

St. Catherine of Siena

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Rectory (073) 324-7131 • Religious Education (073) 324-5257

June 1, 2007

Dear Parents,

With the month of June comes registration for Religious Education classes for the 2007-2008 school year. Before everyone goes into their summer mode, please take a few minutes to read the Handbook enclosed and fill out the registration form. Vacation Bible School will be held the week of August 6th - 10th. This year we are headed to "Avalanche Ranch" - and it promises to be a wild ride! Adult and teen volunteers are needed. For more information please contact Susan Textores at 973-794-4477.

As always, we try to improve our program. This year we have revamped our middle school and high school programs. New materials, approved by the United States Council of Bishops, have been ordered. Grades one through five will use an updated version of the same spiral series from Resources for Christian Living that we have used over the past four years. Grades six through eight will be using a new series from Harcourt Religion Publishers which is comprised of seven different topics including: Sacraments, Morality, the Church, Jesus Christ, the Trinity, Revelation, and the Kingdom of God. We feel that breaking the courses down to seven week programs will hold the attention of this age group, and make it very interesting and informative for our students. Our Confirmation program will be enhanced by adding a new series by RCL which will include an active sponsor component. It is therefore important for your ninth grader to seriously consider who will be his/her Confirmation sponsor- since the sponsor will need to work with your child over the next two years.

Each year we try to improve our program to meet the needs of our parish family. Last year we added an optional retreat program to our First Communion sacrament curriculum, and it was such a huge success that we will make it a permanent part of our program. We also plan to repeat the retreat in grade six on an appropriate level. We will continue to have a staff member meet with all parents of our ninth grade students on a one to one basis prior to the beginning of the Confirmation program. Doing so will strengthen the lines of communication between the Religious Education staff and the parents, which in turn will be a great benefit to our young people. It is also an opportunity for parents to take a more active role in the preparation for the sacrament.

Please also note that due to Easter occurring in late March 2008, our school year is a few weeks shorter than normal and we have been forced to be very "creative" in order to include all we need to cover. For example, the second grade retreat will fall after Easter and after the formal classes have ended. Also, reflected in the schedules handed out in September you will see that class Masses will be held only one Sunday per grade instead of on two separate Sundays. We also need to stay open when some of the school districts are closed – for example, on Columbus Day and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. We appreciate, in advance, your cooperation in this effort and hope that we can go back to our normal schedule next year.

Our Christian Formation Advisory Council, CFAC, is again planning for a wonderful year of family activities that help us to live out our Christian faith. We will begin with a Family Fun night on Friday, September 28th. The calendar for next year will be coordinated at our August 28th meeting to be held in the Library at 7:45 pm, and we are always seeking new ideas, activities, and helpers. If you are looking for a way to become involved in the formal religious education of your child but find the weekly commitment as a catechist to be overwhelming, think about joining this committee. We meet about five times during the year to plan activities, which for the most part take place during a Sunday liturgy. The time commitment is minimal, but the activities have a huge impact on our understanding of Catholic traditions.

THE CLASSES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

We will have a Kindergarten class, but are unable at this point to know whether it will be held on Tuesday or Wednesday afternoons. If you have a child who will be attending Kindergarten in September and would like to take advantage of our class, please indicate that on the registration form. As soon as we are able to determine which day we can accommodate the Kindergarten class, we will call you. It will be on a first-come first-served basis.

First grades will meet on one of the following days: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday afternoons from 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. depending upon availability. Class space is limited, so if you would like to have your first grader on the same afternoon as an older sibling, please send back the registration as soon as possible. Classes will be set up on a first come basis. All afternoon classes will begin the week of September 10th. Please check the times and dates of the evening classes.

All second grades, Monday, 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. beginning September 10th

**Please note: An extra class for the retreat will be held on either Friday, April 4th or Saturday April 5th 2008.*

All third grades, Tuesday, 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. beginning September 11th

All fourth grades, Wednesday, 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. beginning September 12th

All fifth grades, Thursday, 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. beginning September 13th

All sixth grades, Tuesday evening, 7:15 – 8:30 p.m. beginning September 11th

All seventh grades, Monday evening, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Sept. 10th – Oct. 15th ; and Dec. 10th & 17th and Jan. 7th – Jan. 28th

Alternating semesters with

All eighth grades, Monday evening, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Oct. 22nd – Dec. 3rd; and Feb. 4th – Mar. 17th

All ninth grades, Wednesday evening, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Oct. 24th – Dec. 12th; and Feb. 6th – Mar. 19th

**Please note: This schedule reflects an extended class on November 14th extending from 5:00-9:00 pm for an in-house retreat, and a Sunday class, March 16th 7:30-9:00 pm, to practice for Stations of the Cross.*

Alternating semesters with

All tenth grades, Wednesday evening, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Sept. 12th – Oct. 17th; and Jan. 2nd – Jan. 30th [plus practice and Confirmation dates to be announced]

***Please note: The Confirmation Retreat will be held the weekend of September 7th, 8th and 9th.**

PARENTS ARE REMINDED OF THE FOLLOWING IMPORTANT DATES:

General Parent Meeting for grades 1 through 8: Wednesday, September 12th in the church at 7:30 p.m.

Required Parent Meetings:

Parents of 2nd grade students preparing for Reconciliation: Thursday, September 20th at 4:15 or 7:30 p.m. in the church

Parents of 9th grade students preparing for Confirmation: Wednesday, October 24th at 8:30 pm in the church.

Parents of 10th grade students preparing for the Confirmation Retreat: Wednesday, September 5th at 7:30 pm in the church.

****Please note: One parent or guardian needs to attend this retreat meeting.***

Confirmation Interviews:

Required interview meetings for those preparing for Confirmation will be:

9th grade: November 28, 2007

10th grade: September 26, 2007 and January 16, 2008.

Registration will close August 1, 2007. *Due to increasing enrollment, registrations received after August 1st may be wait-listed.* It is impossible to plan for space, books, and teachers at the last minute so please send in your registrations as soon as possible. In addition, you will not receive any of the important mailings sent out in August in preparation for the beginning of Religious Education. If we do not receive a signed form, we can only assume that you have made other plans for the religious instruction of your children. If you have a child who attends **parochial** school, please inform us so that we know who to contact for Confirmation at the appropriate time.

One of the reasons that St. Catherine's is such an active parish, is the participation and support of so many of its members. There is a ministry for everyone from Eucharistic minister to youth activities. The greatest number of people, however, are needed in the education of the youth of the parish programs as catechists, principals, office help, or as baby sitters. Most of the volunteers in our program are not professional teachers, but see this not only as an activity to help their own children and their church, but as an enrichment of their own lives. If you have ever had any thoughts of becoming involved, please call us and let us help you to decide. A commitment to teach involves about 30 hours a year of your time. We have excellent materials to help you feel comfortable with the subject matter, and we offer workshops to get you started and to keep you going. We are in need of teachers on every level. Please think about joining us in spreading the "Good News" and the story of Christianity.

Finally, I consider my position here at St. Catherine's to be a privilege. I am supported everyday by Kathy Smith, Mike Martin, and by Fr. Pat, who are always available to help, along with our Religious Education secretary, and a volunteer staff of 95. Our program now has over 700 students from five towns and 15 schools. This is an enormous undertaking for our parish and our staff. Logistically we need the cooperation of all staff, parents and students if we are to have the quality program our children deserve. Please realize how important it is for all of us to understand and abide by the handbook which is enclosed. We take very seriously our responsibility to give every child what we feel they need and deserve, and because of our size, it can only be accomplished effectively within certain parameters. Please do not think of the handbook as a book of unreasonable rules but rather as a way for us to insure a safe, fair and Christian atmosphere for all of our children. Please pay close attention to the paragraphs on Sacramental guidelines and in particular to what constitutes service hours. We ask that you take the time to read the handbook carefully and to sign the registration form. If you have any questions, you can always call the Religious Education office at 973-334-5257, or address them at the parent meetings.

Thank you so much for your continued support of St. Catherine's. It is wonderful to be involved with so many people who care so deeply about the religious education of their children.

Have a wonderful summer and you will hear from us again in August.

Sincerely,

Barbara Buck
Director of Religious Education