

Our Lady of Fatima Listening Session: “What Are Our Gifts?”

Tuesday, October 16, 2025

Moderators: Mark Abadir, Bob Dela-Cruz, Susie Fritzky, Brigid McMahan

Approximately 30 people in attendance

1) SUMMARY OF QUESTION 1

“How have your experiences in our parish (and your experience of the parish’s gifts and charisms) brought you closer to God? What has been the spiritual impact of your participation in our parish?”

Parishioners consistently described Our Lady of Fatima as a parish that draws people closer to God through welcoming, involvement, community warmth, meaningful connections, and opportunities to serve. Many shared that participating in ministries, youth programs, sacramental preparation, parish events, and service-oriented outreach deepened their spiritual life. Others spoke of being embraced as newcomers—sometimes not even Catholic at the time—and experiencing God’s love through hospitality and belonging.

They emphasized that involvement in faith formation, music, youth ministry, school activities, and parish-wide service helped them grow in their discipleship. Several described the joy of seeing young families, children, and teens in the parish, which strengthened their own faith. Others reflected that when parish life felt challenged or fragmented, it pushed them to lean even more on God.

Many described the parish as warm, inclusive, and spiritually supportive, where participating with others in faith has opened the door to deeper reflection, renewed commitment, and a stronger relationship with God.

Ten Impactful Quotes on “Becoming Closer to God”

1. “Just being involved is what’s really helped me... volunteering for the different ministries helps me think more about my faith.”
2. “Even though I’m on the leadership team, I’m learning right alongside these kids... it keeps me involved and hopefully plants a seed for the young people.”
3. “By being involved, I’ve definitely come closer to God... everyone being so open to welcoming my participation has impacted my faith journey.”
4. “I feel like I need to lean on God more... I don’t feel as connected as I was, so I have to lean on Him more.”
5. “I came not as a Catholic but as a spouse, and I didn’t expect to be welcomed the way I was. This community is warm and full of God.”

6. “Every time I get involved with something in this parish, I feel like I’m embraced... that’s definitely brought me closer to God.”
 7. “Seeing thoughtful, intelligent people going to church and getting value out of the sacraments... they’re good models, and it helps you.”
 8. “Knowing the people in the community has been one of my favorite parts... it brings joy and peace, a way to walk in His way.”
 9. “It warms my heart to see families with little kids... seeing the next generation brings me closer to God.”
 10. “Participating in the ministries reminds me that we are acting as the Body of Christ... it makes me even more proud of our parish.”
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2) SUMMARY OF QUESTION 2:

“If you had to describe the main gifts and charisms of our parish to a newcomer in one sentence, what would you say? What is your favorite part about being a parishioner? What stands out to you as something to be proud of?”

TOP GIFTS, STRENGTHS & CHARISMS

1. A Warm, Welcoming, and Inclusive Parish Culture

Summary: Parishioners repeatedly described Our Lady of Fatima as a deeply welcoming and kind community. Many highlighted how newcomers—Catholic or not—are embraced, included, and encouraged to participate. People feel at home quickly.

- “Everybody here is so kind and happy to make you feel part of the family.”
 - “Come join us—don’t be afraid that you won’t belong, because you belong.”
 - “You will be welcomed, and you will be walked with... you’ll find a home here.”
 - “It’s a warm, welcoming community with many opportunities.”
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2. A Strong Sense of Community, Connection, and Belonging

Summary: The most frequently mentioned theme was the strength of the OLF community. Parishioners described real relationships, friendships, and a sense of family that supports them in faith and life.

- “It’s been a family for many people in joy and sorrow... funerals, marriages, school.”
 - “My favorite part is the people... the community brings joy and peace.”
 - “Knowing the people in the community has been one of my favorite parts.”
 - “There’s such a sense of belonging—whatever ministry you enter, you find community.”
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3. Generous Service, Volunteerism, and Shared Mission

Summary: Parishioners emphasized that OLF is full of people who step up, serve, and share their gifts generously. Ministries, outreach programs, and volunteer initiatives were repeatedly mentioned.

- “We’ve got a really good group of people willing to step up and share their gifts.”
 - “People could be paid good money for what they do for free here, and they choose to share that.”
 - “There is enormous creativity and desire to serve... people put their heart and soul into it.”
 - “We really are acting as the Body of Christ here in this parish.”
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4. Commitment to Youth, Families, and Faith Formation

Summary: Parishioners described strong sacramental preparation, dedicated leaders, and a supportive environment for young families and children. The parish school is seen as a blessing that strengthens faith across generations.

- “We have very competent people running the programs... they get them very prepared.”
 - “Being part of the growth of a new Catholic is my favorite part.”
 - “The blessing of having a parish and a school together is a blessing for the children.”
 - “There are lots of young families—if it’s a mother with young kids, I tell her don’t worry.”
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5. Strong Outreach and Works of Mercy

Summary: Parishioners expressed pride in the parish’s concrete acts of service—food programs, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Martin de Porres meals, and other forms of charity.

- “When all those families bring over 100 meals... my heart just leaps.”
 - “The community blesses others—the food banks, St. Vincent de Paul... it goes on and on.”
 - “There are many opportunities to serve in varied ways.”
 - “It’s beautiful to see how many people are helped.”
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6. Clergy Leadership and Pastoral Presence

Summary: Many spoke of the pastor and clergy as welcoming, present, good with children, and reverent during the liturgy. Leadership was mentioned repeatedly as a gift.

- “Meet Father Freitag—he’s amazing... very welcoming and good with the kids.”
 - “You can see the reverence in the Mass... the music and everything is a special experience.”
 - “Having priests walking through the school is such a blessing.”
 - “Our pastor really cares about the community.”
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7. Beautiful Campus, Facilities, and Gathering Spaces

Summary: Parishioners praised the beauty, care, and improvements of the campus, noting that it is inviting, functional, and well-maintained.

- “We have a beautiful facility... it’s been cleaned up and made relevant for the community.”
 - “It’s a great gathering place.”
 - “The bulletin is chock full of information... much better than before.”
 - “The grounds are really lovely and welcoming.”
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8. Diversity and Inclusion

Summary: Parishioners highlighted the parish’s growing diversity and its openness to people of many backgrounds and life experiences.

- “A diverse body... everyone is welcome.”
 - “You belong here regardless of who you are.”
 - “There are many different families here—it feels inclusive.”
 - “This is a place where all feel comfortable.”
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9. Parish Resilience and Growth

Summary: Participants expressed admiration for the parish’s strength in rebuilding community after COVID and navigating the new parish family structure with hope.

- “We’re resilient... it’s inspiring to see the growing back from COVID.”
 - “We are trying to be more than just Sunday Mass—to be part of people’s lives.”
 - “I’m proud of how far we’ve come.”
 - “The parish is working hard to stay strong through change.”
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3) TEN THINGS PARISHIONERS SAID THEY ARE MOST PROUD OF

1. The welcoming, inclusive culture of the parish.
 2. The strong sense of community and belonging.
 3. The generosity and commitment of volunteers.
 4. The parish’s youth programs, sacramental preparation, and school.
 5. Outreach ministries and works of mercy.
 6. Clergy leadership and reverent liturgy.
 7. The beauty and upkeep of the church and campus.
 8. The presence of many young families and children.
 9. The ability for parishioners to use their gifts meaningfully.
 10. The parish’s resilience and commitment during times of change.
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4) ACTION ITEMS & FUTURE HOPES (REPEATED THEMES)

These emerged clearly and repeatedly:

1. Strengthen communication and visibility.
2. Rebuild parish-school connection.
3. Increase opportunities for adults (especially older adults).
4. Strengthen belonging and accompaniment.
5. Support for clergy and parish operations.
6. Protect what people love during Partners in the Gospel.
7. More social and community gatherings.
8. Improve coordination and scheduling.
9. Expand youth and young family opportunities.
10. Continue building the parish's welcoming culture