

WESTPORT COACHES AND CLERGY SHARE COMMON VALUES

Dear Parents, Catechists and Aides:

On Wednesday, May 23rd, the Clergy from all Faith Groups in Westport met with our Superintendent of Schools and the Coaches, at Staples High School. The Westport Clergy Association asked the Superintendent for the Meeting, as there was a common concern among most of the Clergy that too much pressure was being placed upon our children in favor of Athletics over Religious Services and Education. It was a very useful and productive meeting as it cleared the air and helped establish our common concerns, as Coaches and Clergy: respect for Family, Religion and Athletics . . . in that order of priority.

I was very impressed with Dr. Landon and the Coaches, as well as, with their attitude, openness, their warm welcome to us, and further, very happy to hear the Coaches express their common values. Several Clergy related similar stories we have all heard, "The Coach said. 'If I miss practice or the game, I'm off the team or benched!'" We were assured, in the presence of the Superintendent, that no coach would ever issue an ultimatum in Westport and that Dr. Landon would never tolerate such a choice issued to any Westport student on any grade level.

We all agreed however, the parents set the tone and priority of what really matters in their respective families. I am very aware that in our Community of Westport, life is good, very busy, and I'm also aware from the marriage and family counseling I do, family life is stressed. That is precisely why I added the Sunday 5:00pm Mass so at each end of the weekend we have a 5:00pm Mass (Sat. and Sun.) to accommodate your busy schedules and support you as Parents, in our Sunday Mass attendance, a "commitment" requested not by me, nor our parents, or grandparents . . . but by the Lord, who on the night before he died, asked to be remembered in the breaking of the bread, on the Vigil of, or on the day (Sunday) when he was raised from the dead.

Sunday worship therefore, ought not to be negotiable for parents much less for our children. Spiritual needs are as real as physical, emotional and every other need. Our Catholic Christian traditions require our children to grow into adulthood with a well-developed, nurtured and cultivated **adult faith**. Adults, armed with an 8th grade Catholic Christianity, will only produce more "Spiritually immature Christians." who have only learned how to "earn a living" rather than learning "how to live." Knowing Jesus is radically different from know "a lot about him!" If you know a lot about Him . . . Christmas, Easter, Weddings and Funerals are enough . . . but **knowing** Jesus, then and only then . . . Sunday worship ceases to be an obligation . . . for knowing is loving and from that flows: I **want** to go to Church.

I wish then, to thank all our parents for your efforts in sharing our Catholic faith with our children. Parenting is very difficult but the **noblest vocation**. We are counter cultural. We do a tremendous amount of good not just for our Catholic Community but far beyond our "inner circle." Just to name several: Catholic Charities, Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Schools, Catholic Veterans, and Parish Social Concerns. The increase, in the numbers of children in our Parish Religious Education, over the past 13 years from **112** children in Religious Education to **637** this year, speaks clearly to me and to all, that our Parents and our Catechists do take their Faith seriously, that you hunger to "know more than a lot about Jesus," and I am very grateful to you for this. You deserve praise.

How you manage time, balance the many important family activities is amazing to me. I often preach your lives are far more sacrificial than mine, ergo; you are an inspiration to me. May your summer be filled with some rest and relaxation. Belated Mother's Day wishes to our moms and early Father's Day wishes to our dads.

To our Parents, Catechists and Aides, my esteem, praise and thanks for a Vocation well done!

Father Tom
Pastor
Assumption, Westport