

Sacred Heart Catholic Church
1115 South 8th Avenue East
Newton, IA 50208-1478
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April 26, 2016

Dear Member of the Sacred Heart Church family,

For several months leaders in the parish have been meeting and planning for a great future for Sacred Heart Church. With the approval of both the Pastoral Council and the Finance Council, the parish is pursuing an initiative that has been recommended by the United States Council of Catholic Bishops, by our own Bishop Amos, and by the Diocese of Davenport. This follows a significant national study on religion, teens, and families in the United States.

This past weekend at Mass, the *Strong Catholic Families—Strong Catholic Youth* initiative was introduced to the parish. This is an ongoing parish-based process to engage and strengthen parents and families in growing as a domestic church* through a close and vital partnership with the parish. Below are some results from a national study, which our Bishops think has some important points for all of us, as Catholic Christians to consider, no matter our age.

The National Study on Youth & Religion was recently completed and is the most comprehensive study on religion, teens and families ever done in the United States. Its findings are quite revealing, and warrant our attention, particularly as Catholics. Below are some key findings in this study:

- Catholics teens were positioned LAST of all Christian denominations in practicing their faith in a comprehensive manner
- Children raised in other Christian faiths have:
 - A higher integration of their faith into their personal lives.
 - A greater ability to articulate what they believe and why they believe it
 - A richer relationship to God which shapes their identity, plays an important role in making good decisions, and living a life according to their values

Those religious groups that have relied heavily on parents and family to transmit faith—and their church to “mission” it—seem to be doing better. The research is clear that without the active transmission of faith in the home, and active involvement in our communities of faith, religious practice fades away, and is replaced by other secular values, priorities and activities.

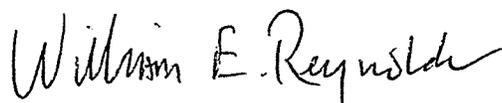
Included in this mailing is a handout with some of the key findings from the survey and dates for upcoming events. Please take a moment to fill out the included Parish Response form and return it to the parish office or the collection box in the Gathering Space. An online version of the survey is also available on the church website — <http://shcnewton.com>, or the direct link <http://tinyurl.com/shcparishsurvey>. Please also plan to attend the follow-up session on May 5th at 6:30 to discuss our next steps in partnering with one another to empower and support family faith growth.

This is a movement, a process, an intentional manner of supporting families within the parish to be strong Catholic families.... We are supporting each other and each family on the journey to our ultimate goal, the life of heaven. Recall this weekend's Opening Prayer, asking God's protective care that we "...bear much fruit and come to the joys of life eternal."

We ask your participation, prayers, and cooperation with this initiative of *Strong Catholic Families—Strong Catholic Youth*.

Thank-you for your cooperation.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William E. Reynolds". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. William E. Reynolds

*Domestic church” is a contemporary term which simply means the Catholic home where the faith is lived. It has many expressions, including new college grads in their first career employment and first adult home, Mom and Dad and kids at home, a single parent with kids, an older couple, a widow or widower, or a single adult. The Domestic Church is the home environment of a Catholic, in whatever situation in life.