



Saint Andrew

Anchored in Faith  Catholic Church and School

Faith Formation Newsletter — September 2018

Dear Saint Andrew Parishioners, Faith Formation Families and Volunteers,

Our Faith Formation program starts in earnest on Wednesday, September 19, with the 11th Grade Confirmation Retreat from 6:00 to 10:00 PM here at the church (a Confirmation Information Meeting for students and parents is scheduled for Saturday, September 8, at 6:00 PM in the Gym), as well as classes for Grades 1-8 on September 19 from 6:30 to 7:45 PM in the Gym and School. Please note that our Opening Mass and Kickoff for the whole family is not until the following Wednesday, September 26, from 6:30 to 7:45 PM.

Our parish is blessed to have many children seeking faith formation and the sacraments—which require many volunteers in teaching and supporting roles. This newsletter details a new model for elementary faith formation that should lighten the load for all of our volunteers and be more engaging and fun for our students.

The catch? This new approach requires *more* volunteers. Not more teachers necessarily (although we still need a few), but more adults and teens who are willing to walk with younger students and support our teachers and staff.

I have to admit, I've been anxious in recent weeks about the lack of Faith Formation volunteers in a parish as big as ours. But our God loves a good paradox: The solution He has proposed is to ask for *more* volunteers, then ask *less* of each one. Together, and with Christ's help, the yoke is easy and the burden is light.

Blessings to you all!

— Jim

A New Model for Grade-School Formation

A few years back while working for my home parish, I was walking the halls, checking in on the elementary faith formation classes. I passed one room, peeked in and saw the kids noisily chattering away while coloring religious pictures. A couple of boys were getting rowdy, and the catechist was doing her best to keep their influence from spreading to the rest of the class.

A little further down the hall, I saw a cutout of a great gray mountain, much like the old Price Is Right game in which the mountaineer makes his way up based on the contestant's guesses. Among other things, the kids were learning about Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, and their teacher had brought in this homemade game and a few



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A “stations” approach yields more engaged students, better formation in the faith and less volunteer burnout.

related props to drive home that portion of the evening's lesson. She had other materials and props prepared to support other aspects of the class.

Both catechists were dedicated volunteers. The former was a faithful working mom who was hanging on at the end of a long day. The latter was single Catholic woman with more time on her hands and a great love for teaching the faith. As I shared my observations with

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A New Model for Grade-School Formation

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the rest of the staff, we began to think: How can we relieve the stress of the first volunteer and enable more students to benefit from the creativity of the second?

The solution was simple: To create three or so “stations” for each lesson, with a lead teacher at each stop, and rotate the students in small groups under the guidance of another adult or teen leader.

The benefits were immediate: We could plan diverse and engaging activities for students with different learning styles, we could get kids up and moving to the next station before they got too sleepy or restless to focus, and we could take the burden of preparing for more than an hour of content off of our volunteers—instead asking just three teachers per grade to prepare one outstanding, 20-minute activity and present it three times. Parents reported that their children enjoyed faith formation classes more and retained more as a result!

† † †

Last year at Saint Andrew, most of our elementary Faith Formation classes had too many children for too few volunteers, and kids were too tired, excitable or distracted to focus. To fix this, I am proposing a similar approach to what I described above:

- Parents and students arrive at 6:30 PM and check in with their adult or teen class leader. The group, ideally 10 to 12 kids, opens in prayer together.
- At 6:35 PM, the group begins their first station of the night. Each of the three groups starts at one of the three stations. For the next 20 minutes, the lead teacher for that station teaches with support from the class leader.
- At 6:55 PM, they rotate to the next station, with five minutes to transition. The second station runs from 7:00 to 7:20 PM.
- They rotate again, and the third station runs from 7:25 to 7:45 PM. Parents meet their child’s small group at the final station to sign them out at the end of the night.

The catechists and volunteers I’ve shared this approach with so far have agreed that this would be great for students and volunteers alike. The challenge is that it requires *more* volunteers—at least five or six per grade.

CATECHIST TRAINING

Catechist Training for Grades 6-8 is Wednesday, September 5, at 6:30 PM in the Cafeteria.

Catechist Training for Grades 9-10 is Wednesday, September 12, at 6:30 PM in the Cafeteria.

My apologies: Our first Catechist Training Meeting for Grades 1-5 was August 22—I scheduled it for 6:30 PM but listed it in the bulletin at 6:00 PM.

I have scheduled a **second session for Grades 1-5 on Thursday, September 13, at 6:30 PM** in the Cafeteria. Please attend if you can, or let me know and I will find a time to meet with you individually.

Can you help us make this happen? We need a few more teachers—but more than that, we need dependable, faithful adults and teens who enjoy spending time with kids. I will provide all the material you need, or only as much as want if you feel creative. The commitment is two and a half hours, roughly every other Wednesday. If you can’t commit to that, consider teaming up with someone who can cover the weeks you can’t!

We will do great things this year, but we need your help. Contact Jim Thorp at jimt@saint-andrew.net or 763-441-1483 with questions or to volunteer—and join us for our next Grade 1-5 Catechist Training Meeting on Thursday, September 13, at 6:30 PM in the Cafeteria. If you can’t make the meeting, I’ll set up a time to meet with you.

Please pray for our Faith Formation programs: That we may find the volunteers and leaders we need to reach and teach every child who registers; that we may convert hearts and families to Christ; and that every family in our parish will be drawn more deeply into the Mass and the other sacraments. The souls of your people are in your hands, O Lord. Sacred Heart of Jesus, we trust in you!

Watch for update emails to registered Faith Formation families almost every Thursdays afternoon. You can find a schedule and other resources by clicking the Faith Formation tab at www.saint-andrew.net.

For more information, contact Jim Thorp or Lori Iannuzzelli at 763-441-1483.