To the parents of St. John the Baptist Parish,

In the beginning of the Gospel of John, John the Baptist was simply described as a witness to the Love, Truth, and Salvation of Christ: “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light.” - John 1:7

Passing on the faith to our children is the paramount project of this parish on this campus. It is a project that I have spent much time in prayer about. How do we engage our kids? How do we get them to take their faith seriously and not brush it off as if it is simply a fairytale? Recent Pew research has shown that our children are losing their faith in about the seventh grade. Something has to be done differently. The old method of simply handing out a workbook has to change to something new, we need to become witnesses to our faith in a simple and profound way.

I am making a commitment to the families of this community. This fall I plan on personally teaching all of the children in our Sacramental Preparation program, this includes the first and second year preparation for both our first communicants and confirmandi. Under normal circumstances, these grades include our 1st, 2nd, 7th, and 8th graders. The program will consist of personal catechesis that is age appropriate from the Pastor himself on Sunday, our most Holy Day. The program will also consist of smaller group sessions where the younger kids can have craft activities and our older kids can engage the faith in a way that is more relevant to them. These small group sessions will still need volunteer catechists, so if you are interested please contact Mrs. Nancy Lefort. Since I will be personally catechizing our Sacramental Prep students, the parish will no longer be accepting the curriculum from the schools as part of our program.

If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything it is that the parish is centered on the Eucharist. If our kids see that the Eucharist on Sundays is not a priority to the parents, the Eucharist will not be a priority for the kids. Parents, you need to be witnesses to the faith! Sunday mass is essential to the formation of the child and the family. Christ needs to come first! An authentic Catholic spirituality requires giving sacred space and sacred time to God. The Pastor’s catechesis will take place on Sunday between the 0830 am Mass and the 1100 am mass, and it will be in the church itself. Our children need to grow into the habit of coming to Mass and learning about the life giving message of Jesus Christ. Mass is an essential requirement to the spiritual growth of the family and child. Our children will continue to be provided Mass journals to help them engage in any questions they have about the Mass or about the faith.

Our third through sixth graders are not forgotten! There will be engaging retreats offered for them throughout the year. If you are reading this and you feel called to serve children, please consider offering your time as a volunteer in our new program. Our children and our faith are worth it.

Hopefully, our new program, which will begin next fall, will inspire our children to make the same testimony of our Patron Saint that our community makes at every mass. “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!”

We are all called to be witnesses to the resurrection. Alleluia!

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Tilley