

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

August 2024

Dear Parents or Guardians,

Let me start by saying thank you for making faith formation a priority in your busy lives. Please read this letter so that you will know of the exciting new things that will be happening. Faith Formation will begin September 29<sup>th</sup> with a family event co-ordinated with the Creation Care Team. They are organizing a nature hike and outdoor mass. This is an idea that really came out of the Synodal Listening Sessions that encouraged more “out of the box” ideas for involving younger families. This opening event is for all but especially for Faith Formation Families, and will be followed by Mass at Chenango Valley State Park, and refreshments after 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. 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 re-commit to attending weekly Mass.

I am happy to share news that Natalie Ehrensbeck has returned to Binghamton and is going to help create a children’s choir here at St. Francis. She graduated from the Boston Conservatory at Berklee and is also teaching private voice lessons. She will be at Mass (as well as Faith Formation) to share more information about this endeavor.

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 about them. FF classes for that week will be exempted so that your children can participate in these engaging area events. You will always have 3-4 weeks notice of these events.

Faith Formation will be held 9–10:15 AM so that you can attend 4 PM or 10:30 AM Mass as a family. All Faith Formation Masses will be held at the 10:30 AM Mass. Regular sessions of Faith Formation for Grades K-9 will begin on Sunday, October 20<sup>th</sup> at 9 AM, in the **church**. There will be a session for parents in the church, after the children are dismissed. **The only entrance/exit for Faith Formation will be through the church.** We started this procedure last year and it really alleviated the “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. 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 6, 2024. The fee is \$35/child or \$70/family. Please return the fee and registration form by October 20<sup>th</sup>. 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 October 20<sup>th</sup>. 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. Our First Sacraments Program requires parents to attend two information meetings, 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 March, a Sharing Meal in April, and of course First Eucharist in May 2025. I will have the first parent meeting **October 27<sup>th</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup>. More details will be mailed in September, but save the October 15<sup>th</sup> 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, 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](http://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 17<sup>th</sup> 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.

You can see that September will be a busy month. Please join us for the St. Phoebe Day Prayer Service acknowledging the important work women do for the church. Our Parish Picnic will be held Sunday, September 8<sup>th</sup> at the 1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian Pentecostal Church grounds. And on September 12<sup>th</sup> Catholic Journalist and author Mary Jo Mc Conahay will be in town to speak about her book [Playing God, American Catholic Bishops and the Far Right](#). And of course don't forget to join us for the Nature Hike and outdoor Mass at Chenango Valley State Park, Sunday September 29<sup>th</sup>. Details will be coming from the Creation Care Team but I will email updates to you. I believe the event will begin at 1 PM with Mass beginning around 2 PM in one of the pavilions.

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 the same group as last year, but if you are not sure you are registered please take the minute to do so. 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