

St. Francis of Assisi ~ Faith Formation
1031 Chenango Street
Binghamton, NY 13901
607-722-4177

August 21, 2018

Dear Parents or Guardians,

Summer always ends too soon! Let me start by saying thank you for all you do for your children and the children of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, and ask you to please take a couple minutes to **thoroughly read this letter** and fill out the enclosed registration form regarding our Faith Formation Program. **This is my permanent record for the year and it is very important that the form is filled out.** There is only one form per family. Register **only** the children who will be participating in the Faith Formation Program, oldest to youngest. Do not register students who will be Confirmed on September 23, 2018. The fee is \$35/child or \$70/ family. Please return the fee and registration form by October 1st. You can drop it in the collection basket or mail it to Maria Kirk, at the above address. Faith Formation is never contingent on your ability to pay, if you cannot pay the fee please register your children anyway.

This year we will be implementing a change from “school-like” catechesis to an experienced based process, parents will be expected to be more involved. Studies show that many Catholics lack the basic understanding of our faith and the reason for our traditions. Because of this Fr. Tim and I are working together to provide family based events as well as Adult Faith Formation opportunities. We will kick off our Faith Formation year with our Pastoral Care Area Mission “*I Have Called You By Name*”, presented by Vince Ambrosetti, Saturday, September 29th – Wednesday, October 3rd. This is a great opportunity for individuals and families to ignite your faith. Saturday’s presentation focus is for anyone who has a specific ministry in the church: Lectors, Catechists, Eucharist Ministers, Altar Servers, Cantors or Choir Members etc. It will be held at St. Paul’s Church followed by lunch. **Sunday evening at 7 PM there will be a concert for all families in our parishes at St. Mary of the Assumption Parish followed by refreshments. I hope to see all of you at the concert. Vince Ambrosetti is a dynamic entertainer and excellent composer, he will perform his own inspiring music.** The Mission will be held at St. Francis of Assisi Church Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at 7 PM. **Parents who have children in the First Sacraments program will need to attend one of these sessions, 2018 Confirmation Candidates and Parents are also expected to be present for at least one session.** The mission is an introduction to a year filled with opportunities to experience God in new and enriching ways. During Lent there will be another opportunity to enrich your faith, “Living the Eucharist”. Please look in the bulletin for more information about these opportunities. Your participation is key to their success.

Faith Formation for students in **grades K– 9 will begin, Sunday, October 14th at 9:30 AM in the Church.** Like last year we will begin with Opening Prayer and classes will be dismissed to their rooms from the church. All Faith Formation Prayer Services will be in the church beginning at 9:30 AM, any Faith Formation Masses will be held at 11 AM. Thank you for attending our special Masses and Prayer Services and continuing to take an active role in your children’s faith development. We will have some kind of hand-on event for different grade levels during the year. I will give you at least 2 weeks notice if they involve a change in the time for faith formation. Hopefully, we will start Children’s liturgy of the Word at the 4 PM and 11 AM Mass—so if you attend that mass and have children aged 3-10 and would like to help out please let me know.

As you know attendance at Faith Formation is not optional. Please call the Faith Formation Office (607-722-4177) to explain his/her absence. Unexplained absences can affect your child’s readiness for Sacraments, *especially* Confirmation. And I gently remind you that nothing in Faith Formation classes makes any sense without an understanding, appreciation and participation in weekly Mass. In our Catholic faith, Mass is not optional. If you are a member of another parish, but have your children attend Faith Formation classes here, please be aware that **your pastor** needs to write a letter to Fr. Tim giving his authorization for your

children to be catechized here. This is a diocesan policy. If you are members here I encourage you to attend weekly Mass at St. Francis' especially if your child is preparing for a sacrament. If you are not a member of any parish, but have your children catechized here, please come into my office and take a moment to fill out the registration form to join St. Francis' parish, and make attendance at Mass a priority in your family.

The United States Council of Catholic Bishops requires that all dioceses train and screen any adult that works or volunteers in any church facility. Our diocese provides Safe Environment training for all employees and volunteers. The diocese is also required by the USCCB to provide training for all children in child sexual abuse and awareness. The diocese is using a program called "Circles of Care" to provide this training. Please go online to www.syrdio.org to peruse this program. You can also view it in my office. It is really extraordinary and very well done. This training will be on November 4th during class time. I will hand out additional information regarding this training in October. Feel free to stop in the office to look at the materials at any time.

Our First Sacraments Program (Reconciliation and Eucharist) requires parents to attend two information meetings, and participate in two "coaching" classes with their children. These classes, one for each sacrament, will help you be more comfortable in forming your child's faith. In addition you are asked to attend some kind of personal event to enrich your own faith life. This can be the mission or take part in the Lenten Series "Living the Eucharist." There will be two liturgies in which the children will participate, as well as the celebration of First Reconciliation, the mini-retreat in February, a Sharing Meal in March, and of course First Eucharist May 5, 2019. I will have the first parent meeting **October 21th in Room 103** during the Faith Formation hour to review the process for the sacrament of reconciliation. Weekly attendance at Mass is required.

All students in 10th grade or older who have not been confirmed should be enrolled in **direct** preparation classes. In order to **begin** direct preparation for Confirmation, candidates must have had regular attendance in prior Faith Formation classes or been enrolled in parochial school. Other signs of readiness include a personal faith consciousness, an appreciation of Sacred Scripture, a communal faith life as demonstrated by participation in weekly Mass, a sense of service, and a sense of Christian identity. Weekly attendance at Mass here at St. Francis is expected. **There will be an orientation meeting regarding the Sacramental process for Parents and Candidates, Tuesday, October 9th at 7:00 PM in the Parish Hall. All candidates and a parent must attend this meeting.** Candidates and Parents are also required to attend at least one session of the Parish Mission described below. Students will begin classes on November 4th, participate in the Rite of Acceptance in December and celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation in the fall of 2019.

Our LEAP Event will be held in March, during the regular Faith Formation time frame. The LEAP event is part of our Faith Formation Program and is not optional. It is designed to be family time that provides a different kind of catechetical experience for you and your children.

Please join Faith Formation on Remind. Remind is a quick way to send you updates, especially in the case of a severe weather closing. You can have reminders sent to your phone or email or both and it's completely private!! A separate group will be created for First Eucharist and Confirmation families later. If you registered last year, you are in the group, if you're unsure just re-register.

If you have any questions, please call Maria Kirk at 607-222-1477. I am always open for any comments or feedback you may have regarding Faith Formation. **The registrations forms should be returned with your registration fee by October 1st.** You can return them by mail or drop them in the collection basket, to my attention. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Maria Kirk, Director of Faith Formation

Fr. Tim Taugher, Pastor