

The Relationship Between our Parish and our School

With the coming fiscal year 2021-2022, SS. Peter and Paul Parish will be part of seven parishes in the diocese that will be moving to a new stewardship model. There will be many changes which will affect how we as a parish view being good stewards and help set up a future of success on every level. Each parish family will be asked to evaluate how they participate in the life of the parish in three ways: 1) In how we practice our faith through Mass attendance and prayer in support of the mission of the parish, 2) In how we volunteer our time and energy in the mission of the parish, and 3) In how we sacrificially give of our resources in support of the mission of the parish.

All three of these criteria go toward bolstering the mission of the Church. Mass attendance and prayer bolster us spiritually so that we may each engage in the mission of the Church. Those who know me know well that Mass attendance is my first priority. Without Mass, the mission of this parish will be reduced to nothing; we need the grace of God to engage. The volunteering in various positions helps us to engage within our parish and community. Cultivating a profound sense of selfless service in ourselves and our children provides the time and energy we need to engage in our mission and to help in the discernment of our vocations. Finally, sacrificial giving is a continuation of the thanksgiving and Eucharistic sacrifices of the Old Testament by which we fund the mission so that we might keep up and expand our ability to engage in the mission of the Church.

WHAT IS THE MISSION? Simply put, it is what is called the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20) This mission comes in the form of teaching and preaching the Gospel both to our own and to the larger community. We do this with our own parish through our many educational programs, the largest of which is our parish school. We do this in our community by being a beacon of charity and mercy in our community and aiding toward evangelization. This takes God's grace to accomplish (Mass and prayer), our willingness to engage (time and energy) and our sacrificial giving (resources).

The largest way we do this is in our school. Each year this parish sponsors students to attend our school. I know the word "sponsors" might seem new, however, that is exactly what the parish does. The parish as whole commits time, energy, prayer, and resources to our students not just so they get a great education (we are not a private school) but so that faithful disciples and leaders may be grown to continue the mission of the parish. Many of our families have made good use of this sponsorship and raised faithful disciples. Some of our families have taken advantage of this sponsorship and failed on their side of the bargain. By "failed", I mean first and foremost they and their children do not come to Mass and thereby receive the necessary grace to engage. Secondly, I mean they neither give of their time, energy, or resources. Doing these things, they squander the great gift given to them by the parish. With the new stewardship model this changes.

What is expected of parents who have their children sponsored by our parish? Like all parishioners, they will be expected to engage in the life of the parish through Mass attendance, volunteering, and sacrificial giving. As those who are having their children sponsored by the parish, the onus of these responsibilities is more. They will be evaluated.

Mass attendance

Of the three, as a pastor who is all about the salvation of souls, **Mass attendance is non-negotiable**. First, the Ten Commandments tell us to keep holy the Sabbath. Second, it is a precept of the Church that all Catholics, save those who are ill, homebound, or caring for a sick person are to attend Masses on Sunday (Saturday PM) and Holy Days. To not do this willfully is mortally sinful. As Mass is where we get the necessary grace to engage in the Mission of Christ, to habitually miss Mass is to say that I nor my children want to engage in the mission of the Church BUT we demand to reap the fruits of those who do engage in the mission of Church and directly undermine the reason they engage! This is unjust. This will no longer be enabled nor tolerated.

When a parent willfully and regularly skips Mass (even before Covid) they are directly undermining the reason everyone else in the parish who does pray, give, and volunteer. Our school does not exist first and foremost to give a superior education. It should give such an education. However expecting the parish to sponsor students to attend a private school free of tuition to parishioners is unjust when that is neither why our Catholic school exists nor why the parish sponsors students. From this point on, taking Covid into account, Mass attendance is fully and regularly expected of students and their families. You need the grace. Your children need the grace. While your students do go to Mass during the week, it IS NOT a replacement for the Sunday Mass.

Volunteering and Sacrificial Giving

Your students are able to be sponsored by the parish because of the volunteering and sacrificial giving of others. Most do not have children in our school. But as the school is part of the mission of the parish, we take that investment of time, energy, and resources and put in into our school. The school, though, is not the totality of our mission by any means. We cannot engage the other areas we must as a parish if only a small percentage are willing to give of their time and energy. Our mission is larger than just the school. Much larger. The entirety of the mission must be attended to.

In none of this are families with children being sponsored by the parish in our school being singled out. We have the same expectations of all parishioners. I just want the parish families with children sponsored by the parish to understand the great gift given to them and their students by this parish and the reason for which that gift is given.

Consequences

As with any of the families in our parish, when a family ceases to attend, give, and volunteer, we move them to inactive status. Once a family moves to inactive status, the parish will no longer sponsor their students in our school. The family will be moved to tuition status if their students are to remain in our school. We would rather it not come to this. The decision to move a school family from active to inactive (hence from no tuition to tuition) will be made by the pastor and the stewardship committee. Even when the decision is made, it can be reversed if the family should change their mind. Even here, the mission of the Church takes precedence. ***For parents planning on putting their children in our school next academic year, please keep this in mind.*** We want you here in this parish as active parishioners so that we may be partners in your and your children's faith formation.