

From the desk of Fr. Tim

We Are Not Water

As we begin a new school year, there are some issues that we need to consider. These seem to surface every year, but they are made more of a concern by our size and the pressures of growth.

The one that has a far reaching impact concerns our attitude about the parish. Our culture is rife with an institutional and sometimes contentious approach to life. We might be tempted to always find a way to get a cheaper price, a lower requirement, a shorter time, a lesser demand.

A friend of mine used to embarrass me to the point that I would not go to lunch with him anymore. He would negotiate the price of lunch and even the tip. He rarely succeeded but there was something about trying that motivated him.

If we have the attitude that we are looking for the absolute lowest common denominator as members of the parish, the truth is that there is much that we can do and get away with. The offering basket can pass us by and no one will ever challenge us. We can wait just a little longer and all the places needed for catechists will be filled. The call for volunteers, special collections, or a special classes of instruction can all be ignored. We can seek the lowest level of involvement and get away with it.

Of course, God sees. And unless we have the most underdeveloped conscience in the world, so does the guy in the mirror. There will come a day of reckoning, and our attitude will go on trial. My friend might be able to negotiate his way out of eternal damnation, but the whole community of heaven will be a witness to his life. Everyone will know.

There are a few areas in parish life when seeking the lowest level simply will not do. It has to do with our children. Of all the things that our children need to see in us, in order to learn the right way to live, more than anything they need to see our commitment. They need to be self-motivated and disciplined.

There are no substitutes in life for the focus necessary to succeed. To have values in life means first of all that we are going to use those values for good, to accomplish an improvement in our life and for our life to be a benefit for others. Our children will have vast numbers of helpful friends and their success will be guaranteed if they are helpful and cooperative.

All the good that we desire for our children is completely overshadowed by the relationship we share with God and his church. We may imagine that the activities in school or sports will bring them success in life. If we have placed their participation in the parish in competition with sports and anything else, we have insured for them only a life of confusion and doubt. What kind of life have we secured for them if we have placed their relationship with and obedience to God as second or third in importance?

In striving for excellence, doing the very best job we can, we have created the very best religious education program that we can. When we consider program plans, we have never said that we will do something just to get by. We have never sought the lowest level of our performance as a parish community. We have taken seriously the mandate to teach the faith to our children.

This is, however, a joint effort. We are partners with our parents in this task. Our commitment to our children cannot flag. Remember as well that while our staff members are professionals, the effort they have committed to their work far exceeds normal job expectations. Many of them work 60 and 70 hours a week. They do so, not to insure their employment but because of the nature of their work. They are absolutely dedicated to our children and to passing on to them the most essential ingredient of life, the love of God.