more of these activities where the church community can meet after mass and meet fellow parishioners for a cuppa."

A recurring theme throughout the survey was the desire for stronger community connections. While respondents valued the parish's welcoming atmosphere, many expressed interest in opportunities to meet others, particularly following Mass or through organised parish activities.

Common suggestions included:

- regular parish morning teas / shared meals
- parish dinners
- guest speaker evenings
- small faith-sharing groups
- social gatherings for families
- activities for older parishioners
- opportunities for adult faith formation
- opportunities for young adults to connect.
- identifying new parishioners at Mass
- creating newcomer information packs
- promoting parish groups and ministries more actively.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Although respondents generally expressed positive experiences of parish life, the survey also identified factors that can limit participation. These included:

- limited awareness of parish activities
- busy family and work commitments
- uncertainty about how to become involved
- feeling that existing groups are already well established
- limited opportunities for younger adults.

WHAT PARISHIONERS TOLD US

Across the written responses, five themes emerged consistently.

PARISHIONERS VALUE:

- a welcoming atmosphere
- meaningful worship
- friendly clergy and volunteers
- opportunities for spiritual growth
- a strong Catholic identity.

PARISHIONERS WOULD ALSO LIKE:

- more opportunities to build friendships
- increased social events
- stronger connections across generations
- easier ways to volunteer
- better communication about parish activities.

STRATEGIC REFLECTION

The survey indicates that St Mary's already possesses the essential foundations of a healthy parish community: welcoming hospitality, strong worship and committed parishioners.

The next stage of growth is not necessarily attracting more people through new programs alone, but helping existing parishioners develop deeper relationships with one another. Strengthening community life beyond Sunday worship has the potential to increase participation, encourage volunteering and foster a stronger sense of belonging for both long-standing and new parishioners.

This aligns closely with the Church's vision of a parish as a community of missionary disciples—where people are not only welcomed into worship but also invited into meaningful relationships, shared service and ongoing faith formation.