

Dear Parents,

May 12, 2026

We hope that this letter finds you well at the completion of the Catechetical Year and as we move towards the summer. We would like to inform you of a change to the Religious Education programs in our parishes of St. Anthony of Padua and St. Francis of Assisi regarding Mass attendance. In consultation with Father Alessandro da Luz, Religious Education Director at Saint Anthony of Padua Parish and Anita Modelewski, Religious Education Coordinator at Saint Francis of Assisi Parish, and my brother priests, we are implementing this change.

As Roman Catholics, we believe that the celebration of the Holy Eucharist is the source and summit of our lives. It is the most important thing we do. Holy Mass is the worship of our God, and as Catholics, we are obligated by the Third Commandment to attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation. We don't pray alone but with the liturgical assembly in our parish community. Because the Mass is so central to our religion, weekly attendance is a central aspect of your children's Religious Education. As parents, we desire to support you in the commitment you made at your child's baptism to raise them in the faith, "so that, keeping God's commandments, they may love the Lord and their neighbor as Christ as taught us."

Weekly Sunday Mass attendance has always been a required expectation of our Religious Education programs. Until now, we have only asked you to check in several times throughout the year as part of our Grade Level Masses. Please note that Sunday Mass attendance is above all a requirement placed upon us by God in the Third Commandment: "Keep Holy the Lord's Day." To go to weekly religion class but not to Sunday Mass sends mixed messages to our children.

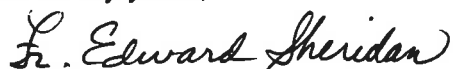
Because of the importance of attending Mass each week, many parishes in our diocese have begun tracking the attendance of their families at the Sunday Mass. Starting in the fall, October 3rd and 4th, all Religious Education students will be required to register their Mass attendance each week. We will monitor this by asking you to scan the QR code posted at the doors of the church. Your family can attend any Mass you wish on Sunday or Saturday evening at our parishes of St. Anthony of Padua and St. Francis. You may still choose to attend Mass elsewhere, and email us a bulletin from the church where you attended Mass. Recorded Mass attendance levels below 75% may delay your child's reception of the sacraments or advancement to the next level. A complete explanation of the policy is included with this letter, which you will be asked to acknowledge when you register or re-enroll your child(ren).

This is an excellent opportunity to hit the reset button on your faith life if you are not currently attending Mass weekly. Remember, we are obligated by God to attend Mass every Sunday in person, with the exception of illness. Watching Mass on TV or live stream without a serious reason (illness) is not a replacement for attending and participating in person, even when travelling. Masses can be found throughout the world by visiting www.masstimes.org or downloading the Mass Times app.

This new policy is meant to assist you and your child not only in attending Mass each week but also to help you and your child to speak about your faith in a practical way. We encourage you to speak about the Sunday Mass readings and homily as you drive home or sit for Sunday lunch or dinner as a family. These conversations can be a joyful extension of your family's experience at Mass and sharing your faith with each other.

We sincerely hope this endeavor will help us grow in faith and love for God and the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and live it out each day.

Sincerely yours,



Fr. Edward Sheridan, Pastor

cc: Fr. Alessandro da Luz, Religious Education Director, Saint Anthony

cc: Anita Modelewski, Religious Education Coordinator, Saint Francis

Parishes of St. Anthony of Padua and St. Francis of Assisi
Mass Attendance Policy

As Catholics, we are obligated to attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation. To support this commitment within our Religious Education program, we maintain the following attendance standards for all families.

The Program Requirement

Families are required to attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation year-round.

- The Sunday Mass obligation may be fulfilled with Mass as early as 4:00pm on Saturday through Sunday night.
- In months with 4 Sundays, Mass attendance must be registered at least 3 Sundays a month.
- In months with 5 Sundays, Mass attendance must be registered at least 4 Sundays month.
- Mass attendance is tracked per family to ensure we are growing together in faith.

How to Register Your Attendance

Option A: Attending Mass in our parishes

When your children are attending Mass with you, scan the QR code at the doors of the church (St. Anthony of Padua or St. Francis of Assisi).

Option B: Attending Mass elsewhere

If your family attends Mass outside of St. Anthony’s or St. Francis, you are responsible for updating your records as soon as possible by emailing us a **photo of the Mass bulletin** with your children’s names, the Mass time, and the name of the priest who celebrated Mass. Please be prompt in sending us the bulletins. Bulletins older than 3 weeks will not be accepted.

Clear Communication

If due to some serious extenuating circumstance, such as illness or death in the family, you will miss more than one Mass in a month, please contact us by email.

Failure to Complete the Requirement

If your family does not maintain 75% registered Mass attendance, the grade level may need to be repeated and/or reception of the sacraments may be delayed.

Acceptance of the Policy

I have read the above policy regarding Mass attendance. As a family, we pledge to fulfill the obligation given to us by God in the Third Commandment to “Keep holy the Lord’s Day” by attending Mass each Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation.

I understand that if we do not meet the requirements of this policy, that my child(ren) may have to repeat a grade level or have reception of the sacraments delayed.

Parent Name: _____

Child(ren)’s Name(s): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Additional Information

Mass Attendance

Mass attendance is at the center of everything we do as Catholics and is the most important component of our Religious Education program. It is critical that we go to Mass every Sunday to be nourished by the Word of God and the Holy Eucharist. The Mass is where we encounter Christ in a profound way. This weekly encounter strengthens our faith, provides spiritual sustenance, and deepens our relationship with God.

Recent data shows that less than 20% of Catholics attend Mass each weekend. Less than 10% of Catholics in their 40s attend Mass each weekend. This is the age of many of the parents of children in Religious Education programs.

Accountability for Mass attendance has always been a part of our Religious Education program. Going forward, we have a way to effectively track attendance when you go to Mass. Rather than filling out weekly Mass reflections or bringing in bulletins, the QR code will simplify tracking Mass attendance.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Doesn't this system seem a little punitive or like you are monitoring us like "big brother?"

The purpose of using the QR code system is not meant to be punitive at all. **We are all obligated as Catholics to attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation.** The Third Commandment is to "Keep holy the Lord's Day," calling us to dedicate this day to God (Exodus 20:8, Deuteronomy 5:12). This obligation is also affirmed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (2180), which states, "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass."

We are not trying to monitor families like "big brother." This system is simply the most efficient way for us as a parish staff to take attendance and allow for families to go to any Mass on the weekend that best suits their schedule, while still fulfilling their obligation.

2. The weekends are really busy for us as a family. Can we go to Mass during the week to make up for missing Sunday Mass?

While attending Mass during the week is a wonderful spiritual practice, it does not fulfill the Sunday obligation. The Church teaches that the Sunday obligation may be satisfied beginning at 4:00pm the evening before, ending with Midnight the day of (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2180; Code of Canon Law 1247-1248). This means that only Masses celebrated within this specific time frame, or designated holy days of obligation, fulfill the precept.

3. Taking my children to Mass each Sunday is a responsibility of mine as a parent, and it is my choice to take them each weekend or not. Do you really have a right to tell us we must go each weekend?

Yes, it is indeed a primary responsibility of parents to raise their children in the faith and bring them to Mass. As a Religious Education program and part of the Catholic Church, our role is to support you in fulfilling this vital duty and ensure that children are truly prepared to receive the sacraments. Attending Mass is the "source and summit" of our faith (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10), where Christ himself is present. Regular participation is therefore necessary for children to grow spiritually and to be properly prepared for reception of the sacraments like Holy Communion and Confirmation. We cannot, in good conscience, present children for sacraments if they are not participating in the very heart of our Catholic life. We must uphold the dignity of the sacraments and the integrity of our Religious Education.

4. My family travels frequently or has other unavoidable commitments. How will this new system accommodate occasional absences?

We understand that life can be busy, and occasional absences are sometimes unavoidable due to illness, and other extenuating circumstances. This system is designed for **accountability and support**, not punishment. We ask that families make every reasonable effort to attend Mass each Sunday.

If you will be traveling, please check www.masstimes.org or download the MassTimes app where you can find Catholic Masses all over the world. You may register your Mass attendance by emailing us a photo of the bulletin.

In the event of illness or another serious circumstance such as a death in the family, please email us to keep us informed. We appreciate open communication and trust our families to uphold their commitment to Religious Education. We are here to support you in fulfilling your Sunday obligation.

5. How can we help our children understand the importance of Mass attendance, especially with this new system, rather just seeing it as a “check the box” requirement?

That’s a very important question and the answer is at the heart of our faith. The QR code system is an administrative tool to help us track attendance. The spiritual significance of the Mass remains paramount. When you go to Mass with your children focus on the **meaning and beauty of the Mass itself**. Speak with them about the importance of receiving Jesus in the Eucharist, listening to the Word of God, and being part of our parish family. The Mass is the most joyous and powerful thing we can participate in. God comes to us in the Eucharist and we get to receive him. Explain that attending Mass is not just a rule, but a joyful opportunity to meet and praise God and to receive his grace. Consider arriving a few minutes early to prepare, or staying a few minutes after to reflect and pray in thanksgiving. Engage your children at lunch or dinner or on the car ride home talking about the Gospel reading and homily. Your example and enthusiasm are the most powerful teacher in helping your family see Mass as a vital and cherished part of our Catholic life, far beyond attendance tracking.