



March 4, 2022

Dear Holy Spirit Parishioners,

Thank you to everyone who completed surveys by Our Sunday Visitor and the parish in 2021. The information you have shared with us has been invaluable in providing data to move forward in the pastoral planning process. Nearly 40% of the December parish survey respondents had not filled out the OSV survey, so we were able to reach a broader segment of our parish. We analyzed, discussed, and prayed over the results of both surveys, and while the survey responses overall were very positive, areas for focus and growth also emerged. Those areas include the following three main themes:

1. **CONNECTEDNESS** - We heard that many of you are feeling disconnected from parish life, and that you are struggling to connect with one another and our three new priests. We heard from new parishioners and visitors that they have come to mass and left without any greeting from another human in our parish, or have tried to sign up for a ministry and never received a call back in return. We even heard from people who feel like they are on the brink of giving up on their faith.
2. **THE MASS EXPERIENCE** - We heard that the pandemic and pastoral changes have led to a desire for more joy at mass.
3. And last but definitely not least, **YOUNG FAMILIES** - We heard from our young families that they care deeply about passing the Faith on to their children, but need more tangible, spiritual and moral support from our community to bring their little ones to the Lord.

These statements challenge us, yet if we allow ourselves to stay open, they also compel us. We need connection with one another, and we need the Mass. We need children, as they are the future of our faith. We need new members, they bring new gifts and energy to our faith community. We need each other. And we all need Jesus. The survey laid bare gaps in our ministry and areas where we have been complacent as a parish. Yet everything that feels broken has given us a chance to build anew. These challenges are our opportunities.

Despite the challenges we've faced in the past few years, the overall feeling of our parish community is still positive, with 96.2% of respondents rating our parish as good or higher (*Figure 1*), and 88% indicating they will probably or definitely stay at the parish (*Figure 2*). We continue to be a committed faith community.



Considering everything you know about Holy Spirit, how would you rate it overall?  
625 responses

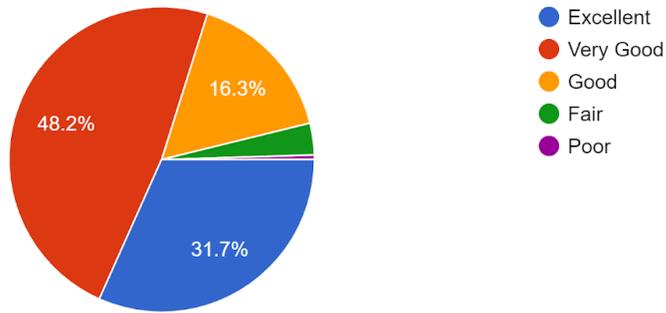


Figure 1.

Assuming you do not relocate from the current area in which you live, how likely is it that you/your household will stay at Holy Spirit?  
624 responses

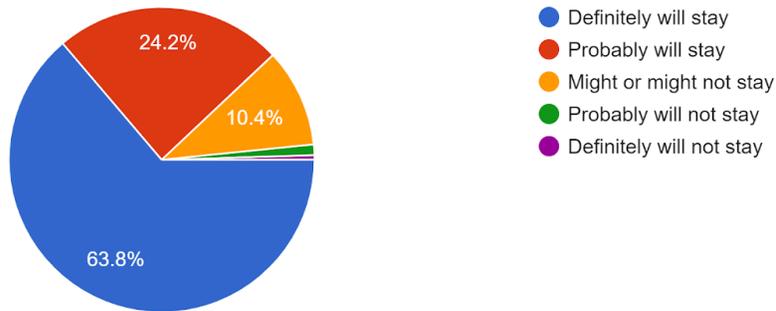


Figure 2.



The overwhelming word used to describe our parish culture in the survey was *welcoming*. We heard from our parishioners that we aspire above all to be a welcoming, inclusive, and joyful parish community, but we also heard from you that we need to continue to work towards these goals, that welcoming does not happen without concrete acts of hospitality. Father Phil encouraged our parish to have a culture of welcome, and he was the reason many of you joined this parish and stayed here to build this community. Father Dan continued that effort, and now our work to carry our culture of welcome, inclusion and joy forward is the greatest gift that we could give back to them. . . and to ourselves! Together with our pastor, Father Dale Ehrman, and our associates Father Andrew Thornton and Father Cole Daily, we each now have the opportunity to be the reason people join Holy Spirit Parish at Geist. . .and stay.



*Father Dan Gartland, Father Dale Ehrman and Father Phil Bowers at the groundbreaking of our Parish Life Center Expansion Project, 2020*

The Pastorate Planning Committee and Pastoral Council will continue work over the next few months to discern and finalize a three-year pastoral plan that we will submit to the diocese. However, with your help we plan to start moving forward now. We first acknowledge that we have endured many changes that are beyond our control. But we also claim that we are the people of God of Holy Spirit Parish at Geist, and with His grace, we move forward. We are responsible for being who God is calling us to be.

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*A Pastorate of the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana*



In that spirit, we are inviting each parishioner to join us in choosing a concrete act of hospitality, welcome or kindness to perform at church each week this Lent. It can be as simple as a smile or greeting to someone sitting alone at mass, inviting a new person to sit with you at the Fish Fry, or you might even prayerfully consider joining one of our hospitality ministries.

We'll follow up with you again with a formal publication and more action steps when the pastorate planning goals are complete. The work of these goals is just beginning, but with God's help we can accomplish it as a faith community.

Yours in Christ,

The Holy Spirit Parish at Geist Pastoral Council

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