Dear Families,

I am thankful for the summer break giving all of us as chance to refocus, relax, unwind and refresh. It won’t be long, and we will begin a new year of Religious Education! We welcome you & are happy to have you participate in our programs.

**Catechists are called to echo God’s word.** I want to thank our dedicated parents & catechists who teach Jesus’ Gospel and help the children grow in their faith & love of God and his Church. God gives us amazing grace when we answer God’s call to carry on the joyful mission to teach as Jesus did. Our volunteers are one of our greatest assets and we are very grateful for the gift of themselves, their time and talent. They enrich the whole parish. Do you feel called to be a messenger for Christ? We welcome more of our parents, guardians and teens to be catechists or assistants in our Religious Education and Children’s Liturgy of the Word programs. If you want to help, please call me.

This year, the Church will celebrate **Catechetical Sunday on September 15, 2013**, and will focus on the theme "Open the Door of Faith." Those to serve as catechists will be called forth to be commissioned for their ministry at the 10am Mass. Catechetical Sunday is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the role that each person plays, by virtue of Baptism, in handing on the faith and being a witness to Christ & the Gospel. Catechetical Sunday is an opportunity for all to rededicate themselves to this mission as a community of faith.

**Our Religious Education program for Kindergarten through High School children** is gearing up to begin Tuesday & Wednesday September 3 & 4 – 5:30-6:45pm for the Opening of the Year Family Kick-Off in the Parish Hall

All parents/guardians and children meet together in the parish hall for the Opening of the Year. We will start with a Prayer Service and introduce our Religious Education teachers. The catechists, then, will lead the children to their classrooms. The parents/guardians will continue with an orientation of our Religious Education program. Parents/guardians please make arrangements to stay for the entire class time.

**Religious Education** is about all of us, as members of the Church, learning together, witnessing & growing in our faith together, and especially attending the holy Mass together. The Spirit of God gathers us together as God’s family when we attend Religious Education & the celebration of the Eucharist and teaches, nourishes and strengthens us to be good followers of Jesus. In Mass, hearing the words “Go in
peace, the Mass is ended,” we are sent forth instructed by the Word of God & nourished by the Bread of life to announce the Good News of the Lord and glorify the Lord by our lives.

We encourage all our families to go to the 10:00a.m. Family Mass with the Jr. Choir on the first Sunday of each month beginning October 6. However, parents are reminded of the obligation that they and their children attend Mass every Sunday. This year all of our families really try to pray daily together, attend weekly Religious Ed. classes, and make our Sunday Eucharist your family’s most sacred hour.

REGISTRATION FOR THE 2013-2014 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SCHOOL YEAR
Enclosed is a registration form, please fill it out and mail it to me. Or you may register after all Masses the weekends of August 10-11, 17-18, 24-25, in the Parish Hall. Please register your children, K through High School, as soon as you can to aid in planning.

The Religious Education program is an essential responsibility for our/every parish to help children learn & grow in faith formation, and to help you parents fulfill the promise you made at your child’s Baptism to raise him/her in the Catholic Faith. We will be using RCL Benziger’s new religious education program: Be My Disciples.

Be My Disciples is a Christ-centered and truly balanced approach that gives children a sound foundation that leads to faith in action. The Weekly Lessons inspire, teach & challenge children and young teens to be good disciples of Jesus and live the Gospel in their daily lives. The engaging lessons for every grade include: age appropriate knowledge of God’s Word & Church teaching, Liturgical music & lessons for Sunday Mass & the seasons of the Church year, safe opportunities for interactive social networking and engaging online activities. Our goal is to lead catholic children and their families to grow in their conversion to Jesus Christ and live as active, committed members of the Catholic Church. At St. Francis of Assisi the children qualified to receive First Reconciliation, Eucharist or Confirmation must be enrolled in the religious education classes.

Mandatory Catechists Workshops – Saturday, August 17, 9am – 12noon in the parish hall. The RCL Benziger Company Representative will lead both our veteran & first-year catechists on how to use the new Catechists Guides as they prepare inspiring & engaging lessons. Be My Disciples Rep. will help our teachers & assistants get the year off to a great start for confident, capable and committed teaching the lessons. We will continue the Diocese Catechist Formation Program for Certification on Saturday August 24 from 9:00am to 12 noon in the parish hall. The workshop will also go over the first class lesson plan and the parish handbook for catechists.

Class times: Tuesday 5:30pm – 6:45pm Grades K- 4
Wednesday 5:30pm – 6:45pm Grades 5 – 12

We will begin classes on September 3 & 4.

- Registration Form:
  Registration form must be complete and accurate.
  Parent/guardian signature must be found in the Mass Obligation box in the top left corner.
  Mark the grade your child will be Entering and the Sacraments he/she has received.
• **Registration Fee:** The fee is $35.00 for one child. Sensitive to the needs of families, especially in the present economic conditions, fees are capped at $50.00 per family. No child will be deprived of Religious Education because of finances. Scholarships are available to help with the cost. See Jim Brantner

• **Communication:** We are here to serve the religious educational needs of our children and youth. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions, contact me.
  
  Jim Brantner DRE  
  Phone: 941-697-4899, E-mail: jbrantner@sfoachurch.com

  **Parents will receive a monthly calendar and Religious Education News.**

• **Websites:** Parents/Guardians and students are encouraged to visit two websites.

  1. St. Francis of Assisi’s website: [www.sfoachurch.com](http://www.sfoachurch.com) contains helpful information about our religious education programs and our parish activities.
  2. BeMyDisciples.com. is the website of our Faith Formation Program.

• **Baptismal Certificate:** It is necessary to present a copy of the baptismal certificate for those children who will be registering who did not attend last year, or for those we have no baptismal record.

• **RCIC for Children** – Those children 7 years and older that are not baptized or baptized but have received limited formal instruction in the faith and have not received Penance & Holy Communion contact the DRE.

• **Confirmation** – Those youth 9th to 12th grade who have not received the Sacrament of Confirmation must register for our program beginning Wednesday, September 4, 2013.

• **The RCIA** begins Thursday, September 19, 7 – 8:30pm for any parent or adult interested in the Catholic faith and receiving the Sacraments of Initiation. Be a friend & bring a loved one or neighbor to Christ thru the RCIA.

We invite all our families to participate in our parish, and give the children a sense of belonging and community. We want to help form your children in the faith and prepare them to face the challenges of the world with a deeper knowledge & love of God, his Church and Jesus the Savior.

Congratulations & thanks for letting God lead you in the ways of Catholic faith.

May this year be a time of grace & growth for all of us in St. Francis family.

Sincerely,

*Jim Brantner*

Jim Brantner

Director of Religious Education