

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

August 2025

Greetings on this beautiful summer day!

Let me start by saying thank you for making faith formation a priority in your busy lives. As many of you are aware, this will be my last year in active ministry. It has been a privilege to serve the families of St Francis of Assisi these past 15+ years, and I look forward to this last year with anticipation as well as humility as we journey together one more time. Fr Tim and I have had many discussions about the future so do not angst over who and when my replacement is or when they will start. But do offer prayers that the right person for our faith community will emerge and be ready to serve. With that said, please take a couple of minutes to thoroughly read this letter. There are changes and updates this year, especially for 9th & 10th grades. Faith Formation sessions will be held 9–10:15 AM. All Sacramental Masses will be held at 10:30 Mass. Faith Formation will begin on Saturday, October 4th with a family event at 5 PM in the parish hall, following the 4 PM Mass. This Fall festival is for everyone, attendance at 4 PM mass is not required, but may be helpful in planning your weekend. I am planning other family events as well, to hopefully help foster a sense of domestic church. The opening event will be based on activities focusing on the Fall theme. Attending Mass will always be part of the faith formation sessions. As I've said many times nothing makes sense to our children without an understanding liturgy, I strongly encourage you to re-commit yourself to attending weekly Mass. Regular sessions of Faith Formation for Grades K-8 will begin on Sunday, October 19th at 9 AM, in the **church**. There will be a meeting for parents (Grades K-8) after the children are dismissed. **The only entrance/exit for Faith Formation will be through the church.** 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.

PLEASE NOTE: The diocese has lowered the age of Confirmation to Spring of 9th Grade so this year all students in Grades 9 and 10 who have been attending FF regularly are eligible to attend Confirmation Prep classes. There is more information on this at the end of the letter.

Diocesan and local area events are being planned for middle and high school students. 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.

Fr Tim and I are working on some events to help strengthen your adult faith. There will be a one act play "Groomed" to be performed Monday, September 22 at 6:30 PM. The performance will be followed with discussion. This topic is still very difficult, and this play may help you identify ways you or your children can be at risk.

I am also putting together an evening of reflection during Advent, more information to follow.

Our parish is hosting a Parish Mission during Lent. The mission is designed to enhance your adult faith development. Parents with children preparing for First Eucharist will be required to attend at least one evening of the mission. Parents and candidates preparing for Confirmation in 2026 are also required to attend at least one evening of the mission. It is our hope that you will enjoy and attend the entire mission.

Please fill out the enclosed registration form regarding our Faith Formation Program. **This is my permanent record for the year, and it is particularly 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 September 21, 2025. The fee is \$35/child or \$70/family. Please return the fee and registration form by October 4th. 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 to the Fall Festival on October 4th. Feel free to 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 on Sunday at the usual time. 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 February, a Sharing Meal in April, and of course First Eucharist in May 2026. I will have the first parent meeting and “coaching session” Tuesday **October 29th in the Parish Hall. 6:30–7:30 PM.** Weekly attendance at Mass is required.

All students in 9th 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 14th at 7:00 PM in the Parish Hall. All candidates and parents must attend this meeting. At this session students will begin planning/discussing their yearlong group service project, as well as other projects, so come with thoughts and ideas.** Confirmation classes will begin on November 2nd. Additional information will be mailed in September, but please save the October 14th 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 remind 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.

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. This training (Grades K-8) will be on November 16th 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. Confirmation 2026 Candidates will receive the training as part of the January Retreat.

Our Family Gatherings are scheduled to co-ordinate with a seasonal event and will usually 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 severe weather closing. Text [@fd88ak](https://text.me/fd88ak) to the number **81010** to join. 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