

Sacred Heart of Jesus Listening Session: “What Are Our Gifts?”

Sunday, October 5, 2025

Moderators: Mark Abadir, Deborah Baker, Brigid McMahan, Alice Shepard

Approximately 25 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 Sacred Heart as a place of profound spiritual intimacy—a church that draws people closer to God through prayer, devotion, service, hospitality, sacramental availability, meaningful relationships, and a deeply sacred atmosphere. Many spoke of spiritual renewal, healing, and conversion sparked by experiences here. Several expressed that Sacred Heart became their “refuge,” “home,” or “anchor” during major life transitions and seasons of suffering.

They emphasized how the Marian devotions, the Legion of Mary, the Mother of Perpetual Help Novena, Eucharistic reverence, silence, and the beauty of the church had a direct impact on deepening their faith. Others described the community’s warmth and multicultural diversity as something that not only welcomed them but inspired them.

Many described their participation in ministries—especially volunteering, lectoring, sacristan work, outreach, and prayer groups—as turning points in their relationship with God. Parishioners repeatedly noted that serving with others or being invited into ministry helped them grow spiritually and feel more fully part of the Body of Christ.

Ten Impactful Quotes on “Becoming Closer to God”

1. “When I come in, I feel like it’s sacred because of the silence. I feel like it brings me closer to God.”
2. “It became a refuge for me when my mother died, and again when my father died.”
3. “Being a sacristan helped me get to know parishioners instead of just coming in and leaving.”
4. “The Legion of Mary brought me here, and it really enhanced my spirituality.”
5. “I like walking from my house to church. I want to walk to church and go to Mass... if possible twice a week.”
6. “Food banks, warm sock drives—that’s how I feel close to God.”
7. “Daily Mass here is what made me hunger for daily Mass.”
8. “I felt the welcoming—people were very nice, and now I feel that the church is like my second home.”

9. “The devotion to the Mother of Perpetual Help has been a very strong energy for me and my entire family.”
 10. “It’s a place where you can practice your faith quietly. A safe place to go for confession.”
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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 Deep Spirit of Welcome, Friendliness, and Hospitality

Summary: Parishioners repeatedly described Sacred Heart as warm, attentive, friendly, and especially welcoming to newcomers, immigrants, and people looking for a spiritual home.

- “I felt welcomed... people are very nice and now I feel that church is like my second home.”
 - “The community was very together and very welcoming for newcomers.”
 - “People are so friendly—they talk to you, even the priests greet you outside.”
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2. Strong Marian Devotion (Legion of Mary, Mother of Perpetual Help, Rosary)

Summary: The parish’s Marian spirituality emerged as one of its most defining gifts. Parishioners described deep attachment to OLPH, the rosary, and Marian groups.

- “The Legion of Mary brought me here... it really enhanced my spirituality.”
 - “The devotion to the Mother of Perpetual Help has been a very strong energy for my family.”
 - “If I don’t pray the rosary, I feel like I’m missing something—joining this group made me so happy.”
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3. Redemptorist Spirituality and Commitment to the Poor

Summary: Parishioners strongly value the Redemptorist emphasis on service, mercy, confession, and preaching. Their presence shaped parish identity.

- “I could understand their ministry of ministering to the marginalized—that message stayed with me.”
 - “They offered confession every day. I hope they come back.”
 - “Their Masses and homilies had a deep impact on me.”
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4. A Diverse, Multicultural, International Community

Summary: Parishioners highlighted the racial, cultural, and generational diversity as a distinctive sign of God's presence.

- "Here, you've got so many foreigners—it makes it more like the Church."
 - "Look at us—Korea, Philippines, Japan, Cuba... this is the universality of the Church."
 - "People come here intentionally, even out of their way."
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5. Sacred Space, Silence, Beauty, and Prayerfulness

Summary: The church building itself—its images, stained glass, architecture, and silence—is seen as a gift that inspires prayer and closeness to God.

- "When I come in, I feel like it's sacred... the silence brings me closer to God."
 - "It's a church where you can spend time—the windows, the saints."
 - "I needed a church where I could concentrate... and immediately I liked the setup here."
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6. Service and Outreach to Those in Need

Summary: Parishioners are proud of the parish's history of service through food banks, sock drives, and direct outreach.

- "Food banks, warm sock drives... that's how I feel close to God."
 - "We created a food bank that became a major mission of the church."
 - "I'd like to get back to that message of service... a lot of that stuff is gone."
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7. Community Participation and Volunteer Spirit

Summary: Many parishioners became spiritually alive through volunteer roles—lector, sacristan, group leader, outreach, young adult group.

- "Being a sacristan helped me get to know parishioners instead of just coming and leaving."
 - "It ignited a love of volunteering—I started lecturing and helping."
 - "Leading the young adult group after COVID had a big impact on me."
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8. Availability of Sacraments—Daily Mass and Confession

Summary: Sacred Heart's history of daily Mass and frequent confession is cherished and seen as spiritually formative.

- "This is the only church that offered confession daily."
 - "Daily Mass here made me hunger for daily Mass."
 - "We used to have confession from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m."
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9. Long-Term Commitment and Multi-Generational Roots

Summary: Many shared decades-long ties to the parish, linking family life, sacraments, and grief with this community.

- “I’ve been here almost 25 years... and we buried my parents here.”
 - “I came here in the 1960s and still feel at home.”
 - “This parish has been with me through everything.”
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3) TEN THINGS PARISHIONERS SAID THEY ARE MOST PROUD OF

1. The parish’s strong Marian devotion, especially the Mother of Perpetual Help Novena.
 2. The multicultural, international community.
 3. The friendliness and welcoming spirit.
 4. The sacred, peaceful prayer environment.
 5. The parish’s history of service to the poor (food bank, sock drives).
 6. The Legion of Mary and its spiritual impact.
 7. The availability of confession in earlier years.
 8. The vibrant community life before COVID (young adult group, ministries).
 9. The enduring presence of the Redemptorists and their charism.
 10. The long-term, generational roots within families.
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4) ACTION ITEMS & FUTURE HOPES (REPEATED THEMES)

These emerged clearly and repeatedly:

1. Restore daily confession or greatly increase confession availability.
2. Restore daily Mass and more weekday liturgies.
3. Revive service ministries (food bank, Thanksgiving outreach, sock drives, shelter ministry).
4. Increase visibility and support for the Legion of Mary.
5. Maintain and strengthen Redemptorist presence and charism in the parish.
6. Grow the young adult ministry and create more opportunities for youth engagement.
7. Create more space for fellowship (bigger hall, more social gatherings).
8. Continue multicultural inclusion and celebrate diversity intentionally.
9. More faith-sharing groups and spiritual formation opportunities.
10. Greater communication and promotion of existing ministries.