



Dear Families,

Over the last few months, Jonathan Galo and I have been reviewing diocesan, state and local policies pertaining to the education of youth during the COVID-19 pandemic. Here in our parishes, our concerns for our Faith Formation program are compounded by the fact that a number of our volunteer catechists are at a higher risk to the virus due to either age or pre-existing health conditions. In addition, the classroom spaces in our buildings are smaller in size than a traditional school classroom, and therefore pose a greater challenge to implementing social distancing protocols.

But with challenges come opportunities. With this in mind, we are developing a very special program for our youth this year, called **“Meet You at the Altar,”** which will focus on the weekend Mass. The Mass is the central form of our worship of God as Catholics, and is a great way for us to grow in our faith through God’s Word, celebrate our faith with one another as a church community, and share our faith through Christ’s presence in the Eucharist.

All students (Grade 1 through Grade 9) will participate in “Meet You at the Altar” which will take the place of our traditional classroom program. In addition, students preparing to receive First Communion (Grade 2) and Confirmation (Grade 9) next spring (2021) will also be required to participate in monthly sessions to prepare them for the reception of the sacraments. All dates can be found on the Faith Formation calendar that has been sent out.

“Meet You at the Altar” allows **YOU** tremendous flexibility **EACH WEEK** in order to accommodate your schedule, and determine when and how your family will participate.

- **Preferred option: Attend Mass as a family** at one of our churches on a Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning/afternoon (over 10 different options). Safety protocols are observed in each of our parishes (wearing masks, hand sanitizing, social distancing, sanitizing of churches after each Mass, etc.). A current Mass schedule for Fall 2020 can be found on the reverse side of the program calendar.
- **Attend a Mass at any other Catholic church** if unable to attend any of our regularly scheduled Masses.
- For those still concerned about attending Mass in church at this time, you **can participate in one of our livestream Masses from St. Anthony’s** (please visit our website at www.falmouthcatholic.org/live-stream).

Each week, after participating at Mass, students will fill out a very simple, age appropriate “journal entry” regarding the Mass that they attended, answering several questions that focus on the message of the Gospel, the homily and other aspects of the Mass (you even get the questions beforehand!) You can choose how you would like to fill out the journal entry:

- **Preferred option:** Online via Canvas (a free (and easy) website which we will explain and give you access to at our first parents meeting)
- Download the journal from our website at www.falmouthcatholic.org/faithformation and email back or hand in at the office or at church at the end of Mass.
- Hard copies—we can provide hard copies of the journal entries at our first parent meetings or you may obtain them at a designated area in each of our churches

The weekly journal entries will be reviewed by a catechist (teacher) assigned to your child’s grade. The catechist will provide occasional feedback on the journal entries and see how your child is

progressing each week. Along with Jonathan, the catechist will be available to answer any question you might have about the program.

In addition to the weekly journal entries, we will also be providing families with additional faith resources which you may choose to use. The core of the “Meet You at the Altar” program as well as these additional resources will give us the flexibility to transition more easily into a classroom setting if possible later in the year.

In order to explain the program and provide important materials for the program, Jonathan and I will ask parents to meet three (3) times during the year. We realize that many of you are already overwhelmed by at-home schooling, so we will keep the responsibility for you and your children to a minimum. And yet, there is **nothing** more important than sharing your faith with your children, for as the Baptism Ritual states, parents are the “first and best” teachers of their children in the ways of faith. Our goal with this program is to have you, as parents, engage with your student in talking about our faith at home.

Our introductory meeting for parents will be held in mid-September on the following dates and times (choose **ONE** from 4 different options):

All meetings will be held at St. Anthony’s (only church with livestream capability)

1. Monday, September 14 at 11:00am
2. Monday, September 14 7:00pm
3. Tuesday, September 15 at 11:00am
4. Tuesday, September 15 at 7:00pm

In keeping with the flexibility of our program, you may attend this meeting in 2 different ways:

- **Preferred option: Attend in-person on one of the given dates above.** All participants must wear a mask and adhere to our safety policies and procedures
- **Watch the meeting live** on our website at www.falmouthcatholic.org/live-stream. We will also record the meeting to watch online at a later time.
 - If you choose this option, you must still make arrangements to meet with Jonathan to pick up important documents that will be handed out to parents during the in-person meeting.

As an additional reminder for those with a sacramental age student, our sacramental programs are typically a 2-year program (typically gr. 1/gr. 2 for 1st Reconciliation/1st Communion, and gr. 8/gr. 9 for Confirmation). Participation in the “Meet You at the Altar” program is expected not only for those planning on receiving the sacraments this year (Spring 2021), but also for those who are entering into gr. 1 and gr. 8 in order to be considered to receive the sacraments with their class next year (Spring 2022).

As in past years, you may register for the program at www.falmouthcatholic.org/faithformation or with the enclosed form. The program fee for this year will be \$25/student. This is reduced from last year and will go to covering materials and operational costs for our program. We recognize that the ongoing pandemic has put a financial strain on some of our families, if you are unable to pay the registration fee at this time, please contact Jonathan to make arrangements.

It is my hope that “**Meet You at the Altar**” will be a fresh approach, and a new “opportunity” for you and your children to grow in your Catholic faith. I hope you will consider participating this year. If there are any questions, please feel free to contact Jonathan at jgalo@falmouthcatholic.org or 508-548-3515. Know of my prayers for you and your family, especially during these challenging times.

Yours in Christ,

