

# Indelible Marks

Growing up Catholic many years ago, I learned that certain sacraments left indelible marks on our souls. I could never figure out how that worked, but I do know for sure that growing up in church can leave indelible marks on our spirits. And if the church is loving and accepting and prayerful it can start us on the amazing journey of an ever-deepening relationship with God.

Young children love being included in their parents' activities and if parents value and participate in church life regularly, children want to be there with them. For my toddler twin grandsons Sunday church means dropping the envelope in the collection basket and getting blessed when their parents receive communion. For many of our Guatemalan children it's kneeling in adoration before the tabernacle with their parents. Burundian children like to join their parents in the choir. Coming forward for a blessing before they leave for Children's Liturgy of the Word is a way our younger children know they are an important part of the community.

Church is home to them. It feels safe and comfortable. They are accepted as they are they sense the holiness of coming together in prayer. This is not to say that they never run in church, climb up on the altar steps or get mischievous—they're children after all. When my daughter Sara was a toddler she cried every time Father Shappelle spoke. I'd take her out and she'd calm and smile. I'd go back into church and she'd be fine until he opened his mouth—wails, again. Finally he told me just to let her stay, that she'd eventually settle. She did. Today she plays the flute and is a music minister who recently got a masters in theology.

My grandson Sam in Baltimore can both bound up the aisle at the offertory to bring a gift for the nearby food pantry and long for the "bread of heaven" when he missed church. He knows that God and the people there love him—that church is a special place. He was able to

recite the consecration prayer over his apple and his "sippie" cup as a two-year-old and pointed to churches he'd serve as an adult on walks through the neighborhood. Church is a normal part of his life, though sometimes it's a struggle when many of his friends don't go to church and can play Roblox on the computer while he's there.



There're a lot of things that vie for our time and attention and churches are led and made up of human beings with all their frailties and sins. We can get angry that the institutional church sometimes doesn't live up to its calling. But we only get that upset with something that's important to us. That indelible mark, that touch of the spirit we first felt in childhood calls us

home. We are the church and with God's grace we can make St. Leo's the community God has called us to be.

We are privileged to be a diverse people reflecting the glory of the face of God. The hardships our refugees and immigrants have faced have made them treasure and live out the faith that has seen them through the hard times. This fire of the Spirit comes alive through this faith and enlivens our worship. It is Pentecost every Sunday at St. Leo's and the indelible mark of the Spirit is on our community. We are truly blessed!

—Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate