

St. Matthew Youth Focus Group  
 7 students who attend Catholic High School; 2 boys, 5 girls  
 5 students in an online survey

**Discover: What is going well at St. Matthew?**

- † There are a variety of mass times.
- † The music ministry is great.
- † Our new priest is a good homilist and feels more involved in the community.
- † The Children’s Liturgy of the Word is a good program, not only for the children, but also for the youth who receive service hours for helping.
- † It seems like more people are attending mass and participating in events. That is good to see.

Student comments that reflect these statements are highlighted below.

<b>COMMUNITY (people, volunteers, descriptors)</b>	<b>Responses</b>
More people are attending mass	3
More people joining our parish	1
Community; how the community supports each other	2
Parish council is growing	1
<b>FAITH FORMATION/CATECHESIS</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Children’s Liturgy of the Word is a program that helps children hear God’s word in a way they will understand it	2
Vacation Bible School Program has always gone well	1
<b>LITURGY and WORSHIP</b>	<b>Responses</b>
A variety of mass times; everyone can find one they like	3
Music program is very good: band, piano, singers across all masses; music is great	3
Length of mass is good for all ages; you don’t lose focus	1
I like Fr. Bill’s homilies; loving the homilies	2
We live stream masses for those who can’t attend	1
The way we do church	1
<b>MINISTERIAL/SACRAMENTAL</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Available confession times	1
<b>RELATIONAL/SOCIAL</b>	<b>Responses</b>
More people participating in events	2
The re-introduction of coffee and donuts	1
<b>SERVICE and OUTREACH</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Service hours for helping with Children’s Liturgy of the Word; I enjoy it	1
There are opportunities for service hours	1
<b>STAFF</b>	<b>Responses</b>
New priest is good; nice; feel like he’s more involved/present; very nice priest; I think change in priest is making Saint Matthew a more positive and happier place. People are enjoying Father Bill	7

## Dream: How can St. Matthew become even better?

- † Our youth want to be engaged in our Catholic faith at an earlier age in more meaningful ways: catechesis and service.
- † The confirmation program could be more inspiring, fulfilling, and fun.
- † Engage youth with each other and our parish by beginning youth ministry sooner than high school. If introduced at middle school, students would build a community in which they would want to be involved and not leave.
- † The youth have an interest in participating in service opportunities for the community-at-large. While a great opportunity to serve, it is also a meaningful way to connect with others.

Student comments that reflect these statements are highlighted below.

<b>Building and Facility</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Expand the church and make it more natural, light.	1
It would be great if we could update the Church, such as replacing the carpet and old furniture	1
<b>Communication</b>	<b>Responses</b>
advertise out more	1
<b>COMMUNITY (people, volunteers, descriptors)</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Engage youth after confirmation. Give them a place to belong	7
Connect public school students with Catholic school students	1
<b>FAITH FORMATION/CATECHESIS</b>	<b>Response</b>
More programs for younger students to get them excited to go to mass	1
<b>LITURGY and WORSHIP</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Once confirmed, high school students could serve as sacristans	1
Have families carry down the gifts again	1
Kids could be more a part of the mass	1
The policy on mask wearing keeps some people from coming to mass. It's important to consider those who are vulnerable	1
I would make the music more up to date.	1
<b>MINISTERIAL/SACRAMENTAL</b>	<b>Responses</b>
More organized and fun youth ministry program	1
Look at the confirmation program; make it fulfilling and inspiring; less rushed; find witnesses who inspire us; closer to our age	7
<b>RELATIONAL/SOCIAL</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Create more youth ministry events that allow us to meet each other	2
North Deanery events help you meet people from other schools. That is helpful for moving onto high school. Look for ways to improve/increase them and engage youth in these events	2
Having more events directly after church	1
Having more get-togethers (maybe a lock-in for teens) could help	1

SCHOOL	Responses
Connect youth ministry program to the middle school so that we build a community we don't want to leave; we can build a relationship with God; public school and school ministry – we should build community	4
If there were middle school retreats, high school students/school alums could retreat to give witness talks	1
SERVICE and OUTREACH	Responses
Provide more opportunities for youth, looking at local issues. Can raise money and volunteer with non-profit organizations; nursing homes, food pantries; More service projects like Easter	4

**Design: How can St. Matthew become even better? (online survey only)**

- ✚ Keep growing and being positive
- ✚ Trying to put the church and our facilities out there more.
- ✚ Have more events directly after church, and example of this is the pancake breakfast
- ✚ My dream is just see the pews full of people again. And I think we do that by convincing people that this a safe space from Covid so they can come back.
- ✚ I think COVID limits the events and options that would create more of a sense of community.

**Design: What can we do at St. Matthew to improve for youth? (online survey only)**

- ✚ Make it more fun (like outings)
- ✚ Have a younger person come in to teach a Sunday school classes or something around those marks so they can relate to the kids on a better spectrum.
- ✚ For the programs such as confirmation for example, maybe have more times throughout the month, but not for 3 hours, like 2 times a month, but for an hour or something like that
- ✚ Just be more involved with social media. That's what everyone is doing and it's a great way to spread the word to the youth to come to church.
- ✚ Having events where youth could connect would be helpful, even events that would act as more opportunities for service that would count towards both high school and their confirmation goals

**Important Quotes**

- ✚ “Our faith formation feels segmented. There are good programs when we were younger: Children’s liturgy of the Word, First Communion program, and vacation Bible School. But then there is nothing until Confirmation. That is too late.”
- ✚ “Why can’t faith be fun?”

**Synod Question**

Pope Francis is encouraging us to talk to one another about our church and where we are going. What do you think about your Catholic faith? How do we respond to the needs of the faithful? Is it relevant?

The Catholic church isn’t relevant.

There is service within the church, but we don’t go beyond.

We need to show people who we are and what we are about.

People make assumptions about the Catholic Church based on what they see and hear. It’s the community that makes it relevant, but it’s hard to see.

BCHS is where my faith is. I would like to feel connected to my parish, but I don’t.

The church needs to be more inviting, less old-fashioned.

I see my protestant friends more involved in their youth ministry programs.