

ST. WILLIAM PARISH

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April 17, 2007

This letter is addressed to all parents of children who are Kindergarten age through 8th Grade age. The SAME LETTER is being sent to all parents, whether they have children in our parish school program, or our afterschool program, or if their children are not enrolled in either of our formal education programs.

Regardless of what decision you make with regard to your child's religious instruction, I want you to know what the parish offers you; what it can, and cannot, do.

What it CANNOT do: It cannot replace the parent!

There is no question: **the parents bear the primary responsibility** for the education of their children and for passing on the faith. This is an awesome responsibility and privilege. **The single most important element in sharing the Faith is to bring your child to Mass.** Each Sunday. Every Sunday. Without fail.

As a pastor I am *extremely* disturbed to see that many parents neglect this most basic practice. Apparently some people have come to believe that Eucharist is something they can choose...occasionally.

Perhaps some parents don't know why this is so vital. Or perhaps they have other issues. In either case, if this is you, please let me know. I won't yell at you, I promise. But I will help you to rediscover your roots, and why bringing your family to Mass is as important as feeding them—something you wouldn't do just...occasionally.

If, however, you don't come to Mass every weekend simply because you've fallen into a bad habit, make up your mind to change, and immediately take whatever steps are necessary.

I commend the parents who bring their children to Mass every weekend. All parents, however must also educate their children beyond the experience which Mass offers. This too, is the responsibility that belongs to the parent, but the parish can help.

What the parish CAN do: We can provide a tremendous support to your efforts by offering a formal program of religious instruction, either through our school program or our afterschool program.

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- 1) Our afterschool program provides the structure for you to assist your child in their Faith Formation, by providing materials and the help of professional coordinators, support staff, and volunteer catechists who are in various stages of certification. We run a “traditional” afterschool program with classes limited to 15 children, and there are about 26 sessions a year.
- 2) The school program is a fully accredited elementary school with state-certified teachers and high academic standards. The entire setting is Catholic, with religious instruction intrinsic to the core curriculum.

Unless you are committed to a formal home-schooling approach to your child’s religious instruction, I STRONGLY encourage you to register your child in one or the other of our parish programs. School: 669-4440; Office of Faith Formation: 624-1371.

There are, of course, costs associated with formal programs, and, to the extent possible, the parent should pay those costs. The parish’s responsibility is to run the programs, and subsidize those families who are unable to pay, so that no parish child would be deprived of a formal religious education due to financial stress within the family.

In times past, presumably in an effort to encourage parents’ participation, only a small portion of the actual cost was charged as tuition for either program. **This worked!** At least, it worked when many more Catholics than today gave a much larger percentage of their incomes as donations to the Church. There was sufficient funding from the whole congregation to provide “blanket” subsidies to all families regardless of their financial need or affluence. Even so, it only worked then, because so much of the cost of the programs was “hidden” through the low or non-existent wages of the persons who were conducting the programs. (For example, religious communities of women –nuns—ran our schools practically for free.) This pattern of hidden cost continues today, with much of the real costs of the programs subsidized—to some extent by unpaid volunteers—to a greater extent by paid staff who get only a percentage of what they would earn in a non-church setting. The paid staff persons are effectively “donating” tens of thousands of dollars EACH toward the education of our children.

In an effort to provide a more equitable wage to employees during a time of [effectively] decreased donations, the tuitions charged for programs had to gradually move more into line with the actual costs. However, there was always the tension of not wanting to “price out” families that were unable to pay due to financial stress.

A good number of years ago, to address this situation at least in the afterschool program, *I decided to actually treat the parents, financially, like adults:* I would tell them what the costs were, and invite them to pay those costs to the extent that they were able. Whatever the parent chose, would be the tuition charged the family for that year. The embarrassment of a special appeal process is eliminated for a financially stressed family. **This policy will continue for the afterschool program.** I urge every family, as they register, to very seriously consider their responsibility when deciding on their tuition. The actual cost per child for 2007-08 is anticipated to be \$395.

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A similar criterion will now apply to the school program. The cost of the this program is obviously higher, and, also, it is probably impossible to reach a consensus on how much of the typical Catholic School day can be described as “Faith Formation”. Nonetheless, the parish stands ready to help those families who are in need with the cost of religious instruction. Our Parish financial difficulties also make it clear that, however you define Faith Formation as a component of the school day, the parish is unable to afford more than 15% of the total cost per student, this year. In fact, our budget anticipates that many of the families will be willing to pay a portion, if not all, of that 15%.

The budgeted “cost per student” for the school program for 2007-08 is \$4,200. This is an increase of only \$10 over last year’s per child cost, and is hereby established as the “full tuition”. The minimum portion of this tuition that is *required* is \$3,570. The parent needs to decide how much of the remainder they will seek as a subsidy from the parish. We are trying to make our limited resources most available to the families who need it most. **The parent will advise us of the tuition amount they decide upon, from \$3,570 to \$4,200.**

As always, if a school family needs still more support, they should first apply to the diocese, which last year offered qualifying families \$625 per student. Then, if there is still more need, some additional scholarship money is available directly from the parish. We can also make special payment arrangements with individual families when there is a need. Out of respect toward the vast majority of families who always pay responsibly, and because the parish needs to be fiscally accountable, the long-standing policy towards re-registering families that are delinquent with tuition will be strictly enforced. (They must either make their payments current or have made other acceptable arrangements with the business manager prior to re-registering.) Also, families that have not been faithful in prior arrangements will not be allowed monthly installments, but must pay each of the two semesters in full before the first day of class.

As this needs-based tuition approach is being instituted, I understand that, in this first year, some families may need extra time for transitioning to higher tuitions, gradually making those adjustments in their yearly budgets. For that reason they may need the full 15% subsidy from the parish this year. Do the best that you can. Also, because this explanatory letter is late in coming, families that are paying in installments can choose ten equal installments beginning in May, or make a late payment for April without penalty. A commitment card will be distributed next week.

In Jesus,



Rev. Michael G. Savickas
Pastor

P.S. To help people understand the costs of the programs, and the subsequent cost per student, I have asked our business manager to post on our parish website the complete budget and also the financial report, exactly as they are submitted to the diocese. They will be available within a few days of this letter. Go to “Stewardship”, then “Reports”.