

## Time & Space For Faith

It is an inescapable fact that we are creatures of time: There is the objective measurement of time indicated by the clocks and calendars on our walls, and then there is the subjective experience of time by which we wonder how summer could have passed us by so quickly, (if you love this season).

This fact has dramatic implications for faith. With a seeming universal propensity to fill every waking moment on our schedules with tasks and activities demanded of us by the culture, we have very little time left for strengthening our faith.

Of course, Sunday Mass is central to our faith because it is simultaneously the worship of God through Jesus Christ and the reception of his divine grace in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. But more is needed than can occur at the celebration of Mass. The practice of daily prayer and contemplation requires some of our time. Acts of mercy and charity are also to be allotted some place on our schedule.

The parish community plays a role in enabling some accountability to this task of ongoing faith formation and spiritual development. By offering prayer opportunities such as Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Bible Studies, among other offerings, a **“when”** and a **“where”** are provided to you precisely for this kind of growth in relationship with the Lord Jesus. This is a major part of why we exist.

An analogy to this provision of a **“when”** and a **“where”** for spiritual and faith development can be found in the rationale for health clubs with respect to physical exercise. One could probably exercise at home and for a lot less money, but the monetary commitment and the solidarity with other club members trying to get fit is a motivation and a mode of accountability for keeping physically fit.

The backdrop for this rather bland reflection is a series of conversations I am having with various parish groups concerning how to entice other parishioners out of their homes and into small-group experiences of faith and spirituality. We have, for example, two faith-sharing groups who meet during the week in the name of encountering

Christ in one another, developing their commitment to discipleship and, eventually, finding the wherewithal to evangelize other people in their circles of influence. You have been welcomed to join these groups, (New Beginnings and Sojourners), and you will be welcomed again!

The Adult Faith Formation committee continues to offer opportunities throughout the year for ongoing faith formation around spiritual programs, bible studies, thematic programs and other offerings. These opportunities are not only focused on the personal development of individuals who are willing to participate, they are for the betterment of the whole of our parish community. The more we can provide opportunities which inspire and inform, and the more participants who find an increased conviction in faith, the more vital a community we become. **The message is “We need you!”**

I am suggesting a change in consciousness around parish programming: The prayer opportunities, study programs, informational nights and other things are not intended, primarily, as services-we-provide as much as they are a summons to everyone in the pews:

***“Put on the armor of God! . . . Stand fast with your loins girded in truth, clothed with righteousness as a breastplate, and your feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace. In all circumstances hold faith as a shield, to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,”*** (Ephesians 6:13-17)



With respect the Devil and all that is evil it is, indeed, a call to arms. But, with respect to the Church and all who have drifted into secularism or other errors, it is a rescue mission for which we all need to be trained and out-fitted. Please respond to the calls and invitations this coming pastoral year!