

# CONNECTIONS

Your Resource for Building a Strong Catholic Family

## What We Believe As Catholics - Part 3



This is the third of a three-part discussion on the Nicene Creed. This third part of the Creed focuses on the Holy Spirit and the Church that the Holy Spirit guides. The Holy Spirit is often not thought about when we think about God. Especially in family life, we tend to focus on Jesus. The Holy Spirit is a very special person of the Trinity. The Creed tells us that He proceeds from, and with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, meaning that He is truly God. The Holy Spirit also 'has spoken through the prophets' over the years telling us humans what God wants from us. That is why we consider Him the guiding force of the Church.

Next, the Creed describes the Church as 'one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.' Think about these words: one, not many churches; holy,

blessed by God; catholic, universal for all people; and apostolic, having its origins in the apostles. A lot to think about, but very worthwhile. These four attributes are known as the four marks of the church.

And finally, the Creed ends with us stating our looking forward to 'the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.' Here we say that we definitely believe that life does not end with death, but continues in a different way with God after our earthly death.

All of the phrases in the Creed are wonderful thoughts for families to explore at home. We hope these brief thoughts encourage you to talk more within your families about what we believe as Catholics.

## What is a Novena?



Over the years, you may have heard of Catholics praying novenas. Or, if you've ever had a specific prayer intention, someone may have said to you, "Why don't you pray a novena?"

If you don't know what a novena is, then the suggestion might sound a little strange to you.

Simply put, a novena is a formalized prayer said over a specific amount of time. A novena could be said for many different reasons such as a devotion to a particular saint, for a liturgical celebration (such as Pentecost, for example) or

most commonly, for a specific intention like the healing of a sick person. You can offer a novena as a way to petition God for a special grace. Novenas give us a powerful vehicle to prayerfully express ourselves.

The most common period of time to pray a novena is for nine days. The word "novena" is Latin for "nine." This nine-day period of prayer can be linked to the Book of Acts. The Apostles, the Blessed Virgin Mary and some of Christ's other followers "joined in continuous prayer" (Acts 1:14) in the Upper Room for nine days after Jesus' Ascension into heaven.

The Lord commanded them "not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father." (Acts 1:4) They prayed together those nine days until the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This nine-day period in which the first believers "joined in continuous prayer" was the first "novena."

It is important to remember the novenas are not magical formulas. They are prayers – conversations with God. A simple "Catholic novena" search on the Internet can connect you with hundreds of novenas if you'd like to learn something new or add something different to your prayer life.

### Symbol Key



#### Prayer and Worship

Understanding what happens at Mass and incorporating prayer into family life.



#### Family (The Domestic Church)

Incorporating Catholic customs and traditions into family life.



#### Formation

Fills in the holes of faith knowledge that may have missed growing up and highlights what makes Catholics distinct



#### Charity and Service

Highlights charity and service opportunities for the family within St. Francis Parish and the greater community.

# Charity and Service



Recommitting ourselves to our health, family, friends, seems to be a natural part of the New Year's holiday. Recommitting ourselves to our faith should be just as important. Attending Mass weekly is a way to not only stay connected to our faith, but it keeps our St. Francis community strong. There are several ministries where you and your family can be involved in the Mass at St. Francis.

### For adults:

- Lectors
- Ushers
- Eucharistic Ministers (invitation by Fr. Ysrael)
- Music Ministry
- Altar Serving (For kids nine years and older, and have received First Holy Communion)

### For families:

- Hosting Coffee and Doughnuts

### It's wonderful to see whole families involved in the Mass- why not yours?

The bulletin and the St. Francis Parish website have information for how you can be involved.

# A Long Lost Friend



We are called to attend weekly Mass; it is an obligation of our faith. It is part of the commitment that we make as

Catholics and the primary source of connection to our faith community. We have all been told by our priests, parents, and teachers of the importance of this obligation. Our parish offers multiple Mass times to accommodate the various schedules of all parishioners. And still, despite the emphasis and accommodation, many of us fall short of our obligation to spend one hour per week sharing our faith in Christ with our brothers and sisters. Why is that? Perhaps the "obligation" aspect just isn't compelling enough to convince someone to spend part of their weekend sitting in a pew.

But what if it is more than just sitting there ~ What if it is an opportunity to deepen your relationship with the greatest Friend you will ever have?

If we just think of Mass in the context of being another obligation, then it is easily thrown into the mix of the various obligations in our lives. We are all busy with more things to do than we have time for, so eventually something has to give. Unfortunately, due to the de-emphasis of faith in our culture, weekly Mass attendance becomes an easily overlooked obligation for many of us.

Let's change our perspective on this. Think about someone close to you who has died, and imagine what you would give if you could be in

their presence just once a week for an hour. Think about one of your close friends that may have moved away, and how much you long for the opportunity to spend time with them. The fact is, you are that long lost friend to Jesus and He longs to be in your presence. Jesus has given everything that He had to be with you. He is present within you and around you, but He calls you to Communion with Him at Mass. He wants you to receive Him fully in the Eucharist, and to be supported by the faithful around you.

So, how can we honor our Friend and prioritize our time so that we can bring ourselves before Him in weekly Mass? Acknowledging that all families are busy with multiple priorities, I suggest that you sit down as a family and calendar your Mass attendance together. Ideally, find the best Mass time that fits everyone so that you can attend as a family. If there are weekends throughout the year where it's not possible to attend together, plan on who will go to which Mass. Most importantly, write it down on your calendar and commit to it. Mark the dates on your I-Calendar or your Smartphone, or write them in ink on your wall calendar. Make it a non-negotiable part of your week, an appointment you simply can't miss.

You are here today because Christ has called you. No matter what means He used, He got you here so that you could receive His presence. Now, He is calling you to make a deeper commitment. Will you accept His invitation?



### Mission Statement

The Strong Catholic Families initiative at St. Francis Parish will provide support to help families pass on the traditions of the faith and share the love of Christ.

For more information visit:  
<http://www.stfrancissherwood.org/>

(Go to: Faith Formation then Strong Catholic Families)



# Nativity Word Search

Find the list of words in the letter maze and circle them

C A N O I T A V L A S D N S H S  
 Q S H E P H E R D S R F A L L U  
 R A T S A M T S I R H C T E J S  
 N E M E S I W S H E E P I G O E  
 J G N I K M A R Y G I U V N S J  
 M O S Y I H X Q U R Q W I A E T  
 D O N K E Y R E G N A M T D P M  
 Z I L I N N K E E P E R Y O H F

- angles
- Christmas
- donkey
- innkeeper
- Jesus
- Joseph
- king
- manger
- Mary
- nativity
- salvation
- sheep
- shepherds
- star
- wisemen