

July 30, 2020

Dear St. Nicholas Parents,

Welcome to the 2020-21 Religious Education program. We hope that you are having a wonderful summer and that everyone in your family has remained healthy.

As we begin planning for fall classes, we realize that there are a lot of unknowns at this time. We are still not certain about what the public schools will do or how family schedules will be impacted, but we would like to see all of our families again on a regular basis while still adhering to the CDC recommendations for safety.

At this time, we are planning to return to religious education classes on a modified schedule. We are proposing that we meet with every class once a month and that the students would be expected to complete the other three lessons at home during the "off" weeks. This will allow us to spread out our 276 students over 4 weeks and only have about 69 students in the building at one time.

Week 1—> Grades K-2 @ 5:30 & 7:00

Week 2—> Grades 3-5 @ 5:30 & 7:00

Week 3—> Grades 6-8 @ 5:30 & 7:00

Week 4—> Grades 9-10

In order to do this, we will need to rely on the help of our parents as teachers not only at home, but once a month as a leader for a grade level. Please contact me if you are willing to help lead a group of students once a month. I am hoping that with the reduced time commitment, that we will have twice as many teachers so that our class sizes can be between 5-7 students.

If everything returns to normal at some point this fall or spring, we can easily adapt our classes to meeting weekly.

Registration Form. A registration form is required **each year**. The form needs to be filled out completely and turned in by **September 2** for your child to be placed in a class. There will be a \$15 late fee for registrations received after **September 2** in addition to the \$35 registration fee. The \$35 registration fee (\$10 for teachers or \$115 for a family of 4+) is **due** when you return the form. The fee covers only the cost of the textbooks and some of the supplies. Textbooks will be issued to students when the registration fee is paid. If there are problems with payment at this time, **please let me know** (by writing a note on your form, calling, emailing, or speaking to Fr. Fitzpatrick if you prefer) and we will make adjustments.

Calendar. **Classes this year begin September 9.** Calendars with lesson plans will be sent at a later date.

Parent Handbook. The Parent Handbook gives information on various policies and guidelines for our program. Please read the Parent Handbook and indicate you have done so by signing the statement at the bottom of the registration form. **Save the handbook** as a reference for the entire year.

Class Times and Locations. Class times will be from 5:30-6:30 and 7-8 pm as they were last year. We will assist your children with finding their classroom. They will go directly to the classroom when they arrive so we do not have too many people gathering in one area. The number of class sections offered will be contingent upon available teachers. If you would like to teach class or have your child enrolled in the early class session, please indicate that on the registration form.

Mass: Parents are invited and encouraged to attend Mass when it is celebrated during Religious Education class times. Students sit with their *families* at the Masses. Please refer to the calendar for the dates for Mass.

Safe Environment Training. Each year, the Diocese of Sioux Falls requires all teachers and anyone working with children in our Religious Education program to participate in Safe Environment Training. We are also required by the Diocese to teach age appropriate safe environment lessons to students. Information about the safe environment curriculum is available from me upon request. Parents may also be present during the safe environment lessons presented in their child's class.

I would love to hear your thoughts about this plan. Please reach out to me with your questions, concerns, uncertainties or to volunteer to help us. We will work to schedule the classes the best we can with the teachers that we have. (I know that I may get a question about teaching more than one grade level, such as ... I have a child who is in Kindergarten and one who is a third grader and I would be willing to teach both of my children's classes since it is only one night a month and I will be driving them anyway. Can I do that?... The answer is Yes, we will schedule classes to accommodate our teachers the best we can.)

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

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