

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

RELIGIOUS ED 101

I heard a story recently about a teacher who was giving her class a religion lesson on the Bible. The teacher said to the class: "We have been learning about how powerful the kings and queens were in biblical times. However, there is a higher power. Can someone tell me who it is? A little boy named Tommy immediately blurted out, "I know, Aces!" Well as it once said, "Kids will say the darndest things." Even so, the children of today are really the hope of the Church and they are our future.

Speaking of the young, one of the best things that we do as priests is to baptize babies. Here at Saint Charles, we don't perform as many baptisms as we do funerals of which we had seven last week! At the end of the baptismal ritual, the priest says a prayer of blessing over the mother and father. The blessing of the father reads: "May God bless the father of this child, he and his wife will be the first teachers of their child in the way of faith. May they also be the best of teachers..."

I always reflect upon those words when I confer the Sacrament of Baptism. Also, I tell the parents what this means is they have a serious responsibility to insure that their children are brought up in the practice of the faith. Sure, it's very important that a baby is baptized. But then as that boy or girl grows up, it is necessary that they be brought to church and hopefully learn their prayers and start their Christian journey.

When the child reaches first grade, then he or she should be enrolled in the parish school here at Saint Charles or if they are attending public school, they can attend what used to be called "C.C.D." But what is more commonly known today as Religious Education.

Saint Charles School, led by Mr. J.C. Kiernan, the principal and his staff of very hard working teachers really do a great job in this regard. Children learn about their Catholic faith in every grade. There is a saint and value that is highlighted each month and there are school Masses and confessions that are heard on a regular basis. It is a very Catholic school and that's a good thing!

Ms. Kerry Quinn is the Director of Religious Ed in the parish and she also does an excellent job in coordinating a program of almost 500 children every Monday and Wednesday afternoons. Many of the teachers in the C.C.D. program have been here for years and are very devoted to the children whom they teach every week from 3:45 - 5:15 PM. As in the school, there are Masses, confessions and prayer services provided as well.

Although for public school children, Religious Ed classes conclude with the conferring of Confirmation in May, I always stress that Confirmation is not graduation from the Church! In fact, the journey of faith is really just beginning. The aim of religious training is not only "book knowledge" about Jesus and the faith-rather it should also be about coming to know Christ and to follow his example of goodness and charity.

Many years ago, Saint Pius X wrote: "How many and how grave are the consequences of ignorance in religious matters. And on the other hand, how necessary and how beneficial is religious instruction. It's vain to expect a Christian to fulfill his duties if he doesn't even know them." How true! Let's all pray for our young people here at Saint Charles Parish at the start of a new school year. May Jesus the Divine Teacher bless them always in the ways of faith.

*Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome*