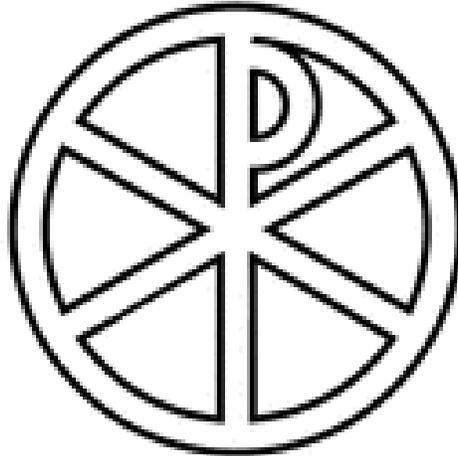


Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan
Parishioner Survey Results

April 2014



Church Alive! Congress 2015

In April 2015, delegates from our diocesan parishes, missions, committees and Catholic organizations will gather in Peace River for a Congress of the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan. The purpose and goal of the “Church Alive!” Congress is to produce a five-year pastoral plan that will truly bring and give life to the Church and the surrounding communities in this part of the world.

In order to encourage the participation of all Catholics in the Archdiocese the first step on the journey to the Congress was inviting parishioners to complete a survey of what is and is not working in the archdiocese and its parishes. The survey input was collected both online and on paper, between December 22, 2013 and April 25, 2014. There were 232 paper surveys submitted and 259 completed online, for a total of 491. Not everybody answered the demographic questions, but at least 35 parishes and missions were represented in the survey responses and people of all ages took part, with the majority (64.8%) being between 40 and 69 years.

Each survey was read and the responses were captured under one or more broad themes. This gave the total number of each type of response and allowed for a determination of the total number of times an idea or opinion was expressed.

Below, you will find the results of the survey analysis, broken down into two sections: first, questions and responses about individual parishes; and, second, questions and responses about the Archdiocese. In each section, there are tables that show the frequency of responses, from most to least common, for each question. These are followed by **representative** comments for each response. This means that not every comment in every survey has been captured. Rather, each comment found here is representative of **at least one, and usually more than one**, survey respondent’s belief or opinion about a question.

Who Responded

Parish	#	Parish	#
St. Mary's, Beaverlodge	17	St. Félix de Valois, Kinuso	1
Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Bezanson	3	St. James the Major, Manning	9
Our Lady of Assumption, Chateh	5	St. John the Baptist, McLennan	22
Sacré Coeur, Donnelly	1	Virgin of the Poor, Meander River	1
Holy Family, Grimshaw	28	St. Charles, Nampa	6
St. Thomas More, Fairview	17	Our Lady of Peace, Peace River	51
Ste-Anne, Falher	11	Our Lady of Guadalupe, Red Earth Creek	1
St. Henry, Ft. Vermilion	1	St. Patrick, Rio Grande	3
Notre Dame de Lourdes, Girouxville	9	St. Peter and St. Paul, Rycroft	7
St. Joseph, Grande Prairie	77	St. Isidore, St. Isidore	3
St. Bernard, Grouard	1	Immaculate Conception, Sexsmith	12
St. Guy, Guy	2	St. Peter Celestin, Slave Lake	37
Our Lady of Good Counsel, High Level	6	St. Joseph, Spirit River	9
St. Paul, High Prairie	2	Our Lady of Fatima, Sucker Creek	1
Immaculate Heart of Mary, Hines Creek	6	St. Rita, Valleyview	22
St. Edmund, Hythe	2	St. Patrick, Wanham	1
St. Joseph, John D'Or Prairie	1	St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, Whitelaw	4
St. Anne, Joussard	4		

Age Group	#	%
<18	7	1.9
18 – 29	16	4.3
30 – 39	44	11.7
40 – 49	72	19.2
50 – 59	97	26
60 – 69	71	19
70 and over	67	17.9
	37	100

About the Parish

1. What do you like about your parish?

1) The parish community	36.4%
2) The parish priest	25.7%
3) The activities in the parish	16.6%
4) The Mass	12.8%
5) The young people in church	5%
6) Having a church in my community	3.5%

1) The parish community (36.4%)

I love that the parish community feels like a loving, supportive family.

I love that there are so many volunteers willing to give of their time for the ministries, for events (Talent Show...), for transporting the elderly to church, etc. My parish feels like a family.

We truly are a Family. Young and old, differing opinions and life stages, but united by time and place and a shared faith.

2) The parish priest (25.7%)

I am most happy about having a priest in our parish. We prayed for many years for God to send us a priest that would be with us for more than a few weeks or months...

That we have a resident priest and that our parish priest who is truly willing to serve us and become involved in our community and lives.

Our parish priest because he appears to have a Shepherd's Heart. He loves us and is very supportive; with him it appears our parish is beginning now to come alive.

I do not like it when we don't have a priest.

3) The activities in the parish (16.6%)

It is a very active vibrant community. Many activities, ministries and formation for various age groups.

I love the formation programs. Can never have enough. It brings people in the parish together.

It has a strong Knights of Columbus and C.W.L. that support the Catholic school as well as the community.

It has scriptural study groups. Whether the people take them or not, at least they are offered.

4) The Mass (12.8%)

I love the way liturgy happens and the music ministry.

Latin mass, Adoration on Thursday, Confession before every mass.

Weekday Mass offered frequently.

5) The young people in church (5%)

There are a lot of young families and I have been able to share my faith with people my own age.

6) Having a church in my community (3.5%)

We like that it's local (we don't have to drive far).

I like that the church is in my town. I was baptized and married there.

Bilingual Mass/ French Mass.

2. What do you not like about your parish?

1) So few Catholics regularly participate	29.2%
2) Not welcoming/obvious divisions	15.3%
3)The Mass	13.9%
4) Logistics	13.9%
5) The priest	9.4%
6) The building	9.4%
7) Insufficient offerings for formation, discernment, lay ministry	3.9%
8) Nothing	2.8%
9) Too inward-focussed	2.2%

1) So few Catholics regularly participate (in the Mass, in ministry) (29.2%)

I don't like the loss of active participation by parishioners in various committees and ministries. There is more work being done by fewer people.

Not enough children participate.

We can't seem to fill the church.

The feeling that we practicing Catholics are alone in the world, that most people have abandoned the practice of religion. The crushing burdens a small parish places on the few that are ready to devote themselves to it. The fact that there are no other musicians to help out. It is exhausting.

2) Not welcoming/obvious divisions (15.3%)

Not a very welcoming parish. Cliques. Being patronized or treated in a condescending manner.

At times, it seems so big and impersonal; vast range of "ecclesiologies" and "spiritualities".

It can give the impression of exclusiveness to newcomers.

Little welcome/help for lapsed Catholics.

3) The Mass: the music is not to my liking, the celebrations are not to my liking, the availability and visibility of Catholic devotionals and practices are insufficient (13.9%)

Rarely starts on time, services are quite lengthy as well.

The music is really bad. On Sundays it is not upbeat and cheerful...

I also don't like that in our present circumstances we have no priest- Some people love the lay ministry and it is beautiful but I feel we do need spiritual direction from a priest.

Too much ritual in Mass makes occasional attendees feel uncomfortable and unwelcome

4) Logistics: Mass times are inconvenient, difficult to park, poor readers, Mass times change without notice, too much fundraising going on after Mass (13.9%)

I would like for some fellowship after church that is not geared to fundraising, as it turns some people away. We seem to be targeted a lot for fund raising for outside of our parish needs

Parking - too many people parking where they shouldn't and/or incorrectly, wasting parking spots for others.

-A Saturday evening mass once a month or every second month would be welcome. ...the early time for mass. (I do not live in town).

I don't like the early time for Mass (I do not live in town).

5) The priest (9.4%)

[What do I like about my parish?] Very little. I go to church because I feel like it is a "duty" to go for my sake and for the sake of my children. Not to mention the fact that if we miss a couple of weeks I get "guilt-tripped" by the priest, with comments about how we need to come more often. Why would a person like that? Very seldom do I find it inviting, uplifting, or renewing of my spirit.

Most of the clergy are very dated in their understanding of laity and will fight to keep lay ministry out of the parish, even after being shown books and documentation from CCCB.

6) The building (9.4%)

Our building is falling apart but people do not see the need for a new church.

The actual building. Needs updating.

No proper seating for people with handicaps, not enough proper room for a choir, a cold, unwelcoming basement for functions

7) Insufficient offerings for formation, discernment, lay ministry (3.9%)

Many people are poorly formed. Faith based more on feelings and personal experience. Solid knowledge of church teaching weak. Opinion often replaces truth

The permission for lay ministry to be accepted as a ministry, and to receive proper training as noted in Canon 231. There is no training and people who feel they would like to do certain 'ministries' are selected from a general sign-up sheet.

The diocese is for some reason unwilling to support lay ministry and follow CCCB guidelines of proper formation and education.

8) Nothing (2.8%)

9) Too inward-focussed (2.2%)

Inability to see beyond the parish limits.

Encourage Catholics to associate with those in the other churches in [town].

We need to really work on having a PPC that truly focuses on the pastoral needs of our community and separate this discussion from the business aspect of running a parish.

3. What do you think would be an improvement in your parish?

1) More for youth	27.3%
2) More faith formation	18.7%
3) Actively bring back Catholics	11.2%
4) Better priest	10%
5) More fellowship and socializing	8.8%
6) More engaging Mass	7.6%
7) More sacramental and devotional teaching and practice	7.1%
8) Better communication	5.8%
9) Use church building more	3.5%

1) More for youth (27.3%)

Somehow we are failing to keep our younger adult parishioners active and participating in Sunday mass and the sacraments- especially reconciliation.

Missing many options for the few youth that do come regularly i.e. youth group, youth activities. Difficult to get youth from our parish to go to more diocesan events such as Discovery as they feel they have no one to go with.

2) More faith formation (18.7%)

I have heard of requests for the Alpha program. I would appreciate more focus and activities concerning marriage and relationships.

Clergy teaching people the faith - parish missions/ retreats on more regular basis -

We don't like the seeming lack of formation opportunities that would actually APPEAL to us. (We know there are opportunities, but they seem to miss the mark.)

3) Actively bring back Catholics (11.2%)

A focus on engaging and connecting with the schools and families of the communities. NOT the ones that go to church every Sunday...the ones that "come sometimes"...finding out what is stopping them from coming more often and CHANGE to make it more welcoming or easier for them to come.

Attracting more people to Mass. Live music, more ministries

Train and organize outreach teams to approach those Catholics who are no longer actively participating.

4) Better priest (10%)

- More presence from priests in the community, e.g. in schools, sporting activities. Many people if they don't go to mass they don't know who the priest is. Priests should be part of everyday life and a part of our community.

Priest not inviting, LONG homilies

Priests teaching the Faith during homilies so that we can apply the Faith to our daily lives - how is the Faith, Scripture readings from Mass relevant - instruct people how to behave in the House of the Lord

5) More fellowship and socializing (8.8%)

No more fellowship after church. It was my favourite part as a child, a brunch and time to chat and play with friends. This is no longer a regular thing. Maybe because of loss of volunteers.

I know some of the other churches have evening activities for adults and kids (basketball, tobogganing, etc.)

The activities seem to revolve around the elderly. Although we now have a Children's Liturgy and Youth Group, I feel that the people in the middle sometimes get left out. Those couples or singles who are 50-65 and who have not retired yet but whose children have left the nest and moved away, or those who are new to the area and or parish.

Events for single parishioners, if for no other reason than to gain connections and make church events more welcoming.

Returning to "Soup Sunday" gatherings during the winter, but not insisting people watch movies during that time. People want to visit with friends and neighbors when together, not watch a movie.

6) More engaging Mass (7.6%)

Less singing.
Having the choir sit out a few Sundays and give us a break.
Like I said, more involved singing/music with younger people involved. Sunday school that is engaging for the children
Maybe have more Masses at the church in which the children of the parish can be more involved.

7) More sacramental and devotional teaching and practice (7.1%)
A bigger focus on the Sacraments would be great. I think programs should as much as possible, begin with Mass - and certainly not be at the same time as Mass!
Following the Mass schedules and highlight such devotions as 1 st Friday and 1 st Saturday, as well as feast days. Make them important and announce them on Sundays. Celebrate the true liturgy.
We should have perpetual adoration rotating from parish to parish in our churches or in the homes.
Home visits [from priest] and say Rosary in the evenings, or statue from house to house for a week each.

8) Better communication (5.8%)
We need to have parish council meetings and decisions should be made by the parish not one or two members. We have not had a parish council meeting for the past 2 years nor have we received a financial statement for over 2 years
More connection between groups, not isolation. It's good that there are a lot of different groups for people to work together in with common interests, but it seems that people get stuck in these 'cliques'...AND- better use of the internet and social media to inform people of events, resources, articles, etc.!!

9) Use church building more (3.5%)
Chapel more accessible to all people.
When the school is close to the church -we should utilize the church more.

Would you mind to open the door of our church every day and from morning till 7pm, because I want to visit and pray inside of our church.

About the Diocese

1. What do you like about our diocese?

1) The Archbishop	33.4%
2) The welcoming and involved parishes	14.9%
3) Commitment to growing the Church	13.5%
4) I don't know much about it	12%
5) The diversity of people and communities	11%
6) The history and continued missionary purpose	6.2%
7) Commitment to youth	5.3%
8) Commitment to having well-trained and dedicated priests	3.7%

1) The Archbishop: his pastoral approach; his accessibility; his regular communication; his commitment to relationship building (33.4%)

I think that our archbishop does a great job in recognizing and visiting every one of the parishes.

I like that I have met people in this Diocese through Cursillo, and through being involved in Marriage Encounter in the past. I think that our Archbishop has been trying to shrink the gap between us by making us appreciate our faith and what we have in common - rather than focus on the differences between the parishes in the diocese.

I like the increased participation and involvement of lay people through the various committees that the Archbishop has established. I like the increased communication through his monthly letters and the website. I like the attempts at greater networking and collaboration throughout our diocese through the APC council and the Deanery Councils. I like the Archbishop's concern and outreach for the First Nations people.

2) The welcoming and involved parishes (14.9%)

There are lots of activities now being planned and parishes invite people of other parishes to join in these activities. I like the newsletter. I like the compassion shown to those who have suffered through their attendance at residential schools.

There are many events that are supported by folks across the diocese which creates a larger community.

3) Commitment to growing the Church (13.5%)

We like that the diocese appears to be trying to listen and evangelize, to build a diocesan community and identity, and to reach the isolated areas.

I love the fact that diocese is "on the move". There is life and things are happening. There are new services for youth, evangelization, faith formation. Every year we are better organized in our finances and our administrative side.

4) I don't know much about it (12%)

Don't really know much about it other than it is way too big and way too poor.

I have no complaints but know very little about our diocese

5) The diversity of people and communities (11%)

Its diversity...peoples of all walks of life and nationalities bring such richness to it.

It is composed of a variety of different parishes; not all are urban like Grande Prairie. I like to visit and worship with my mom in the small parish church of Grimshaw. I have seen my sister and her family grow in faith as they volunteer in the small parish.

6) The history and continued missionary purpose (6.2%)

The size of it, the historical significance of it.

It's one of the oldest dioceses in Alberta, that is something we would not want to lose. The church in McLennan must be preserved when the move to Grande Prairie is made.

7) Commitment to youth (5.3%)

They have many retreats and give youth many opportunities to get involved.

New attempts/ initiatives to connect youth to faith.

I love that we have a Youth Coordinator now. This is a great step to keeping our youth involved & growing in the church.

8) Commitment to having well-trained and dedicated priests (3.7%)

It cares for our spiritual needs by maintaining a resident priest.

2. What do you not like about our diocese?

1) Its size and isolated communities	24.2%
2) Too much need for money/unwise use of limited funds	18.6%
3) Not enough attention to needs of small parishes/too much attention to the "big city"	17%
4) Lack of communication and awareness about each other	13.3%
5) No clear connection with schools and Catholic education	9.5%
6) Too few Canadian priests	7.5%
7) Changes seem arbitrary, imposed from above	3.4%
8) Interfering in parish business	2.7%

9) Gambling policy	1.5%
10) Nothing	1.5%
11) Too-frequent changes of priest	0.4%
12) I don't know enough to say	0.4%

1) Its size and isolated communities (24.2%)

Maybe it is too large an area for the Bishop to cover to attend to the needs of the faithful in the parishes. Also we have no connection to parishes other than the ones in our Deanery.

Bishop not easily accessible.

It's big and hard to bring people together.

2) Too much need for money/unwise use of limited funds (18.6%)

The constant, never ending requests for funding for everything under the sun (I am hitting donation request burn out (church building fund, move the chancery, our outlying missions, truth and reconciliation, 2nd mile giving) it seems to never end!!! I am an active giver to the church and diocese but really would like the constant requests to slow down or stop for a break.

The money that is wasted on bureaucracy.

Archbishop travelling less - put Jesus in the centre instead of us and our meetings and endless talking.

To recognise that priests from Africa, India and almost any other country are costing far too much money. We should be spending that money to fully develop the skills, gifts and talents of our lay people as Jesus did.

3) Not enough attention to needs of small parishes/too much attention to the "big city" (17%)

The threat of closure from being a small parish. Bigger is not always better. There is not enough value placed on small parishes and the work they do for small communities all over Canada.

There is not much cooperation among the different parishes, some need to give better support financially and in kind, to their needs, others seem to receive support in vain and not participating in their parish's well-being or viable future.

I don't like the lack of help for parishioners as they experience new international priests.

It seems to me that the diocese takes but gives very little back...the priest comes, says Mass, and leaves. The Archbishop has been here twice in six years...

All parishes should have equal quality of building/upgrades/services.... Smaller, less affluent communities should not have less than others. Christian attitude does not always seem to prevail. The money being spent on moving to GP is yet another thing to make us parishioners of the north feel less important. We see the Bishop very little as it is. This is an example of a decision made that will certainly give many more benefits to one parish.

4) Lack of communication and awareness about each other (13.3%)

I do not like the lack of opportunity for women's voices to be shared and heard in the decision making aspects of our diocesan structures.

The needs of each area in the diocese differ. We are not always connecting in a positive way. St. Joseph's being the largest population is often asked for financial support but we also need visible support from each other, such as gathering for specific events at other churches

When I hear that one part our diocese is cut off from another, or that there are jealousies, bitterness, distancing, I realize that we need to build relationships.

5) No clear connection with schools and Catholic education (9.5%)

Young people (junior & senior high) do not attend Mass.

Better relationship between the church and the school.

More leading by example, with teachers visible at Sunday Mass. I recognize that many non-Catholic staff members are hired if they agree to work/teach according to the Catholic faith, but their students do not see them as role models or leaders within the parish.

6) Too few Canadian priests (7.5%)

Many priests are from another country and just do not "get" social justice/development and peace issues and concepts.

We don't like the lack of "home-grown" priests (but we are excited to have local boys in seminary!).

Many Priests from foreign countries that have trouble adapting to Canadian culture.

I dislike the fact that we never have a white, English-speaking priest to deliver our Mass, which makes Mass hard to follow.

7) Changes seem arbitrary, imposed from above (3.4%)

We do not like the financial burden of the new chancery building. The archdiocese should look to Pope Francis' teachings on conservation, environmental issues, and serving the poorest of the poor as guiding principles.

When the Archbishop forms a team of all "men" and sends them with a message to the Parish Council that the Council is not functioning well, it is a slap in the face. We were confronted at a very negative "surprise" meeting with the news we were not supposed to have a Parish Facilitator, were not supposed to have an Administrative Council separate from the main Parish Council, etc. Why were we not given that feedback before in an open and honest conversation

8) Interfering in parish business (2.7%)

We have had some serious differences of opinion on how lay people should and could support the parish. The Archdiocese has interfered with some of the decisions the Parish Council felt were in our best interests and supported our parish.

The funds should NOT all go into one place, our church works hard to be self-sufficient and it is a shame that our fundraising for renovations does not stay in our parish!

9) Gambling policy (1.5%)

The whole bingo/casino ban is not cool with me either. "Games of chance (card games, etc.) or wagers are not in themselves contrary to justice. They become morally unacceptable when they deprive someone of what is necessary to provide for his needs and those of others." Well, I don't know that people are going homeless and hungry because of bingos and charity casinos, but there may be a few parishes that cannot provide for their needs without the extra funding source.

10) Nothing (1.5%)

11) Too-frequent changes of priest (0.4%)

I don't like the ever-revolving door for our priests. We have had several priests over the past few years

Moving priests from their parish when they and the church community are happy.

3. What do you think would be an improvement in our diocese?

1) Attract young people and families	25.5%
2) Archbishop taking a personal interest in our parish	14.4%
3) Better (enculturated, English-speaking) priests	14.4%
4) Create and facilitate diocese-wide activities	14%
5) Develop diocesan identity and awareness	10.7%
6) Promote parish-based and diocesan groups focussed on social justice, family, other broad social issues	7.4%
7) Merge or twin parishes for larger congregations	5.8%
8) Dedicated retreat site/well-promoted pilgrimage site	2.5%
9) More presence of/in First Nations communities	2.8%
10) We need Sisters in our community	2.5%

1) Attract young people and families (25.5%)

I would like to see the youth leader visiting our parishes more. Without the youth we will just wither away.

More opportunities for our youth to build community. One retreat or rally and one week of summer camp is not enough for the kids in the smaller parishes.

We need to figure out how to engage young families and young adults, how to get more to attend Mass, how to engage our youth.

2) Archbishop taking a personal interest in our parish (14.4%)

I think a greater effort needs to be made to look at the needs of all individual parishes and not just the greater good of the whole archdiocese.

Have our Archbishop visit the school community more often - better visual presence.

3) Better (enculturated, English-speaking) priests (14.4%)

Number of attendees at Mass is declining... many leaving due to priest comments and attitudes that are due to cultural differences. (The priests are wonderful people, though.)

Too many different priests that are hard to understand.

A diocese that truly sees the needs of the people. Not put a priest in place just for the sake of having a priest but finding a priest that meets the needs of the people.

Providing mentorship, guidance, and accountability for our priests. It would be really great if our foreign priest could work with or be mentored by some of the priests such as the Redemptorists. Enculturation is not just a two week course when you first get to Canada. It is an on-going process that requires patience, and on-going guidance.

4) Create and facilitate diocese-wide activities (14%)

More interaction with the other parishes. I enjoyed and found the 'faith rally' last year to be a huge spiritual success. We need more of these gatherings.

The diocesan mission that we had several years ago was wonderful.

5) Develop diocesan identity and awareness (10.7%)

Wish we were better united. Need to see Catholics in action more. Perhaps a list of projects required within the diocese would motivate us to answer the call to help more.

Better coordination between parishes;

We could also benefit from consistency... or if not consistency, then information. The recent discussions of whether prayers should be on the overhead, or in missalettes is a prime example. If we are all to be doing the same thing, why is there such variance? If variety is okay, why are some not getting that message?

I don't know. If somehow we could bring our outlying parishes into diocese activities.

6) Promote parish-based and diocesan groups focussed on social justice, family, other broad social issues (7.4%)

Continue to encourage Cursillo Movements. Would like to see Marriage Encounter weekends available in Diocese.

Need for more Specific Apostolate like for Social justice, social development, family and other ethnic groups.

7) Merge or twin parishes for larger congregations (5.8%)

If Mass was celebrated as a larger community instead of each separate parish, more people would be at Mass and the larger number of people would attract others. I feel that we keep trying to keep the small parishes alive but people are burning out and it discourages people from going to Mass. In the [area], all the kids go to school together and play sports together, I don't see any reason why we can't start to celebrate mass together.

8) Dedicated retreat site/well-promoted pilgrimage site (2.5%)

I do not like the reality that we have no place for retreats

Retreat center or Pilgrimage site - perhaps update the Notre Dame de Lourdes and add camping facilities?

9) More presence of/in FN communities (2.8%)

I do wish there were more interaction between Natives and non-Natives.

Support Native culture and beliefs, like Sacred Heart in Edmonton.

Not enough local Native contribution to our local parish.

The Faith Rally or something of that nature could be used to build bridges with the FN community.

10) We need Sisters in our community (2.5%)

Our best time as a parish community was when Sister was our administrator. She had a real gift for getting everyone involved in one way or another.

Not much going on for vocation direction for men or women. No real opportunities in this diocese for women feeling called to religious life - no nuns. Very few active sisters... no real communities for women to look into.

A contemplative order of nuns. Active sisters - who wear habits - working with Catholic schools.