



Diocese of Joliet

Religious Education Office

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Dear Parents,

Did you know that Catholics have two different *New Year's* to celebrate? That's right! Give yourself a gold star for knowing that the *Liturgical* (Church) Year begins on the first Sunday of Advent. So, as Thanksgiving concludes and Advent begins, feel free to start wishing people a happy New Year. Of course, you'll then need to explain.

I mention this to highlight the opportunity that lies at the end of this month, on Sunday, November 30th. Just as the New Year on the calendar is seen as a time to reprioritize and to make a fresh start in our lives, our New Year on the Catholic-Christian calendar can be a great time for positive changes and a new beginning in our faith lives.

There are many ways we can put Jesus Christ first and deepen our faith practice. We can look for good resources to learn more about Jesus and Catholic faith. We can make time for various forms of prayer in our day. We can commit to being more involved with our children in their growth in faith. We can even take seriously our role as baptized members of the Body of Christ, each called to evangelize, to share by our example and in our words, the Good News of Jesus. And there is another thing, something that is meant to underpin our Catholic lifestyle.

With Advent approaching, I want to offer a heartfelt invitation (really, it is Christ's invitation) to you to make a commitment to attend Sunday Mass in the weeks leading up to Christmas. Our celebration of Sunday Eucharist is the fulfilling of Jesus' command to "*do this in remembrance of me*". It is the centerpiece of our week, the celebration of God's immense love shown to us in Jesus. Mass is where we gather to be nourished in Word, in Sacrament and in community. It is the core action of us as Catholic people, from which we go forth having been fed by Christ to be more Christ-like in the week ahead. What a gift is our Eucharist!

I am so grateful to you for being parents who have your children attending a Catholic school in our diocese. You know the beauty of our faith and wish your children to live in the light of our Catholic faith. Their education in faith, however, makes sense most fully only when it is lived, both in the practice of prayer and worship, and then out there in the world where we are called to make a difference because of our Baptism.

At times such as this, with tremendous stresses in our lives and upheavals in our world, isn't it the right time to make greater room for Christ at the center of our lives? So, how about it? How about making a Catholic New Year's resolution as a family? *Sunday Mass as the centerpiece of each weekend in Advent, a time to be together in faith with your parish community.* Perhaps for those of you who don't regularly make it to Sunday Mass, traveling the Advent road to Christmas with your parish will help lead your family to a greater experience of Jesus as our Light in darkness throughout the New Year and every new day.

In the love of Jesus, who comes to feed us,

Thomas S. Quinlan
Diocesan Director