

April 23, 2021

Dear St. Ann Parish Families,

We are introducing new initiatives to our Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) at St. Ann Parish. We are looking forward to your family starting to or continuing to be a part of our program.

These ideas came about as a result of researching the most successful ways in which children learn the faith. The results show that unless parents take a primary role in the religious education of their children, nothing will stick. We have also seen this put into practice for the last year and a half as parents took the lead as we, the parish staff, served as a support to our families. Families raising their children in the faith is the most solid education a child can receive.

We have always operated on the principle that parents are the primary educators of their children in religious education. During the last 18 months, however, we have had to dive more deeply into this principle as classroom instruction became impossible and home-based instruction became our only option. While none of us welcomed the public health restrictions, we have been seeing that religious formation focusing on the family as a whole and supporting the domestic church has been in some ways a plus.

We have always and will continue to support parents in their responsibility of handing on the faith to their children. Our commitment to quality and Christ-centered teaching remains unchanged. It is our intention however to take steps to enrich and improve the way parents and children experience and practice faith formation in our parish. Moving forward we will continue to focus more on forming the family as a whole and on supporting the domestic church.

Our program improvements include three main components:

**Web-based, self-paced learning** Instead of having children sit at desks and listen to a catechist's lecture at the front of the classroom, we're going put into practice the "flipped classroom" model. This is a learning approach which moves away from the old-fashioned classroom toward more of an individual learning model, which allows for children to learn at whatever pace is most appropriate for them. Instead of having to attend weekly class sessions at the parish, students will be completing weekly lessons at home, wherever and whenever it suits your family.

All home based lesson plans will be provided for families. While each lesson typically takes 30-60 minutes to complete, each child (Grades K-6) can take the lessons at his/her own pace, with a parent's help as needed to reinforce concepts. Those lessons will deliver the grade-level content and faith-based knowledge children should be learning about the Catholic faith at each developmental stage. The parish will guide you to videos and other interactive and engaging activities which are available through our textbook's publisher and many other reputable Catholic platforms making learning fun and easy to remember.

**Bi-Monthly Parent/Student Catechesis** With content being covered through home based lessons, we can then come together with families to gather in multi-generational groups and engage in a more dynamic, interactive learning environment. This gives us the opportunity to engage with the teachings of the faith in fun and new ways which will help to foster a deeper love of Christ. At least one parent/guardian must be in attendance. These will be similar to the monthly gatherings we provided this year but gradually increasing in size as indoor limits increase and we determine parish building availability. These gathering dates, times, and locations will be communicated closer to the start of the PREP year.

**Community Prayer Services** To help foster a sense of community among our families, we will have three Prayer Services during the PREP year. These are intended for families. At least one parent/guardian must be in attendance. These will be held in Chapel. Multiple dates for each Prayer Service will be offered in order to accommodate various schedules, but also to be able to fit the large number of families that we do have in our program.

We understand that all of us have busy schedules and that some days and times won't work for everyone. We hope to be able to offer a variety of days and times as we gather families together throughout the year.

As we come closer to the conclusion of the 2020-21 year, we ask that you take few minutes to complete a family questionnaire. The following link will take you to a Google Form on which you will find 5 questions regarding your family's experience over the last year of religious education. Thank you in advance.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScZkMMw-PePCtSYx1cmiOkvYqkU3zEyGUY967NVcO-dzZunw/viewform>

We look forward to this new endeavor with you, as we think this format will help us to better encounter Christ as a family and meet children where they are as 21st century learners.

We look forward to continuing as your partners in the faith formation of your children at St. Ann Parish!

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Julie Prichett at 610-755-1077 or [youthstann@comcast.net](mailto:youthstann@comcast.net)

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