

Pastor's Thoughts

The Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

“Remain Faithful”

The Work of Intergenerational Faith Formation

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ & Friends of St. John Vianney:

“Beloved: Remain faithful to what you have learned and believed, because you know from whom you learned it, and that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are capable of giving you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” – 2 Timothy 3:14

These words of St. Paul which open our Second Reading at Mass this weekend (2 Timothy 3:14-4:2) speak directly to the purpose of intergenerational faith formation. Sharing and learning about our faith together as a parish family what we believe and why... strengthens the gift of faith in our lives and helps us to remain faithful to Jesus and to the Church (each other). Faith formation is a lifelong responsibility and a lifelong project. A few weeks back in my *Pastor's Thoughts* letter from the 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Sept. 18th) I wrote about the importance of lifelong learning and the work of intergenerational faith formation. I encourage you to go back and re-read that letter, entitled: *Are You Catholic?* In this week's *Pastor's Thoughts* I do a 'deep-dive' into Intergenerational Faith Formation and *Why* IFF is important for our individual sanctification, and the sanctification of our entire parish family. I also give a 30k view of IFF in our parish this year. Here we go....

The General Directory of Catechesis (GDC) #254 states that “The Christian community is the origin, locus, and goal of catechesis. Proclamation of the Gospel always begins with the Christian community and invites (people) to conversion and the following of Christ. It is the same whole community that welcomes those who wish to know the Lord better and permeate themselves with a new life. Catechesis, that is teaching and learning about our faith in Jesus is the work of the entire parish family.” The work and a commitment of every Catholic Christian is sanctification. You've heard me describe this before as “Project Sainthood”. We all have a responsibility and a part in one another's faith formation and our own. Learning about what we believe and why helps us to know and love Jesus more and more and to know and love each other. Faith formation helps us to know how we belong, and that we belong to Jesus and to each other...belonging leads to believing. As I mentioned in my *Pastor's Thoughts* letter from the 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, we are and will be taking more steps this year to embrace this lifelong model of learning known as Intergenerational Faith Formation”.

Benefits of Intergenerational Faith Formation

Some years back in 2006 & 2013, research studies were conducted (the “Generations of Faith Project”) in over 1000 parishes across the country doing Intergenerational Faith Formation. These studies underscored the many positive benefits of IFF:

Benefit #1: IFF Promotes Our Catholic Identity

- IFF roots us in the Sacred Liturgy of the Mass and draws us into a deeper encounter with the Word of God proclaimed in the Mass Readings. The Mass and the sacraments become more meaningful touchpoints of faith in our lives. The liturgical year takes on new significance as well as God's Word, connecting our lives with living the liturgy.
- IFF engages us to learn about the truths of our faith together as a parish family and in our respective age groups. The beauty of this is that we can all learn about a particular topic simultaneously.
- IFF helps us to learn and grow in our faith as a parish family just as we do so in our families at home.
- We become more mission minded and focused on acts of charity and service to others.
- We grow our prayer life together and learn about develop our relationship with God together.
- We can learn together about social justice issues and the richness of the Church's social teaching.
- We make connections with the rich traditions, teachings and customs of our Faith that can engage us more fully together in the liturgy and life of our parish family. Both young and old, we learn from each other when learn intergenerationally and in our various age groups.

Benefit #2: IFF Renews and Builds Our Relationships with Each Other

- IFF strengthens our relationships and friendships with each other and helps us to move beyond the comfort zone of our familiar friends to get to know and build new friendships with others of all ages.
- IFF strengthens our sense of belonging to Christ and belonging to SJV...once again...*Belonging leads to believing!*

- Promotes a climate where generational differences are transcended rather than reinforced, and intergenerational relationships are experienced. This is very enriching and rewarding.
- Fosters a climate of valuing, nurturing, and sharing the gifts of every person from young to old.
- Creates an environment of welcoming, warmth, trust, acceptance and openness to one another's faith experience and faith sharing. We learn about growing in our faith from each other.

Benefit #3: IFF Fosters Learning and Growth Together in Faith

- IFF provides "up close and personal" faith experiences for all of us as children, teens, young adults, midlife adults, and older adults come together to engage in sharing faith, teaching, learning, serving, celebrating, and praying for and with one another.
- Has a positive effect on all generations by creating intentional opportunities for young and old to meet together, share faith experiences, create something together, or merely to talk with each other.
- IFF supports families by surrounding them with a community of faith, engaging the whole family in caring, celebrating, learning, praying, and serving together; and providing parents with opportunities to learn from others practicing their faith and raising faithful children.
- Equips us to live our faith daily and engages us in service to others.

Benefit #4: IFF Empowers Us to Share Our Faith and Put Our Baptism into Action

- IFF is a good work that we can all engage in doing. It involves and really requires each of us to participate in the work of faith formation. We all have been gifted with the precious treasure of faith that is meant to be shared, cherished, and witnessed both in the family and beyond the family; both at SJV and in the broader community. IFF strengthens our confidence to put into practice what we profess to believe beyond the walls and doors of our church.

IFF at St. John Vianney This Year

Unwrapping the gift of Intergenerational Faith Formation, this year we are going to focus on the Creed, or apologetics...learning about what we believe and why. The First Sunday of the month will be our IFF Sunday where we will meet for sacramental preparation or faith formation in our various age groups. Here's what a typical IFF Sunday will look like:

10:45-11:45am: After Mass, grab a snack in the Social Hall (donut, fruit, drink, etc.). We'll begin in the Social Hall to pray a brief gathering prayer. Then everyone will go to meet in their different age groups in different locations. Adults, youth and elementary children will meet in the Social Hall, First Sacraments children will meet in the Atrium apartment, and Confirmation candidates, parents and sponsors will meet in the church. Our elementary children will be studying Bible Stories, and the rest of us will be working with an online apologetics video series on Formed.org called *Symbolon*. The beauty of utilizing the *Symbolon* series is that we can watch the *Symbolon* episodes and do the work that accompanies each episode on our own time. Our monthly IFF meetings will be spent sharing our answers to the questions of an online Study Guides that accompany each *Symbolon* episode.

The Second Sunday of the month will be "Question of the Week" Sunday with a discussion question based on Sunday's Mass readings at each table in the Social Hall. If you wish to reflect on this question during the Coffee Hour, the question will be available for you to share about and discuss! Additionally, if there is interest, I'd like to offer an apologetics book study for adults on the Third Sunday of the month.

Other IFF Opportunities Throughout the Year: We'll be planning Communal Penance Services in Advent and Lent this year, a Parish Mission (Retreat) to begin the holy season of Lent, and then a Bible Study in the Easter season. The penance services, Parish Mission, book study and bible study are new faith formation offerings that we haven't done in years past.

Next Sunday (Oct. 23), I will be holding an Information Meeting at 10:45am to talk more about IFF this year, the *Symbolon* series, the apologetics book study, and to gather your thoughts and ideas for faith formation offerings you are interested in doing. I am very excited and looking forward to the launch of IFF year. **Mark your calendar for Sunday November 6th!** – That's when this all begins. I believe IFF will bring our parish family and your individual family God's rich and abundant blessings. Have a wonderful week!

May God be with you. His joy. His peace. His love.

Fr. David

Positivity, Relator, Futuristic, Developer, Empathy
Personal Religious Faith Demands Engagement!