

St Anne Listening Session: “What Are Our Gifts?”

Wednesday, October 8, 2025

Moderators: John Comerford (recorded by Javier Taylor), Brigid McMahan, Alice Shepard, Carrie Steen

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 St. Anne as a community that brings people closer to God through belonging, welcome, stability, connection, service, prayer, and formation. Many spoke of renewal, healing, peace, and spiritual grounding that they found at St. Anne during major life events, relocations, or family transitions. Others emphasized the role of relationships, young adult community, friendships, and shared ministries in deepening their faith.

They emphasized how involvement in young adult ministry, being a sacristan, volunteering, social justice, parent groups, the school, and parish-wide activities helped them encounter God more personally. Several expressed that St. Anne is a place where they can “be themselves,” worship with authenticity, ask questions freely, and feel at home.

Many described the parish as a safe, holy, peaceful place where Mass, preaching, the choir, and sacramental life nourish their spiritual growth. The parish’s intergenerational friendships and “feel” of the community were central to their experience of God.

Ten Impactful Quotes on “Becoming Closer to God”

1. “This is the one place I can come to that I feel whole again.”
2. “We were able to form a community, and that’s been really helpful to me... a place where we can really come and share spiritual talks.”
3. “Coming to church... it’s a time when you can think about yourself, and hearing the sermon is always uplifting.”
4. “I made a friend who I ended up being his sponsor for confirmation... a great blessing.”
5. “Being involved makes me feel good to be helping people.”
6. “My kids said, ‘It’s so much more holy,’ and I said, yes—because God is present... every time I leave I feel a minty freshness in my heart.”
7. “It’s definitely brought me closer to my Catholic faith, and through that closer to God.”
8. “This parish launched my children into the faith.”
9. “I love being a sacristan... it gives me a real taste for spiritual growth.”

10. “There is a really strong community here... which is what brought my husband and I here in the first place.”
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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 Welcoming, “Come As You Are” Parish Culture

Summary: Parishioners repeatedly described St. Anne as warm, accepting, and authentically welcoming—especially for newcomers, young families, and those returning to faith. People said they feel comfortable being who they are.

- “St. Anne feels very come as you are... it was a relief to come back here.”
 - “One of our main gifts is that we are very welcoming to people who are new to the parish.”
 - “My main thing is... it’s welcoming.”
 - “It’s very Seattle—come as you are. They’re just happy you’re in a pew.”
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2. Strong Sense of Community, Connection, and Belonging

Summary: The most frequently mentioned theme was the strength of the St. Anne community—people genuinely know, support, and care for one another. Parishioners treasure the relationships formed here.

- “We’re glad to see each other, and we want to be together.”
 - “My favorite thing still is the people... loving them, the community.”
 - “There is a really strong community, which is what brought my husband and I here.”
 - “We developed very close friendships... a real strength of the parish.”
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3. Opportunities to Participate, Serve, and Share Gifts

Summary: Parishioners emphasized that St. Anne provides many ways for people to serve and use their talents. Ministries, commissions, and volunteer roles were repeated as gifts of the parish.

- “There is something for everyone here.”
 - “This gives you a chance to branch out, volunteer, do good, and share with the congregation.”
 - “There’s opportunity here for different kinds of people and strengths.”
 - “People looking to be involved—even with thinly stretched resources.”
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4. Vibrant Young Adult Ministry and Faith-Sharing Community

Summary: The young adult group is seen as a major gift. It is a place of friendship, belonging, shared faith, and spiritual growth.

- “We were able to form a young adult community... it’s been my main friend group.”
 - “My favorite part... the young adult group. It’s bigger than I ever thought it could be.”
 - “It’s amazing—the group is growing, and it’s beautiful to think about how we met each other.”
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5. Meaningful Liturgical Life (Mass, Music, Sacristy, Ministry)

Summary: Parishioners spoke of the beauty and power of St. Anne’s liturgies—especially the choir, sacristan ministry, and the sense of holiness at Mass.

- “I love being a sacristan... it gives me a real taste for spiritual growth.”
 - “I love the choir and the music—very beautiful.”
 - “Coming to Mass is uplifting—hearing more about God and that He cares for you.”
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6. A Safe, Holy, Peaceful Place to Practice the Faith

Summary: Many shared that St. Anne is a place where they feel spiritually safe, calm, and connected to God.

- “A safe place to practice your faith.”
 - “God is present... every time I leave, I feel a minty freshness in my heart.”
 - “It’s so much more holy.” (child’s reflection)
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7. School Ministry and Faith Formation

Summary: Parishioners emphasized pride in the school’s mission and the way it shapes children’s lifelong faith.

- “The ministry of our school is really important.”
 - “It launched my children into the faith.”
 - “My grandchildren are now in Catholic schools because of their start here.”
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8. Parish History, Beauty, and Legacy

Summary: Parishioners take pride in the parish’s long history, enduring community, and beautiful church building.

- “I am proud of this absolutely gorgeous building built by the hands and donations of the people.”
 - “This community—we want it to continue to grow.”
 - “We used to all work together... all the commissions would meet together.”
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3) TEN THINGS PARISHIONERS SAID THEY ARE MOST PROUD OF

1. The welcoming, “come as you are” spirit.
 2. The strong sense of community and belonging.
 3. The young adult group and its growth.
 4. The beauty and history of the church building.
 5. The parish’s music and choir.
 6. The vibrancy of ministries (sacristan, social justice, volunteering, hospitality).
 7. The school and its mission of forming children in the faith.
 8. Long-lasting friendships and intergenerational connections.
 9. The ability to serve and participate in many ways.
 10. The parish’s resilience and commitment despite limited resources.
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4) ACTION ITEMS & FUTURE HOPES (REPEATED THEMES)

These emerged clearly and repeatedly:

1. Rebuild collaboration among parish commissions.
2. Improve unified calendaring and communication across parish & school.
3. Address understaffing and communication gaps.
4. Increase intergenerational activities.
5. Revive adult faith formation offerings.
6. Rebuild strong lay involvement.
7. Increase personal invitations and newcomer engagement.
8. Strengthen relationship between parish and school.