

STATEMENT REGARDING CHURCH GROUNDS

St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church certainly welcomes guests and visitors in the community to worship and pray to God. We wish to be generous towards the community, but this cannot and does not include tolerating all behaviors. We welcome visitors, but we also request that everyone who is on the grounds please respect the church grounds as a sacred place.

Most visitors do recognize the church grounds as sacred and deserving of respect, but there are those who have not always done so. Disrespectful behavior has included but is not limited to: someone walking a dog on the church grounds, people parking vehicles overnight, or coming on the grounds very late at night, people joyriding in the parking lot when it was icy in the winter, people wanting to treat the church parking lot as a playground for bicycles and skateboarding; people driving and parking on the grass, people taking pictures by the Meditation Area, people removing items that were designed to deal with traffic flow, and someone running over landscaping shrubbery with a vehicle. Some of these actions are disrespectful in themselves, such as running over landscaping shrubbery with a vehicle or walking a dog on the church grounds. Others are not disrespectful in themselves, but were done without the awareness or the permission of the pastor, such as taking pictures by the Meditation Area. Some of these actions have resulted in damage or have taken time to fix, paid for at the church's expense.

Some might think that no one lives by the church, or that the church is only open on Sunday. St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church has Mass most every morning, and various activities in the afternoon and evening. Someone once remarked about proceeding to do something without permission, "We didn't think anyone was here." Disrespectful behavior is still disrespectful, whether someone is present or not. There are cameras now that record what happens.

Although the church is generous in providing parking to visitors to the Everett Elementary School and the athletic field, there are times when the church has its own functions, and so additional parking is not available at that time. Visitors to the school may utilize the parking lot if the church is not using the lot first. We understand the concerns of the community regarding the parking situation in relation to the Elementary School and the athletic field. The church is generous in helping to alleviate the situation *temporarily*. Ultimately, the Everett School District is responsible for providing parking to visitors attending the Elementary school or athletic field, not the church.

Unfortunately, some in the community have wanted to blame the church for asking that its grounds be respected. This usually results from someone being confronted about disrespectful behavior. Some have commented, "You're a church." This was likely meant that the church should allow anyone to do anything he or she wants, and not confront disrespectful behavior. Yes, this is a church, and we expect that people will show the grounds respect.

We look forward to developing ways to alleviate any unpleasant situations. We have welcomed and continue to welcome visitors, but we cannot tolerate any behavior, especially behavior that is destructive towards the church grounds.

Fr. Derek Fairman, Pastor