

**Ongoing Vision for Faith Formation**  
**September 26, 2024**

Dear Families of Saint Joan of Arc Parish,

Getting lost can be especially tragic when it is the case that a child has gone missing or disappeared. Even worse when it happens to be that a crowd is gathered around. Mary and Joseph, having left the temple in Jerusalem three days prior, go looking for Jesus, all of twelve years old, in the caravan heading north. There is no sign of Him anywhere. All the way back in Jerusalem, they find Him sitting in the temple with the elders who are enthralled with His teaching. His parents call to Him, one can only assume with all sorts of emotion welling up, and He joins them on the journey home. Of this instance, Luke writes in his Gospel, “And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.” (Luke 2:51-52)

The Son of God was obedient to family life. That is an extraordinary part of Jesus’ life that perhaps we overlook too often. For 30 years, He lived His hidden life in Nazareth with Mary and Joseph. That characterizes the life of the family – hidden from the world in some ways, but always seen in the eyes of God. Families are the source of life in this world. Pope Francis writes:

“The family is experiencing a profound cultural crisis, as are all communities and social bonds. In the case of the family, the weakening of these bonds is particularly serious because the family is the fundamental cell of society, where we learn to live with one another despite our differences and to belong to one another; it is also the place where parents pass on the faith to their children.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 66)

At the end of that paragraph, the Holy Father addresses a very important truth that the Church has always sought to emphasize, especially in recent decades. Namely, that parents are the first and best teachers for their children. This is especially true about the life of faith, because faith is first passed on by parents, and parents have the most time with their children to help them develop and grow.

The ongoing vision for faith formation at Saint Joan of Arc Parish is this: to empower parents in their role as teachers of the faith to their children so that it can be lived at home, in the Church and in every facet of family life. That is why we are asking that parents be involved with their children’s faith formation on a more regular basis. The goal of this change is to give families the tools they need to live the faith at home, as well as to emphasize the best formation of all, the Mass. Our desire is for families to meet each other in more contexts in the life of the church, too, especially in events for families centered around faith, recreation, and service.

This vision is ongoing, and it will take time to grow. Nonetheless, I am grateful to so many who desire to give of their time and talent for just that purpose. Families living the life of faith and inviting others to do the same is undoubtedly a path that will help us prosper together and love God and one another well.

Sincerely,

Fr. Matt Norwood