

Faith on Fire
The Sixth Step
Commitment to Parish Community

During the past five weeks I have written about several ways we can strengthen our faith so that it will be on fire with love and devotion for Christ, I have suggested that we must be committed (1) to personal and communal renewal, (2) to prayer and reflection, (3) to community worship, (4) to a sacramental way of life, and (5) to a liturgical piety. Today, I add a sixth step in the process of personal and parish renewal: *We must be committed to our Parish Community.*

The need to be committed to our parish community means we must be committed to the community of people with whom we worship and pray each week, even if we do not know each of them by name; for we share a common life in Christ. All of us have been baptized into Christ; all of us profess the same faith; all of us receive the same Eucharist. And so we are united to each other in Christ with a bond of unity that makes us one in Christ. Our task is to make our unity in Christ visible to the world.

According to our census, we have a rather large parish, but people have different levels of commitment to St. Mary's. At the center and core of the parish are those parishioners who are *deeply committed to St. Mary's*. They attend Mass weekly and are involved in one or more ministries. St. Mary's helps them to live their life in Christ.

There are other parishioners who are *committed to St. Mary's*. They faithfully attend Mass and do their best to live a Catholic way of life. But for whatever reason, they are not involved in parish ministry or outreach. They are faithful, but they are not as involved in the life of the parish as is the first group.

A third group might be described as *active members of St. Mary*. They attend Mass somewhat regularly, but not always. Their involvement in the parish is from time to time. They are on the way to commitment to the parish, but they are not quite there.

A fourth group consists of those who are *on the margins*. They identify themselves as members of St. Mary's, and indeed they are. But they only worship with us from time to time, Christmas and Easter, and other holidays. Catholicism is a part of their lives but it has not taken hold of their lives.

A fifth group is in *danger of falling away*. They still self-identify as Catholic, but their participation in parish life and worship is minimal. They are here when circumstances such as baptisms, communions, confirmations, marriages, and death require their presence. Otherwise they are absent.

Nothing is gained by judging others. Everything is gained by encouraging and supporting each other, especially those who are weak in faith. What is your commitment to Christ and our Parish? Is it time to move from circle to another? *Father Matera*

Our Parish Mission Will Be Held March 3—7

Save the Date!