

**Saint Mary Parish  
Office of Religious Education**

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***“Prayer: The Faith Prayed”  
The Year of Mercy***

Dear Parents:

I hope and pray my letter finds you rested from Summer activities and joyfully active with your children in the new beginnings of the Fall season! This letter is to inform you about the beginning of the 2016/2017 Religious Education Program at St. Mary Parish.

**Program will begin with Orientation for all Children and a Parent  
the week of Catechetical Sunday – September 18 to September 22, during your child’s  
scheduled session time!**

The Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis is pleased to announce the release of the 2016 Catechetical Sunday focused on the theme: ***“Prayer: The Faith Prayed.”*** ... Those who serve as catechists will be called forth to be commissioned for their ministry. Catechetical Sunday is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the role that each person plays, by virtue of Baptism, in handing on the faith and being a witness to the Gospel. Catechetical Sunday is an opportunity for all to rededicate themselves to this mission as a community of faith. (USCCB)

This year’s theme invites all the baptized -especially catechists and Catholic school teachers- to devote themselves to a deeper study and practice of prayer, for their own spiritual good and for the good of those they serve...Part Four of the Catechism of the Catholic Church provides an excellent overview of prayer. Another very helpful resource can be found in chapters 35 and 36 of the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (USCCA). The Catechisms often refer to what the saints have said about prayer. For example, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, for whom “...prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.” Or St. Francis de Sales, who says that “every one of us needs half an hour of prayer each day except when we’re busy –then we need an hour.” (USCCB)

We will start the year with time to bless and commission our wonderful Catechists, Peer Helpers and Aides as we begin our time together.

We will also bless and commission our wonderful Parents, the first teachers of their children, as they share the Word of the Lord in their homes and instill and share their faith as a family!

Please join us as we pray that our Catechists will magnify the presence of Christ as we approach the challenge of living as a disciple, and by seeking ways to be more mindful of Christ’s life within us!

Beginning on **September 25<sup>th</sup>**, children will be in their classrooms.

**Class Assignments** Your child’s assignment will be sent in separate cover through email. Please make note of your child’s grade, room # and Catechist’s name. There are still some classes without a Catechist.

If there is no section and Catechist name on the slip, please call the office before bringing your child to class the week of September 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Calendar and Schedule** are posted on the website, and a copy is included in this mailing, so that you will know when sessions are being held. The schedule on back is to inform you of the **Sacrament** schedules, **Family Masses for all Grade levels**, and **special events**.

**Parent Volunteers!** If you have any available time during your child's class time, please stop into the office! There are always many things to do and an extra pair of hands is always welcome!

**Catechists and Aides Needed** I also ask you to consider becoming a Catechist or Catechist Aide. **Training and mentoring support are available!** The Families of our children most often volunteer to serve the needs of the Parish Catechetical Program. We cannot adequately deliver the best experience of Christ's love to our children if we have inadequate staffing. **Please help us to do our best!**

### **The Mass**

Religious Education classes **do not fulfill our obligation** as practicing Catholics to attend Mass weekly. Weekly participation in the Mass is vitally important for the children in the Religious Education program. The instruction the children receive is based on their knowledge and participation of the family in the worship of the Liturgy. It remains the Family obligation for weekly Mass attendance.

I share my concern for your sharing of the sacredness and beauty of the Liturgy of the Mass with your children. **Please remember that our Sunday obligation of the Mass is a loving request of God to worship Him above all. The Mass is the greatest prayer of the Church. We gather in community to listen to the Word of God, and to share in His Divine Sacrifice of love for us. As children grow in their participation and understanding of the Mass, they will learn more about their personal faith and the love, strength and guidance Jesus offers to us in the Eucharist and in God's Word. The Mass, the family and Religious Education are not mutually exclusive but are finely partnered in the formation of the faith life of the child.**

***And please keep all of our Catechists, Catechist Aides, and Prayer Helpers- these faithful people of God - in your prayers as they now prepare their lesson plans and anticipate the coming year. They are the most talented and generous of volunteers in God's service and they deserve our thanks!***

If you have any questions, please call the Religious Education Office. We hope that once again Saint Mary Parish will be able to provide an excellent program of religious instruction for your child and a welcome environment for your family. With the dedication of our wonderful group of Catechists and Aides, and with your help and support, we will.

With God's Blessings,

*Mrs. Patricia Postiglione*

Mrs. Patricia Postiglione, Director, Religious Education

cc.: Msgr. Bronkiewicz, Pastor