

Spring 2012

Dear Friends in Christ,

Thank you for registering your child(ren) in our **Youth Formation Program** and for taking the time to read this letter. Our primary goal is to not only assist with the “learning” of your faith, but with living it out as well. We have inherited an erroneous philosophy that purports that adequate religious education can occur without regular participation at Mass and that simply sending a child to Youth Formation fulfills the promises made by parents and godparents at Baptism. Unfortunately, this kind of thinking is wrong and greatly reduces the success of any learning a child may receive at weekly classes.

When a person is baptized, **promises** are made by parents and godparents that children be “raised in the practice of the faith.” This means that **regular, weekly attendance at Mass is a necessity**. The church assumes that through “practicing” their faith that families will also be “educated” in their faith. It is unreasonable to believe that anything can really be “learned” when it is not done regularly.

For a Catholic, the minimum requirement is weekly Mass attendance. This is not an option. The church has never stopped teaching about the obligation of Mass participation for all Catholics. The Mass, with the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, is to be taken seriously as the primary way to give due honor and glory to God, identify ourselves and express our beliefs. Even more importantly, it is at Mass that the Body and Blood of Christ are consecrated and received. In this light, **the church still strongly teaches that missing Mass, without sufficient reason, is a sin**. In fact, it is sin serious enough to require the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance) for absolution, especially if committed repeatedly. Our children are taught about sin in their Youth Formation classes. They are also taught that serious sins, like missing Mass, must be confessed before approaching Holy Communion. **Neglecting our Sunday Mass obligation sends the wrong message to our children!**

Therefore, on your family registration form is a Covenant I am asking you to sign indicating your promise to attend Mass each week. This promise is not new. It was already made by you and your child’s godparents at Baptism. It is my responsibility to insure that families grow not only in their education of the faith, but its practice. I applaud our families who have consistently taken this responsibility seriously. I know in our confused culture, setting these priorities is difficult. We must take care to adjust our schedules so that nothing secular (such as regular sports commitments and the like) has precedence over Sunday worship. **Sunday is the Lord’s Day and is to be respected as such.**

That being said, **weekly Mass attendance is a requirement** for all children in our program. We are asking, however, that children in grades 2, 3, 7, 8, and High School present a **Mass Attendance Form** each week. Please let our Youth Formation staff know of any particular circumstances, such as custodial issues, that would take your child away from St. Anthony on weekends. When away from St. Anthony Church, including vacations, please hand in a signed bulletin from the church you attended.

I thank you for your cooperation with the above and promise that a life lived in the practice and knowledge of the faith will bring nothing but greater peace, joy and courage. We will continue to work to ensure that our children experience the best in Youth Formation.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Father Mark
Pastor