

2022



Survey of People of Color

REPORT TO ST THOMAS MORE LEADERSHIP TEAM

PRESENTED BY THE ST THOMAS MORE IMAGE AND LIKENESS COMMITTEE
MAY, 2022



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St. Thomas More Catholic Church, Chapel Hill, NC
Image and Likeness Committee
Survey of People of Color
Conducted on October 9-17, 2021

I Background and Objective

During the past decade, the Catholic Community of St Thomas More has grown and become more diverse in membership, with a large contribution from the Hispanic population. Between 1990 and 2006 the number of Hispanic households affiliated to St Thomas More grew from 1400 to 2900. The church responded to this rapid growth by establishing a Hispanic Ministry in 2000-01. The Faith Development program is integrated with the Hispanic community, established bilingual family retreats for sacramental preparation, has begun translating all letters and documents into Spanish, and established regular meetings with Hispanic parents to convey information and to hear their concerns

Apart from the rapid growth in Hispanic congregation, the Parish growth has also benefited from the rapid increase of immigrants to Chapel Hill and neighboring areas, communities of Asian, African, Polynesian, and Indigenous heritage. Besides these immigrants, there is the often “invisible group” the African American, descendants of slavery who have always been here but whose needs have never really been “seen” or “recognized” and addressed by the church.

The rapid growth and diversification of communities seen at all population levels in the country and community have also been reflected in the church, requiring the church to adapt to the changing population it serves today.

Despite the many articles and amendments to the constitution that laid out the frameworks for ensuring that all American citizens are treated equally, like other institutions, the church has lagged knowingly or unknowingly in extending these privileges to their congregations. Although many black people had been murdered and or unjustly treated, the church had remained largely silent and had not taken to address these issues. The brutal and inhuman killing of Gorge Floyd, captured on camera, and widely circulated, led to global demonstrations by the Black Lives Matter movement which seems to have been a wakeup call for all actors including the church that had thus far been silent.

Many actors ceased at this moment to reflect on their own institutions and sought for ways to take some action or at the very least be seen as caring and willing to address issues of racism within their establishments. As a national uproar over the death of George Floyd while in police custody in Minneapolis continued, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops acknowledged the anger felt by many Americans who perceive in Mr. Floyd’s death yet another instance of police violence against African Americans. They called racism a “real and present danger,” not a relic

of the nation's past, adding, "We cannot turn a blind eye to these atrocities and yet still try to profess to respect every human life," the bishops said. "We serve a God of love, mercy, and justice." The bishops concluded.

With all these, came a renewed responsibility for the church to fulfill its mission to pray, serve and spread the Gospel with joy. The question was whether the Church was meeting the needs of all its parishioners adequately. As a follow up to the bishops' conference, recognizing that nearly 50% of the congregation were people of color (POC), the Image and Likeness Committee (ILC) was established. The goals of which are to find out if the Church is adequately aware of the needs of the POC and if they were being served adequately and to support the parish in developing and offering programming that deepens Catholic understanding that all people are made in God's Image and Likeness with an emphasis on addressing racism and diversity within the congregation. The ILC was tasked with finding out from the parishioners who self-identified as POC, their needs and if they felt they were served and well represented in the church.

To better understand the issues faced by POC, the ILC set out to collect data that would support their recommendations and established a survey subcommittee (list of committee members is in Acknowledgements) to design and conduct a survey among the non-white members of the congregation.

The survey sub-committee was set for the first time on January 30, 2021. A survey was designed and received input on questions from representatives of each demographic group.

The ILC survey's specific purpose was to find out how people of color feel about their engagement in our parish, what changes they might like to see to make it a more welcoming and inclusive environment and to identify what they feel are barriers to participating fully on committees and in leadership. The goal was to give the committee direct and actionable insights about the experiences of people of color (POC) in our church.

The target population was parishioners over 18 years old who self-identify on their parish registration as an ethnicity other than white/Caucasian.

II Methodology

- The Survey Team met every week and worked during the next months. The survey of 15 questions was finalized, then presented to Fr. Scott and the Leadership Team for approval. The survey was approved on May 13, 2021.
- After approval, the Spanish-speaking members of the survey team translated the survey into Spanish. The Burmese version was to be sent to the communication staff, but this task was not completed in time to distribute the survey.
- Final corrections to the survey questionnaire and testing of the Google forms were performed during the next four months. The survey was launched on Saturday October 9, 2021, in English and Spanish, with a closing date of Sunday October 17, 2021.
- The survey was promoted online in the e-bulletin, the parish website, and via email to the target parishioners. A link to the Google form and a QR code was included for the target population to access the survey.
- The survey was also announced in the weekly paper bulletin and after each mass. The announcements were made by the priest presiding the masses. Paper surveys were distributed and collected in the Friends & Family Hall after the masses by volunteers of the survey team and other parishioners of the parish (5 Hispanics and 2 non-Hispanics).
- The survey data was transferred from the paper forms, collected after the masses, to the online Google form. At the end of October 2021, all the results of the English and Spanish surveys were compiled. The Burmese surveys were never received.
- The analysis and reporting were delayed by personal circumstances that prevented several committee members from participating.
- On February 14, 2022, another volunteer-parishioner joined the survey team and on February 9, 2022, she presented a draft summary report of the results to the ILC survey team.
- The analysis (calculations and graphs) was made based on the data collected in the Google spreadsheet given by the Google forms.
- The survey team revised the presentation and report. Changes were made, and the final report of the ILC Survey to People of Color of St. Thomas More Catholic Church was completed on April 1, 2022.

III. Conclusion: Statistical results

The total number of parishioners of color who completed the survey was 146. This represents 7.1% of 2054 total active parishioners of color. Surveys submitted in Spanish were 81 and, in English were 65. It is important to note that 25 English-speaking respondents identified as Hispanic. Also, one Spanish-speaking respondent identified as Black/African.

The total number of questions in the survey was 15 (plus sub-set questions). The survey was a mix of multiple choice, close ended questions, ranking and open ended, write in questions. Response rate was high with 14 questions 93% completed (136 min/146), and one at 58% (85/146). Five open ended question response rates were above 90%, three between 76% and 62%.

Demographics

- The largest ethnic respondent group was the Hispanics, with 105 participants, representing 71%, followed by 21 Black/Africans (14.4%), then 17 Asian/Pacific Islanders (11.6%). The “Other” ethnic group was 3 (2%).
- Note the POC audience includes Asian/Pacific and Black/African racial groups with different ethnicities, combined with Hispanic ethnic groups with some racial differences.
- The majority (73.3%) of respondents were between ages 25 and 56 (Millennials and Generation X) and were busy working age adults with limited free time.
- Most of these parishioners live less than 10 miles radius: 64% in Chapel Hill, 14.4% in Durham, and 6.2% in Carrboro. Others live in Pittsboro, Graham, and Other areas.
- This community is stable with 52% having a tenure of more than 10 years in the parish and 21% of 6 to 10 years. There are parishioners with 3 to 5 years representing 13%, and months to 2 years at 14%.

Preferences

STM is the local church of choice for most parishioners (43%). Second highest reason (27%) for joining the church was based on family and friends’ recommendations. A significant number of parishioners did not disclose why they joined STM (26%), while an insignificant number chose it through the Internet (0.7%). Another reason with the least responses was Walked in (3.5%) But this could be associated with a locality choice.

Participation in the church

The volunteer participation rate in ministries and committees is 69%. Those not volunteering is 31%. Although the majority of respondents did not reveal their reasons for not participating, 13% of Hispanic respondents report that their voice will not be heard. Smaller group thought that language was a barrier. Hispanics prefer to volunteer in liturgy, mass, festivals and family activities while non-Hispanics report a wider range of volunteer activities. A list of active volunteer ministries and committees e as well as the reasons why POC do not volunteer can be found in Appendix B.

Only 30.3% of respondents believe they have talent (artistic, musical, etc.) or knowledge that would contribute to the church, while 69.7% say they do not. 54.7% respondents report that they have not been contacted to use their talent or knowledge. A list of reported talents can be found in Appendix B.

Representation of the ethnicities

A satisfaction level of 66.9 % of POC believe the church is doing a good job on addressing ethnic concerns during mass and other church events. A total of 45/136 responses were less satisfied, of which 60% were Hispanics. Issues these groups would like to see addressed can be found in Appendix B.

Promotional materials

77.5% believe promotions/materials used in the church reflect their ethnic community. 60% of less satisfied respondents were non-Hispanics. Specific comments to change this can be found in Appendix B.

Incorporating cultural heritage

STM commitment to include the heritage of many cultures in liturgies and church events was rated high at 70.2%.

Half of POC (50.6%) believe their culture or country's Catholic traditions are recognized and shared in their children's Faith Development classes. From 85 respondents in total, 42 (32 Hispanics, 10 non-Hispanics) believed their traditions are not recognized and shared.

Community Engagement

52.9% of respondents said no one from the leadership team (staff, priests, and deacons) has reached out to hear their opinions/ideas. Hispanics (60%) and non-Hispanics (40%) show concern about lack of being heard.

Results showed 73% of all respondents report an overall very positive experience as POC in the church. A total of 23/139 responses were less positive and 8 of these were more negative. In the sub-set question on what the church leadership team and/or parishioners could do to make POC's experience better, received 48 comments which are listed in Appendix B.

Honest conversations about race

56.1% of POC feel confident that it is possible to have honest conversations about race with other parishioners in the parish. Of the 43% (61 respondents) that felt less confident 39 were Hispanics and 22 were non-Hispanics.

Meaningful ethnic interactions

47.1% of respondents reported having meaningful interactions with people of different ethnicities at parish events. From the less satisfied group of 73 respondents, (52.9%) 52 were Hispanics and 21 were non-Hispanics.

POC Leadership roles and recognition

52.5%, reported knowing nobody of their ethnicity in the parish councils or boards. From these 74 respondents, 42 were Hispanics and 32 were non-Hispanics. Others said they know between 1 to 3 members (27%), 4 to 6 members (8.5%), between 7 and 10 (4.3%), and more than 10 (7.8%).

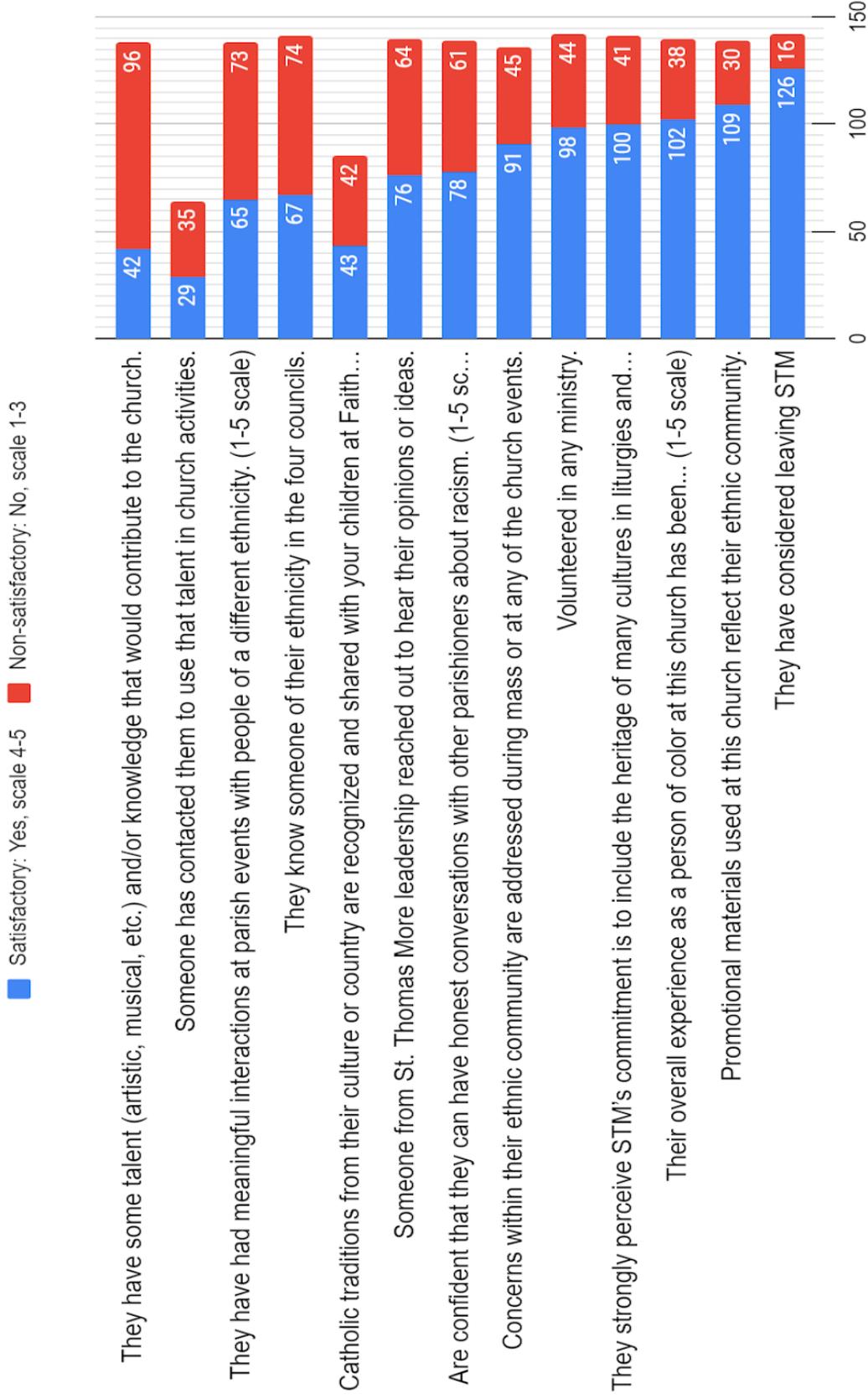
A high number of parishioners (142/146) responded to the question about whether they had considered leaving STM with a positive rate of 88.7 % wanting to stay and 11.3 % considered leaving. Reasons for leaving were related to moving jobs, housing etc. The list of these reasons can be found in Appendix B.

Summary of survey responses in order of concern (satisfactory, unsatisfactory):

1. They have some talent (artistic, musical, etc.) and/or knowledge that would contribute to the church. 42, 96
2. Someone has contacted them to use that talent in church activities. 29, 35
3. They have had meaningful interactions at parish events with people of a different ethnicity. (1-5 scale) 65, 73
4. They know someone of their ethnicity in the four councils. 67, 74
5. Catholic traditions from their culture or country are recognized and shared with your children at Faith Development classes. (1-5 scale) 43, 42
6. Someone from St. Thomas More leadership reached out to hear their opinions or ideas. 76, 64
7. Are confident that they can have honest conversations with other parishioners about racism. (1-5 scale) 78, 61
8. Concerns within their ethnic community are addressed during mass or at any of the church events. 91, 45
9. They volunteered in any ministry. 98, 44
10. They strongly perceive STM's commitment is to include the heritage of many cultures in liturgies and church events (1-5 scale) 100, 41

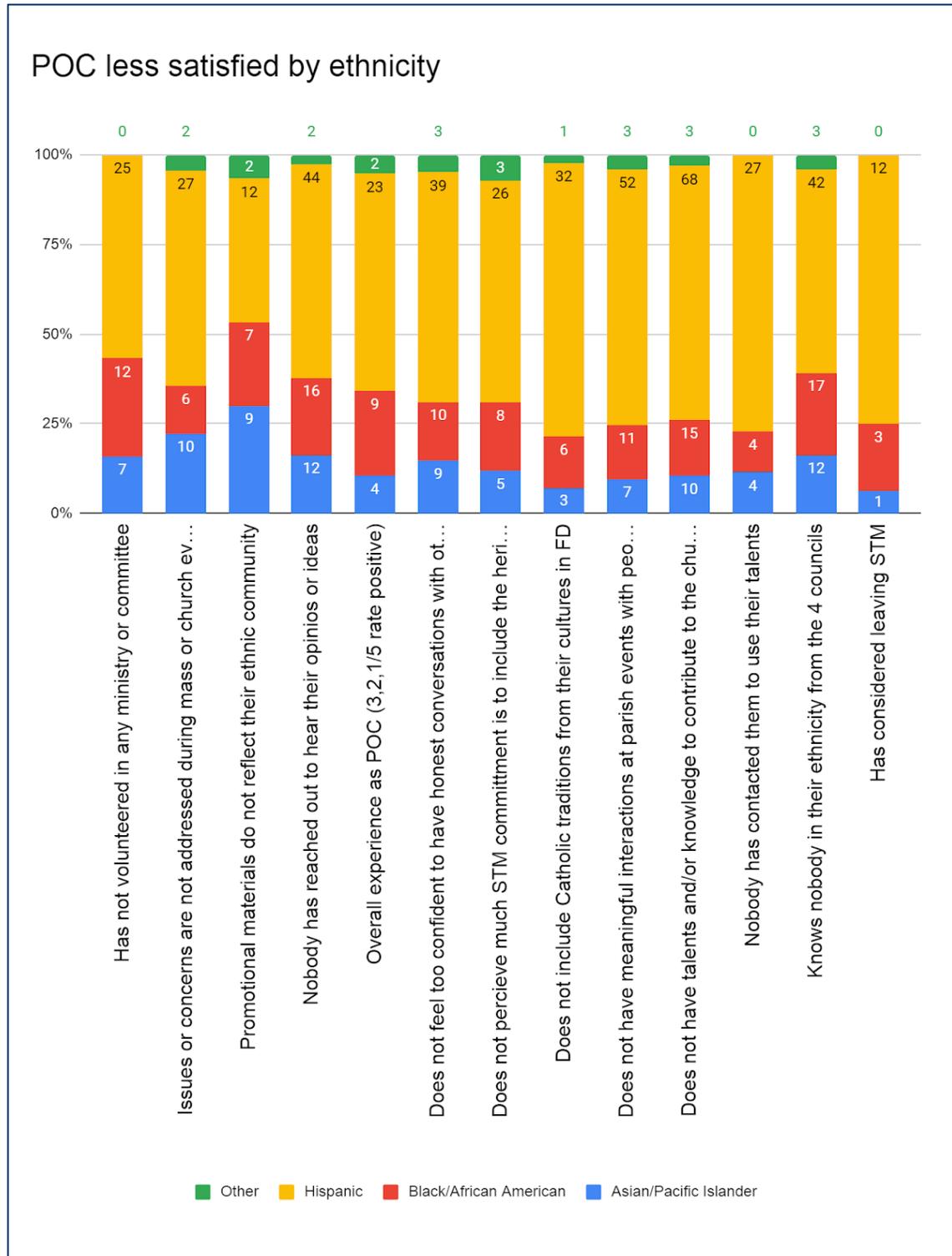
11. Their overall experience as a person of color at this church has been... (1-5 scale) 102, 38
12. Promotional materials used at this church reflect their ethnic community. 109, 30
13. They have considered leaving STM 126, 16

STM POC survey responses -October 2021



Notes on dissatisfaction by ethnic groupings

Irrespective of statistical significance, the following chart illustrates the differences of opinion and experience between the members of different racial and ethnic groups.



Hispanics three main areas of dissatisfaction are:

- 68/105 (65%) believe they do not have talent or knowledge that would contribute to the church
- 52/105 (50%) have not had meaningful interactions at parish events with people of different ethnicity
- 44/105 (42%) report that STM Leadership (priests, deacons, staff) have not reached out to hear their opinions or ideas
- Other areas of concern in order of importance are:
 - Knows nobody in their ethnic group from the 4 councils (42).
 - Does not feel too confident to have honest conversations with other parishioners about racism (39).
 - Does not include Catholic traditions from their culture in FD (32).
 - Issues and concerns are not addressed during mass or church events (27).
 - Nobody has contacted them to use their talents (27).
 - Does not perceive much STM commitment is to include the heritage of many cultures in liturgies and church events (26).
 - Has not volunteered in any ministry or committee (25).
 - Overall experience as POC is 3 or below in a 5-number scale (23).
 - Promotional materials do not reflect their ethnic community (12).
 - Have considered leaving STM (12).

Black/Africans three main areas of dissatisfaction are:

- 17/20 (85%) don't know any representatives of their ethnicity in the parish councils
- 16/20 (80%) report that STM Leadership (priests, deacons, staff) have not reached out to hear their opinions or ideas
- 16/20 (80%) believe they do not have talent or knowledge that would contribute to the church
- Other areas of concern in order of importance are:
 - Has not volunteered in any ministry or committee (12).
 - Does not have meaningful interactions at parish events with people of a different ethnicity (12).
 - Does not feel too confident to have honest conversations with other parishioners about racism (10)
 - Overall experience as POC is 3 or below in a 5-number scale (9)
 - Does not perceive much STM commitment is to include the heritage of many cultures in liturgies and church events (8).
 - Promotional materials do not reflect their ethnic community (7).
 - Does not include Catholic traditions from their culture in FD (6).
 - Issues and concerns are not addressed during mass or church events (6).
 - Nobody has contacted them to use their talents (4).
 - Has considered leaving STM (3)

Asian/Pacific Islander three main areas of dissatisfaction are:

- 12/17 (71%) don't know any representatives of their ethnicity anybody in the parish councils

- 12/17 (71%) report that has not been reached out from STM Leadership (priests, deacons, staff) to hear their opinions or ideas.
- 10/17 (59%) believe they do not have talent or knowledge that would contribute to the church, and their issues and concerns are not addressed during mass or church events.
- Other areas of concern in order of importance are:
 - Issues and concerns are not addressed during mass or church events (10).
 - Does not feel too confident to have honest conversations with other parishioners about racism (9)
 - Promotional materials do not reflect their ethnic community (9).
 - Has not volunteered in any ministry or committee (7).
 - Does not have meaningful interactions at parish events with people of a different ethnicity (7).
 - Does not perceive much STM commitment is to include the heritage of many cultures in liturgies and church events (5).
 - Overall experience as POC is 3 or below in a 5-number scale (4)
 - Nobody has contacted them to use their talents (4).
 - Does not include Catholic traditions from their culture in FD (3).
 - Has considered leaving STM (1)

Middle Eastern and Other ethnicities concern in order of importance are:

- Do not feel too confident to have honest conversations with other parishioners about racism. (3/3)
- Does not perceive much STM commitment is to include the heritage of many cultures in liturgies and church events (3/3)
- Knows nobody in their ethnicity from the 4 councils (3/3)
- Does not have meaningful interactions at parish events with people of a different ethnicity (2/3)
- Does not have talents and/or knowledge to contribute to the church (2/3)
- Issues or concerns are not addressed during mass or church events (2/3)
- Promotional materials do not reflect their ethnic community (2/3)
- Nobody has reached out to hear their opinions or ideas (2/3)
- Overall experience as POC (3,2,1/5 rate positive) (2/3)
- Does not include Catholic traditions from their cultures in FD (1/3)

Survey Strengths and Weaknesses

- Survey offers some clarity on key issues for people of color in the parish. Satisfaction levels were generally high (greater than 50% with some notable exceptions to be addressed) and comments were mostly constructive. Data collected offers a baseline for future planning.

Weaknesses of survey

- Survey suffers from lack of data on gender.
- Survey response time needs to be extended beyond two weeks for greater participation.
- Seems to be some participant confusion with self-identification as “people of color” at STM and distinctions between, race, ethnicity and culture which is reflected in broader social and academic discussions.

IV. Summary and Recommendations

The satisfaction level, stability, and overall happiness with STM is statistically acceptable. Non-Hispanic groups seemed to have a wider and more multiethnic, parishioner interactions and volunteer experience at STM than their Hispanic counterparts.

Survey respondents are active in the parish and are seeking more intersectionality and support within their POC community. Interestingly, fewer folks sighted language as a barrier to participation.

Small group solutions could be considered in light of the staff to congregation ratios.

Neighborhood Church

As the demographics of the respondents show, 85% of POC members live within a 10-mile radius of STM - with the majority living in Chapel Hill and Carrboro. This local presence raises the possibility of developing multiracial, multiethnic, neighborhood small group programs to personalize the STM experience.

Big Church Needs a Big Voice

Some of the top communication issues may be related to the size and structure of a large, corporate church like St Thomas More where the ratio of staff to parishioners is not ideally suited to a more intimate and regular level of interaction. Targeted community programs to address the concerns of POC could be helpful along with regular and effective outreach to all constituents.

These can include regular listening sessions with parishioners, priests, deacons and staff to share ideas and opinions.

More Multiethnic Communications and Event Programming Plan Needed

There is a communal desire for more integration and meaningful interaction with all ethnicities. The current segregation of services, communications and activities by English/ Spanish language could be explored to see if it can be modified to offer ways to enhance parishioner unity and multicultural relations (two churches = alienation/division.). Increasing bilingual services and cultural events might provide more meaningful interaction for the whole parish

Ethnically Diverse Catholic Catechesis

Effective and multicultural Catechesis and more youth formation activities are requested. Participants want culturally conscious programs and incorporation of heritage stories to their children's faith formation.

Promoting Unity

Overall respondents wanted a family-oriented church experience, where no clear ethnic majority dominates, rather members work together in a shared Christian community both inside STM and surrounding neighborhoods. ILC is joining a trend of organizations worldwide looking to establish and run effective Black Indigenous and People of Color affinity groups as part of larger organizational initiative to create multicultural anti-racist organizations.

Follow up action plan

Based on the key insights in the survey, the inherent stability of the POC communities and the awareness and intentionality of the ILC group, a long range, follow up planning effort is warranted.

- Work towards the expectation that STM will grow to be a more integrated, multicultural community in the future and prepare for it now. Planning should account for socially, economically, and ethnically diverse communities including Caucasians.
- Develop a long-term, multicultural strategic vision and communications plan to harness the power of diversity within the church. Offer frequent opportunities to share and promote stories of ethnic and traditional Catholic practices and leverage the current Catholic Community of STM messaging more effectively.
- Communications should be intentional and employ market segmentation techniques to reflect a wider range of cultural values, including the youth.
- STM needs to plan for an enhanced bilingual web/digital presence and more effort to represent all ethnicities in both image and content.

- Implement a more intentional and sustained POC newcomers' program to and include recruitment of talent to support church mission.
- Carefully consider the political implications and possible divisiveness of using the POC label as it is not showing to be a popular or unifying term with the survey respondents. Fear of creating division from other parishioners (many of whom are also immigrants and have multiethnic backgrounds) is a concern.
- Some respondents believe that it is essential that STM continue to offer racial and affirmation, justice, and unity as integral to their church experience and Catholic faith development.

Acknowledgements

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Members of ILC

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