

Dear RE Parent,

I hope that you and your family are doing well during this difficult time in our world. While the past months have been challenging to people in so many ways, we now look forward to new opportunities. Some of the new opportunities will be opening up as we come together as a unified parish. As you may have heard, as of July 1st, we were formally named, *St. Alphonsus & St. Patrick Church*. We are a unified parish with a unified religious education program. One of the new opportunities, necessitated by the need for an abundance of caution, is to offer faith formation in a new way.

We have been chosen, along with several other parishes, to participate in the Family Faith Formation Pilot Program sponsored by the Archdiocese of Chicago Office of Lifelong Formation. The program is designed for children in **Grades 2-6** to offer their families a "simplified" approach to faith formation for this upcoming year. We will take a similar approach with **Grades 7 & 8** in adapting our own Confirmation program. We will not be offering virtual learning for **PreK - First Grade**. The Archdiocese does not suggest virtual learning for this age group, and encourages parents to read Bible stories with their young ones and have basic conversations about the faith. We will provide resources for parents. Please include your PreK-First Grader on the application for information purposes. There will be **no** tuition charge.

We have been called upon to make significant program adjustments to ensure the health and safety of all students, families, and volunteers during the unusual time we find ourselves in. As can be seen in a number of schools, we will be starting off the first 3 months of the program year with a 100% virtual and online learning format. As we move into 2021, we will evaluate the possibility of going to a hybrid format, combining some in-person sessions with virtual sessions.

Our Virtual/Hybrid Family Faith Formation Program is designed to:

- Strengthen families by engaging parents in small ways, encouraging personal faith development and faith sharing in families, and helping families to practically live out their faith together while connecting with our parish community
- Offer essential religious instruction in brief virtual segments to limit screen time for children and create more time for families to engage in faith-sharing outside of formal religious education classes. When possible, we will consider including in-person sessions in our program.

What our Family Faith Formation Program will look like:

This year will focus on faith formation for parents, students, and families .

- Note: We recognize that parents are the primary influence in their child's faith development, so this year we plan increase our efforts to support you in the faith formation of your family.

The content of our faith formation lessons and activities will be centered on the Liturgical Year Sunday Mass Readings. This will help connect all parents, students, and families to the life of the Church & Scripture.

- Note: As families learn more about the Sunday Mass Readings, we hope that you'll be able to discuss Scripture together and grow in faith as a family.

Two student and one parent 30-minute virtual sessions will be held each month on Zoom.

- Note: Classes will start virtually this year, but that may change as we assess health and safety guidelines. We will keep you apprised of state & Archdiocesan guidelines and our assessment process.

Our schedule this year looks very different than it has in previous years. Since the program will be focused on Sunday Mass Readings, our class weeks may vary each month. We have not yet determined the dates and times of the sessions (don't worry; we'll give you a clear schedule, updates, and reminders throughout the year).

It is difficult to estimate costs at this time with the uncertainties related to the possibility of having on-site sessions at some point, and the unknowns with a combined parish. Our religious education tuition has never covered all of our costs. Both parishes have subsidized our programs by 20-30%. Since Weekly Mass offerings and contributions to the parish have been drastically reduced over the last 6 months, the parish cannot afford to subsidize the program at the same rate. At the same time, we realize that families have also been impacted financially by the shut-downs. Accordingly, we have reduced last year's tuition rates to the following:

\$250 – One Child
\$425 – Two Children
\$550 – Three Children
\$625 – Four Children or more

We ask that you please submit payment with your application. If you cannot submit the entire amount at this time, please include a down payment and a payment plan. Checks should be payable to St. Alphonsus & St. Patrick Parish and can be mailed to 210 E. Logan Street.

Please be aware that no child will be excluded from the program due to financial difficulties.

Even if you are unable to make a payment at this time, please mail or drop off your application. Contact us to request a payment plan or financial assistance.

We hope that you will appreciate the safety and convenience of our program this year. During this challenging time, we want to help your family stay connected to our parish and grow in your faith, and we believe this model of faith formation will do that. We are committed to providing a quality faith formation experience this year that is nourishing and enriching for your entire family. God bless you.

Together In Christ,

Kevin Cody, DRE
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