

SANCTUARY SEATING CAPACITY vs. PARISH SIZE

For Parishes in The Archdiocese of Atlanta

Estimating the necessary seating capacity for a parish sanctuary is not easy because of the multiple masses, the potentially different audiences and languages, and probability of church attendance on any Sunday.

To help, we have taken the data from the recent Pastor, Deacon, and Priest Survey to get a sense of how many seats are needed on-average per family in a parish. We used the survey data from parishes that reported none of their normal weekend masses exceeded seating capacity and those that reported only one weekend mass exceeded capacity.

Based on the averages, it appears that counting somewhere between **2.4 and 3.5** families per sanctuary seat is a good “Rule of Thumb” to estimate seating capacity needs.

Seating Capacity vs. Families (per survey)*						
Parishes Reporting	Average Number of Families			Sanctuary Seating Capacity Average	Families per sanctuary seat	
	Registered	Unregistered	Total		Registered	Total
No masses exceed capacity	975	275	1250	523	1.9	2.4
One mass exceeds capacity	1428	381	1809	518	2.8	3.5

*As of March 2016

Example: Church A has a total of 3000 families in the parish, both registered and unregistered.

In order to have masses where only one exceeds capacity, it would need at least 857 seats.

$$\mathbf{3000 \text{ families} \div 3.5 \text{ families per seat} = 857 \text{ seats}}$$

In order to have masses that do not exceed capacity, it would need at least 1250 seats.

$$\mathbf{3000 \text{ families} \div 2.4 \text{ families per seat} = 1250 \text{ seats}}$$