



**St. Catherine Laboure Parish
Feasibility Study
Executive Summary of the Findings & Recommendations**

Introduction & Methodology

Greater Mission, LLC conducted a Feasibility Study for a proposed Combined capital campaign as part of the Witness to Hope Campaign. A Gift Analysis/Constituent Study was conducted in conjunction with *DonorSearch*. A case statement, study questionnaire and interview list was produced with the assistance of parish clergy and lay leaders. The study consisted of input from parishioners through individual interviews, two Town Hall meetings and an In-Pew survey. A total of 16 individual interviews of 27 parishioners were conducted. Parishioners were selected for the interviews to represent various constituencies of the parish. Eighteen (18) parishioners attended the Town Hall meetings on May 24th and 86 parishioners responded to the In-Pew and online survey. *The case tested was to raise \$450,000 or more to fix the chilling unit, hall flooring, parking lot repair and replace, sidewalk repair, roofing revision and ceiling repair, future capital improvements, fund and the case for support for the wider Church through Witness to Hope.*

Key Findings:

Appreciation of Parish and Challenges Facing the Parish:

Parishioners most often mentioned the friendliness and welcoming of the parish community “its home”. There was strong support for Fr. Tim and the ability to have a full time priest. The location was also cited as a plus because people come from different local communities. The most frequently cited challenges were: people felt a lack of participation which can be attributed to past financial management which leads to poor facility maintenance. The parish is small so

getting parishioners to participate is crucial to its success.

Case for Support:

Over 85% of the parishioners who responded were in favor of the case and moving forward with the campaign. This is a combined total from the all study sources. While support for the overall case is very good some parishioners commented on specific aspects of the case like: these are critical priorities, we need to live within our means, the cupola has leaked since it was put on the building. the rectory should be our priority, we really need the gathering space, we have needed this for a long-time, the diocesan case is forward thinking and we can do this if we all pitch in.

Can the Parish Raise \$450,000 or More?

The combined responses of all of the participants indicated that 35% felt the parish could raise \$450,000 or more. As is typical in most parish feasibility studies, many parishioners were unsure if this amount could be raised.

Would you support the campaign financially?

Over 80% of those responded indicated that they would make a gift. Only 1 respondent said they would not give and the remainder, were unsure based on a variety of reasons, the most common being from people who were older and on fixed incomes.

Level of Giving

Ninety four (94) parishioners indicated they would make a gift to the campaign in ranges as high as \$25,000 to below \$1500. The total gifts that were indicated were over \$321,500 from 32% of the total parish community. This

is an average gift of \$3,151 and indicates very good financial support.

Would you be willing to volunteer to assist with a campaign?

The combined responses of participating parishioners indicated that 17% (18) would volunteer to assist with a campaign. Many were willing to be a part of the campaign cabinet and serve in other volunteer roles. These figures indicate good volunteer support.

Do you have any advice to give to parish leaders to assist with their decision making process?

Parishioners had many comments and a great deal of advice to share. Over 20 comments were noted. They expressed support for Fr. Tim's leadership. Many indicated that Fr. Tim must take the lead in making the case and that there must be a clear communication effort to explain the campaign. In general, there was good support for the diocesan case, although some elements, Religious education, Catholic Charities, Priest Retirement, and Seminary Support received the most support. The parish case was widely supported:

- Be honest and upfront
- Keep parishioners informed and included
- Prioritize the projects
- Pray for the success of this
- Tap into your local resources to assist with these projects
- Make people feel energized

Conclusions to the Findings

The following is a synopsis of more detailed findings addressed in the full study report.

- St. Catherine Laboure is a warm and deeply spiritual community "its home".
- Fr. Tim is widely respected and has the support of the parish.
- I hope the Campaign starts off positive – we need a strong start.
- A significant number of parishioners are willing to contribute financially to the campaign.
- There is a broad general support for both the parish and diocesan case.

- Parishioners care very much about their parish.

Recommendations

1. At the present time we propose that St. Catherine Laboure parish consider setting a Witness to Hope Campaign Goal of \$400,000. This goal would be 1.7x present parish offertory and would provide \$275,912 in parish share to the parish.
2. Counsel recommends building an aggressive volunteer recruitment effort for the campaign that will stimulate support.
3. Counsel recommends holding parish gatherings in these small towns to go out to parishioners.
4. Counsel recommends that the parish include and emphasize a Legacy gifts program at all levels and with all constituents, and a targeted effort for those over 65. This should be done at the beginning of the campaign. Setting a specific goal for inaugural membership in the Diocese of Lansing's Immaculate Conception Society is a strategy counsel feels would be effective at this parish. In addition, counsel recommends that long time parish staff - many of whom have excellent institutional memory - be involved in this effort.

Final Thoughts

There are optimal factors pointing to the potential success of a campaign at St. Catherine Laboure Parish. The leadership of the Pastor, coupled with the small town community feel and commitment to their parish can be encouraging factors for current and potential contributors as they discern their level of support for Witness to Hope. It is likely that this campaign will also engage a segment of the parish family who are interested in legacy gifts and counsel cites in the recommendations above that this be undertaken. If we can build support in each small town we can get buy in from their neighbors and friends which will inspire others to make a sacrificial gift.