

St. Catherine of Siena

10 North Pocono Road • Mountain Lakes, New Jersey 07046
Rectory (973) 334-7131 • Religious Education (973) 334-5257

June 1, 2011

Dear Parents,

If it's June, it must be time to register for Religious Education classes for the 2011-2012 school year. Please take a few minutes to read the Handbook and fill out the registration form, which are both enclosed with this letter.

As always, we try to improve our program. All of our programs are on the list approved by the United States Council of Bishops. Grades one through five will use Faith First Legacy, a spiral series from Resources for Christian Living. These grades run for approximately twenty-four weeks. Grades six through eight will be using a series from Our Sunday Visitor 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 follows a series by RCL which is a two year interactive program.

Each year we try to improve our program to meet the needs of our parish family. We have added retreats for all sacramental grades and have found them quite beneficial. We plan to continue to offer a retreat to grade six, during class time, which will be given by the Salesian Sisters from Newton. Grades seven and eight will also benefit from in house retreats given by our peer ministry students, as well as our ninth and tenth grade retreats.

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 a Friday night in September TBA. The calendar for next year will be coordinated at our August meeting to be held in the Library at a date and time also TBA. 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. Unfortunately, due to construction that is taking place during the summer months, we will be unable to offer Vacation Bible School this year. We will resume this wonderful program in the summer of 2012.

THE CLASSES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

We anticipate having a Kindergarten class, but are unable at this point to know whether it will be held on Wednesday or Thursday afternoons, or whether we may need to start it later in the fall. 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 19th. Please check the times and dates of the evening classes, some of which will begin the week of September 12th.

All second grades, Monday, 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. beginning September 19th

All third grades, Tuesday, 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. beginning September 20th

All fourth grades, Wednesday, 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. beginning September 21st

All fifth grades, Thursday, 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. beginning September 22nd

All sixth grades, Tuesday evening, 7:00 – 8:15 p.m. beginning September 20th

All seventh grades, Monday evening, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.
Sept. 12th – Oct. 24th ; and Jan. 2nd – Feb. 13th

Alternating semesters with

All eighth grades, Monday evening, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.
Nov. 7th – Dec. 19th ; and Feb. 27th – Apr. 2nd

All ninth grades, Wednesday evening, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.
Nov. 2nd – Dec. 14th; and Feb. 29th – Apr. 4th

**Please note: This schedule will include an in-house retreat TBA. There is also a Sunday practice for the Stations of the Cross on Sunday, April 1, 2012.*

Alternating semesters with

All tenth grades, Wednesday evening, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.
Sept. 14th – Oct. 26th; and Jan. 4th – Feb. 15th

***Please note: The Confirmation Retreat will be held the weekend of September 10th, & 11th 2011**

Confirmation will be celebrated on Saturday, March 3, 2012 at 11:00 am. Practice will be held on Thursday, March 1st at 7:30 pm.

PARENTS ARE REMINDED OF THE FOLLOWING IMPORTANT DATES:

General Parent Meeting for grades 1 through 8: Wednesday, September 14th in the Parish Center at 7:30 p.m. **This is an especially important meeting if you are new to our program.*

Required Parent Meetings:

Parents of 2nd grade students preparing for Reconciliation: Thursday, September 29th at 4:15 or 7:30 p.m.in the church

Parents of 2nd grade students preparing for First Holy Communion: Thursday, January 12, 2012 at 4:15 or 7:30 p.m.in the church

Parents of 9th grade students preparing for Confirmation: Wednesday, November 2nd at 8:30 pm in the church..

Parents of 10th grade students preparing for the Confirmation Retreat: Wednesday, September 7th at 7:30 pm in the Parish Center
** 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 30, 2011

10th grade: September 28, 2011 and January 11, 2012.

As you can see, we try to plan everything we can so that you know our schedule well in advance. Unfortunately, one thing we cannot plan on is any weather related closure. Therefore, please be advised that if needed, we reserve the right to add classes on to our schedule.

Registration will close August 8, 2011. *Due to increasing enrollment, registrations received after August 8th 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. **In an effort to reduce paper usage and postage costs, this is the only registration mailing we will be sending out for the upcoming school year. 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.** We intend to increase the amount of communication done via email, so please make sure that we have your most current/frequently viewed email address on file. 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. Please note that all catechists must complete a background check and a diocesan training program, "Protecting God's Children."

Finally, I consider my position here at St. Catherine's to be a privilege. I am supported everyday by Fr. Peter and Fr. Tom, who are always available to help, Kathy Smith, Mike Martin, our Religious Education assistant, Marie Westerman, and a volunteer staff of 85. Our program now has about 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, after your registration has been received.

Sincerely,

Barbara Buck
Director of Religious Education

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