

ST. MARY FAITH FORMATION OFFICE

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Dear Families,

Wow! Hasn't this been one crazy year?! It sure would be nice if everything would get back to normal soon, but it doesn't really look like that is going to happen. So, as I am sure you have heard, Fr. Christian has decided that we will not have in-person religious education classes at least through the Christmas holidays. But that does not mean that religious education should not happen. Quite to the contrary!

Years ago, it was customary for families to be responsible for the religious upbringing of their children – and in all honesty that is probably the best way since children learn what they live. So we have a couple of options for you to choose from to assist you with the religious instruction of your children at home for the time being. One is a program developed by the Diocese of Kalamazoo and is online based. The second option is using our usual textbooks and working with your children through the lessons. Our sacrament preparation programs already make use of video and book learning and they may be adjusted for at home learning.

THE WAY

This program developed by the Diocese of Kalamazoo is called “The Way.” The program is meant to involve the whole family and encourages not only learning about our faith but also encourages family prayer time and offers ideas for living out the faith in your daily lives. There isn't a specific kindergarten component with “The Way,” but it would be easy for them to work within the family, especially with the prayer and daily faith experience. If you would like to investigate this further, please feel free to go to <https://diokzoo.org/theway> and check it out! There would be no cost involved with this program. We ask that you let us know each week what your family has learned by completing a simple one page report and emailing or texting a photo of the page to us.

GOD LOVES US (Kindergarten)

VIVOS EN CRISTO/ALIVE IN CHRIST (Grades 1-7)

The textbook option would be for you to use the “Vivos En Cristo” (“Alive In Christ”) or “God Loves Us” textbooks at home with your children. You would work through the lessons with your children and have them complete the chapter and unit reviews. Then, throughout the week we would encourage your child to recall the concepts learned and apply them to their daily lives. As always, we hope that you spend some time helping your children to learn prayers and live the works of mercy every day. We ask that you text or email a photo of the completed reviews so we can track their progress. There is some expense associated with this option since the books have to be purchased.

Kindergarten – God Loves Us _____ \$20

Grade 1-7-Vivos En Cristo/Alive in Christ (Bilingual) _____ \$25

BLESSED FIRST RECONCILIATION/EUCHARIST (Grades 2-5)

Students who are in the second grade or higher who have completed at least one year of religious education and have not received First Reconciliation/First Eucharist should be preparing to receive these sacraments this year. Students in grades 2-5 would use the “Blessed” series of books along with

videos that are available online <https://dynamiccatholic.com/blessed/parent-program/>. The lessons can be completed without the videos, but it is helpful and enjoyable to watch the videos and then read and discuss the lessons. There is quite a bit of repetition, but that helps your child to learn the material. At the end of each chapter there is a “Show What You Learn” and a journaling page. We ask that you take a photo and email or text it to us each week as you complete the lessons. We expect you to complete the Reconciliation book this fall with First Reconciliation in December and First Eucharist in the winter/spring with First Holy Communion in May. We will also provide a booklet entitled “The Mass for Children” for you to help your child learn the responses and postures associated with the Mass. You can work with your child whether you attend in person Mass, watch Mass on TV or online. By the time First Communion comes, your child should be able to participate in the liturgy knowing when to sit and stand as well as knowing the appropriate responses during the Mass

Blessed Reconciliation/First Communion _____ \$20
Bendecido Reconciliacion/Primera Comunion _____ \$20

GOD’S GIFT: RECONCILIATION AND EUCHARIST (Grades 6+)

DON DE DIOS: LA RECONCILIACION Y LA EUCHARISTIA (Grades 6+)

If your child is grade 6 or higher and has had one full year of religious education but has not received First Reconciliation/First Eucharist, we would encourage their preparation for these sacraments as well. For this age group we use “God’s Gift: Reconciliation & Eucharist.” Students would be expected to read and complete each chapter, write out answers to the “Living My Faith” section, and complete a worksheet for each lesson. We ask that you email or text us a photo of the completed work as chapters are completed. We will also provide a booklet entitled “The Mass for Children” to help them to learn the postures and responses used during the Mass. These can be used whether you are attending Mass in person, on TV or online. They should be able to fully participate in the liturgy by the time of their First Holy Communion.

God’s Gift: Reconciliation & Eucharist _____ \$16
Don de Dios: La Reconciliacion y la Eucaristia _____ \$16

CHOSEN (CONFIRMATION Grade 8+)

Preparation for

the Sacrament of Confirmation is a two year program. We typically start with students in grade 8 and Confirmation is conferred in the spring of the 9th grade year at about 15 years of age. Students in grade 8 or higher can be enrolled in the Confirmation program. Students from Confirmation 1 last year will move on to Confirmation 2 and will continue to use the textbook, “Chosen.” New students and those from last year who have lost their textbooks will need to purchase a new one. Lessons may be completed at home with access to the accompanying videos on YouTube. Parents should take time to discuss with the student these lessons and also encourage prayer and faith filled family activities. Students should be challenged intellectually as well as spiritually to live Christ-centered lives. We ask that you take a photo of the completed “Watch It!” page as well as the Challenge of the Week and email or text it to us so we can track your progress.

Second year Confirmation students will also be required to:

1. Participate in a Confirmation retreat. This could be an in person retreat, an online retreat or an at home retreat depending on whatever restrictions for meeting that we may have.
2. Perform some type of service to others. A log of this service should be completed along with a description of how the service relates to the Works of Mercy and God’s presence.
3. Research at least 3 saints and complete a saint report for each. Candidates should use this research to choose a saint name for Confirmation. Reports must be turned in.
4. Choose a sponsor. The sponsor should be a practicing Catholic in good standing with the Church, be at least 16 years of age, be Confirmed in the Catholic Church, may be one of the

candidate's Godparents, but may not be his/her parent. Sponsor form must be completed and turned in.

5. Write a letter to Bishop Bradley to introduce him/her self, tell him why they wish to be confirmed, and ask for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Letters should be addressed to the Most Reverend Paul J. Bradley in a letter format and should be signed with a proper salutation by the candidate.
6. Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and be in a state of grace prior to receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Chosen (Confirmation) _____ \$25

Regardless of the program(s) your children are enrolled in, you may find it helpful to have a copy of the Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. If you already have these at home, great! The information is also available online. But if you would like to have inexpensive copies on hand, we can make them available to you at the cost below:

Bible (softcover)	_____	\$ 6
Biblia (softcover)	_____	\$ 6
Catechism	_____	\$12
Catecismo	_____	\$12

REGISTRATION

We are going to keep this simple for now. If we decide to move to in-person classes after the first of the year, we will need to ask you for more information. I am attaching a simplified registration form for you to complete and return to me. You may also opt to register via an online form that may be found on the faith formation page of the parish website: <https://stmarysniles.org/faith-formation>. We will not be offering in-person registration at this time. Both forms give you the opportunity to order books as needed. The online form gives you the option of using a credit card or making an ACH transaction. Using the paper form, we can only accept cash or a check. If the cost is a problem, please let us know and we will be happy to work with you. No one will be denied faith formation due to an inability to pay!

If you have questions, please feel free to email me at cjralston@sbcglobal.net or call me at the office, 269-683-5087, ext. 16, or text me on my cell 269-362-1730. Together we can make this work!

God bless!

Sincerely,

Cheryl Ralston