



Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church

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Dear Parents,

April 22, 2019

Happy Easter to all of you! I hope you and your family are well and that in this Easter season all of us are being renewed in our trust in the graces the Risen Lord pours forth upon us as we face the joys and challenges of daily life. At Mass on Easter we renewed our baptismal promises, and it reminds me how as parents you and your children's godparents made those promises on behalf of your children as they were about to be baptized. How truly amazing it is for us: that because of Christ's death and resurrection through baptism God calls us to be His children, and as parents how you are entrusted by the Lord to help foster their faith given to them in baptism.

As we are concluding this year's Faith Formation classes, I hope as a parish we have helped foster the understanding of the faith for child. Though most of what we offer in Faith Formation is in the form of a classroom setting, forming your children in faith is so much more than helping them learn about different teachings. Growing in the knowledge of the faith is just one aspect of forming any of us in faith since we also have to experience the living of it every day. For example, as the children learn about sin and God's power to forgive, I was very happy that we were able to give all the children in grades 2-9 the opportunity to experience the mercy of Christ through the sacrament of reconciliation (to know the joy of being forgiven of their sins and learning to begin again in Christ).

Ultimately, the formation of your children, like for all us, is about forming them in the heart of Jesus Christ in whom we believe and follow as disciples. That formation occurs throughout our whole life and we grow in it by knowing and living it. As parents, you are the primary formators of your children. You are the ones who by word and example, and by fostering daily experiences in your family, especially through the sacraments (the Eucharist every week on Sundays or the Saturday Vigil), daily prayer, and living the moral life so that your children will grow in the love of God. Keep striving to seize daily experiences to talk to your children about living our faith and how to trust in the Lord in whatever things we face. Also, do not be discouraged in those moments when your children show lack of interest or even rebellion towards living faith, but remember we have to think of their growth long term and not looking for immediate wants. But, if a family is not striving constantly to grow in faith and the love of Christ, if the formation of your children's faith is dependent only on what we try to offer in Faith Formation, then your children will most likely not be truly drawn to the Lord (because in the classes can only offer teaching, not the daily lived experiences of the presence God).

As you know back in September when I arrived we made some changes with Faith Formation with the hope we can offer the best structure and lessons for the children. I hope you were pleased with what Maureen Brawley and Christine Gregorek coordinated, but as we finish this year we are looking at areas where we can hopefully improve. We would appreciate any feedback you may have. One area we already have discussed is the schedule and how it can work well for you and help foster a greater connection to the living of the faith for your children. The times for classes in Grades 1-7 will remain the same. Please remember that classes for Grades 1-3 are scheduled for Sunday morning so the children can attend Mass with their families at the 9:00am Mass before their classes. But for Grades 8 and 9, we want to connect them more to the living of the new and eternal covenant with Christ that he

calls all of us to live through the Eucharist (His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity). So, starting in the Fall children in grades 8 and 9 will have classes each week on Sunday mornings in the basement of the church after they have attended Mass at 10:45am (if you regularly attend a different Mass as a family that will be fine to continue with that since it is a crucial part of family life, but we will ask the children to sign in before any Mass, so we know they are striving to live this covenant with Christ). Since they would have just been at Mass with you, when they go downstairs their classes will only be 50 minutes long afterwards. I know for many years Grade 9 classes have met only once a month for three hours, but we have found that by only meeting once of month there is less of a connection for the kids with their faith, and we found three hours makes for a long afternoon for the children and teachers.

Regarding homeschooling, I would like to continue to offer the opportunity for parents to homeschool because it can offer the chance for parents to teach the faith and how to live it, as well as talk more with their children. It also gives you the opportunity to teach them in a schedule that works for you because of the busy lives many of you and your children live. Unfortunately, we have also found from some work turned in or not picked up that for some families homeschooling is apparently being treated very lightly and because of it the children are not learning much (which only makes them more disconnected from the faith though they do not realize it). For those who are homeschooling, not only should you strive to treat the subject with the greatest of importance because it is about their relationship with God, but since they are not in class with other children, it is important to consciously find ways to connect them to parish life so they are building friendships in the area of faith with their peers. I personally can remember in public school I knew who the other kids were that believed what I did because I saw them at Mass and Faith Formation and that often fostered a connection with them. Lastly, just be mindful with each homeschooled child we have to purchase extra Catechist guides which we loan to you, so there will be an extra \$10 charge for each Catechist guide you need.

Please know the fostering of your children's faith and relationship with the Lord is the greatest thing you can do, but know you are not on your own (the Church and, most importantly, the Lord is there to help you). Remember your ultimate goal for your children is not to achieve worldly accomplishments, but to achieve eternal happiness in the glory of God. Please know you are in my prayers. As your pastor I know I still have many of you that I need to get to know and it is my hope I will be able to in the near future. May the Risen Lord always reign in your hearts and home.

In preparing for next Fall, at this time it makes it much easier for us if you could register your children at this time. So please fill out the registration form and turn it in this weekend if you can.

God bless,

Fr. Kevin Cook
Pastor