



ST. PHILOMENA & ST. THOMAS PARISH FAMILY



DISCOVERING OUR GIFTS

The communities of St. Philomena and St. Thomas are continuing the journey towards becoming one parish family. We have been engaging in the “*Who We Are*” phase of this process, which seeks to better understand our parishioners and the wider communities we serve. Last summer, this work focused on demographics—the “hard numbers”—using data from the parish demographic survey and the U.S. Census. Those findings were shared in the fall ([Who We Are Demographic Survey](#)). We then turned our focus to explore the “heart and soul” of our parishes. In September, parishioners from St. Philomena and St. Thomas were invited to meet after Mass with members of the Parish Family Advisory Council to reflect on three questions:

- What experiences at your parish have brought you closer to God?
- What keeps you coming back?
- Which of the five (5) things does our parish do particularly well: Evangelization; Teaching the faith; Moving us deeper into relationship with our Lord through prayer; Caring for the Needy; and Nurturing a Christian community?

Parishioners also had the opportunity to share their reflections online. Responses from St. Philomena and St. Thomas were analyzed separately in order to identify and celebrate the unique gifts and strengths of each parish.

This phase intentionally focused on what is life-giving and strong within each community. The next phase will invite thoughtful and honest conversation about our challenges and opportunities for growth as we continue to move forward together as one parish family.

WHAT WE DISCOVERED

Key Themes and Gifts

Responses to the first two questions listed above were analyzed to identify key themes. While St. Thomas and St. Philomena share many strengths—including welcoming communities, deep appreciation for the clergy’s ability to explain the readings, and meaningful spiritual experiences through liturgy, adoration, and faith formation—their unique characters and charisms also emerged clearly.

St. Thomas is a small, close-knit, and culturally diverse community where relationships and shared worship foster a strong sense of belonging. St. Philomena is shaped significantly by its parish school, which many parishioners describe as the “heartbeat” of the parish and a central source of faith formation, connection, and continuity across generations.

ST. THOMAS

Community & Belonging Parishioners described St. Thomas as home, family, and a place where they feel known and accepted. Parishioners value St. Thomas’ multicultural identity (English, Spanish, Samoan) as a sign of universality and welcome.

Leadership of the Clergy There is a deep appreciation for the priests’ and deacons’ spirituality, warmth, and homilies. Their presence personalizes parish life.

Encounters with God through Liturgy and Devotions The Eucharist, music, adoration, and sacraments are important moments of closeness to God. The beauty and aesthetics of the physical environment is appreciated.

Faith Formation & Ministries Spiritual growth is fostered through active participation in ministries and formation programs, including choir, catechism, Bible study, Knights of Columbus, and service roles..

Accessibility & Convenience The parish's size, Mass schedule, and proximity make participation easy and foster a sense of intimacy.

ST. PHILOMENA –

Community Parishioners describe St. Philomena as welcoming. The sense of community is founded on long-term friendships, ethnic diversity, and multigenerational connections.

Faith Formation for All Ages Parishioners value the opportunities for spiritual development through such programs as Faith Formation, OCIA, and Bible studies, and the recent short-term sessions like Beloved and Search. These programs have bolstered the faith of the entire family, and not merely that of the participant.

Parish School as a Center of Faith and Community Life The parish school is a defining spiritual and relational anchor of St. Philomena. Parishioners repeatedly describe their faith growth, parish involvement, and long-term commitment as flowing through their children's education and school community.

Adoration, Spirituality & Liturgies The Adoration Chapel, Marian devotions, Eucharist, and sacraments are experiences that draw people closer to God and keep them returning. The *music* at liturgical celebrations is especially appreciated.

Priests & Spiritual Leadership St. Philomena has been blessed with beloved clergy throughout the years. The priests' warmth, communication, and relatable homilies make parishioners feel spiritually nourished and supported. This sentiment is for our current clergy as well as for prior priests who had served St. Philomena.

Opportunities to Serve & Participate Parishioners value opportunities to interact and help each other and the larger community — CYO, funeral receptions, Knights of Columbus, coffee & donuts and other various ministries — all deepen connection and discipleship.

Tradition, Stability & Familiarity Many long-term members describe a deep sense of continuity and rootedness. This stability creates a feeling of security and identity. The location of the parish and the Mass schedules are also appreciated.

The Functions of a Parish

Finally, from a list of five functions, parishioners were asked to identify those that their parish does particularly well. Respondents could endorse more than one function. The table below shows the percentage of endorsements at each parish:

Percentage of Endorsements	To evangelize	To teach the faith (including in our school)	To move us deeper into relationship with our Lord through prayer	To care for the needy	To nurture a Christian community
St Philomena	19%	25%	19%	11%	25%
St. Thomas	11%	23%	22%	21%	22%

