

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

August 2023

Dear Parents or Guardians,

Let me start by saying thank you for all you do for your children, for making their faith formation a priority in your busy lives. Please take a couple minutes to thoroughly read this letter, there are changes and updates for Faith Formation. Faith Formation will be held 9–10:15 AM so that you can attend 10:30 Mass as a family. All Faith Formation Masses will be held at the 10:30 Mass. Faith Formation will begin September 17th with a family event at 9 AM in the parish hall. This opening event is for all Faith Formation Families, and will be followed by Mass. I am planning other family events this year as well. The family sessions will be especially important as they will help foster a sense of a domestic church for you. The opening event will be based on family activities focusing on the theme of Eucharist. Attending Mass, will always be part of the family events. As I've said many times nothing makes sense to our children without an understanding liturgy, I strongly encourage you to commit to attending weekly Mass. Regular sessions of Faith Formation for Grades K-9 will begin on Sunday, September 24th at 9 AM, in the **church** for Grades K-9. There will be an information session for parents after the children are dismissed. **The only entrance/exit for Faith Formation will be through the church.** Last year there was often a “traffic” jam at drop off. Please enter using the driveway between the church and former school, but drop off your children on the other side of the church so that we can hopefully have a safer traffic pattern.

Diocesan and PCA events are being planned for middle and high school students. I will let you know the dates and locations of these events as soon as I know them. FF classes for that week will be exempted so that your children can participate in these engaging events. You will always have 3-4 weeks notice of these events.

I'm not sure if you read the weekly column in Saturday's newspaper “Everyday Spirituality” by Norris Burke. He is going to be in the area and Fr Tim has invited him to come to our parish on Sunday, September 24th at 4 PM, for a talk, followed by a reception. His column is always very enlightening and thoughtful, I'm sure his presentation will be the same.

As part of our participation in the national Eucharistic Revival, our Fall Mission “Living with the Real Presence” with Deacon S. James Meyer, will begin the weekend of October 14 & 15 with his homily at our weekend liturgies. He will present his mission focusing on Eucharistic Revival, Monday-Wednesday evenings 7-9 PM. Parents with children preparing for First Sacraments are required to attend at least one session. Parents and Confirmation Candidates are also required to attend at least one session.

Please 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, as it is the only way I have updated contact information.** There is only one form per family. Register the children who will be participating in the Faith Formation Program, oldest to youngest. Do not register students who will be Confirmed on October 1, 2023. The fee is \$35/child or \$70/family. Please return the fee and registration form by September 10th. You can drop it in the collection box or mail it to Maria Kirk, at the above address, you can also bring it with you on September 17th. You can also register and pay online at our website. Faith Formation is never contingent on your ability to pay, if you cannot pay, please register your children anyway.

First Sacraments (Reconciliation/Eucharist) will meet as usual, as I am expecting 10-12 children. Our First Sacraments Program requires parents to attend two information meetings, and participate in two

“coaching” classes with their children, as well as participate in our mission and weekly mass. These additional sessions, are designed to help you be more comfortable in forming your child’s faith. There are two liturgies in which the children participate, as well as the celebration of First Reconciliation, the mini-retreat in February, a Sharing Meal in March, and of course First Eucharist in May 2024. I will have the first parent meeting **October 15th in a location to be determined**, 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. Confirmation prep meets once a month (November thru April) 11:30 AM –2 PM. **There will be an orientation meeting regarding the Sacramental process for Parents and Candidates, Tuesday, October 10th at 7:00 PM in the Parish Hall. All candidates and a parent must attend this meeting. At this session students will be planning discussing their year long group service project, as well as other projects, so come with thoughts and ideas.** Confirmation classes will begin on November 5th, the Rite of Acceptance in December. More details will be mailed in September, but save the October 10th date.

If you are a member of another parish, but your children attend Faith Formation classes here, please have **your pastor** 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 take a moment to fill out a registration form, available from me or in the church, at 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 currently 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 very well done. This training will be on November 19th during class time. I will hand out additional information regarding this training in early November. Feel free to stop in the office to look at the materials at any time.

Our Family Events are scheduled to co-ordinate with a seasonal event, and will take place in the parish hall during the regular Faith Formation time frame. The Family Events are part of our Faith Formation Program and are not optional. They are designed to be family faith 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. This is a new group so please register today. A separate group will be created for First Eucharist and Confirmation families later.

If you have any questions, please call Maria Kirk at 607-222-1477. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Maria Kirk, Director of Faith Formation

Fr. Tim Taugher, Pastor