

The Pastor's Column - September 14th, 2023



“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Matthew 29:19

Jesus makes it crystal clear. Passing on the faith to the next generation is one of our principal responsibilities. There's no “let the kids decide” in Jesus' instruction to the disciples, nor to us. That's an important thing to remember as we celebrate our religious education efforts here at St. Paul's. It involves all of us!

Once upon a time in Catholic America, seemingly everyone went to Catholic School. There are countless photos of classrooms teeming with kids and Sister in full habit presiding. Some share idyllic stories of the May Crowning of Mary or playing hoops in the school yard with Father. Others remember the use of the ruler that kept them in line.

St. Paul's had a school just like that once... except for the ruler! Sadly, in the early 1960s, the development of Lincoln Center by Robert Moses dramatically changed the face of our neighborhood displacing countless parishioners. The school

struggled with diminished enrollment and eventually closed in the 1970s. The giant apartment building behind the Church sits on the old footprint of the school. The convent on 60th street, once home to the sisters who educated our youth, is now the home to Jesuits who work at America Magazine and teach at Fordham University. After the school closed, some attended Catholic Schools in neighboring parishes. Many attended our Sunday School program.

As a new Sunday School Year begins and as a new group of Adult Inquirers begin the path towards full initiation in the Church, we joyfully carry on the tradition of all those who came before us to share the Catholic faith with children, youth, and adults. Our religious ed programs are enjoying a robust enrollment this year. Our students and inquirers will be instructed by a faithful and talented group of teachers, sponsors, aids, and volunteers. I am grateful for Hernan Sanchez who has returned this year as our interim Director of Religious Education and for Dave de la Fuente who leads our Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) team. We are blessed by this amazing team.

As we commission our catechists in their important work, we are reminded that we share their ministry. We know that our faith is caught as much as it is taught. Our example in all that we say and do matters, especially to those coming into the Church as an adult or to a child looking at us for an example of unselfish love. It is by being with the Body of Christ, the Church, fully alive, that they will really understand the nature of God who is loving, caring, nurturing, accepting, forgiving, and so forth. May we all be teachers of God's love, seeking to transform our neighborhood and our world in His image.

God Bless,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. Eric".

Rev. Fr. Eric Andrews, CSP
Pastor, Church of St. Paul the Apostle (NYC)