



St. John the Baptist Catholic Church

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December 2, 2018
First Sunday of Advent

***“If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray,
will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go search for the stray?”
Matthew 18:12***

Dear Friends,

We have a very serious problem at St. John the Baptist. However, there is a very easy solution.

Here's our problem: We have 236 Catholic students registered at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church. 148 in our parish school, 15 in our religious education program and 73 in high school.

The problem is...I don't see 236 students at Sunday Mass. In fact, it's not even close. On any given weekend, I see less than 10% of our children. That means over 90% of our Catholic, registered students do not attend Sunday Mass at St. John's on a regular basis. *We have practically an entire school of children who do not attend Mass at their parish on Sunday.*

Here's the solution: We start coming to Mass at St. John's. Every Sunday. And every Holy Day of Obligation.

When God created the Heavens and the Earth, He rested on the seventh day. Why? After all, He's God. He's all powerful. He doesn't get tired. He doesn't need to rest. The reason He “takes a day off” is because He's telling us that our lives cannot be consumed by the dictatorship of work.

When God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, He gave them Ten Commandments. The third commandment is “Remember the sabbath day - keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8). He knows that without Him, we are prone to return to the

slavery from which He delivered us and worship false gods. We need to set aside a day to praise and worship Him, the one true God, who has given us true freedom.

Jesus rose from the dead on a Sunday. Think about that: *Jesus rose from the dead!* And he did it for us; to save us from sin and death. If someone threw themselves in front of a bus to save us from being killed, we would never stop thinking about them. We'd tell everyone we knew about them. We'd never forget the day they sacrificed themselves for us and we'd honor their memory.

We need to treat Jesus likewise.

I am sending this letter to all Catholic families registered at St. John the Baptist with children in our schools. I am bringing this issue to light with you because of the strong connection you have with the parish by virtue of the fact that you send your children to our Catholic school. However, the school is only one small part of their being raised in the Catholic faith. *The most essential part of their being raised as disciples of Jesus Christ is weekly Sunday worship of Him, the Father, and Holy Spirit, with the community of believers, Catholics who profess the faith.*

God's greatest desire is that His children come to Him and receive the gift of His own Son, Jesus Christ, who is truly present in the Eucharist, His most sacred Body and Blood. That is why we come to Mass. We come to Mass to receive a gift we can't find anywhere else. We can't find it at a sporting event. We can't find it at the lake. We can't find it at work. We can't find it in any other form of entertainment or labor, as good as those things can be. We can only find His Body and Blood at Mass.

As you make the decision to come to Mass, and especially as you're tempted perhaps not to come, I want you to say to yourself: "Jesus wants to give me Himself." And think about what that really means. Think about what that says about God's love for you. Think about what that should mean in your life. And think about what the appropriate response to this gift from Jesus Christ should be. I'll give you the answer: it's coming to receive this gift at Mass.

I also write this letter as a plea for justice. St. John's makes a tremendous investment in your children. This investment is made primarily by passing on the Gospel of Jesus Christ to them. And for all of our active Catholic families registered at St. John's, the parish also makes a significant investment of money for them as well.

I'm not sure if you're aware of this or not, but the **cost to educate** each individual student for one year at St. John the Baptist Catholic School is approximately \$5,700. Some might find this number to be new news. That's because the **tuition**

that is charged for active Catholic families registered at St. John's is approximately \$3,600. However, the remaining \$2,100 still has to come from somewhere. Where does it come from? Our weekly Sunday collections.

Some clarification of terms will shed light on what this means. Our active Catholic families registered at St. John the Baptist do not receive a **discount** on tuition. A discount is merely a reduced price on some good or service which then yields a smaller profit. Our active Catholic families registered at St. John the Baptist do not receive a discount, they receive a **subsidy**. What is a subsidy? A subsidy is a gift of actual cash, from the parish, that is applied to the tuition of a student. This gift comes from the weekly Sunday collections. Why does the parish do this? Because we want to support our active Catholic families registered at St. John's.

As a matter of justice, all Catholic families registered at St. John's need to be **active**. What does it mean to be active? ***First and foremost, it means coming to Mass at St. John's every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation.*** It also means contributing to the life of the Church in some way by means of service. It also means contributing to the material needs of the Church by sharing a portion of the financial blessings we've received from God to the extent that we are able. I'm sure you've heard of this described as a sharing of "time, talent and treasure."

To be perfectly honest, the one I'm most concerned with is time - particularly, time at Mass. It's actually the element of stewardship most absent in our parish. Many families volunteer in various ways at the school and even contribute financially to the church. However, many families do these things, and yet do not give the gift of their time to God by coming to Sunday Mass at St. John's.

As you know, every spring, you fill out a form requesting a subsidy from the parish to help pay for your child's tuition. We will continue this practice. However, the principal criteria that will be looked at will be *Mass attendance*. If a family is coming to Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation, they will receive the subsidy gift from the parish. We will determine Mass attendance by way of the envelopes you put in the basket every Sunday. I will not be looking at how much you put in the envelope. I just want to see you at Mass.

Sometimes a family is out of town for vacation. No problem. At the same time, I don't expect that families would be out of town for vacation half the year.

Sometimes a family member is sick and it might be truly necessary for another to stay home and take care of them. Charity and the health of our loved one dictates, in some cases, that we miss Mass, in order to attend to their genuine needs. Again, no problem.

Sometimes a family member might have an occupation that works through a weekend for the good of society (i.e.: a police officer, firefighter, nurse, doctor, etc.) Again, charity dictates that these special skills be available to our community at all times. If you miss Mass because of something like this, that's a legitimate excuse.

However, if you have a job that frequently causes you to miss Mass on Sunday, I would like to hear about your experience. As your shepherd, my concern is for your eternal soul, and we need to have an in person conversation to make sure your faith is remaining strong by way of the Sacramental life of the Church which God has given us as the means to sharing in His divine life.

I understand that some families might struggle with writing a check and putting it in an envelope, while at the same time trying to get the kids bathed, fed, dressed and in the car in time for Mass. Trust me, as a celibate, I can truly only imagine. So, in order to help you, we will have blank envelopes in the pews where you can write your name and drop it in the basket, letting us know you were here. Again, my principal concern is not what you put *in* the envelope. My principal concern is what you put in the *pew* - you.

Some might ask if the two weekday Masses our students attend fulfill their Sunday obligation. The answer is no. God commands us to keep holy the Sabbath, Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection. It is imperative that we teach our children from the very beginning the necessity of Sunday worship at Mass.

For the past three years I've received the subsidy requests at the end of the school year, just a few short months before the beginning of a new school year. And I've never felt comfortable denying a request given the short amount of time before the beginning of the school year. That is why I am writing this letter to you now, nine months before the next school year begins.

I am not writing this letter with the goal of increasing our weekly collections or taking away subsidies. We will happily give a subsidy to every single active Catholic family registered at St. John's. I am writing this letter because we all need to go to Mass. *If every single family came to Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation and I had to say Mass on a card table on the lawn because we couldn't afford to keep up our buildings, I'd be the happiest priest in the world.*

At the same time, I don't expect to have to resort to card tables because God, and His people, have been good to St. John's. We've been able to pay our bills, but just barely. But that's OK because we're not in the business of making money. We're in the business of making disciples for Jesus Christ. In fact, that's the only thing we have to do and it's really the only reason we exist. A shoe factory can have the greatest buildings, location, staff, and resources. However, if they don't make

shoes, they're a failure. We're no different. If we don't make disciples of Jesus Christ, it doesn't matter how pretty our church looks, how many people we have on staff, or how good our sports teams are. If we don't make disciples of Jesus Christ, we are failures.

That's why I'm writing to you today. Because I want us all to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. And Jesus Himself has shown us the primary way by which we are to become his disciples. On the day before he was to suffer, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke the bread, and gave it to his disciples saying, "Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, which will be given up for you." And likewise, he did with the chalice, giving us his Blood saying, "Do this in remembrance of me."

As you can see by the length of this letter, this is a matter of grave concern. Again, we simply cannot permit over 90% of our families to consistently miss Mass every Sunday without just reason. As your shepherd, I will come looking for you; not just because it is my duty, but because I love you and I want to see you at Mass and I want to spend eternity with you in God's Kingdom. More importantly, God wants to spend eternity with you in His kingdom.

When our school families start coming to Mass, we will literally double our congregation overnight.

If you have questions or circumstances related to your weekly Mass attendance, I'm completely at your disposal. I will be happy to meet with you in person to discuss anything that is on your mind.

Today is the First Sunday of Advent; the beginning of a new liturgical year in the Church. Together, let's make a "new year's resolution" to receive the most precious gift imaginable: the gift of Jesus Christ, given to us by Him at St. John's every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation. This is the gift we need more than any other. This is the gift that cannot be found anywhere else. See you next Sunday!

Your Pastor,

Fr. Andrew

Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked them, but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Matthew 19:13-14

2018/2019 Holy Days of Obligation*

1.) Every Sunday Throughout the Year

Mass times: Sat, 4:30PM; Sun, 8 & 10:30AM

2.) Saturday, December 8th, 2018 - Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Mass times: Fri, Dec 7th, 5:45PM, Sat, Dec 8th, 9AM & 4:30PM

3.) Tuesday, December 25th, 2018 - Christmas

Mass times: Mon 12/24th, 4:30 & 10PM; Tue 12/25th, 9AM

4.) Tuesday, January 1st, 2019 - Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Mass times: Tue, Jan 1st, Noon & 5:45PM

5.) Sunday, April 21st, 2019 - Easter Sunday

Mass times: Sat, 8:26PM; Sun, 8 & 10:30AM

6.) Thursday, August 15th, 2019 - Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Mass times: 6:30AM, 8:15AM & 5:45PM

7.) Friday, November 1st, 2019 - Solemnity of All Saints

Mass times: 6:30AM, 8:15AM & 5:45PM

8.) Wednesday, December 25th, 2019 - Christmas

Mass times: Tue 12/24th, 4:30 & 10PM; Wed 12/25th, 9AM

* Times subject to change. See Sunday bulletin for latest updates.