

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We are fast coming to the end of the Easter season. This weekend we celebrate the Ascension of the Lord. Next weekend, Mother's Day will also be the Solemnity of Pentecost. We will then once again return to Ordinary Time.

Last year we began a perpetual novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus at our daily Masses each Friday. On Tuesday, May 6, we will begin a perpetual novena to our Mother of Perpetual Help at our daily Masses each Tuesday, thus giving us all an opportunity as a worshipping community to honor the Blessed Virgin Mary.

When I preached at the First Holy Communion Mass on Saturday, April 13, I reminded the parents that it would be their responsibility to make sure that their children continue to live out their faith during the years that will follow First Communion. First Communion may be a once-in-a-lifetime event, but Catholics are called to make the Eucharist a once-a-week event. It is true that I have heard some parents say that it is their child who is the reason why they come to church on Sunday. In such a case, the young person is extraordinarily admirable, serving as an example to his or her parents.

Such an approach is not what we normally expect, however. We expect that the parents, clear about their own call and need to practice the faith, are examples to their children of Catholics who desire to worship the Lord together with their sisters and brothers in their parish community.

Sometimes Catholics say that they wonder why the level of religious practice is so low in our society. Perhaps the first place to look for a reason giving rise to such a situation is the mirror. People who themselves worship faithfully can be a real sign to others that we must all work together to sustain our faith.

Even our private, personal prayer is directed toward formation of a Catholic who understands that he or she is part of a community. We do not go to God alone. We make the pilgrimage with our sisters and brothers. We impart that knowledge and experience to the young by joining with them to worship God each Sunday.

Some may see First Communion and other sacraments simply as so-called rites of passage. Actually we participate in one primary passage as Christians: the passage from this life to God our Father. All other rites, including our fidelity to the Eucharist and the other sacraments, are meant to prepare us for this greatest of all passages.

In our Lord,
Donald A. Hawkins, S.J.
Pastor