

Dear Parents,

Good News! The time is approaching for us to restart Religious Education here at St. Mary's. I thank you for your patience during these last couple months that I have arrived at St. Mary's. I have been doing my best since I arrived to give this matter the attention it deserves. Our young people deserve a religious education program. Now more than ever our youngest generation needs to be taught the truth and the beauty of the Catholic Faith.

And so it's time to begin anew here at St. Mary's, to start fresh with a brand new program – a program that meets the needs of our young people, that teaches them to love and appreciate the Catholic Church, that offers them the opportunity to receive the sacraments of the Church, the instruments of God's sanctifying grace, and that teaches them to know, love, and serve God throughout their whole life.

With that said – I am excited to announce that this past week I hired a new Director of Religious Education (DRE). Her name is Michelle Pickering. Michelle's home parish is St. Mark's in Jamestown. She brings with her a wealth of experience and education. Michelle has taught Theology in Catholic High Schools and Middle School for many years. She was also the DRE at St. Barnabas in Portsmouth and at St. Mark's Jamestown for several years – and she is no stranger to building a Religious Education program from the ground up and she is eager to get started.

Please join me in welcoming Michelle to our St. Mary's family as together we begin a new chapter in our Religious Ed program. Moving forward, our Religious Ed program will be different than has been in the past. We will no longer have a summer Religious Ed program. The program will take place within the academic year.

My hope is to begin this year's Religious Ed classes the week after Columbus Day. Specific dates and times will be announced soon. At this stage – it is crucial that we know how many families in the parish are in need of Religious Education for their children. So the first step is to get every child registered as quickly as possible.

You can find registration forms at the back of the Church, in our office, or right here on our website. Please fill out a registration form for your child and return it to St. Mary's Office as soon as possible. You only need to fill out one form per family. The deadline for registering is Friday, October 8 at 3pm.

Please note that there will be an opportunity for those who have missed their sacraments in the past two years to make those sacraments in the year to come. Anyone in 3rd, 4th, or 5th grade who has not made their First Communion will have the opportunity to do so at our upcoming First Communion Mass in the Spring Of 2022. Furthermore, special instruction will be given to prepare them to receive this sacrament. Likewise, anybody who is entering 10th or 11th grade in the Fall of 2021 is welcome to take part in the Confirmation 2 program this year (with our 9th graders) and then be confirmed at our next Confirmation ceremony.

Finally, as you know we can't have Religious Education if we don't have teachers for the grade levels. If you are interested in volunteering to teach Religious Ed, please fill out the appropriate form on our website (Volunteer Teacher Application) and email it to our new DRE at StMarysReligiousEd@gmail.com.

Thank you and May God Bless You and Your Family,

Fr. Rowley

