



GROWING IN FAITH: MASS & CLASS

Dear Parents,

Raising a child is one of life's greatest blessings—and one of its greatest responsibilities. Every day, parents make countless sacrifices for their children: providing for their education, encouraging them in sports and activities, and helping them grow into kind, compassionate, and responsible adults. We all hope our children will experience joy, peace, love, good health, and strong values.

Yet among all the gifts we hope to give our children, there is one that lasts forever: **a living relationship with Jesus Christ.** It is the greatest gift we can ever give them, because it leads them not only to a full and meaningful life on earth, but to eternal life with God.

As Catholic parents, you are the first and most important teachers of your child's faith. We recognize that this responsibility can sometimes feel overwhelming. Many parents feel they don't know enough about the faith, have had difficult experiences with the Church, or simply struggle to find time amid the demands of daily life. If that describes you, please know that you are not alone.

God is not asking you to be perfect. He simply invites you to walk with Him—and to invite your children to walk with Him as well.

Research consistently shows that families who pray together and actively practice their faith enjoy stronger marriages, closer family relationships, and children who are better equipped to resist negative influences and make healthy, moral decisions. More importantly, a life of faith opens our hearts to God's grace and fills us with the hope and promise of eternal life.

Faith Formation classes and Catholic School provide an important foundation for teaching our children about the faith. But no classroom can replace what happens at Sunday Mass and within the home. Children learn the Catholic faith most deeply when they see their parents pray, worship, forgive, serve, and place God at the center of family life.

Simply put:

**Class teaches the faith.
Mass forms us in the faith.**

The Eucharist is the heart of our Catholic life. At every Mass we encounter the living Jesus Christ, who speaks to us through His Word and nourishes us with His Body and Blood. For this reason, children enrolled in our Faith Formation program or Catholic School are expected to make Sunday Mass a regular priority.

Throughout the year, we ask each family to participate in at least **twelve parish weekend Masses.** Two of these Masses will be designated for your child's grade level, while the remaining Masses may be attended at any weekend liturgy. Your child's participation will be recorded using a Mass card placed in the collection basket.

This is not simply another requirement to complete. Rather, it reflects what the Church has always taught: participation in Sunday Mass is a sacred obligation for every Catholic, unless illness, the care of someone who is sick, or another serious reason prevents attendance.

Parents preparing their children to receive the Sacraments should understand that regular participation in Sunday Mass is an essential part of that preparation. If your family has been away from regular Sunday Mass, we warmly encourage you to begin that journey now. Should a family choose not to participate regularly in the Sunday Eucharist, we may need to postpone the celebration of a child's sacrament until this essential commitment to the practice of the faith has been established.

When families worship together, children learn that faith is not simply something we study—it is something we live. They discover that God is present in both the ordinary and extraordinary moments of life. They experience the beauty of prayer, the grace of the sacraments, and the love and support of the parish community.

As we begin this new year, I invite you not simply to bring your child to class, but to come to Mass together as a family. **Learn together. Worship together. Grow together in faith.** Together, let us help our children discover the greatest gift they will ever receive: the love of Jesus Christ—a love that will guide them throughout this life and lead them to eternal life.

May God bless you and all those you love.

Fr. Adrian McHugh *Pastor*
St. Philip Neri, Northport
Our Lady Queen of Martyrs,
Centerport



HARBORING FAITH
CATHOLICS OF CENTERPORT
AND NORTHPORT