

**The Reflection from Pastor Fr. John
Carlos, Holy Cross Church, Harrison, NJ,
September 19, 2021**

THE FIRST CHURCH

Today, Catechist Sunday we begin our Religious Education program for this year as we recognize and commission our catechist. I invite you to take a few moments and think back to when you were introduced to our faith in Jesus. Who stands out as the significant influence in your faith formation? I can think of two: my mother and my grandmother. Both of them spent time talking to my sister and I about Jesus, taught us our prayers, and sat with us during Mass. I was blessed with having great catechists, yet the example of my family has had the most impact on who I am as a Catholic and a priest.

I am profoundly grateful to such a great group of dedicated and talented Coordinators, Catechists, and Helpers, under the direction of Mr. Frederick Osterkorn, that bring the faith alive in our young Christians. We have labored intensely to provide a safe and Christ-centered environment where our children can learn about our beloved Catholic faith.

No matter how effective our Religious Education program may become, it is only as good as the example that is presented to our children. Teaching that happens at home is just as important as the teaching in our classrooms. As a Church, we recognize that it is within the family unit that our Catholic faith is handed down, the family is the first church. Learning is more effective when parents actively participate in their children's education. Families enrolled in our parishes' Religious Education program are strongly encouraged to assist in the faith lives of their children by taking part in one of the Sunday liturgies (masses) and actively participating in their faith formation.

I look forward to working and growing with you in our faith.

Father John Carlos