

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

August 2021

Dear Parents or Guardians,

Let me start by saying thank you for all you do for your children, for doing your best in navigating this complicated and uncharted territory and for being open to the new experiences that are coming your way. Please take a couple minutes to thoroughly read this letter, we are making changes and updates will be determined by how school is in session. Our new mass schedule will begin the weekend of September 11-12th. Our Masses will be Saturday at 4 PM, and Sunday at 10:30 AM. Faith Formation will be held 9:15-10:15 AM so that you can attend 10:30 Mass as a family. Faith Formation will begin October 3rd with a family fun event at 9:15 AM in the Church. It is part of the weekend mission *A Journey to Joy*, with Frank Runyeon. The Sunday morning session is suitable for children, especially Grades K-5. The evening sessions, October 3-4-5 at 7 PM will be enjoyed by everyone Grade 6 and older. I am asking that parents and younger children attend in the morning and families with older children attend at least one evening session. Frank Runyeon gives a powerful performance and will be enjoyed by all.

Regular sessions of Faith Formation for Grades K-9 will begin on Sunday, October 17th at 9:15 AM, in the church. Classes will meet face-to-face socially distanced. Masks must be worn by everyone, and parents will need to self screen their children and themselves before coming to classes. Please do not come to Faith Formation if you or ANYONE in your household is sick. We will meet in the classrooms unless stated on the calendar.

Under certain conditions, parents can choose a remote option for regular classes. **PLEASE contact me in advance for this option.** I will not be mailing the Gospel Weeklies this year, and I have not subscribed for the download version this year. You will need to pick up the supplies at the Family Events that will be held. This option will only be available for First Sacraments or Confirmation under extremely special circumstances. Families who choose this option are **required** to send in a weekly assessment. This especially important for Grades 8-9 (pre Confirmation) as it will effect your child's readiness for direct preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. I will plan 2 or 3 family events—for community building and for supply pick-up. The family sessions will be especially important for the family's that choose the online only option. Mass, will always be part of the family events. As I've said before nothing makes sense to our children without an understanding liturgy, I strongly encourage you to recommit to attending weekly mass. The first Family Event is October 3-4-5 *A Journey to Joy* with Frank Runyeon.

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 10, 2021. The fee is \$35/child or \$70/family. Please return the fee and registration form by October 3rd. You can drop it in the collection box or mail it to Maria Kirk, at the above address. Faith Formation is never contingent on your ability to pay, if you cannot pay, please register your children anyway.

The children preparing for 2022 Sacraments (First Reconciliation/First Eucharist) and Confirmation we will have in person sessions, because it is especially important for the children to have a sense of community and a good understanding of what a Sacrament is. Again, Mass attendance, in person is also very important. First Sacraments will meet as usual, as I am expecting < 12 children. 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. 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 Spring 2022. I will have the first parent meeting **October 24th in the parish hall**, 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 required. Confirmation will meet as usual, once a month (November thru April) 9:15 AM - 1 PM. **There will be an orientation meeting regarding the Sacramental process for Parents and Candidates, Tuesday, October 12th at 7:00 PM in the Parish Hall. All candidates and a parent must attend this meeting.** Students will begin classes on November 7th, participate in the Rite of Acceptance December 5th and celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation in the fall of 2022.

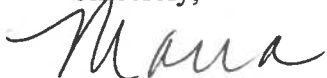
If you are a member of another parish, but your children attend Faith Formation classes here, please have **your pastor** write a letter to Fr. Tim giving his authorization for your children to be catechized here. This is a diocesan policy. If you are members here I encourage you to attend weekly Mass 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 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 very well done. This training will be on November 21st 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.

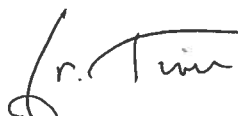
Our Family Events scheduled to co-ordinate with any Gospel Weekly pick-ups, if they need to be rescheduled I will give you at least 3 weeks notice, and will take place during the regular Faith Formation time frame. The Family Events are part of our Faith Formation Program and are not optional. They are 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. 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 3rd.** You can return them by mail or drop them in the collection box, to my attention. Thank you!

Sincerely,



Maria Kirk, Director of Faith Formation



Fr. Tim Taugher, Pastor