

# THE PASTOR'S POST

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Dear Parish Family:

"But I play soccer on Sundays."

That was the response to one of my awesome students when I asked if he would become an altar server.

Ultimately, it probably was not just a response about being an altar server, it was a statement about Mass and the Sunday Eucharist. We believe the Eucharist, especially when we celebrate the Mass, is our communal encounter with the risen and glorified Christ. We believe receiving the Eucharist calls us to be more like Christ in this life with the hope that one day we will meet him in the next. And we pray that we can go forth to be that presence of Christ for all we encounter when we leave Mass. This is the reason we are called to Mass every Sunday, every Sunday of the year. And if we truly believe the Eucharist to be Jesus Christ, how can we not be at Mass every Sunday?

Over the past years, as you may have noticed :), we have implemented a workbook/journal process that requires young people and their parents to write about their experience. Then after Mass the priests sign them. I enjoy the opportunity to meet kids and their families. There have been some powerful encounters on those lines for me...some that have remained for almost four years. It's not a perfect process and we're always trying to make it better but it is one way we are encouraging families to consider the importance of the Eucharist in their own formation.

This past week a few families wrote to withdraw their children from Faith Formation and the reason saddens me. The reason: we are asking that they go to 25 masses. (That's actually not true. We ask them to be at Mass every Sunday. For 25 of those Sundays we ask that their journal be signed.) They are transferring to parishes that do not require attendance at Sunday Mass. The writings - very similar in wording and structure - were respectful. They each spoke of the

importance of their faith, their love for the parish, even the happiness that going to Mass has brought them and how it had become an important part of their lives. One family wrote the realities and schedules of modern families are not fully being considered when it comes to participating in the Eucharist. Another shared that work schedules, family responsibilities, extracurricular activities, weekend sports schedules, and other commitments, managing that many Masses within the year can be difficult, even for those who have a great commitment to their faith. Another wrote they were not sure how going to Sunday Mass would fit in their schedule.

Welcome to Corpus Christi. This feast which we celebrate today calls us to a deeper and deeper awareness and response to the Eucharist - that nothing would be able to get in the way of this encounter with Christ. I'm saddened because somewhere along the way many of us have lost focus about how important we believe this encounter is. The parents that wrote are sincere. They want the best for their kids. Maybe just not yet sure how Mass fits in or understanding how important the Eucharist is for our lives here and now and in the life to come.

Can this be true for us, too, sometimes? For some of us, participation at Sunday Mass has just become another encounter instead of THE encounter. For others it is a good thing to do, if it's convenient. The truth is that we each can use a "wake-up" call when it comes to the importance of the Eucharist. Maybe today's feast can help us remember that we who eat this bread will live forever - in this life and in the life to come! Even more, by our witness, we can inspire others to see the same!

That kid is becoming an altar server! He'll serve before his soccer games if he has them on Sunday, his mom says. A good start! I'll take it. Please pray for me. I promise the same.

*Father [Signature]*

