

What Do You Mean I'm not Registered?

Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan, *People of God*, March 2014

Registering in a parish is a declaration of your desire to be part of a Catholic community and to make a commitment to the life of that specific parish. Unfortunately, it is becoming a common occurrence that when someone needs to obtain a letter of good standing from their pastor, they are surprised to find out they are not registered!

When would you need a letter of good standing from your pastor?

- To become a sponsor (padrino/madrina) for any sacrament, especially if you are going to another parish in the archdiocese or outside the archdiocese
- To get on the archdiocesan speaker's list as a speaker outside your own parish
- To enter a seminary to study for priesthood
- To enter the permanent diaconate formation program
- To enter vowed religious formation
- To request an apostolic blessing
- To serve on the boards of Catholic Foundation and Catholic Cemetery Association
- To obtain school subsidy from your parish for your child who is attending a Catholic school located in another parish.

The reasons some people are not registered are many but the two most common are:

1. First, some have been attending the same Catholic church for years and they consider themselves part of the community, they place cash in the donation baskets every Sunday, they know many of the parishioners; and the parishioners and pastor know them. They just never registered!
2. Then there are those who have been confirmed and are out of high school and are now considered adults in our Catholic faith. One day, they are asked to become sponsors for baptism or confirmation or to witness the sacrament of marriage. They go to get a letter of good standing and find out they are not registered. Their parents ensured they received all their sacraments, many times at the same parish, but when they were out of high school, they failed to register themselves.

Why is it so important to register at your Catholic church? Let's compare it to attending a school – elementary, high school, technical school, or university – you have to be registered to get credit

hours. You might be able to “sit-in” in some classes at a university but without being registered you won’t be getting credit hours towards a degree. So when you need a transcript to prove you have attended a school, there will be no record for you.

Why do some people resist registering at any parish? Some people do not want to register because they do not want to receive “envelopes” for their donations. Talk to your pastor about your concern. It may be that you are not able to give financially to your parish at this time, but you might be able to donate some volunteer time instead. It may be that you don’t want your financial contributions “tracked,” but God already knows what you give. So why not wrap your financial gift in the provided envelope? Some of our newly arrived immigrant brothers and sisters do not feel comfortable providing personal information, and it is not part of their culture to do so. Again, talk to your pastor about your situation. We are obliged to provide formation and sacraments in the Catholic faith.

Is it possible to register at two parishes? Yes, but the reasons vary. I have a cousin and his wife who are registered during the summer in a parish in Alaska and during the winter in Arizona. This is how they live their life and they support both parishes year round. (However, you cannot register at several parishes just to obtain the school subsidy mentioned above. Only one parish will provide school subsidy for a student.)

Ministries at any parish are driven by the number of registered households and the makeup of those households. So if the registered households in a parish are mostly senior citizens then the parishes should be providing outreach to those parishioners. Sometimes I receive phone calls stating that there are no programs for young adults. Have the young adults registered?

I encourage you strongly, if you are not registered at your parish – do it now! Or if you know of anyone in your parish, family or workplace who is Catholic and is not officially registered at a parish – encourage them to register now.