

Diocese of Richmond

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Office of the Bishop

Dear Pastors and Principals,

In the Diocese of Richmond, much effort has been put into our plan for evangelization called *Encounter the Joy of the Gospel: Set the World Ablaze*. We are currently in the second phase of our evangelization plan which focuses on strengthening the Domestic Church – that is, the Christian family.

I am very aware of the demands of busy schedules on families – days and nights filled with school, work, practices, games, recitals and meetings. I am amazed as I travel around the Diocese how busy our schedules have become. While there is little we can do to help with such a fast-paced world, I believe it is our responsibility to encourage families to set Sunday apart as the Lord's Day. Scriptures and our Church teach us that Sunday, as much as possible, should be a day for worship, catechesis, family, and rest. As we find ourselves in this phase of our plan for evangelization which focuses on the Christian family, it seems an appropriate time to re-examine how we support families. After careful thought and in response to requests from many families, leadership in Catholic Schools, and Pastors, I am implementing a new policy which opens the door for Sundays to be more fully a day for worship, catechesis, family and rest.

Currently in our Diocese, there are many sports leagues, meetings, and rehearsals which take place on Sundays in our schools and parishes. While our young people benefit greatly from these programs, the fact that they take place on Sunday seems contrary to the nature of Sunday as the Lord's Day. **For that reason, beginning on July 1, 2016, I am asking that parishes and schools no longer sponsor or host extracurricular events on Sundays.** Sunday Worship, catechesis, and parish community life events may continue as a part of the parish's outreach in equipping the family in the ways of faith.

I have made the decision in consultation with the Diocesan School Board and the Diocesan Priests' Council. The Priests' Council, which is comprised of priests and pastors from all across our Diocese, voted unanimously to support this policy. Pastors readily recognize the need for us to do our best to make Sunday a day for families to be free from the burdens of the busy work week. I believe this decision is an important one in reclaiming Sunday for its original intention. Certainly our schools and parishes will continue to offer the beneficial extracurricular activities on days and evenings other than Sunday, and in time we will adjust to this new policy while still maintaining their important functions.

Sincerely yours in Our Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Francis X. Di Lorenzo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. Francis X. DiLorenzo
Bishop of Richmond
20 May 2016

THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF RICHMOND

POLICY REGARDING SUNDAY EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN THE
PARISHES AND SCHOOLS OF THE DIOCESE OF RICHMOND

EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2016

In the Book of Genesis, we read that God, “blessed the Seventh day and made it holy, because on it, He rested from all of the work He had done in creation” (Genesis 2:2). Further, the Catechism notes that Sunday, the day of the Resurrection, is now our day of rest and that in addition to worship on Sunday, “the Sabbath brings every day work to a halt...” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2172).

To that end, Bishop DiLorenzo, with unanimous support from the Priests’ Council, has promulgated the following policy regarding Sunday extracurricular activities:

In Diocesan and Private Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Richmond, Sunday is to be seen as a day for rest from the ordinary functions of school life. Schools should not sponsor or host extracurricular activities on Sunday. This includes school sports, sports leagues, “open gyms”, fine arts practices or performances, club meetings, study sessions, and similar activities.

In the parishes of the Diocese of Richmond, Sunday is a day ordinarily reserved for worship, most especially the celebration of Mass and Baptism, as well as catechesis and community life. Parishes are encouraged to continue to provide prayer and worship, catechesis, and events that foster and encourage parish community life on Sunday. In this effort, the parish becomes a central means of equipping and encouraging the family as the Domestic Church. Parishes should not schedule additional groups or business meetings (Scouting, Parish or Finance Council, et.al.) on Sundays.

Principals or Pastors with questions regarding this policy should contact the Vicar for Catholic Mission and Identity in the Office of Catholic Schools.