



# The Importance of Registering in Your Parish

Registering in your parish is an important first step to becoming an active member in the local church community. Registration brings with it tangible benefits that can help a person become more fully engaged in the local church and may help immigrants in future immigration law-related matters.

Please note that parish and diocesan leadership **will not share the registration information** with any governmental or law enforcement agency. The registration process is completely confidential.

Registering in one's local parish is generally not a common practice for Catholics in Latin America and Europe. However, it is common practice in the United States and therefore important for immigrants too since it offers a variety of benefits. Below are some reasons to register:

## *Benefits of Parish Registration*

**1. Establishes evidence of your presence in the United States.** It is not unusual for immigrants, including those who are undocumented, to have to provide evidence to immigration authorities of continuous presence in the U.S. Registering with your parish is a quick and easy step to help document the number of years you have resided in this country.

**2. Provides proof of sacramental participation.** If a person receives any of the sacraments in a parish, registration provides a clear and straightforward way to keep track of this information. Conveniently, proof of sacramental participation can easily be passed from one parish to the next if one moves.

**3. Offers spiritual benefits.** After registering with a parish, it is more likely that a person will participate fully in the life of the parish and to find a spiritual family. Families will feel less alone and more supported in times of joy and in times of sorrow. Immigrants will come to know more U.S. citizens on a close basis and feel more secure in this country. In times of difficulty, a parish family can offer crucial material and spiritual assistance. Parishioners will find many opportunities to grow in love of God and of neighbor, and will be surrounded by some excellent role models who will help them navigate the complexities of life in the U.S.

**4. Demonstrates community involvement.** Registration in the parish provides an opportunity to participate in and become an established member of the local parish community. This has a variety of benefits that extend beyond participation at weekly Mass.

- Becoming involved in the local parish helps one become acquainted with other parishioners and the

parish priest. Should a person experience any immigration-related problems with local or federal law enforcement, the local parish priest and fellow parishioners will be able to provide a letter of good moral character.

- Through any community involvement that follows, a parishioner can demonstrate the positive ways in which she has served the parish and the local community (e.g., volunteerism at a local soup kitchen). This can function as a useful tool to further demonstrate good moral character and an interest in contributing to the community.

- As a registered member of the local parish an individual will have the opportunity to help organize and promote the celebration of traditional religious fiestas, such as Guadalupe, Altigracia, Señor de los Milagros, and the Living Stations of the Cross.

**5. Provides financial and educational benefits.** Registering in the local parish will often bring with it additional benefits that could help family members. For example, registration could provide a credit or subsidy that can be used for your children at local parochial schools. This could reduce the cost of tuition and help a parishioner's child receive both the educational advantages and spiritual formation that come with attending a Catholic school.

**6. Demonstrates financial commitment.** Providing regular offerings at the weekly Mass by using the offering envelopes after registration demonstrates a financial commitment to the Church on a weekly basis. It is important to emphasize, however, that registering at the parish does not require a parishioner to give financial contributions; nor are individuals expected to provide large contributions.

