**Parish Summary Report**



**Blessed Trinity Catholic Church**

Frankenmuth

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**Table of Contents**

Executive Summary 3

Parish Process Overview 4

Narrative of Listening Sessions 4

Joys 6

Regarding Mass 7

Frustrations 7

Those Who are Overlooked 10

Hopes 10

Review of Listening Session 11

Changes for Blessed Trinity 11

**Executive Summary**

Blessed Trinity held 9 listening sessions. Parishioners and community members were invited to take part. This included 8 in-person sessions and one online opportunity. The questions from the diocesan toolkit were modified to make them more understandable. Overall, the ones who attended in person enjoyed the experience and hope to see the good things that come from it. There is concern that what they were doing was just part of “another form” that gets sent to the Diocese and that’s the last we hear about it; that they never see anything come from the discussions.

There were many joys about the Catholic Church, the Diocese of Saginaw, and Blessed Trinity that were shared. People like being part of the oldest Christian faith, one that is universal throughout the world. Receiving the Eucharist was very important, as were the signs and rituals associated with our Catholic faith. We heard that many feel that Blessed Trinity is “home”. It is a warm, welcoming, and friendly parish. They like the way that we celebrate liturgies, our faith formation/youth ministry programs, and the return of events after Covid.

Along with the joys, people shared many frustrations with the Catholic Church, the Diocese of Saginaw, and Blessed Trinity. The main frustration that we heard was the way the sex abuse scandal was handled by the Church and by the diocese. Participants were frustrated with the rigidity of the Catholic Church, and what they said were “man-made” laws. Other frustrations include Right to Life and LGBTQ+ issues. People are frustrated about the disconnect they feel as a parish with the Diocese of Saginaw. Within Blessed Trinity, people would like to see more parishioners becoming involved in all areas. Some didn’t care for the music and others were concerned about youth/young families.

A summary of our listening sessions will be made available to parishioners. Together as staff and parishioners, we will affirm the good things that the parish is doing and will continue to do and will begin work on areas that caused frustrations in regard to our parish. As for what we will focus first on in our parish, that information is not available at this time. It is our hope that we will begin making the needed changes in the very near future if they have not already been started.

## **Parish Process Overview**

Blessed Trinity held 8 in-person listening sessions, with one session dedicated to teens, and another dedicated to young adults ages 18-30. The remaining six sessions were made up of adult parishioners of mixed ages. We offered sessions during the day, in the evening and on the weekend to reach as many people as we could. We offered an online opportunity for those who do not attend a parish or weren’t able to attend a session in person. They were able to give input through a form that was created using the same questions as were used for the in-person sessions. In total we had 110 people share their thoughts, 60 in-person and 50 online.

The questions we used were modified from the originals. We felt that the following questions, based on the ones given to us from the diocese were easier to understand and therefore answer.

Questions that were used at Blessed Trinity:

* What are the joys of being Catholic? About parish life at Blessed Trinity?
* What are some of your frustrations about the Catholic Church? About the Diocese of Saginaw? About Blessed Trinity?
* What are some of your hopes for the Catholic Church? For the Diocese of Saginaw? For Blessed Trinity?
* Does the celebration of Mass inspire you to lead a holier life? Why or why not?
* Does the Catholic Church respond to the needs and challenges of the present day? Does Blessed Trinity?
* Where do you feel the Holy Spirit is calling the Church (or the parish) to grow?
* Is there anything happening in the world which makes you feel that the Church (or the parish) isn’t listening to people?
* Are there people in the Church (or in the parish) who are being overlooked?

**Narrative of the listening sessions**

Our listening sessions were quite informative. While there seemed to be common joys and frustrations about the Catholic Church, the Diocese of Saginaw and Blessed Trinity, there were some areas where people differed in their viewpoints. For example, some thought that the Church did not speak up enough on Right to Life issues while another thought we will seem unwelcoming if people see us protesting at Planned Parenthood. One group thought the music at our parish was superb while another wished for more organ music and instrumental music played before mass. The following summary explains some of the joys, frustrations and hopes for the Church, our diocese, and our parish.

Joys

Listening session participants spoke of the joys they have for the Catholic Church. They include:

* being able to receive the Eucharist
* the Tradition of the Church
* Being a part of the oldest Christian faith
* They like that Mass follows the same order with the same readings all over the world. It helps them know that they are part of something bigger than just our parish or the diocese.
* Devotion to the saints and Mary
* The sacraments
* The rituals, signs and symbols that make up our Catholic faith.

Things that people found joy in and would like to see continue in our parish include being a friendly and welcoming parish. Many thought that Blessed Trinity did a good job at welcoming all who enter our church for Mass. Parishioners and visitors are greeted as they enter the building, with staff, greeters, and hospitality ministers there who try to answer any questions.

 We received many positive comments on the community/family feeling at Blessed Trinity. They feel Blessed Trinity is home and enjoy coming together to share faith with friends and neighbors. People are happy to see a few of our social events returning and would like to see more. All want our parish to return to the vibrant parish it was before Covid. People feel that we have been blessed with wonderful priests throughout the years and enjoy having Fr. Patrick Jankowiak as the present pastor.

People like that faith formation that is happening at the parish for all ages. They feel we have a good religious education and youth ministry program. They enjoy the adult formation opportunities, especially the Tuesday evening sessions with Fr. Patrick.

There are many aspects of the liturgies at Blessed Trinity that people find joy in, including:

* The homilies and Fr. Patrick’s teaching and history that are often part of his homilies.
* The music
* Being able to attend Mass through livestream for those who are unable to attend due to poor health or being homebound.
* The beautiful facility to worship in
* The friendliness of people when they enter the church
* The special way that rituals and sacraments are celebrated

Regarding Mass

Most of the people we asked said “Yes, the celebration of Mass does help me to live a holier life.” Here are some of the examples received:

* It brings me back to center after a week of being bombarded by everything.
* Celebrating Mass reminds me that we are all looking for God in our lives
* It renews me every Sunday to live the best life I can.
* Fr. Patrick’s homilies are inspiring, informative, and challenging. He makes it feel as if he is talking directly to you.
* I remember the homily throughout the week and think of how it applies to my life. We seem to get something hard to think about every week.
* Receiving Communion reminds me of the sacrifice Jesus made for me and that I can show my appreciation through daily acts.
* Just as rereading a favorite book, revisiting scriptures throughout the year can affect us differently in different seasons of our lives.
* Those 18-30 years old liked the routine of the mass and knowing that it remained the same each week.

Although most agreed that celebrating Mass helped them live a holier life, there were some who felt it didn’t make a difference in their life. Comments received include:

* I think about the Mass and the homily but can’t say it affects my daily life
* I think I live a decent Christian life, but I am sure I can do better.
* I believe rituals are important in life, but the Mass needs updating, more contextual input, and less stringent “rules” to follow.
* For my children, no. Our noses are in books and tv prompts would be better. Other Catholic churches have them and images. Words and prompts keep you engaged.
* I believe in God and grew up listening to all his teachings with a weekly Mass. I have had a lifetime full of that, and care to keep Him alive in what I do each day than attend a regularly scheduled Mass. He knows I keep Him in my heart and mind, my neighbors don’t need to visually see me at church to confirm…He already knows what I believe and follow His word.

Frustrations

There were a number of frustrations with the Catholic Church, the Diocese of Saginaw, and Blessed Trinity that were brought up in the listening sessions. Participants spoke about what they felt was not being addressed or listened to as well as who they thought were overlooked by the Church.

Catholic Church and Diocese of Saginaw

Within the Church, the way that the sexual abuse scandal was handled caused people to lose trust in bishops, cardinals, and past popes. Even within our diocese, some didn’t think it was handled well. There needs to be honesty and transparency. Someone shared that they know a victim of abuse, and that the priest who did the abusing was allowed to stay in the parish until he died. (Although we cannot confirm or deny details related to this statement, we felt that it was important to share in this summary) All agreed that the whole Church is in need of healing from this scandal.

People talked about the rigidity of the Catholic Church and what they see as “unbending” man-made laws. Judgement can take place instead of compassion and understanding. They feel that the Church needs to change her stance on the matters of divorce and annulment. People going through a divorce are already going through a hard time. Making them go through the annulment process only continues and prolongs the pain. More compassion is needed instead of more paperwork.

At times it seems like the Church and the diocese are out of touch with the people. The The Church is too slow to change and needs to adapt to the times we live in. The Patriarchal hierarchy is outdated. Tradition is good, but so is understanding and adapting to a changing culture. We heard comments that the hierarchy of the Church is made up of older single men who are making decisions for families.

People would like to see the priest shortage addressed more, especially regarding the reality of allowing priests to be married, and of women becoming priests and deacons. Many would like to see women have more leadership roles in general in the Church. Some of our groups feel that the Diocese of Saginaw is always changing its views on what a lay minister can and cannot do. They feel that some of their roles have been taken away and that the diocese needs to allow lay ministers to do more.

We received differing comments on Right to Life issues. Some felt the Church and the diocese do not speak up enough on Right to Life issues; that we don’t teach on abortion anymore because we are worried about offending women. Others feel that we shame or judge those who have had an abortion. Instead of judging, we should be willing to support the woman and the child. Still others think that the Church should not be protesting at the Capital or at Planned Parenthood, saying it makes the Church seem like an un-inviting place and think that it may be what is keeping young people away from the Catholic Church.

There was a lot of discussion about LGBTQ+, and how many who are gay or lesbian do not feel accepted in the Catholic Church, a Church they grew up in and love. Those in our listening sessions often felt this group of people were being overlooked or even turned away from the Church. We had a small minority that felt as if the Church are not doing enough to speak out against LGBTQ+, but for the most part, people feel that more compassion and acceptance of all God’s children is needed.

Parishioners feel there is a lack of communication between the diocese and parishes. They feel that those in the diocesan office don’t understand parish life and don’t take into consideration what may be happening in the parish when planning events or wanting the parish to do something.

 Another example of the lack of communication between the diocese and the parishes was when Blessed Trinity was in the transition between priests after Fr. Bob retired in 2018. We didn’t know what was going to happen. Perhaps the diocese didn’t know how they were going to handle things either, but we needed to know what direction we were moving in. It was very confusing and frustrating, and many are still upset by things that happened during that year.

Other areas of frustration with the diocese include:

* Some feel that the bishop needs to come to parishes once a year.
* People want to see the diocese involved with parishes as we work on some of the things that may come from the listening sessions.
* The diocese should make more resources available to the parish.
* People also feel the inconsistency between parishes and priests and wonder about why things can be so different from one parish or priest to another.
* People would like to have communal confession with general absolution return to our parishes. They feel that there would be more people who would celebrate the sacrament if this was an option.

Blessed Trinity

Through the listening session we found out that people felt Blessed Trinity and perhaps the whole diocese has a problem with parishioners being involved in their parish. They feel as if most parishioners come to Mass and it’s the only time you see them. They don’t stop after Mass if there is a function and won’t attend any “after hours” or social events. They would like to see more parishioners sign up for liturgical ministries and to volunteer for committees.

 Some people thought that a social type of atmosphere before mass might help, something like a coffee bar and snacks or donuts. Another suggestion was not having every activity being so founded in the church, but more about developing a welcoming community of people who get to know each other better. There was mention of the Time and Talent Survey that the parish used to have. Some would like to see this happen again.

Although there were many positive comments about the music at Blessed Trinity, some thought that there was too much focus on music within the Mass. They felt like they were watching a performance and found this distracting. Some would like to see music being played for 10-15 minutes before mass begins to create a more spiritual atmosphere. Someone commented that they thought there was too much money being wasted printing worship aid and that hymnals would be better.

There was talk about having more outreach in the parish. Examples that were given include more mission opportunities or habitat for humanity type projects. They would like to see committees and groups resume now that Covid restrictions are gone and spoke of the need to personally reach out and invite people, not just put notices in the bulletin.

Many commented with frustration on the youth of our parish, including:

* They do not see the youth at Mass or if they are at Mass, they are not very involved. They discussed how the parish can support both the parents and the youth.
* There is not enough emphasis by the parish and parents on the importance of Mass in the life of the youth. They noted that we often make excuses on how busy the youth are but talked about the need for both the parish and the parents to prioritize what is most important in life - God.
* They feel that the parish and the Church need to find ways to be flexible about Mass to meet the youth where they are at. Suggestions that we heard were to be more flexible regarding Mass– perhaps offer it at a different time on Sunday or have more youth Masses.
* There is not enough formation in our youth ministry program, no curriculum. Peers are allowed to “lead” the session, but if they don’t attend Mass and are not being formed in the Catholic faith, how can they lead others?
* The parish and parents need to foster a sense of the importance of Mass and encourage youth to come on a regular basis. Parents need to be more committed in bringing their children to youth ministry events.
* There is a need to understand that while sports and activities are important, their faith life is important as well.
* Some would like to see liturgical dance return to the parish and see it as a way to keep teens active in the parish.

Our middle school and high school students shared their comments on coming to Mass and life at Blessed Trinity:

* They feel that the homily and mass doesn’t always connect with them
* They feel judged when they miss mass.
* They want to be welcomed and appreciated and often don’t get this feeling from the parish and the Church in general.

Those Who are Overlooked

Those attending listening sessions feel people are often overlooked in the local and universal Church are:

* the poor and those struggling to make ends meet. We need to be a welcoming presence in our communities who reach out to the poor in our neighborhoods, as well as in the world.
* The physically and mentally disabled. Some feel as if the parish is not welcoming of those with mentally disabilities.
* the elderly and homebound. People felt as if the parish should have reached out more during the time of Covid to visit with people. They are happy to see that we are resuming visits to area nursing facilities and would like to see it continue.
* women. The Church need to stop treating women as 2nd class citizens.
* those who have fallen away from the church
* young families
* The parish needs to be more aware of when our parishioners are going through hard time and find ways to help them.

Hopes

Hopes for Catholic Church and the Diocese of Saginaw:

* Pay attention to what is sent in the synod information
* Have the resources to do what needs to be done to make a change at parish, diocesan, and Church levels
* Vocations awareness
* Catholic Church to become the healer of the World (War, injustice, acceptance)
* For leaders to be honest with all.
* Be like Bishop Untener – No person was left out or better than anyone else – just had that true feeling of a shepherd
* Women will be brought into all ministries Keep Tradition alive while staying current to the needs of people
* Priesthood for married people
* To get more people from the diocese here. If the diocese is going to be an effective part of our parishes guiding direction, we need more connection (at least the bishop here once a year)
* Respond to this survey in a timely fashion. Not months and years. Show people you listened.

Hopes for Blessed Trinity

* Continue adult faith formation on Tuesday nights
* Get more young people involved
* Expand webpage and Facebook
* Add events from the diocese in the bulletin – or from other parishes
* More music before and after Mass
* More symbols in Church. Example – stained glass, more statues and symbols of our heritage as Catholic.
* BT to continue to be a place of vibrant worship and outreach
* More outreach to the chronically ill and dying
* Encourage people to ministry in the church so they feel a personal connection
* More active community – parishioners who get involved more than once a week
* To allow liturgical dance again – a good way to keep the girls involved in their church and faith by praying in a way that is meaningful to them

**Review of the Listening Sessions**

Overall, the listening sessions went well. The facilitators noted that the sessions went smoothly, with people respecting another’s opinion and letting each person have the opportunity to share their thoughts. Although the number of people who participated was smaller than what we had hoped for, those who attended in person commented that they enjoyed the experience and the chance to share their feelings about the Church. They are concerned that nothing will come of their comments and ideas. Many welcomed the opportunity to gather on a regular basis to discuss issues in our parish.

**Changes for Blessed Trinity**

A summary of our listening sessions will be made available to parishioners. We will meet as a staff to discuss the results of the sessions and look at the areas in our parish where we can do better. Together as staff and parishioners, we will affirm the good things that the parish is doing and will continue to do and will begin work on areas that caused frustrations in regard to our parish. As for what we will focus first on in our parish, that information is not available at this time. Our staff needs time to reflect on all that was shared and come up with a pastoral plan for our parish. It is our hope that we will begin making the needed changes in the very near future if they have not already been started.

**Appendix**

* Add any additional supporting information gathered in the listening sessions you would like to express and document.
* Individual or group listening session input can be attached as an addendum to the report as deemed appropriate.
* Any other additional information deemed necessary or important.