

TUITION ASSISTANCE INFORMATION

Saints Peter and Paul and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart have both provided tuition assistance for Catholic grade school tuition for many years. You will notice on the application, that assistance is for active parishioners of our respective parishes. This begs the question of what constitutes an active Catholic. “What is an active Catholic?” This question is difficult to answer in a very specific way because each and every person is called to live out their faith day to day through different vocations, professions, and even lifestyles. However, if we look at the minimum requirements to be able to call oneself Catholic, we can gain an understanding of what it means to be active.

The Precepts of the Catholic Church are a description of the absolute minimum actions required of Catholics regarding the Church. The Church uses these precepts to remind us that Christian life requires a commitment to prayer and active participation in the liturgy and sacraments. If we fall below this bare-minimum level, we can't rightly consider ourselves to be in full communion with the Catholic Church. Each of the five precepts of the Catholic Church are a requirement. Together with the Ten Commandments, they represent the minimum level of moral living. Intentional violation of the precepts or the Commandments is a grave matter, meaning a mortal sin. Let us take a brief look at each of the five precepts.

The Precepts of the Catholic Church

1. You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor. We must “sanctify the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord” (Sunday), as well as the principal feast days, known as Catholic holy days of obligation. This requires attending Mass, “and by resting from those works and activities which could impede such a sanctification of these days.” (CCC 2041) What does it mean to “attend” Mass? Sacrosanctum Concilium states that one must have “full, conscious, and active participation” in the liturgy. This entails both preparation for (reading the scriptures of the Mass earlier and in the week, Confession, private prayer before Mass, etc.) and engagement in (praying, singing, listening, etc.) the Mass. This does not mean that one must be a Lector, Eucharistic Minister of Holy Communion, Server, Usher, or Greeter. However, these ministries help enhance the overall experience and deepens one's life in Christ.
2. You shall confess your sins at least once a year. We must prepare for the Eucharist by means of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession). This sacrament “continues Baptism's work of conversion and forgiveness.” (CCC 2042) Note, we are required to confess sins even if mortal sin is not present.
3. You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season. This “guarantees as a minimum the reception of the Lord's Body and Blood in connection with the Paschal feasts, the origin and center of the Christian liturgy.” (CCC 2042) Note, there is a difference between attending Mass and receiving the Eucharist. The Sacrament of the Eucharist should only be received when the individual is free from mortal sin.

4. You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church. “The fourth precept ensures the times of asceticism and penance which prepare us for the liturgical feasts and help us acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart.” (CCC 2043) Children, the elderly, and pregnant or nursing women do not have to fast on normal fast days (Ash Wednesday and Good Friday). This precept presupposes a life of prayer and study of the faith in order to grow deeper in the life of Christ.

5. You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church. “The fifth precept means that the faithful are obliged to assist with the material needs of the Church, each according to his own ability.” (CCC 2043) The Lesson of the widow's mite presented in the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 12:41-44, Luke 21:1-4), teaches that even the poor have a responsibility to provide for the needs of the church, even if just a small sum. Jesus preaches on the dangers of money more than any other topic in the bible except the Kingdom of God. One's need to tithe supersedes the Church's need to receive for their own spiritual well-being.