

Letter From Fr. Matthew (Continued)

What are our parental responsibilities in the eyes of the Church? Parents are responsible for the spiritual development of their children. This includes the following:

- ◆ Ensuring their children receive the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Chrismation as entrance into the Body of Christ.
- ◆ Regular and punctual attendance at the Divine Liturgy and other services.
 - ◇ And the reason we should come to the Divine Liturgy with our children is to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ together as a family.
- ◆ Playing an active role in their child's religious education and not relying on others do so for you. This includes the following:
 - ◇ Reading the bible to children.
 - ◇ Talking about the lives of the saints.
 - ◇ Explaining the importance of major feast days.
- ◆ Most importantly, parents should strive to improve their personal faith in Jesus Christ.

The Importance of parental faith

A great way to understand the importance of parental faith is to think about flying on a commercial airplane. When we fly on an airplane, the flight attendants go over a number of safety features: how to buckle your seatbelt; where the emergency exits are; and what to do with the oxygen masks if there is a loss of cabin pressure. This last safety feature is important. If you are flying with your children and there is a sudden loss of cabin pressure, oxygen masks for each passenger will fall from the cargo storage above. Adults are instructed *to put the mask on themselves first before putting the mask on their child or children.* This is important because if the adult passes out, then no one will be able to help their child. The adult is responsible first for taking care of himself or herself before taking care of any child.

If you don't take care of your spiritual lives first, then how do you expect to take care of your children's spiritual lives?

Honor your father and mother

I want to underscore the responsibility of parents by quoting the 5th commandment given to Moses on Mt. Sinai: **Honor your father and mother that it may be well with you, and your days may be long upon the good land the Lord your God is giving you.** Why does this commandment underscore parental responsibility? The children are responsible for honoring their parents, but the parents are responsible for honorable parenting. I've heard numerous stories about parents letting their children drink alcohol at the dinner table; or letting teenagers have parties at home and the parents go out and buy alcohol because they know their children will do it anyway so they would rather be at the party to help supervise; or parents allowing boyfriends and girlfriends to spend the night. This commandment teaches us that if the parent leads their children into sin, then the sin is on them and not their children. Our children are responsible for obeying us. We are responsible to lead them not into sin or temptation.