



VERMILION CATHOLIC
a legacy of Mount Carmel

September 18, 2024

Parents & Guardians of Vermilion Catholic,

I thank God often that I've become the pastor of Vermilion Catholic, A Legacy of Mount Carmel! It's hard to overstate the joy I've experienced on so many occasions already. The opening Eucharistic procession, mornings at car line, visits to classes – these and more have been occasions of great happiness and a real gift! Thank you for being a part of Vermilion Catholic!

As pastor, my goal is for VC to continue providing quality education and formation to your children. We want your children to grow in virtue, deeply rooted in Jesus Christ as sons and daughters of God the Father. Of course, no one and no organization is perfect. So, if you or your child experience things at VC that seem to fall short of or contradict the Catholic faith, please let us know how we can address that. I've already seen how closely families and faculty work together for the good of our children and I want to foster that ongoing cooperation.

Like the faculty and staff and VC, I take the safety of your children seriously. You've seen already the steps we've taken to provide a secure campus, so I won't rehash those here. I personally have been impressed with the collaboration of law enforcement and experts. The faculty and I will continue to follow through on their guidance. While I cannot guarantee perfect security for every possible situation – no one can – I am taking every reasonable step that I can.

Finally, I want to exhort you in your role as the primary formators of your children. While we will do all that we reasonably can for the spiritual, physical, and intellectual well-being of your children, there is no replacement for your example. I know you know this, but it sometimes helps to hear it again. So, as your pastor, here are three things I'd like you to consider for the well-being of yourselves and your children:

- If you are Catholic, how often are you attending Sunday Mass?
 - o It is truly a blessing to have Mass with the school each week, but this cannot replace our duty to worship God on the Sabbath as he has asked us to do.
 - o It saddens me when a child expresses anxiety in confession because they miss Sunday Mass when their parents do not bring them. I remind them it's not their fault, but it still makes it harder for them to have a peaceful conscience.
- How do you go about deepening your own faith?
 - o No one expects you to be a perfect example to your children or to have all the answers regarding the Catholic faith. Yet, the simple witness of you trying to grow in your own way is hard to overstate.
 - o I will periodically send you resources I think you might find helpful for your family's spiritual life.



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- What kind of oversight do you have for your children's use of phones and social media?
 - o Technology can be used well. But technology also *affects* us.
 - o Since 2012 when smartphones and social media became highly accessible, anxiety, depression, and suicide rates among adolescents have gone up 25-30%.
 - That's not just a number for me. I've witnessed it. Twice.
 - It's not the only cause, I know, but it is one factor we can influence.
 - o Children are not meant to be in constant contact with the whole world all at once.
 - Their brains are physiologically incapable of properly moderating the stimulation these devices and apps are designed to provide. If you do not restrain it for them, they will be worse off for it.
 - o I beg you to wait to give your children smartphones for as long as possible.
 - If they do have these devices, they should have strict limits as to when, where, and how they can be used. Monitoring software is essential.
 - At the very least, please do not allow your children to have internet access in their rooms at night.
 - *Every* child makes mistakes. Even if your child is responsible and normally wouldn't do something dumb online, don't forget their brains are still developing. There is a good chance they will do *something* dumb with the internet on occasion.
 - In my experience, children without these devices tend to be happier and more emotionally balanced overall.

I will continue to communicate with you (don't worry, they won't all be this long!) and I look forward to what the Lord has in store for us all. Know that you are daily in my prayers. My time is meant for serving the spiritual needs of this community, so if there's anything you need from me as your priest, please don't hesitate to reach out.

May we each this year be empowered and engaged to excel in Christ, through whom we soar!

Faithfully yours,

Father Alexander M. Albert,

Pastor,

Vermilion Catholic, A Legacy of Mount Carmel

St. Mary Magdalen Catholic Church

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