

# **St. Mary's Catholic Church**

Jackson, Tennessee

## ***Feasibility Study Final Report***

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## PREFACE

Guidance In Giving, Inc. (GIG) wishes to express its gratitude for the assistance provided by the staff and parish leaders of the St. Mary's during this Feasibility Study. Father David Graham, Kate Todd, Calli Carpenter and the entire parish staff were an invaluable source of assistance throughout the study process. Thank you.

Our thanks are also extended to all the parishioners who shared their thoughts and opinions during this Feasibility Study to discuss the development and future of the St. Mary's. These participants took time from their busy schedules to be personally interviewed or to complete a survey questionnaire. The openness, candor and sincerity of their answers demonstrated that the members of the St. Mary's truly care about the future of their parish and want to be actively involved in the planning and implementation process.

The gracious participation of these families have made the following report possible, and we at Guidance In Giving, Inc., are truly grateful.

## INTRODUCTION

Guidance In Giving, Inc. was retained by the St. Mary's Catholic Church to conduct a Feasibility Study to gather the thoughts and opinions of parishioners regarding the proposed construction of a Parish Youth Center.

The Feasibility Study was conducted from February – April 2022, with Stephen Babcock and Michael Messano of Guidance In Giving, Inc. organizing study preparations and providing on-site service during the active phase of the study.

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## **OBJECTIVES OF THE FEASIBILITY STUDY**

- To educate parishioners about the proposed construction of a Parish Youth Center;
- To determine whether parishioners feel there are other elements, needs or projects that should be considered by the parish to be included in a potential campaign;
- To identify potential Leadership Gift prospects within the parish and/or local community;
- To determine collective financial support from parishioners/families;
- To identify possible campaign volunteers, including leadership committee members;
- To identify any potential issues, points of concern or conflicts within the community.

## **FEASIBILITY STUDY PREPARATION**

During the preparatory stages of on-site service, Counsel worked closely with Father David Graham and Kate Todd to prepare and complete the following:

- Questions for personal interviews and the direct mail/online Study Survey
- An interview request letter and a cover letter for the Study Survey
- A Master Plan Summary was created with information received from the parish to give an overview of the proposed project
- Identification of one hundred (100) potential personal interview prospects
- Identification of nine hundred and thirteen (913) survey recipients
- Weekly pulpit announcements and bulletin newsletters

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## FEASIBILITY STUDY METHODOLOGY

Two methods were utilized to obtain information during the Feasibility Study:

**1. Personal Interviews:** A Personal Interview invitation letter was sent to 100 parish households to participate in the interview portion of our Study.

The families selected for interviews represent a cross-section of parishioners who have a history of generous participation with their time, talent and treasure to the parish. They include top parish donors, ministry leaders and participants, as well as regular Mass attendees. The invited families were asked to contact the parish office to set an appointment to be personally and confidentially interviewed by a representative from Guidance In Giving, Inc. **A total of 39 personal interviews were conducted.** The names of all those who participated in an interview are provided as an Addendum to this report.

**2. Direct-Mail/Online Study Survey:** An invitation letter was sent to 913 registered parishioners via mail. Those receiving the letter were asked to complete the survey online or by taking home a questionnaire and returning it to the parish office by April 18, 2022. Additionally, email and Flocknote were also utilized to encourage families to participate in the study. All surveys received as of April 18, 2022 are included in this report.

This report includes a total of **120 Study Survey** responses. The names of those who responded to the survey are provided as an Addendum to this report.

**In summary, a total of 159 households (16% of all registered families) of St. Mary's participated in the Feasibility Study.** The rate of response is consistent for a parish of St. Mary's size as Guidance In Giving will typically see a response rate of ~10-15%+ in parishes of ~1,000+ families.

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## REPORT FORMAT

In an effort to provide a comprehensive report of findings and suggested actions, this report is presented in the following format:

- I. **RESULTS** from both the Personal Interviews and the Study Survey are presented statistically and include commentary.
- II. **REVIEW OF KEY POINTS** of the results of the Study.
- III. **ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS** as to how St. Mary's should consider proceeding based on the results and analysis of the Study findings.
- IV. **ADDENDUM** to be provided to Father David Graham separate from the Findings Report, include the following:
  - A. *Personal Interview Participants*
  - B. *Study Survey Respondents*
  - C. *Potential Campaign Volunteers*
  - D. *Potential Campaign Leaders*
  - E. *Potential Reception Hosts*

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## I. RESULTS

### *(FROM THE PERSONAL INTERVIEWS & MAIL/ONLINE SURVEYS)*

*(Please note that not every question was answered by every respondent)*

#### **Demographic Information:**

Each interview and survey began with a series of demographics questions, asking parishioners about their involvement in and opinions of the St. Mary's Catholic Church.

#### **1. How long have you been a member of St. Mary's?**

<i>Membership Ranges</i>	<i>Responses</i>
> 30 years	<b>27%</b>
25 – 29 years	11%
20 – 24 years	14%
15 – 19 years	9%
10 – 14 years	11%
5 – 9 years	12%
1 – 4 years	13%
< 1 year	3%

#### **2. What ministries, programs and/or activities are you involved with?**

Of the 159 households who participated in the Study, 132 (83%) indicated their involvement in a wide array of parish ministries, programs and activities.

The responses from Study respondents provided us with an excellent cross-section of the parish. The ministries, programs and activities that were mentioned include:

<i>Altar Society</i>	<i>Eucharistic Minister</i>	<i>Ministry to the Sick</i>
<i>Bereavement Committee</i>	<i>Evangelization</i>	<i>Money Counter</i>
<i>Bible Study groups</i>	<i>Faith Formation</i>	<i>Parish Council</i>
<i>Book Club</i>	<i>Finance Council</i>	<i>Prayer Group(s)</i>
<i>Building &amp; Grounds</i>	<i>Haiti Ministry</i>	<i>Prison Ministry</i>
<i>Children's Literature</i>	<i>Heartwarmers</i>	<i>RCIA</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>Hispanic Community</i>	<i>Room in the Inn</i>
<i>Christmas Partners</i>	<i>Committee</i>	<i>Sacristan</i>
<i>CORO</i>	<i>Knights of Columbus</i>	<i>Sunday School</i>
<i>Diaconate</i>	<i>Lector</i>	<i>Ushers</i>
<i>Eucharistic Adoration</i>	<i>Light of the World</i>	<i>Youth Ministry</i>

#### **3. In your opinion, what does the parish do well?**

The most common responses to this question overwhelmingly referred to:

- Welcoming and friendly
- Offers a wide variety of opportunities to participate
- Adoration Chapel
- Convenient Mass times
- Supportive and engaged clergy

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### Representative Commentary:

- *Fellowship.*
- *Catholicism, great education in the school.*
- *I love the liturgy and involving people in the celebration.*
- *The parish has several opportunities to attend mass, as well as online options.*
- *Very good Youth program and Senior program.*
- *The overall feeling of community here at St. Mary's. It just feels like home.*
- *The parish does a lot of good work in and for the community.*
- *Opportunities for Growth and Bible Study.*
- *Make sure all nationalities are welcome.*
- *Friendly welcoming parish. Chance of learning and knowledge of Jesus, All priest involved and caring.*
- *I love that we have three priests and several deacons that serve our parish!!!*
- *We feel like we are one big family.*
- *We care for the sick in our parish. We also care for people in our community with Angel Tree, serving at the soup kitchen, food boxes during the holidays and Room in the Inn.*
- *Sunday School and Bible study are excellent.*
- *Everything!*
- *El servicio a los dems, convivir y compartir mi fe con mi comunidad hispana.*
- *We kept things going during COVID.*
- *Focus on the spiritual.*
- *I believe we have great spiritual leadership here. Our priests are welcoming and engaging.*
- *Multiple weekend masses means everyone should be able to make a mass. There are many opportunities for adult education, an active youth group, and faith formation program.*
- *Bring us together in learning, in prayer and in service to others.*
- *Having daily mass. There are so many parishes that do not offer the number of masses and because of this I am grateful.*
- *Retreats, visit the sick.*
- *Because we are new, we cannot not answer that as of yet.*
- *Communication is very good, especially since they started using Flocknote.*
- *Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration, outreach/support through card ministry and involvement in Room at the Inn/RIFA/Soup Kitchen.*
- *Offering many opportunities to become involved in church activities and ways to further our knowledge of our faith. Programs for faith education for our children.*
- *Variety of opportunities for Bible study, variety of volunteer activities, care for sick and homebound.*
- *Communication through social media & flock notes & bulletin.*
- *The parish hosts a variety of activities to try to get people engaged. That being said, I think it rightfully emphasizes the place of Mass and the Eucharist as of prime importance.*
- *Communication has improved. Welcoming, lots of ways to get involved.*
- *Supports the Catholic schools, has numerous events such as fish fry, pancake Sunday, etc.*
- *I love the message I receive at Mass. School Mass 2x week. The people are friendly.*
- *La entrada del padre, las canciones, las lecturas.*
- *Our parish has very supportive priests to guide all of us. The bereavement committee is such a blessing to those during the loss of a loved one. The K of C Christmas Partners is a program*

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*that brings happiness to so many families. And the Christmas Partners program is known in the Jackson community and shines a light on St. Mary's Church.*

- *Convenient Mass times; Ample opportunity for confession, Knights offer monthly breakfasts; a good opportunity for socialization; Adult Sunday School offered.*
- *Celebrating Holy Days and Feast Days, Youth Ministry, Children's Church.*
- *Diverse congregation, Fr. David is a great homilist.*
- *The service to the parishioners through all of its ministries.*
- *Invites parishioners to get involved, educate them about the faith.*
- *This is a very orthodox parish, emphasizing true Catholic teachings.*
- *Kids love the school. Sports are great.*
- *Perpetual Adoration and Daily Mass.*
- *Wanting to work together, sense of being a parish family. People are very generous with their treasure.*
- *I am so glad to have a school.*
- *Transparent about finances; religious opportunities aside from Mass.*
- *So many things: Knights of Columbus do a fantastic job w/ fish fries & pancake breakfast: Christmas Angel tree is phenomenal; Haiti Mission is so special; Easter vigil Mass & Xmas Eve Mass is so special; the parish wide Penance service is wonderful; Afrocentric Mass is wonderful; St. Joseph Mass is wonderful; The angel tree program; Haiti orphanage program...*
- *Great opportunity for faith development to through programs and activities.*
- *La Misa.*
- *Sometimes the parish can be very good at adapting to current situations with faith. Drive thru confessions during COVID was the most wonderfully faithful and amazing idea ever!! I can see the effort and thought behind the adult catechesis programs. Overall I think they are well thought out and varied and help foster faith.*
- *Friendly people, wonderful priests.*
- *Adoration Chapel, Fellowship, ministries, school has exceeded expectations*
- *I think that our parish does well in diversity of programs and ministries to be involved in. Also, I think that they do well in welcoming our Spanish community.*
- *Welcoming new people.*
- *There are a lot of opportunities for parishioners to participate in various ministries.*
- *Offers a good variety of Masses and opportunity for confession, opportunity for input, bulletin is informative and timely. Before COVID, good outreach to bring the Eucharist to the sick.*
- *La Enseñanza , la convivencia y por supuesto la Misa.*
- *Does well? Inform parishioners and give them opportunities to be involved.*
- *Offer many opportunities for teenage & young adult involvement.*

#### **4. In your opinion, where does the parish need to improve?**

The most common responses to this question were:

- Care of the parish buildings and grounds
- The involvement of more families in parish programs
- Communication/transparency
- Sound system in the church
- Parking, traffic

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Representative Commentary:

- *Property and facilities needs to be taken care of better.*
- *More community outreach.*
- *Communication at all levels.*
- *No puedo opinar mucho porque tengo poco tiempo viviendo en Jackson. Pero si creo que es importante que las personas encargadas de la administración tengan en cuenta que la comunidad latina está en crecimiento me gustaría que fueran un poquito más flexibles.*
- *We must do a better job taking care of the buildings we have.*
- *Growth. The number of active parishioners I feel is not strong. Many feel it is divided into two separate communities. Our parish needs to be ONE vibrant community.*
- *Way before Covid, the parish doesn't plan activities well or get the parish involved. After Covid, it has really gotten worse.*
- *The existing buildings are not taken care of.*
- *Adult singles group, divorce counseling, marriage counseling, and offering bible studies and daycare programs to allow us to attend bible studies.*
- *More teen and youth activities maybe, Hispanic and English communities participating together in more fellowship events.*
- *1. Misa en español en la mañana 2. Hacer misas especiales en español en vez de bilingües*
- *Listen to all the people, not a chosen few.*
- *Parking lot markings and maintenance. Improve outside lighting for parking lot and entrances.*
- *Our Catholic Children are the future of our church and our world. I think we need to focus on providing our youth with an excellent academic education in a very Catholic environment, with accessibility for all Catholic children. We have made strides in this area with tuition relief angels but we need to really look at all the Catholic youth in our parish and see how to make this a reality for everyone.*
- *More parking!*
- *Cleaning all areas.*
- *The average parishioner is not aware of the issues going on here.*
- *Hopefully the new parking lots will be large enough.*
- *More fellowship opportunities would be good. The Well is a good start. St. Mary's has needed a community like The Well is building for a long time. All programs at St. Mary's need to be more advertised. Some parishioners don't even know about the opportunities available to become connected to a group. I see that Heartwarmers has started having a spot in the bulletin. That is a good start.*
- *Youth Group had been more active.*
- *Needs more choir members. Encourage more parishioners to be involved with parish activities/ministries.*
- *Outside landscaping needs some attention.*
- *Financial generosity, parking and traffic problems.*
- *I really don't have an opinion on any improvement needed.*
- *Like a lot of bigger churches, the standard weekend parishioner seems quick to slide in at the beginning of Mass and quick to leave right at the end. I feel like a lot of the people are disconnected from each other, but I'm not sure what solutions there are to this apathy.*
- *Needs to improve the church sound system. During pandemic, mic on YouTube was bad!! If you sit on the left side you barely hear the homily.*
- *Need more volunteers. Need to unify Anglo and Hispanic communities.*
- *More classes taught by Father David. Day classes and recreation for Seniors.*

- *More classes/things for young children to get them interested in church. Continue with middle and high school children.*
- *Activities for young adults, not sure what the youth program is like now but was lacking when my kids were there ~15 years ago.*
- *Not informed enough to have a response on this question.*
- *Más programas para jóvenes y matrimonios ya que la familia es muy importante por que es la base del hogar , la familia debe estar unida en la fe para un mejor futuro de nuestros matrimonios y jovenes!! Y para eso se necesitan personas preparadas en nuestra comunidad y llevar acabo la obra de Dios que es evangelizar a su pueblo.*
- *We need to address the sound system in the church. If you sit on the side next to Holy Family Hall you can barely hear unless they are using the special mic.*
- *I guess we will never use a nursery again because of its size. Maybe that could be housed in the school to encourage more people to use it.....especially for the toddlers.*
- *They need to serve the needs of everyone not just the youth of the parish and school.*
- *I would like to see the choir grow and be more invigorating.*
- *More activities like family camp, volleyball for adults, more confession times.*
- *Having an option of religious education for children with disabilities.*
- *Follow through. We talk a lot...*
- *I hope that while the parish looks to building for the future, especially for our youth, that we also not forget about maintaining the areas of the parish that already exist, some of which really need refreshing.*
- *Too many ballgames and social activities.*
- *Better communication, try to involve more young people.*
- *Communication, financial transparency, get school cafeteria up and running, school gym needs attention.*
- *Welcoming strangers, welcoming those of other cultures who speak other languages, music ministry.*
- *Sound system in church.*
- *Our commitment to our youth, which is our future.*
- *Need another Spanish Mass.*
- *We do not always feel like one big happy family. In some ways it feels as if we are all maneuvering on our own without a master driver (person or group) to pull all the pieces together. Also (brace yourself) there needs to be more integration between the Anglos and Hispanics. We may speak different languages but we are in this together. Each piece brings a special piece of celebration and understanding to the Parish.*
- *Communication about building progress and how the previous money was spent.*
- *Need more handicapped parking (current lot always full). Also, the church needs to be more accessible to those who have difficulties ambulating. Consider benches along the pathway for those who may need to sit to catch their breath. Need to address the people in the parish who need rides to get to/from mass & church meetings. There are so many that want to attend yet are not able to drive. Many feel they are a burden to continually ask for a ride. We need to do a better job at taking care of our elderly. Next, I feel there needs to be more opportunities/leisure time with the priests and deacons outside the church so that one can better get to know them. For example, Pints with the Priests.*
- *Need more to contribute financially.*
- *It needs to improve on making people feel welcome—current parishioners as well as new parishioners.*

- *I feel like we are undercover Catholics. Our community should know us more, and we should proudly declare our faith and share our message more.*
- *There should be more outreach to our little ones, especially the little ones before school age. Being forced to be quiet isn't causing them to look forward to going to church. It's also encouraging young families to stay away to care for their toddlers. There needs to be a social group for young adults with child care provided, maybe on a Sunday afternoon with school children's bed time considered. With COVID restrictions loosened, I'd like to see a very active youth group again with maybe their own Mass so their musical skills can be better utilized. Etc.*
- *En el aspecto de la enseñanza creo que enfocándose un poco más en tratar de predicar con la verdad en las homilias hacia nosotros pues habemos algunas personas que aún estando evangelizados nos falta mucho que aprender inclusive para poder server (ojo no estoy juzgando a nadie es solo una observación).*
- *Ministries for adults older than 30/35 and younger than 65.*
- *We should hire a music director to cover all our masses, who will enrich the Mass.*
- *Young families need a safe place for their children during Mass, specifically mothers who nurse their babies. The narthex has no privacy, no back support, and it is a large open area difficult to manage young children. Also, all restrooms do not have a baby changing station, making finding one during mass frustrating!*
- *More groups or community events for adults 22-35.*
- *I think the administration could use some help. It seems like there is so much to be done, and it falls on just a few people. I think we could use more staff. At the same time, I think we could work smarter not harder. Simple things like software that could coordinate scheduling and communications within the main office would solve a lot of problems and could also cut down on staff hours and double work. I also think there are probably ways to involve the laity that would take burden off the pastors. We would have to find a way to not ask the same 20 people for help all the time, but with as large a parish as we have there must be a way to delegate and get things done better. -In general, I think we need to free the pastors up for pastoring and delegate a lot of the day to day running things to laity. I would love to have a confession available more often, for example, adding another evening a week, but this is difficult right now when the pastors are already pulled in so many different directions at all hours.*

##### 5. What is your opinion of the proposed Parish Youth Center?

<i>Project Summary</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>	<i>Total</i>
Positive	73%	61%	64%
Negative	1%	9%	7%
Unsure	26%	23%	24%
No Response	0%	7%	5%

The most common responses to this question were:

- The youth need a space of their own
- Project has been promised for years
- Concerns regarding expenses to operate and ongoing maintenance/upkeep
- The men's and women's restrooms should be switched

Representative Commentary:

- *I believe the more opportunities for young people to enter in to activities in their own parish, will foster a greater appreciation and involvement in the future.*

- *I like the layout and the idea but not sure how many youths would use the facility. Do we have a high participation in our youth groups? I don't have kids so I'm not sure.*
- *Yo creo que invertir en los niños y joves de nuestra comunidad es la mejor decision.*
- *There is always a need for more room for activities.*
- *Involve the youth. Ask them what do they want.*
- *It's needed. Young people are the future of the Church.*
- *Absolutely not needed. How does this bring in money to the school or church. The school, church, and grounds could benefit from that money. Improve what you have before you add another building.*
- *Love it!!!!*
- *We feel this would be a great addition for our church. The youth ministry could really benefit from this space. Perhaps even a few updates to the current gymnasium could be included. We love all of the features that you have included in the plans.*
- *Do we have enough youth to support it?*
- *Way past time. We need this a long time ago. I heard about this 20 years ago and my kids are already grown up and we still are talking about it.*
- *I think it is needed. I will support the building fund.*
- *I feel if have the right youth leadership to encourage participation and for kids to be excited about going and for the youth to be invested in what is going on would be a real positive. Not beneficial if parents are making kids go or if there is poor follow through on part of youth leadership.*
- *I thought when we gave up the gym to Sacred Heart this would be covered with these funds.*
- *Can we afford to maintain this new building?*
- *A facility designated for the youth ministry is important to keeping the faith alive in our youth. Wish it could include room for a gym.*
- *There is a need to care for the facilities already on the property. Maintenance is an issue now on campus. For example, some of the cherry trees need to be removed and replaced, several of the lights in front of church are broken and have not been replaced, flooring in some halls of the school is damaged and in need of replacement, some of the school's bathrooms need repair and refurbishing; if the youth center is built, are there funds to maintain it?*
- *School numbers are dwindling. Is this a good investment?*
- *Why not use the school more? When will it get done? Who is going to pay for it?*
- *A very good asset for the church.*
- *They need a place to get together in a safe environment. Need a place for games and plays.*
- *The idea of a Parish Youth Center is very positive in many ways but only if it is not too much too soon in the midst of the current project.*
- *I have no expertise in architectural plans. From what I see, looks impressive.*
- *The addition is a great idea if: 1. We have the money to pay for it 2, More importantly - we will be able to afford the ongoing maintenance that will increase over the years. Question: Is SMS enrollment increasing or declining? Is the school capable of meeting current financial commitments? If the answer to either question is negative than the addition is not a good idea at this time. There is one HUGE BUT to this. The Ford plant that is slated for completion in 4 years. It is very possible that this plant and subsequent support companies may have the same effect on Memphis and outlying areas (Jackson) that Nissan had on Nashville. Maybe we ought to consider a wait and see approach before we make our final decision. This addition would make SMS a much more appealing choice for new families.*
- *St. Mary's Parish Center, not just youth. Walking track for seniors.*

- *If you don't have the youth engaged we won't have a future.*
- *I hope more families will join and contribute and not just the big donors like us. We have young families in the parish and they should be tapped since they will benefit. I hope some group is doing the math — there will be added expense to maintain the electricity, supplies, housekeeping - I worry the weekly collections will not catch up to this rising expense.*
- *Excelente! Santa María tiene esa gran necesidad.*
- *Space available in the school. Why a new bldg? Classrooms not being utilized, enrollment is declining.*
- *The restrooms should be reversed, for example, women restroom by girls changing room & vice versa. This is a much-needed addition....our youth are our future!*
- *It doesn't appear to affect my family, except that I am positive they will ask for money (even though my family is not included in any of the things they will do in this building)*
- *As a single young adult, I don't have much to do with youth activities at St. Mary's to know what the needs are. It seems like a good idea if we have a growing program.*
- *Do we need it?*
- *Please offer programs that are open to everyone, not just SMS students.*
- *Needed, been needed.*
- *I want it to happen.*
- *Will the large meeting room take the place of Holy Family Hall? If so, what will we do with the space of Holy Family Hall? I agree about the large meeting space but it seems like a duplication if we keep both.*
- *As the finance person, I think there are other things needed for St. Mary's. However, I do understand this is what was promised many years ago and so we should follow through.*
- *I'm really excited about it.*
- *I only wish this had been done sooner. I've been giving money for 16 years with the first phase promised to include a youth center. We were "surprised" with an undercover decision for the first plan to be only the ministry center. In the next phase we were promised that it would include a youth center. It is instead an office. So my main concern is who might come in and decide that something else is necessary other than the youth center! We are losing our young people left and right to Protestant churches who are providing something we are not.*
- *We do not have children, but it is important for the church to have a good space where there is room for youth groups to have activities, and a place for kids to feel at home.*
- *There is such a large youth group and space is needed. Many activities can happen. It is greatly needed.*
- *Yes, we need it. If you don't serve the youth here, they'll get it somewhere else.*
- *According to the plans, the girls' changing room is next to men restroom??? Don't like. The men's and women's restroom need to be swapped.*
- *Will it meet the needs of the Hispanic youth?*
- *We've been looking at this for 15 years.*
- *My husband and I gave to the last giving program thinking the youth center was a large part of it. We are definitely in favor of going forward.*
- *If our youth is not nurtured, our church will not continue.*
- *For those of us without children in the youth organization there is no way to know how many youth from our parish would benefit from this proposed Youth Center. I do not know of any communication in the parish where youth activity is discussed/communicated. When my children were in youth group, the crowds of kids were large on Sunday nights. This Youth Center would have been a blessing. But are the crowds of kids still large? Our future is our*

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*children, but we have to be financially fair to the entire parish to make sure our funds are spent in the best way to serve our Lord.*

- *It's a positive move to draw St Mary's youth into parish life and maybe allow them to invite their friends to come too!*
- *My suggestion would be that the plan swaps the placement of the men's & women's restroom. It seems like it would make more sense that when coming out of the girls changing room you lead into the women's restroom & not the men's, the same also for the boys changing room & have the men's restroom outside of that.*
- *We think that this will help benefit the children of our parish who are not enrolled in our parish school and hopefully be a place that all the children of the parish can be involved and get to know each other and not make such a division of the children who do not have the means to attend our parish schools.*
- *I think we as a parish need to focus on bringing youth in as active participants of the parish. A youth building is great but if it is empty what purpose does it accomplish? I feel a young full time youth director would serve more of a purpose. The parish hall could or St. Mary's School has the space to accommodate larger events and/or gatherings until the youth participants are brought up in numbers.*
- *Enough is enough. I have pledged money twice for this project and the money was allocated elsewhere i.e. Sacred Heart of Jesus gym project. Exactly how many youth are we talking about here that would need a \$2.4 million building? The rooms in the Ministry Center are vacant much of the time. Repurpose those rooms for the youth.*
- *Me parece buena idea pues como iglesia cada día debemos de ir creciendo en todos los aspectos tanto espiritual como en lo material pues al final somos una comunidad grande y siempre se ocupa el espacio para compartir o convivir con los demás, que además al grupo de danza le vendría bien que se le facilitara un espacio cerrado para practicar.*
- *Looks like a great plan.*

## **6. Are there other projects you feel should be addressed at St. Mary's?**

The most common responses to this question were:

- Maintenance (and upgrades) of current facilities
- Parking
- Additional programs for all parishioners

Representative Commentary:

- *Take care of what we have now, but not at the expense of our programs.*
- *More programs for seniors.*
- *The bathrooms in the church are terrible shape. There are ceiling panels in some of meeting rooms that need to be replaced.*
- *The school entrance needs a facelift.*
- *We don't have a dedicated maintenance person.*
- *Natural Family Planning programs.*
- *We need to maintain what we already have.*
- *Our facilities need to be upgraded.*
- *A/C in the current gym.*
- *The inside of the church needs attention.*

**7. What would you estimate your family contribution to be over a 3-year period?**

29 of the 39 (74%) Personal Interviewees responded, and 41 of 120 (34%) of the Study Survey participants responded. **Overall, 70 (47%) families indicated potential financial support towards the project.**

It is the experience of Guidance In Giving, Inc., that families who participate in a Study may not be prepared to give an answer to this question; however, that does not mean that they will not contribute when the parish enters into a capital campaign. The firm has also found that once a complete case is presented and families are challenged to make a pledge that is sacrificial, many are likely to contribute more than the amount they originally stated in the Study.

**PLEDGE RANGE: Gift-by-Gift Breakdown (Low estimate)**

<i>Gift Breakdown</i>	<i># of Gifts</i>	<i>Total Pledges</i>
\$100,000 +	1	\$100,000
\$50,000 - \$99,999	2	\$100,000
\$25,000 - \$49,999	7	\$190,000
\$20,000 - \$24,999	0	\$0
\$15,000 - \$19,999	3	\$45,000
\$10,000 - \$14,999	5	\$50,000
\$7,500 - \$9,999	2	\$16,000
\$5,000 - \$7,499	14	\$74,200
\$4,000 - \$4,999	5	\$20,000
\$3,000 - \$3,999	10	\$31,300
\$2,000 - \$2,999	3	\$6,800
\$1,000 - \$1,999	12	\$14,790
\$1 - \$999	6	\$3,220
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>\$651,390</b>

**PLEDGE RANGE: Gift-by-Gift Breakdown (High estimate)**

<i>Gift Breakdown</i>	<i># of Gifts</i>	<i>Total Pledges</i>
\$100,000 +	2	\$200,000
\$50,000 - \$99,999	2	\$100,000
\$25,000 - \$49,999	7	\$190,000
\$20,000 - \$24,999	0	\$0
\$15,000 - \$19,999	5	\$75,000
\$10,000 - \$14,999	6	\$60,000
\$7,500 - \$9,999	2	\$16,000
\$5,000 - \$7,499	12	\$65,200
\$4,000 - \$4,999	8	\$32,500
\$3,000 - \$3,999	8	\$25,300
\$2,000 - \$2,999	2	\$4,880
\$1,000 - \$1,999	11	\$13,290
\$1 - \$999	5	\$2,920
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>\$785,090</b>

**8. Is there anything in the local or parish community that you believe would hinder the success of the proposed project?**

<i>Response</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yes	<b>58%</b>	13%	24%
No	36%	<b>50%</b>	<b>47%</b>
Unsure	6%	30%	22%
No Response	0%	7%	7%

The most common, perceived hindrances to the campaign includes:

- State of the economy
- Decline in the enrollment at St. Mary’s School
- Donor fatigue
- Lack of transparency, issues regarding past projects

Representative Commentary:

- *There is donor fatigue in the parish right now.*
- *We need to make it perfectly clear that the funds raised are going to the objectives stated.*
- *How will it benefit the ENTIRE parish, not just those with children.*
- *Credibility - will it get done?*
- *Traffic problems.*
- *\$\$ With the economy being uncertain at this time and the school needing assistance because of the enrollment going down, I would be concerned if the parish needs to take on such a large financial debt right now. I do not know if we have caught up financially from the pandemic when we were not able to take regular collections. I think the center is a great idea but I wonder if the timing is good.*
- *Parish needs to stick to the plan.*
- *Yo diría que no pues mientras pongamos todo lo que hagamos en manos De Dios el es quien hace las obras pues si nos detemos a pensar en si todos estamos de acuerdo en hacerlo o no incluso hacer alguna aportación monetaria siempre va haber quien esté de acuerdo y quien no.*
- *I do believe the declining SMS attendance needs to be addressed. Other local private schools are booming while SMS is shrinking. SMS is a valuable institution and I am saddened that it is not growing. What can be done to turn it around? Maybe a Consultant Group should be hired to address how to bring SMS back to the powerhouse that it once was. Furthermore, Students who graduate from SMS are well mannered, spiritually trained & are well educated.....an asset to this community. SMS is not an expense, it is an investment!*
- *I am not sure what is meant by this. In the past, money has been raised with the promise of certain projects and then they never came to fruition. I think there are certain biases that exist because of this. Calling it a youth center may be a little misleading as a large amount of the space seems to be used for the gym/sporting events as well.*
- *High inflation rate.*
- *Based on recent attendance at focus group studies for our Catholic schools I know there are parents who want to see bathrooms by gym redone or improved, heating and air conditioning fixed or upgraded, water fountains properly mounted to the wall, sports facilities improved. Over the years our school population has decreased and to continue to operate we seem to have gone into a cost savings mode at the school, and I believe there are people who want to see some money go into improving the school in order to attract and keep more students.*
- *Concerns about the economy.*

- *Misinformation about the gym.*
- *School fundraising, other community needs.*
- *Donor fatigue.*
- *Money and active participants.*
- *Worst possible time in the last 30 years to build something.*
- *Lack of coordination in the parish, Can't take care of what we own.*
- *What the private schools are offering (sports and technology).*
- *The new Ford Plant.*
- *People's attitude about the poor maintenance of the property.*
- *A change in administration will kill the project.*
- *Some people may not donate to capital projects because they feel they are not involved in certain areas.*
- *People will be concerned that you are investing in youth when the school numbers are dropping.*
- *I had children at St. Mary's for 24 years. I think we've been talking about a youth center for 20 years, no exaggeration. I just don't believe it will ever happen. I don't know if administration isn't really committed or what the obstacles are. We needed it years ago when there were more students at St. Mary's school. The enrollment is so low at this point, I don't know if the building is even necessary, but I do support it.*
- *Inflation, instability*
- *It's been hindered before. There seems to be unknown sources with power who have the ability to change things that better fit their needs.*
- *History of not following through on projects. Is there a real need for the Center?*
- *Tell us the truth up front.*
- *Will raising funds for building prevent funds from being available for more pressing needs? Is the Holy Family Hall used so often that another large meeting space is needed? What about rooms that are already empty or used for storage in the school? Would it be more economically feasible to provide some type of storage building for the school and refurbish some of the empty spaces in the school? There are unused changing rooms now that are used for storage. Why?*
- *What will be the impact of the Ford plant on the parish/school?*
- *Where are the youth and the youth leaders?*
- *I'm sure many families would support the youth group.*
- *Abuse scandal still lingers with people.*
- *During these current financial times in America and around the world; I'm sure that there will be some parishioners that will say let's hold back on this for a while. I don't feel this way!*
- *Just aware that construction costs are high and that many people are struggling financially.*
- *It is important that this project has input from a variety of groups and is coordinated into one cohesive idea.*
- *Todo lo que se desea de corazón se realiza con el favor de Dios siempre que sea para bien de los demás.*
- *The parish can barely make enough money to sustain the present expenses. How will it sustain heating, air conditioning, insurance, maintenance, and security for this additional space?*
- *Improper use of funds.*
- *I don't think that the plan should take away from the existing playground. A kitchen would not necessarily be needed since there is an existing kitchen. The entrance to the existing gym appears to be a definite plus. Additional youth classrooms are not needed since the existing*

*school has many open classrooms and space. In conclusion, pare down the plans to have a more modest but updated entrance into the gym and facilities.*

- *The current economy is scary—it worries me about the parish taking on debt, people being able to fulfill pledge, and the on-going cost of operating and adequately maintaining a new building.*
- *Money, gas prices.*

**9. Should St. Mary’s move forward with a capital campaign to build the new Youth Center?**

<i>Response</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yes	69%	55%	59%
No	8%	11%	10%
Unsure	23%	22%	22%
No Response	0%	12%	9%

**10. If the campaign proceeds as proposed, will you support Father David and the parish leadership to the best of your ability to help ensure that the campaign is successful?**

<i>Response</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yes	85%	72%	75%
No	10%	5%	6%
Unsure	5%	12%	10%
No Response	0%	11%	9%

**11. Are there any other topics or advice you would like to mention that have not been addressed in this interview/questionnaire?**

Representative commentary:

- *Parking is a major issue. Set up an Ongoing Maintenance Capital Fund. You need to take care of what you have.*
- *St. Mary's needs to be more involved with Sacred Heart HS. Youth Center needs to bring both youth together rather than separating them more. Make an investment in the current gym. Facade of the gym needs to look like the other buildings on campus.*
- *Consider integrating other needs, new roof, pews into the campaign. It will help involve others who don't gravitate to the Youth Center.*
- *Make sure the numbers are there. We'll give money if they do it. Refurbish the existing Admin bldg? Communicate how long the project will take.*
- *How does this project address the needs of the Hispanic community?*
- *Need to make the youth program more inviting, vibrant. If we build this building, we need to fill it up. Build it for use, not show. This will complete our campus.*
- *State the MISSION of the new center.*
- *Will Fr. David still be here?*
- *Make sure you offer more elaboration on the project*
- *Name it Parish Activities Center to include EVERYONE. Need a f/t Youth Minister. Financial transparency. you put your money where your heart is. Make campaign inclusive*
- *Where is the surplus from the last campaign? Transparency. Donor fatigue?*
- *Thank you for asking my opinion. I've never really been asked before.*
- *I mentioned it briefly. You may want to talk to reps from the Jackson Chamber of Commerce about what changes they see happening in Jackson with the development of the megasite in*

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*Stanton/Dancyville. I think some projections show people staying in their small towns not coming into Jackson for work anymore. (This could change their desire to travel for church as well.) Others show an increase in population in Jackson. I know the city is actively working to bring people to Jackson so we will have the work force we need in Jackson when that site pulls some of our workers away. Realistically, this could bring an influx of people from different parts of the country. Depending on where they come from this could increase the percentage of Catholics in Jackson or decrease the percentage. I doubt they have tracked religious affiliation of people coming, but I bet they are tracking where people are coming from, or maybe they are recruiting more heavily in certain areas. I know they have involved local universities and property development people in their discussions/decisions. It's possible they won't have any valuable info, but it can't hurt to ask.*

- *What are plans to continue ministries to the homebound? This group is often left out of just about all activities.*
- *The pew cushions need to be professionally cleaned.*
- *How much has the youth group grown in the past five years? What is projected growth of the demographic that will use the facility if it is built? I have not heard or seen an analysis. From what I have observed, the number of youth in our parish has been static, if not declining. I would consider changing my opinion if I had a better understanding of the number of our youth as well as potential for growth.*
- *Speak more often about giving to make people better understand what things cost.*
- *I thought we had the money to build the expanded gym. I was involved in the last giving plan and I thought we had the money for the church office and the money we raised then. I think this needs to be addressed. I am sure there are a lot of people like me that are thinking the same thing.*
- *Would like more inventory in St Elizabeth bookstore.*
- *Would like to see more people step up and participate in the planning and implementation of parish activities.*
- *Invest in lights for the football/soccer field (HS).*
- *I would like to see more offered for real fun for our young people that encourages them to stay connected with the Catholic Church. Maybe a fun activity for them so parents could go to Sunday School. Perhaps a study could be done among the more active Protestant churches that is attracting their young people. It seems that many of our Catholics youth that don't just join other religions, they become a member.*
- *Convene a town hall meeting to give all interested people a say in what's happening*
- *Boy! You're asking for it. I stopped coming to church because of Covid. I will come back to church because I missed my relationship with God, my Lord and Savior. Everything else is white noise. Our church has lost its way.*
- *Inclusiveness - everybody's opinion is important.*
- *There are 2 youth groups (Anglo/Hispanic), we need to unify them. Create programs for seniors in the parish. Explore other money makers*
- *No. Very well put together.*
- *Like I have mentioned, please have a survey like this that pertains to St. Mary's School.*
- *Make sure the campaign has complete transparency*
- *Thanks for doing this parish survey. I am very grateful and excited to see what the response will be. God bless you!*
- *Si tengo algunos pero tal vez sea un poco delicado mencionarlos.*
- *Can any parishioner find out when the planning committee meets, and can they attend? This might allow more people to get involved in this project.*

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## II. REVIEW OF KEY POINTS

### A. POSITIVES/SUPPORT

The idea of moving forward with a campaign to construct a new Youth Center received strong support throughout the Feasibility Study including the following findings:

- A total of 59% (69% of interviewees and 55% of survey participants) of the overall respondents indicated they would support the parish leadership in the decision **to move forward with a Capital Campaign. A total of 75%** (85% of interviewees and 72% of those surveyed) indicated their support of Father David and parish leadership to the best of their ability if the campaign were to move forward.
- Those who gave an estimated contribution amount (**70 households**) projected that they would be able to **pledge between \$651,390 – \$785,090** or more over a 3-year pledge period. This is an **average of approximately \$9,306 – \$11,216** and represents a **ratio to offertory of 3.6 – 4.4 times income** (*Ratio to Offertory pertains to a family's campaign gift as it relates to their annual offertory income: i.e. If the Jones Family gives \$20/week for the calendar year (~\$1,000/year) in the weekly collection and make a \$5,000 gift to the campaign, they are participating at rate of 5.0 times their annual offertory income*). These 70 families represent 7% of the registered parish families and 27% of the total annual offertory (2021).

### B. CONCERNS/NEGATIVES

During the Study, some participants expressed concern about the proposed Parish Youth Center. When negative or concerned comments were offered, they were focused primarily in the following areas:

- The cost of the new facility in light of the possibility of both donor fatigue in the parish and an uncertain economy.
- The need for transparency in light of the mixed messages and misinformation surrounding past campaigns in the parish.
- Dissatisfaction with the current upkeep of parish facilities and grounds.
- Many parishioners believe that the Youth Program in the parish is declining. They are concerned that a new building will be under-utilized because the number of children and young adults in the program does not support investing in a new facility.

## ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and analysis of the 159 responses received during the Feasibility Study, Guidance In Giving, Inc. offers the following to the leadership of the St. Mary’s Parish:

### A. Campaign Case

To reiterate the results from **Questions #5, 9 & 10:**

#### **5. What is your opinion of the proposed Parish Youth Center?**

<i>Project Summary</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>	<i>Total</i>
Positive	<b>73%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>64%</b>
Negative	1%	9%	7%
Unsure	26%	23%	24%
No Response	0%	7%	5%

#### **9. Should St. Mary’s move forward with a capital campaign to build the new Youth Center?**

<i>Response</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yes	<b>69%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>59%</b>
No	8%	11%	10%
Unsure	23%	22%	22%
No Response	0%	12%	9%

#### **10. If the campaign proceeds as proposed, will you support Father David and the parish leadership to the best of your ability to help ensure that the campaign is successful?**

<i>Response</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yes	<b>85%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>75%</b>
No	10%	5%	6%
Unsure	5%	12%	10%
No Response	0%	11%	9%

The majority of parishioners at St. Mary’s understand the need for and support the construction of a new Parish Youth Center. However, there are three (3) issues that need to be addressed as you proceed. First, many of the study participants were quite adamant regarding the lack of maintenance and upkeep currently being performed on the parish facilities. There must be a clear plan developed and shared with the parish prior to beginning a campaign, not only for the new building, but all existing buildings and the parish grounds. Secondly, a number of parishioners remain unclear as to how funds from past campaigns have been allocated and how decisions were made regarding the projects addressed. This is especially true as it pertains to the construction of the gymnasium at Sacred Heart High School. It was mentioned by some that there exists a surplus from previous campaigns that has yet to be utilized. We suggest that a communication strategy be designed and implemented to educate parishioners about the

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history of fundraising and capital projects conducted by the parish. Additionally, parish leadership should consider conducting a forum to outline this history, present the idea and plan for moving forward with the Parish Youth Center and addressing all questions and concerns parishioners wish to share. Finally, the size of the building is being questioned due to the perceived decrease in the number of young people currently participating in Youth Ministry. There exists a fear that the building will be under-utilized. It was suggested by parishioners that the parish consider expanding the scope of the building's usage to include more than just the youth of the parish (this was especially touted by a number of seniors) or reduce the footprint/size of the building to eliminate redundancy (particularly with the large gathering space).

A successful campaign would need to address these concerns and others with sensitivity, clarity, and transparency. It will be vitally important for parish leadership to continue to be vigilant in developing and communicating the needs to all parishioners, showing financial transparency and an overall sense of good stewardship. They are being entrusted with the gifts of the people and have the responsibility of utilizing these gifts in the most efficient and effective manner to achieve the mission of the parish and goals of the campaign. This will be critical in reaffirming the foundation of trust necessary for a successful Capital Campaign today and for future development efforts.

## **B. Conduct a Capital Campaign**

*September – December 2022*

In order to conduct a successful campaign, the parish must be in the best position to succeed. This includes providing and presenting the most up to date renderings, floor plans, cost estimates and construction timelines. It is vitally important because many parishioners asked numerous questions and expressed concern about the current construction project (the Administration Building) and the delays it has suffered. With all of the challenges facing construction today (availability of materials, labor and costs), communicating how the project is progressing is crucial. In addition to the numerous questions posed by parishioners, some general questions that will need to be addressed in a campaign are:

- What is the actual total cost of the project?
- What programs/services will the new Center house?
- What is the timeline for the construction?
- What is needed to begin the project (how much money in hand, how much in pledges, will we need to take out a loan)?
- What are the cost associated with other projects that the parish needs to consider (roof projects, pews, etc.)?

Parish leadership must be prepared to answer these and similar questions when they arise during the planning phases and ultimately, a campaign. If numerous questions are left unanswered, the entire effort will appear as poorly planned, uncertain and lacking realism in achieving the project success, particularly during the active portion of the campaign. This would undermine the credibility of the case and the confidence of the parishioners, resulting in a diminished level of support.

In reviewing the parish offertory records and past campaign history combined with the results of the Feasibility Study, Guidance In Giving, Inc. feels that St. Mary’s has the ability to raise upwards of \$1,500,000-\$1,800,000 (or more) in a successful campaign, once a case has been finalized and many of the questions posed by parishioners have been addressed.

**SAMPLE GIFT RANGE AND PARTICIPATION CHART**

**# of Families in the Parish: ~1,000 Families**

<b>30% Participation</b>			
300 Gifts X	\$4,000 Avg. Gift	=	\$1,200,000
	\$5,000 Avg. Gift	=	\$1,500,000
	\$6,000 Avg. Gift	=	\$1,800,000

<b>40% Participation</b>			
400 Gifts X	\$4,000 Avg. Gift	=	\$1,600,000
	\$5,000 Avg. Gift	=	\$2,000,000
	\$6,000 Avg. Gift	=	\$2,400,000

**C. Further Leadership Gifts Identification and Cultivation**

As part of the Leadership Gifts Phase of the campaign plan, Guidance In Giving will utilize the information obtained during the Feasibility Study, the parish offertory, past giving records and input from parish leadership in order to quantify current potential Leadership Gift (LG) prospects as well as identify additional Leadership Gift prospects. Working hand in hand with Father David and the Capital Campaign Committee, we will look to further expand our base of potential LG prospects and, through significant Prospect Review, determine a Solicitation Plan for each of the individual families identified in the LG phase.

An important part of the Guidance In Giving, Inc. Campaign Plan is the composition and performance of the Leadership Gifts Team. In addition to Father David, this team should be composed of six to eight knowledgeable and highly regarded parishioners/couples who will serve as a sub-committee of the Campaign Committee (see Item D below). The role of the Leadership Gifts Team will be to identify and

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solicit all parishioners and friends of the St. Mary's with the potential to give at a level of \$25,000, \$50,000, \$100,000 or more to the campaign.

It is imperative to the success of the campaign that personal outreach for Leadership Gifts be seriously pursued in the early weeks of the Campaign (utilizing a variety of fundraising strategies in order to educate and engage each family in this phase of the campaign).

#### **D. Lay Campaign Committee**

As a firm, Guidance In Giving believes strongly in the role of the laity of the Catholic Church, both in the campaigns it conducts as well as in the general life of the parish. The firm regards the participation of lay leaders as essential for the success of any endeavor, for it is truly the parishioners who make up the Church. Creating the sense of ownership among the laity, as a whole, is crucial and emphasizing the role of lay leadership in the development of the project, from its inception, will further strengthen how parishioners will view the overall plan. In addition, lay leadership can reflect on, being a fellow parishioner, why the project is important to them, how this project will make a difference to their family and our parish as a whole and why they are involved in making it a reality.

Guidance In Giving will provide a detailed Campaign Committee Flowchart, including a description of Duties & Responsibilities and will assist Father David and parish leadership in selecting the appropriate individuals who will represent a cross section of parish life. By empowering a strong Campaign Committee, educating them on the details of the Feasibility Study and Campaign, and giving them a voice in the decision-making process, we will be able to show that the project is driven by parishioners who want to secure the future of their parish.

#### **E. Promotion of Study Findings**

Copies of this Feasibility Study Findings Report should be provided to all Pastoral Council, Finance Council, and parish staff members, as well as other parishioners/groups as Father David deems appropriate.

***A Feasibility Study Executive Summary has been prepared by Guidance In Giving and should be made available to every member of the parish. Counsel strongly recommends that Father David present the Feasibility Study Findings Summary at each of the Masses in the coming weeks and that the full study report should also be posted on the parish web site for all to read.***

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## CONCLUSION

This completes the Parish Feasibility Study conducted by Guidance In Giving, Inc. for the St. Mary's Catholic Church. Guidance In Giving hopes that these recommendations will be helpful in charting the course for a successful capital campaign, and we thank you for allowing us the opportunity to serve as counsel.

Guidance In Giving, Inc. believes that there is support, excitement and potential for a capital campaign. Achieving the parish's potential will take a concerted effort on the part of all; including a generous response from parishioners, an optimistic atmosphere, strong leadership and a theme of Parish Stewardship.

We consider it a privilege to have conducted this Feasibility Study for the St. Mary's Catholic Church. The parishioners we encountered were receptive to our inquiries, candid in their responses, and interested in providing meaningful commentary and direction. It has been a pleasure for Guidance In Giving, Inc. to have met and worked with the Parish staff, volunteers and parishioners.

**Thank you once again for allowing us the opportunity to serve your community. We are available to you at any time to answer questions, provide additional information or counsel, attend important meetings, etc., and look forward to working with the parish on a successful capital campaign.**