



July 2021

Dear Faith Formation Families,

Carolyn Mello Pryor and her dedicated team of catechists met over the summer to brainstorm ways to make our Faith Formation program more engaging. We are committed to offering a program that will help your family grow in our rich Catholic faith. We're excited about what we've planned and we appreciate the confidence you'll place in us by allowing us to partner with you as formators of your children in the faith.

Carolyn's letter and the registration form for the 2021-2022 school year will explain the details of our upcoming program. If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to reach out to me or to Carolyn. **You will notice that, this year, you will be offered options for gathering times that fit into your schedule.** We are always willing to make accommodations, and as we often say, we are not about hoop-jumping or red-tape. We truly want to provide a positive and formative experience of church for your family.

With that in mind, please know that, as a staff, **we have been particularly concerned with improving our weekend Mass experience.** Let's be honest. We haven't always put our best foot forward in planning a weekend experience that is engaging and meaningful while also being prayerful and encouraging full, active participation. But the celebration of Mass each week is the most significant formative experience in our faith!

Picture the Roman province *Africa Proconsularis* (present-day Tunis) in the year 303. The Emperor Diocletian was actively persecuting Christians and had ordered that "the sacred texts and holy testaments of the Lord and the divine Scriptures be found, so that they could be burnt; the Lord's basilicas were to be pulled down; and the celebration of sacred rites and holy reunions of the Lord were to be prohibited." Disobeying the Emperor's orders, a group of 49 Christians at Abitene continued to gather for weekly Mass, a crime for which they were imprisoned and eventually martyred. One of the martyrs, Emeritus, when asked why he would so brazenly defy the Emperor's order, declared: "*Sine dominico non possumus!*" "*Without Sunday we cannot live!*" **Imagine if we had reason to declare the**

same at SMB! The truth is that without our gathering at Mass each week as a parish family, we cannot live our faith at all!

So we are inviting your family to make the commitment to participate in weekly Mass.

We know that you have many commitments and that juggling them all isn't easy. But prioritizing weekly Mass will only make you grow in love for God and for each other; it will make your family stronger as a collective and will help make each individual member a better version of themselves. There is nothing to lose and everything to gain!

Please know, too, that **we want your experience of weekend Mass to be more engaging!** To that end, we have committed ourselves:

- to music that is both prayerful and contemporary,
- to preaching that is relevant and understandable, and
- to creating an atmosphere of welcome and hospitality where families may come just as they are.

If you have little ones, know that **SMB Mountain Movers** will be starting in the Fall at the 10:30am Mass. This special program will allow you to gather in the main church with your children, but to see them off to a special experience of children's church for the duration of our service, so that you and your older children can worship without distraction. After Mass, head downstairs to reconnect and hear about all the fun they had with Milly Grieve and her expert team. Our Hospitality Ministers will have also prepared some **post-Mass drinks and snacks**, if you should choose to stay and mingle with other members of our community. Know, too, that you are always welcome to keep your children with you in church. We do not mind the squirming or the noise! We're just glad that you're with us! But if *you'd* prefer to use the soundproof **Parenting Room** at the back of the church, please feel free to do so.

The witness of the martyrs of Abitene is a powerful one. As your pastor, I hope that we will give your family reason to say, "*Without Sunday we cannot live!*" We look forward to welcoming you, and please let us know if there is anything at all we can be doing better to serve your family.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Fr. Joe
Pastor