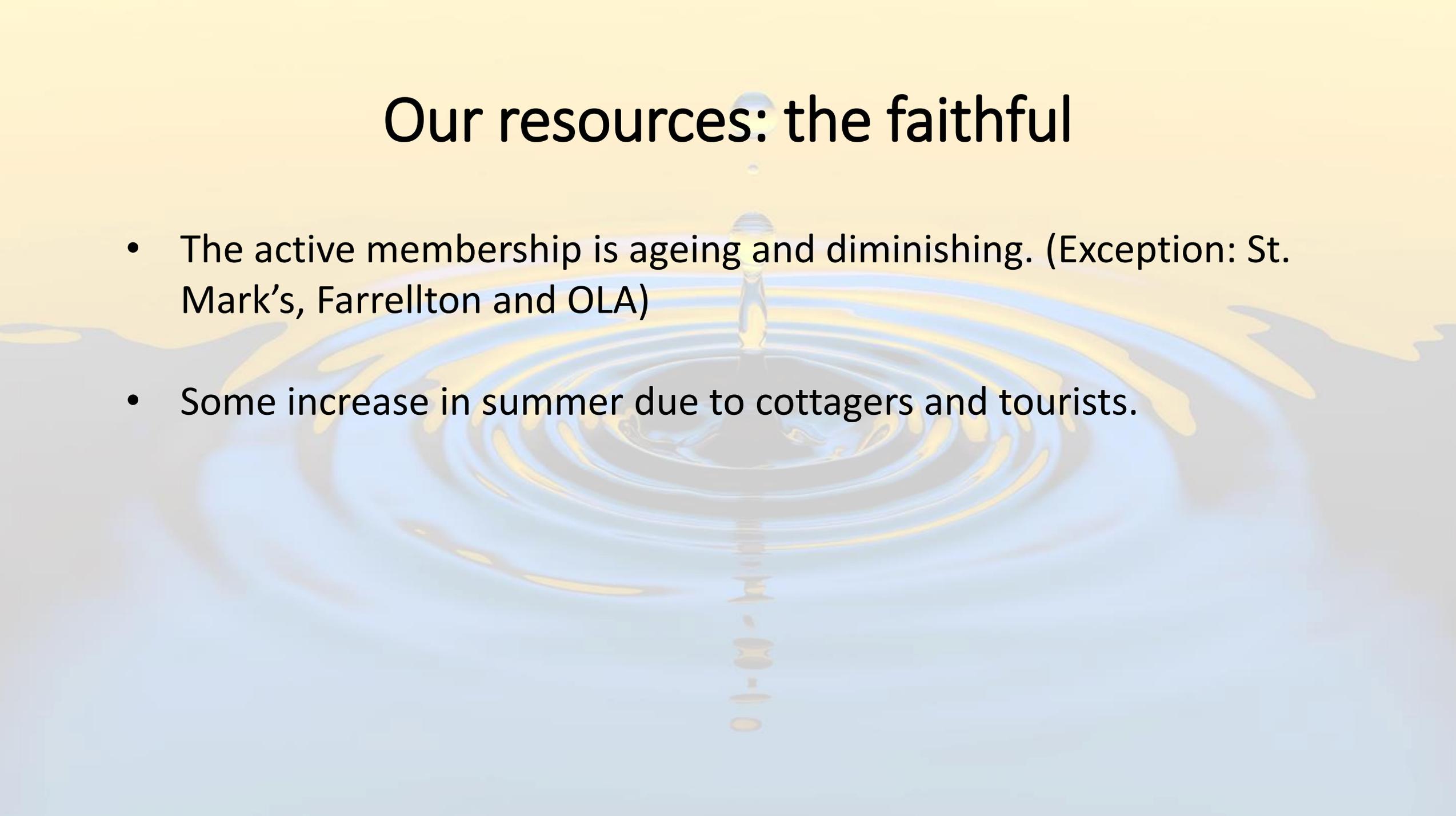
A water droplet is captured in mid-fall, just above a pool of water. The droplet is perfectly spherical and reflects the light. Below it, a series of concentric ripples spread outwards from the point of impact. The water's surface is highly reflective, mirroring the droplet and the ripples. The background is a soft, warm gradient of yellow and orange, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall composition is centered and symmetrical, with a sense of calm and precision.

Synodal process

Snapshot of the English zone

Our resources: the faithful

A background image showing a single water droplet falling from the top center, creating a series of concentric ripples that spread outwards across the surface of the water. The water is a light blue color, and the background is a soft, yellowish-white gradient.

- The active membership is ageing and diminishing. (Exception: St. Mark's, Farrelton and OLA)
- Some increase in summer due to cottagers and tourists.

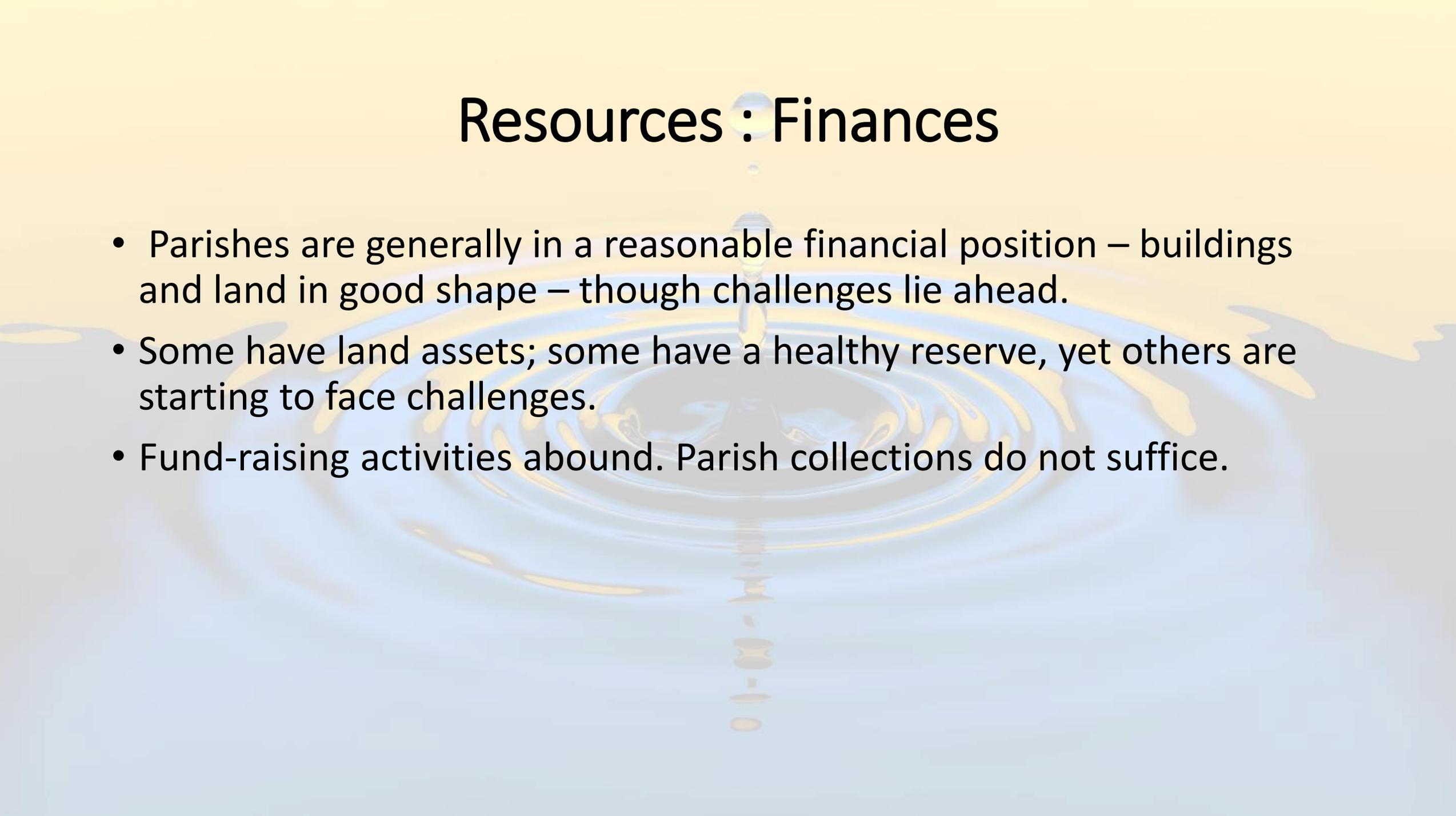
Resources : Administrative and pastoral staff

- All parishes share priests except St. Mark's, because of its size.
- Two inter-parish committees exist.
- Two parishes share a secretary.
- There is sharing in sacramental preparation, except for St. Mark's.
- Few parishes have a parish pastoral council; generally, the *fabrique* council takes on the responsibility of coordinating activities and volunteers.

Resources : Catholic Organizations/Mouvements

- No organizations exist except at St. Mark's, where we can find K of C, CWG, Youth Group, Saint Anne Society, Saint Vincent de Paul

Resources : Finances

A water droplet is shown falling from the top center of the frame, creating a series of concentric ripples in a pool of water below. The background is a soft, light blue gradient.

- Parishes are generally in a reasonable financial position – buildings and land in good shape – though challenges lie ahead.
- Some have land assets; some have a healthy reserve, yet others are starting to face challenges.
- Fund-raising activities abound. Parish collections do not suffice.

Snapshot of our parishes: Faith formation

- The Sunday homily is the main occasion for faith education in the parishes.
- After that, sacramental preparation:
 - Few baptisms, small groups of first communicants, occasional confirmations, rare weddings
 - Preparation is often shared with other parishes
 - Sometimes led by the priest alone, sometimes by a team of lay people, sometimes “contracted out” (ex.: marriage preparation in Ottawa)
- Very little non-sacramental faith education:
 - One Bible Study group, one Christian meditation group.
 - Lack of parish retreats.
 - Several parishes have Sunday liturgy of the Word for children (but some don’t have a lot of children participating).
- St. Mark’s is the exception in the zone because of the greater numbers attending

Snapshot of our parishes : Liturgy (1 of 2)

Important focus on Sunday Mass

- Many parishes have musical groups or choirs to lead the liturgy
- Various ministries are exercised
- Liturgical teams are active (seasonal decorations, etc.)
- One parish has a liturgy of the word; one has a liturgy of the hours

Special celebrations throughout the year are important, for example:

- Christmas and Easter still attract many people, family members who return
- Corpus Christi procession
- Marian feasts
- Blessing of cars
- November services for the deceased
- Our Lady of Knock pilgrimage

Snapshot of our parishes : Liturgy (2 of 2)

- Weekday masses generally rotate with neighbouring parishes
- Some wakes are held in churches
- Devotions remain important, for example:
 - First Fridays
 - Way of the Cross
 - Adoration
 - Rosary
- Penitential celebrations are generally celebrated during Advent and Lent.

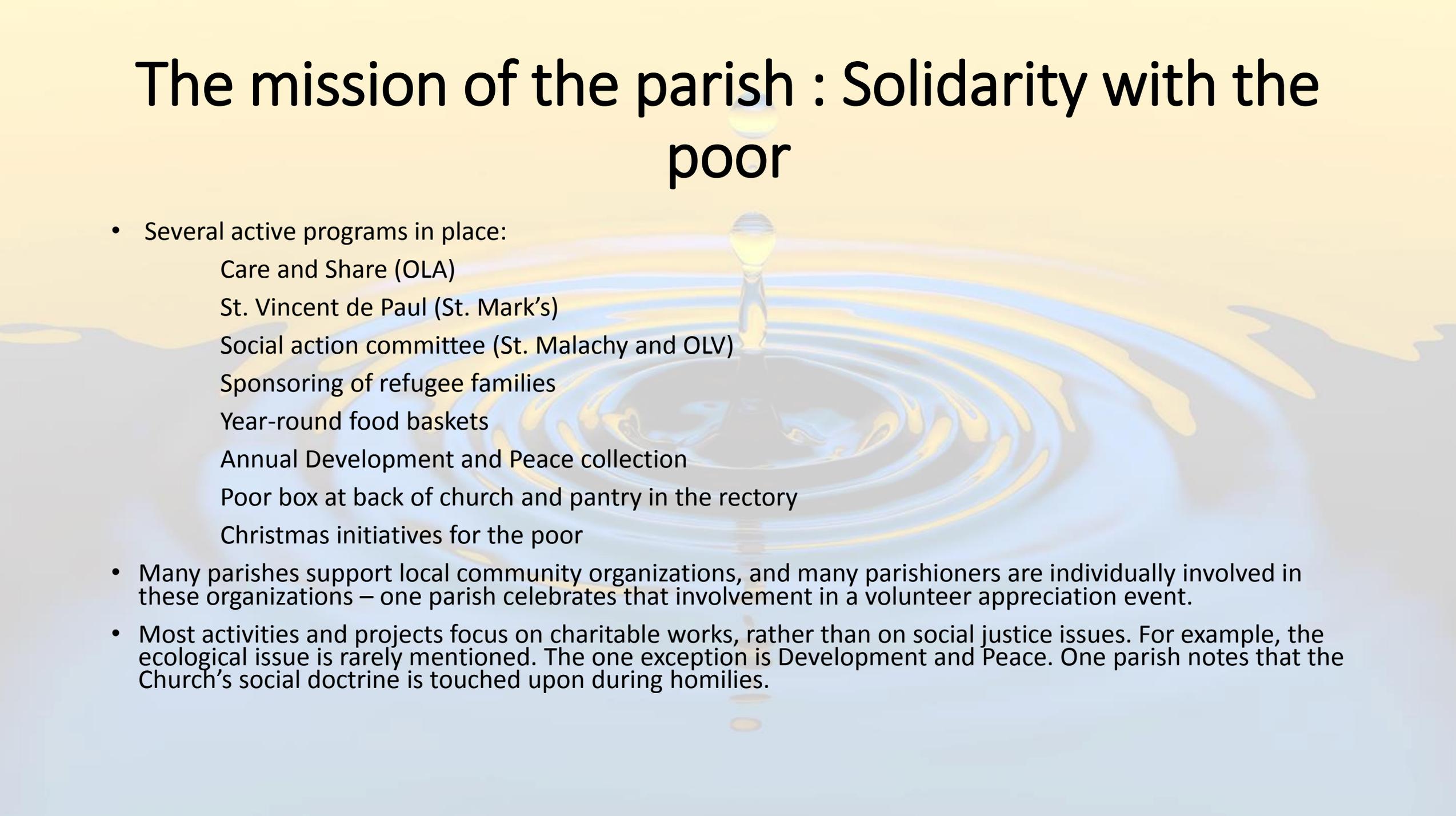
Snapshot of our parishes : Fellowship

- All parishes consider that they are tightly knit, that parishioners know each other well and appreciate each other's company.
- Members who do not attend regularly and former members who have moved away maintain a strong sense of belonging, returning for fundraisers, special events, Christmas and Easter celebrations.
- Fellowship is an important focus for parish life. Examples abound:
 - Welcoming ministry at mass
 - Parish picnics and potlucks
 - Bake sales, garage sales, auctions
 - Christmas supper for lonely and less fortunate parishioners
 - Funeral luncheons
- Those who volunteer are very active, however, they are often older and must handle multiple duties.
- Efforts are made to recognize volunteers and to thank them.

The mission of the parish: Evangelization

- Some activities could potentially be evangelizing, for example:
 - Homilies at funerals
 - Sunday homilies posted on parish website
 - Activities related to solidarity and presence in the community
 - Reaching out to parents in sacramental preparation
 - Making strangers feel welcome
 - Some hospitality ministers approach visitors on an individual basis
 - One parish has set up an “Open Doors” initiative
- However, no effort exists to explicitly train parishioners to evangelize, no programs or services exist to bring people to believe in Christ.

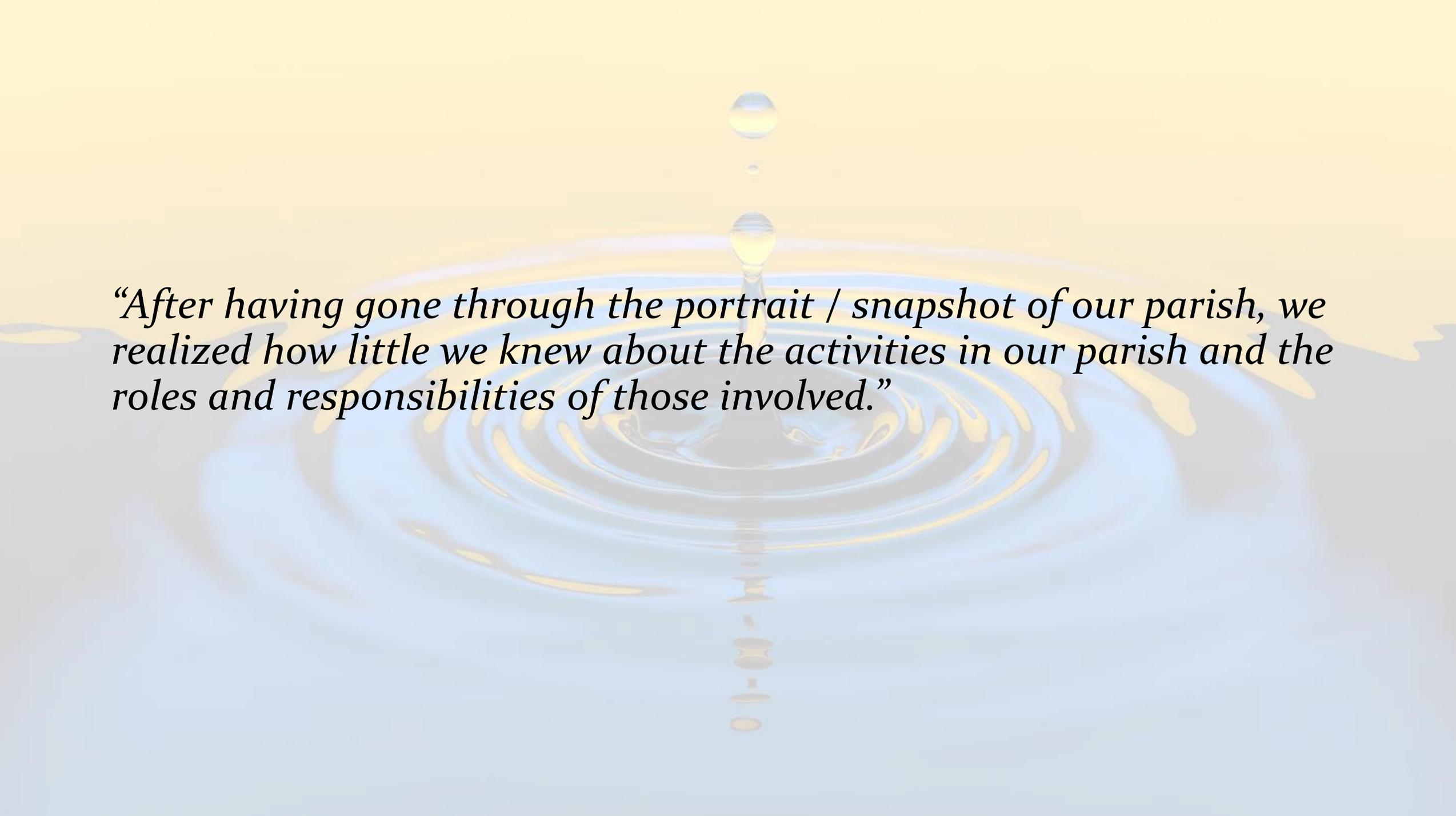
The mission of the parish : Solidarity with the poor

A water droplet is shown falling from the top center of the frame, creating a series of concentric ripples that spread outwards. The background is a soft, light blue gradient, and the water droplet and ripples are rendered in shades of blue and white, with some yellow highlights.

- Several active programs in place:
 - Care and Share (OLA)
 - St. Vincent de Paul (St. Mark's)
 - Social action committee (St. Malachy and OLV)
 - Sponsoring of refugee families
 - Year-round food baskets
 - Annual Development and Peace collection
 - Poor box at back of church and pantry in the rectory
 - Christmas initiatives for the poor
- Many parishes support local community organizations, and many parishioners are individually involved in these organizations – one parish celebrates that involvement in a volunteer appreciation event.
- Most activities and projects focus on charitable works, rather than on social justice issues. For example, the ecological issue is rarely mentioned. The one exception is Development and Peace. One parish notes that the Church's social doctrine is touched upon during homilies.

The mission of the parish : The parish in the larger community

- The use of the parish hall and grounds by various community organizations is a sign of the openness of parishes to the neighbouring community (for example, Cubs and Beavers, children's summer camps, AA, NA, OA, community choir, local day care).
- Some collaboration with local municipality is noted (for example, sharing of information, participation in various activities, fire department's help with major activities).
- A few public manifestations of faith are mentioned (for example, Good Friday walk, Corpus Christi procession, bells, parish website).
- Parishioners are involved in coordinating local services for the anglophone population.
- One parish hosts an ecumenical friendship club, another supports a neighbouring adult-education school, another is involved with a local women's shelter
- The parish acts as the focal point for community social events in some villages.
- Fundraising activities spill over onto the community
- The sharing of sacred space with other community groups raises a number of issues.

A high-speed photograph of a water droplet falling into a pool of water. The droplet is captured mid-fall, just above the surface, with a smaller droplet above it. The impact has created a series of concentric ripples that spread outwards. The background is a soft, warm yellow-orange gradient, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The water is a clear, light blue color.

“After having gone through the portrait / snapshot of our parish, we realized how little we knew about the activities in our parish and the roles and responsibilities of those involved.”

Our strengths

- All parishes consider themselves to be welcoming, charitable, cohesive, open, engaging, active. Parishioners have a strong faith, as well as a sense of responsibility for each other. They respond generously to the needs of those around them.
- Parishioners are proud of their church and attached to it. They support their parish generously, in spite of dwindling numbers and resources.
- Volunteers are deeply committed and share wonderful gifts with the community. Many of them are generous, active seniors. Collaboration with priests is very good.
- Many parishes act as the focus of village life, with social events having great importance for parishioners, friends and neighbours. The broader community, in turn, supports the local parish.
- Some parishes actively collaborate with other parishes, which is a great source of strength for them.
- Generally, Sunday liturgy is of good quality: preaching, music, ministries.

Our weaknesses

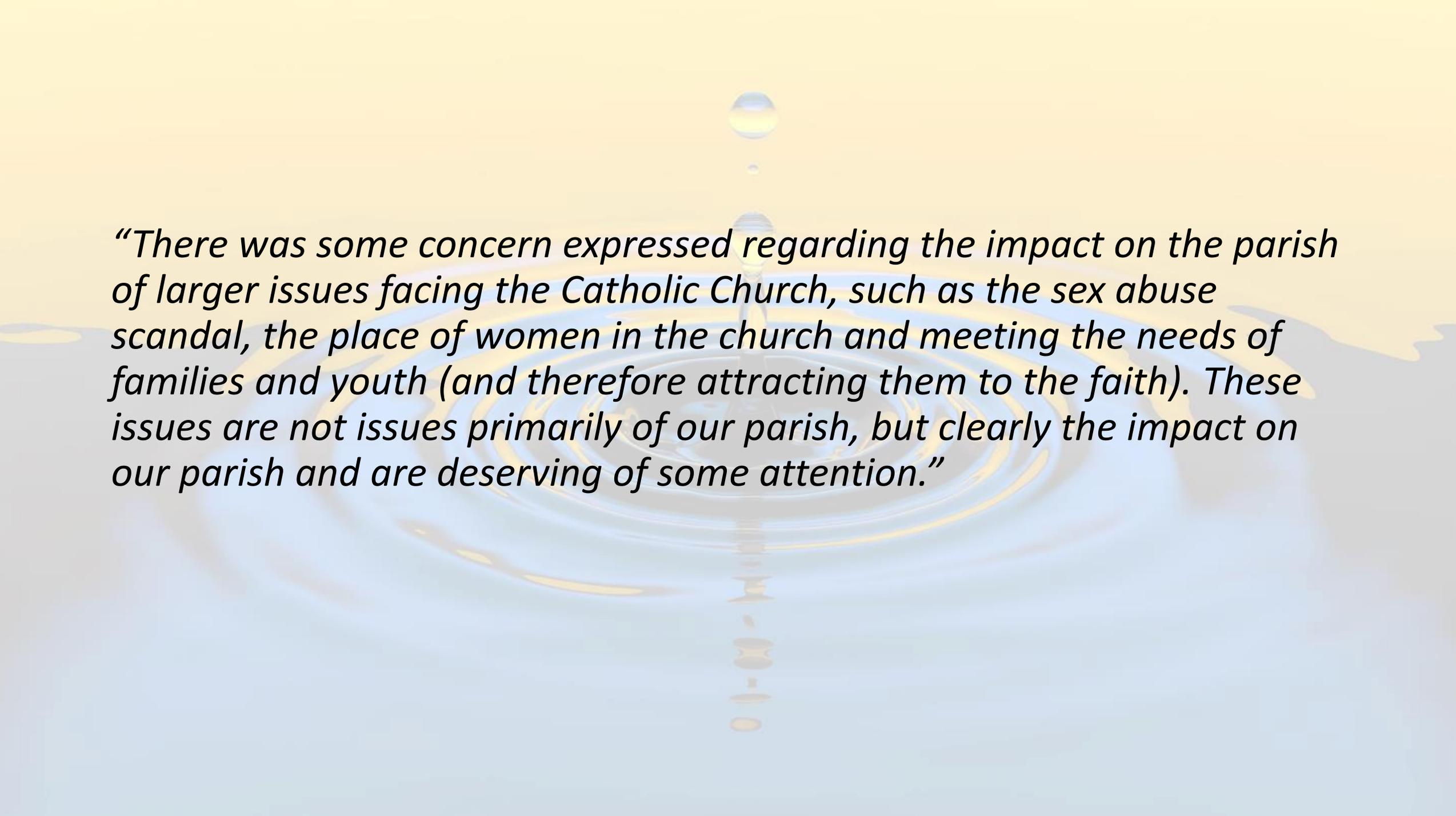
- There is little renewal in the membership of the church, so that the population is inexorably getting older. Few members of the younger generation seem to want to take up the flame of faith. The number of regularly attending churchgoers is going down (with the exception of St. Mark's and Farrelton).
- This is most evident when looking at the volunteers, who are all getting older and less numerous. Because of their generosity, they take on many tasks, but are at risk of burning out. People are willing to give a hand, but not commit themselves to taking on responsibilities.
- Communication is sometimes poor (between parishioners, between parish groups, between parishes, between diocese and parishes)
- Parish priests are mostly non-resident, have no knowledge or attachment to our region or culture, are overburdened with work and cannot provide local leadership since they are rarely present.
- Our liturgies are “correct”, but not life-giving. There seems to be a lack of “prayerfulness” in our gatherings.
- The finding of pastoral services competes with maintenance costs. We are too focused on financial issues, not enough on pastoral/ spiritual issues.
- The quality of the catechetical formation to the sacraments is not great (volunteers are ill equipped); poor follow-up after the sacraments. There is a general lack of faith formation and spiritual development activities outside of sacramental preparation.
- We have no communication strategy for non-practising Catholics, we don't know how to respond to the challenge of outreach or of evangelizing.

Concerns/Challenges (1 of 2):

- With many parishes sharing one priest, mass times are not particularly convenient especially for the elderly nor for young families, and the priest cannot give the local leadership which is needed. Some parishioners find it difficult to understand some priests' accents. Some parishioners yearn for the time they had a parish priest in residence.
- Participants are concerned that too few individuals are burdened with too many tasks. How can we nurture and expand volunteerism in the parish?
- How can we attract new parishioners, particularly younger ones? How can we make Christ and his Church relevant to others. We don't know what it means to evangelize or how to do it. How can we help each parishioner become a missionary disciple?

Concerns/Challenges (2 of 2):

- How can we educate children in the faith when neither the school nor parents do it? There is no tradition of parents educating their children in the faith. How can we give birth to such a tradition? How should we adjust sacramental preparation to today's reality?
- How can we have conversations on moral issues and explain the Church's teachings to other parishioners and enquirers?
- There is great concern about the future of the parish, its financial security, its pastoral personnel. Some fear that their parish will close in the near future (if the present group of committed parishioners is not replaced), yet they ardently hope that it doesn't.
- We need to learn how to work through occasional tensions in the parish.
- How can the diocese provide better resources and consultation for English-language parishes for faith formation?
- Are we focusing on the right priorities given our declining volunteers and finances?
- Some parishes ask "How do we make our liturgies more alive?"



“There was some concern expressed regarding the impact on the parish of larger issues facing the Catholic Church, such as the sex abuse scandal, the place of women in the church and meeting the needs of families and youth (and therefore attracting them to the faith). These issues are not issues primarily of our parish, but clearly the impact on our parish and are deserving of some attention.”