

RESULTS FROM CATHOLIC SCHOOL SURVEY

*A Sign of Hope for
Father Ravalli County*

*A Sign of Hope for
the Bitterroot Valley*

Survey Results & Community Discernment

Over the past several months, we have been working on assessing the need for a Catholic school in Father Ravalli County. Many members of the St. Francis of Assisi Parish, St. Mary's Parish and our wider Catholic Community participated in a survey and shared their needs and desires. We are grateful for the prayerful, thoughtful, and generous responses. The results of our latest survey indicate that there is a strong interest, deep faith, and a shared desire to pass on Catholic truth to the next generation.

Who Responded

Survey participants included:

- Families with children ranging from preschool through high school
- Parents with young children not yet school-aged
- Grandparents and parishioners whose own children are grown but who desire Catholic education for future generations and their grandchildren
- Families currently homeschooling, attending public school, or traveling long distances for Catholic education

This wide range of responses reflects a community-wide concern for a Catholic Christ centered education.

Strong Desire for Authentic Catholic Formation

Across nearly every response, one theme was clear:

Families want a school that is unmistakably and faithfully Catholic.

Respondents expressed strong support for:

- Daily or regular Mass, prayer, Adoration, and Confession
- Catholic teaching integrated into every subject
- Solid instruction in Catechism, Scripture, Church history, and moral theology
- Formation that teaches children not only what we believe, but why
- Emphasis on logic, reason, virtue, and ethics to prepare students to face modern challenges
- Faith lived and modeled daily by teachers and leadership

Many emphasized the importance of forming students who can apply Catholic teaching to real life, not merely memorize facts.

Academic Priorities

Families expressed interest in a classical Catholic education, with many noting:

- Strong foundations in reading, writing, math, and history
- Logic and critical thinking
- Age-appropriate Theology of the Body
- Outdoor education, music, art, and physical education
- A long-term vision that could grow gradually (for example, beginning with Pre-K or elementary and adding grades over time)

Several respondents emphasized the importance of small class sizes and high-quality teachers who are faithful to Church teaching.

Challenges Identified

Participants were realistic about the challenges facing Catholic education today. The most frequently cited concerns included:

- Affordability and financial sustainability
- Availability of qualified, faithful teachers
- Maintaining orthodox Catholic teaching without compromise
- Ensuring sufficient enrollment to grow responsibly
- The broader influence of secular culture and moral confusion

Despite these challenges, many respondents encouraged starting small, planning carefully, and trusting in God's providence.

Willingness to Support the School

A particularly hopeful result was the strong willingness to support the school beyond enrollment. Many respondents indicated they could help through:

- Fundraising and event organization
- Teaching or administrative support
- Admissions, campus ministry, and retreat coordination
- Professional expertise (education, law, management, trades)
- Volunteering and prayer

Several families even shared that they would consider moving to Father Ravalli County if a Catholic school became available.

Location Preferences

While opinions varied, many expressed interest in:

- A central valley location (Hamilton frequently mentioned)
- Willingness to drive if the school offers strong Catholic identity and quality education

Openness to phased or hybrid models if necessary

What This Means

The survey results demonstrate that:

- There is a genuine interest and need for Catholic education in Father Ravalli County
- Families desire a school that is faithful, affordable, and academically strong
- The Catholic community is willing to pray, serve, and sacrifice to make such a school possible

This needs assessment has been an essential part of our discernment process. Further progress will require continued prayer, dialogue, and collaboration with leaders from both parishes.

Next Steps

Further updates will be shared as discernment continues. Those who expressed interest in receiving updates or getting involved will be contacted as appropriate.

Please continue to pray: "Lord, if it is Your will, raise up a Catholic school in Father Ravalli County that forms saints, strengthens families, and glorifies You."

