

Dear Religious Education families,

Our school year has come to a close I want to express my gratitude to our catechists, parishioners, and all the parents and grandparents who helped us. We could not do any of this without your help and I truly appreciate every one of you!

I am writing to you to let you know of the exciting developments in the RE program next year! After much prayer and guidance from Fr. Rich and the diocesan leaders, we have decided to make the switch next year toward a Family Faith Formation program. What does this mean? As the name suggests, we will be focusing on forming the FAMILY unit rather than just the child(ren) in the faith. This means that parents will now have the opportunity to grow in your faith journey while your child learns the foundations of what it means to be Catholic. We will be focusing on educating parents to be the first heralds of the faith and providing you with the resources, support, and confidence that it takes to raise your children to know and love our Catholic faith. I am so excited to walk hand in hand with my fellow St. Mary's parents to be a resource and a guide for you next year.

Starting in September, your time at RE will be spent as a family. That means parents AND children will have a place in our program next year. Not only will the lessons be taught to the entire family, but there will also be a topic speaker each week just for the parents while your children are being taught by our loving catechists. All children are welcome because (and I cannot stress this enough!!) YOU ALL HAVE A PLACE HERE!! The Church needs mothers. The Church needs fathers. The Church needs infants, teenagers, grandparents, empty-nesters, toddlers, and everyone in between. The Church needs families!

That being said, I cannot do this on my own. We have been blessed with wonderful and devoted pastoral leadership, staff, and volunteers for many years at our parish but to create the program that I am hoping for, this is going to be an all-hands-on-deck situation. Which is why I am sending out registration early this year so that I can get an idea of where the need is and how it can best be filled. If teaching is not where your gifts lie, then don't be discouraged, there are plenty of other places for you. Because, as Paul reminds us in 1Cornithians, just as the body has many parts but is one body, so the Spirit provides many gifts but is the same Spirit.

Finally, I ask that you please read through the entire registration form and send it back as soon as possible. Your wants and needs are what will allow me to prepare to provide the most well-rounded and family-friendly program possible. You can mail it back or simply drop it off at the Parish office or in the mailbox outside of the office. Thank you so much for all your help and I truly cannot wait for the next school year!

God Bless,

Stephanie Schermerhorn, CRE