

## **How does the Church define Who is a Parishioner?**

### ***Baptism and membership in the Church***

When Jesus had accomplished everything he set out to do, and was about to return to the Father, he commissioned the Disciples, saying:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28: 18-20).

Through baptism, we become members of the body of Christ, that is, the Church.

Through baptism, we are constituted as the people of God.

Through baptism, we participate in the priestly, prophetic, and royal function of Christ.

Through baptism, we are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world: to tell others the Good News of the Father’s love and mercy.

How seriously do we take our baptismal call?

### ***From baptism to Christian discipleship***

All too often today, we go through the motions of being followers of Christ. We attend Divine Liturgy on occasion. We call upon the pastor for First Holy Communion, a wedding or a funeral. We bless pussy willows, our Easter baskets, and undertake similar activities.

Perhaps influenced by the secular world around us, we have become consumers of the services provided by the parish, adopting an attitude of “What’s in it for me?” or “Go ahead, entertain me.”

Rather, through baptism, our membership in Christ’s Church calls for a commitment on the part of each of us to develop a personal relationship with Jesus, to foster our prayer life, and to use our God-given gifts of time, talent and treasure in the building up of the Christian community.

In other words, the rights we inherit as members of the Church are balanced by an equal obligation in continuing the mission of Christ entrusted to our care.

Baptism means being a disciple of Christ.

And being a disciple of Christ comes with certain expectations related to my membership in a given parish.

### *Parish membership and expectations*

What then does it mean to be a parishioner? What are the expectations?

As a result of my baptism, in practicing my Christian discipleship, I am expected as a registered member of my parish to:

- regularly attend and participate in the Sunday Divine Liturgy, together with my family;
- regularly participate in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church;
- develop and practice an ongoing personal/family prayer life;
- witness to the teachings of the Church by the manner of my living life;
- practice stewardship of my time, talent and treasure in service to the mission of the Church;
- acknowledge, as a registered member, that I am to be a participant in serving the mission of the parish rather than being only a spectator; and
- realize the necessary and ongoing importance of love, generosity, faith and family.

Christ comes into the world to tell us of the mercy and love of the Father. Through baptism, we say: “yes, Lord, I choose to follow you by becoming an active disciple and parishioner. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you and my neighbor. Bless me!”

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