



# Listening to the Heart of the Parish

## Three Reasons to Regularly Assess Discipleship and Engagement

In most parishes, spiritual growth is the goal—but measuring it often feels impossible. While weekend attendance, sacrament preparation, and volunteer signups offer glimpses into parish life, they rarely tell the full story of discipleship. Is the average parishioner deepening in prayer? Are families growing in their relationship with Christ? Are ministries fostering transformation—or just activity?

Just as a physician wouldn't prescribe a treatment without first checking vital signs, today's parish leaders need better tools to assess the health of their communities. One such tool is the **Discipleship Indicator**: a brief, 20-question survey designed to help parishes get an honest, anonymous snapshot of spiritual engagement across their faith community.

Here's why a tool like this should be part of your regular ministry rhythm:

### 1. Clarity: Understand Where Your Parishioners Really Are

Parish leaders are deeply pastoral—and also deeply busy. It's easy to rely on gut instinct or anecdotal feedback when evaluating your community's spiritual life. But those impressions, while important, don't always tell the full story. The Discipleship Indicator provides data-informed insight into key areas of faith life: prayer, belief, trust in God, engagement with the sacraments, and more. It helps you understand not just what people are doing, but why—and where they long to grow.

### 2. Confidence: Know What's Working—and What Isn't

Ministries thrive when they meet real needs. But without feedback, it's difficult to know whether your programs are bearing fruit. The survey results can help identify patterns and shifts over time—so you can build on what's effective, and reimagine what may not be connecting. This is especially helpful for strategic planning, preparing liturgies that resonate, and shaping small group studies or other formation efforts.

### 3. Courage: Make Meaningful Adjustments That Matter

When you can clearly see the needs of your community, you can respond with focus and compassion. Leaders who use the Discipleship Indicator have reported greater alignment among their teams, clearer priorities, and renewed energy around mission. You don't have to do everything. You just have to do the right things—well.

## What about privacy?

Parishioners often hesitate to give honest feedback if they think someone will know what they said. The Discipleship Indicator is anonymous by design—there's no identifying information collected—so your people can respond freely, knowing their personal reflections and concerns will be received in a spirit of trust, not traced to individuals.

## What if the results are hard to hear?

It's natural to feel hesitant. No pastor wants to see discouraging feedback or learn that parishioners are struggling more than expected. But knowing the truth is a gift—and a grace. Even difficult results can open the door to renewal, healing, and more focused pastoral care. The Discipleship Indicator doesn't assign blame. It offers clarity, so you can walk more intentionally with your people, right where they are.

**Regular reflection is part of every healthy spiritual life.** Shouldn't the same be true for parishes?

By taking a thoughtful, data-informed look at where your people are today, you can better accompany them into deeper discipleship tomorrow.

## About ACST Catholic

ACST Catholic, a business of ACS Technologies, is devoted to serving and equipping Catholic parishes and dioceses with the tools to engage, inspire, and accompany their communities and form missionary disciples. By harnessing technology as a tool for connection and growth, we amplify ministry impact and foster more meaningful experiences that can lead to intentional discipleship.