

## MASS ATTENDANCE IN THE DIOCESE OF JEFFERSON CITY

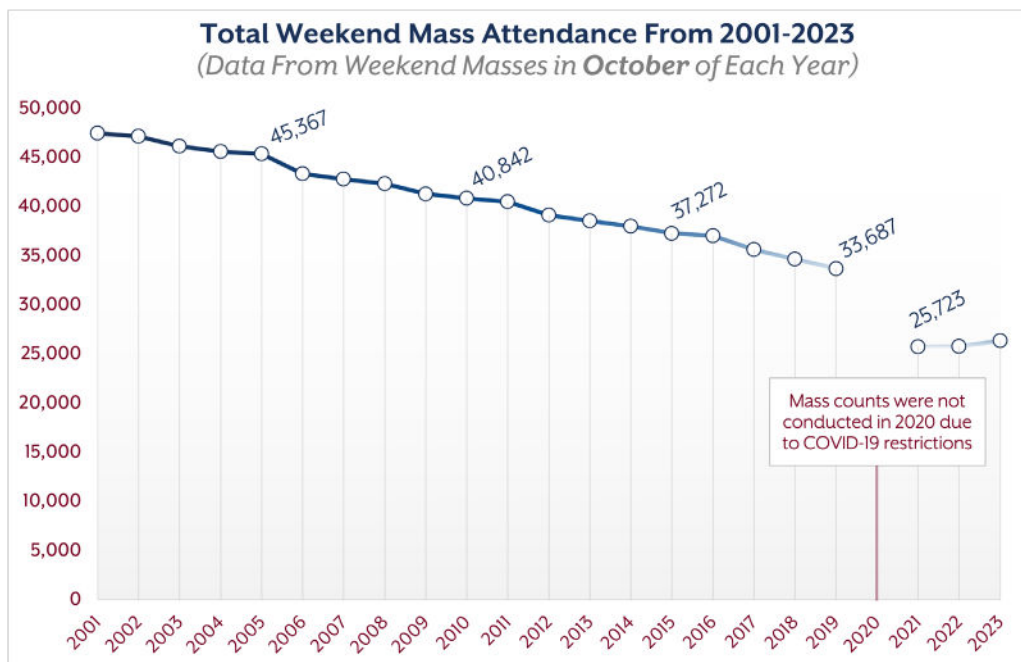
### *Results of the 2022-2024 Attendance Counts*

Since at least 2000, parishes in the Diocese of Jefferson City have used Mass attendance counts as a valuable tool for pastoral planning.

Accurate counts of Mass-attending Catholics help the diocese and individual parishes make informed decisions for the future. By understanding attendance trends, resources can be used effectively, and support can be directed to areas of greatest need. For parishes experiencing a decline, quantifiable data can support planning to address these challenges.

Traditionally, Mass attendance counts in the Diocese of Jefferson City were taken annually over the first four weekends of October. The counts were not conducted in 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data gathered over nearly 25 years of October counts indicate a slow, steady decline in Mass attendance in the diocese. From 2001 to 2019, October counts showed a collective 29% decline. With this decline in attendance, the diocese has also observed that churches are less full during the celebration of Mass. Since Catholic priests are limited in the number of Masses they can celebrate, it is essential to structure Mass schedules to maximize the reach of their ministry. Scheduling Masses to encourage fuller congregations helps prevent priest burnout, makes better use of liturgical ministers, and enhances the Mass experience for all. After the 2020 pause, counts resumed in 2021, revealing an additional 24% drop in attendance in the wake of the pandemic.



With this sharp decline, the Diocesan Presbyteral Council identified the need for more timely data to track attendance following the pandemic. They also noted that counting only in October could distort the data. Some parishes in tourist communities see seasonal attendance fluctuations that are not reflected in October counts. Additionally, October can be a challenging month for parishes with schools, as families often travel for fall youth sports and activities, leading them to attend Mass outside of their home parishes.

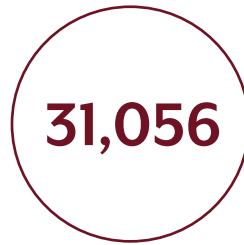
To address these concerns, the Diocesan Presbyteral Council initiated a year-long count of all weekend Masses beginning in August 2022. In this new model, parishes tallied attendance at all weekend Masses throughout the year.

## Total Weekend Mass Attendance From August 2022 - July 2024

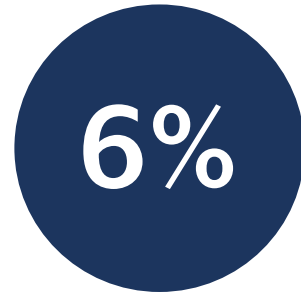
*Data From Weekend and Holy Day Masses  
Throughout **All Months** of the Year*



*Weekend Mass attendance from  
August 2022 - July 2023*



*Weekend Mass attendance from  
August 2023 - July 2024*



*Mass attendance increased  
by 6% between the two  
counting periods*

As data collection progressed, council members observed that continuous tracking provided a more accurate picture of parish vitality. In 2023, they extended the count for a second year, through July 2024. Overall, the data showed a collective 6% rebound in Mass attendance over the two year data collection period.

While this report is a simplified summary of the data collected, much greater detail is available to parishes upon request from the Chancery.

Following the second year of data collection, the Diocesan Presbyteral Council decided to pause the Mass counts for three years, with plans to conduct another full-year count from August 2027 through July 2028.

In the meantime, parishes throughout the diocese continue to implement strategies rooted in our Catholic faith to encourage participation in Mass and to warmly welcome those new to the Church.

Strengthening Catholic stewardship in the diocese includes a focus on hospitality, ensuring that both regular attendees and newcomers feel welcomed in our parishes. Many parishes have incorporated hospitality initiatives into their local pastoral plans. The Shaping Our Future Together initiative also supports parishes as they seek to thrive by fostering cooperation, deanery-level planning, and resource sharing. More recently, the diocesan-wide Parishes as Communities of the Beatitudes effort invites parishioners to study and pray together, reflecting on how we can better structure our parishes as we move forward as a united People of God in the Diocese of Jefferson City.

The insights gained from these attendance counts highlight both ongoing challenges and opportunities for renewal. By fostering a spirit of stewardship, hospitality, and collaboration, we are committed to strengthening our parish communities, enhancing our expressions of faith, and ensuring that all are welcomed.

Together, we will continue working to build a vibrant, faith-filled future for the diocese and all who gather to worship within it.