



St Mary of the Immaculate Conception Catholic Parish

Forming saints for Christ and the Church since 1857

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION RESTRUCTURING FOR 2016-17

Dear parents and parishioners:

After much prayer, consideration, and consultation, I am pleased to announce that 2016-17 will see some substantial changes to the methods of resourcing and providing Religious Education. These changes are made based upon three observations:

- For Faith Formation to be truly transformative, it must be fully integrated in the home. Religious Education cannot be abdicated to others. True Faith Formation is 24/7/365. This means the faith must be lived actively and authentically within the context of the family, which sees parents as the ‘first educators in the Faith.’
- When parents bring their child to be baptized, they made a promise to God to ‘accept the responsibility of training their child in the practice of the faith. It is the parent’s duty to bring the child up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor.’ The proposed changes are intended to resource and equip parents to fulfill their Godly mission and to keep the promise they made.
- The decrease in number of participants in the lowest age classes makes a traditional classroom model seem less needed and ineffectual.

Please plan to attend a **Mandatory Parent Meeting on Sunday, February 21, 2016** from 8:45-9:45a in the multipurpose room to learn about the proposed changes. Below is a brief overview.

For the primary age children from kindergarten to sixth grade, the parish will be adopting a program called *Family Formation* (familyformation.net). It is currently being used by St Gabriel, Connersville and St Michael, Brookville to much success. The program includes a monthly formation meeting for parents and children. Seventh graders will utilize two study programs we have been using – *Teen Timeline* and *Theology of the Body for Teens* – by Ascension press. Video access will be provided online for home use with parents. Eight graders will complete a study of *Our Moral Life in Christ* facilitated by instructional videos by Fr John Hollowell of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis (catholicsreligiousused.blogspot.com). Freshmen to seniors will utilize resources on Formed.org, which is a sort of Netflix for the faith.

First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion will be celebrated in the second grade. The reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation may take place between the age of 13 and 17 per Archdiocesan guidelines, with the expectation that most will do so in the eighth grade. Candidates will utilize the Archdiocesan Day of Reflection and one meeting with Fr Gries.

Ms. Jill Kuntz will continue as the part-time Administrator of Religious Education to help coordinate the various resources and follow up on parishioner participation.

In Christ,

Rev. Jeremy M. Gries