

A View from the Pew

by Deacon Greg Kandra

A New Year's Resolution You Should Make

Several weeks ago, I met with a family about scheduling a baptism. They'd been attending the parish for a number of years, but weren't registered. Okay. Not a problem. Since they lived within the geographical boundaries of the parish I asked them to register after our meeting.

I then asked for some documentation from the godparents, to prove that one of them is Catholic. Generally, that means a copy of the godparent's baptism certificate—easily obtained these days with just a phone call to the church where they were baptized—or a letter from the home parish, verifying that he or she is Catholic and qualified to be a sponsor.

Well, there was a problem.

The godmother was baptized in another country and would have great difficulty trying to obtain a baptismal certificate. Okay, once again: not a problem. Brooklyn and Queens are home to people from all over the globe. We live in a truly international diocese, and we encounter these situations a lot. So I just asked if she could provide some documentation from her home parish, to verify that she is Catholic.

Well, that was the second problem.

She'd been attending Our Lady Queen of Martyrs for many years, but had never taken the time to register.

In a nutshell, what that means is, there was no record of her life as a Catholic.

I asked the family to track down the godmother's previous parish—or, as a last resort, find a friend or family member who could write a letter, vouching for the woman and verifying that she is a baptized Catholic.

All of which brings me to an important point: If you are not registered in the parish, make this your New Year's resolution: **Register**. Soon. It can make your life infinitely simpler.

What many people don't realize is that registering in a parish means more than just signing up so that you get envelopes and letters from the pastor. More important, it helps to maintain records for things

like baptisms, weddings, ordinations, annulments and funerals. It provides proof of your Catholic heritage—or, at least, that you regularly worship at a particular church and care enough to have your name in the records.

I've had to provide these kinds of records several times over the years—for my wedding, for my ordination as a deacon, and for various times that I've served as a godfather. (Most recently, my wife and I presented a letter from OLQM last fall to a parish in Virginia, when we served as godparents for our grand-nephew.)

To put this as simply as possible: Do you want to get married in a Catholic church? Register.

Do you want to have your child baptized in the parish? Register.

Do you want to serve as a godparent or sponsor for a child? Register.

Do you want to have a funeral in the parish? Register.

It is sometimes the only way the Church can keep track of her members and verify worthiness to take part in the sacraments. It's not foolproof, and it's not a 100% guarantee of a person's Catholicity—but in a pinch, sometimes, it's all we have to go on.

If you haven't registered in the parish, take a few minutes and stop by the rectory during the week to fill out the form.

Besides being able to say, "This my home, this is where I belong, this is where I have put down roots," this simple act may also spare you some headaches down the road.

The Process is simple and painless. And as New Year's resolutions go, it doesn't involve exercise or cutting out snacks. In fact, it doesn't involve giving up anything—and what you will gain may be more than you realize.

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