

# FAMILY OF FAITH



## *Introductions*

Greetings and grace, families of St. Mary! I can't tell you how excited I am to get to know you and walk this journey into a new method of catechesis with you.

I come to you from Sacred Heart Church in Racine, where I was the pastoral associate. There, I directed Family Faith Formation and grew it from the halt it had been placed in during the pandemic. Over the years I have learned a lot about what works and doesn't work in family catechesis, and together with God I am sure we will grow in faith and knowledge as a community.

My husband Mike and I have been married for seven years and we have three kids- Matthias is our personal saint, our preschool daughter Clare, and our toddler son Michael. They are social butterflies and no doubt will make fast friends with all of you.

I hope to put out a newsletter for you each month. We will go over main points of the month's lesson, answer any questions you might send in for this newsletter, talk about

upcoming events, and build you up in your office of parent and catechist.

Do you know how many times the Lord tells us to 'be not afraid' in Sacred Scripture? Three hundred and sixty-five. That's one for each day of the year. It's almost as if that was planned! He is saying it to each of you. By making you guardians and parents of these children you love, God has granted you the gifts you need to hand on the Faith to them. I am here to support you in whatever way you need, and I am on this journey with you (see: the ages of my children!)

Be assured that I pray for each of you daily. I hope that as this program grows, as we begin to approach formation as a community of individual journeys rather than a program for our souls to force ourselves to fit into, we will grow closer in faith to God and shine Christ's light even brighter on Hales Corners.

— Jess Panlener

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# Characteristics of your child

A useful resource for parents, grandparents, and guardians of any child in the Church is a document that was published by the Archdiocesan Office of Catechesis and Youth Ministry in 2018 called the Grade Specific Religious Education Curriculum. Don't let the title make you nervous. This document describes core religious concepts that the child can reasonably grasp at their developmental level, and also gives characteristics of the child.

For example, a first grader characteristically becomes aware of social justice issues at the age of seven or eight, and may begin to question their parent, grandparent, or guardian about the existence of injustice and evil. A fourth grader may begin to show increasing interest in the marginalized and show a sense of

injustice about poverty.

This document is too long to be printed here but since this newsletter is received and viewed electronically, you can find and download it by following this link:

<https://www.archmil.org/CentersofExcellence/DOCsPDFs/Grade-Specific-Religious-Ed-Curriculum-2018.pdf>

Please take a look at this document, especially focusing on your own children's grade levels. Personally, I found it very useful in understanding my own four year old. By paying attention to what she can reasonably be expected to understand and learn, our faith conversations have grown deeper, and she has been learning about the Faith far better.

## Upcoming Events

You may have seen these on your Faith Formation calendar, but reminders are always helpful!

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November 19 and 20: Lasagna Feeding the Hungry 10:15a Sun and 6p Monday

November 23 and 24: Parish Office Closed

November 25: Installation Mass of Pastor Aaron, 4p

December 2 and 5: Family Celebrations of First Reconciliation, 9a Sat and 6:30p Tues

December 3 and 4: Family Session #3, 10:15a Sun and 6p Mon

December 10: Advent Holy Hour, 4p

Please see the parish website for Mass information over the holidays.

*Of the two strongest connections to faith maturity, family religiousness is slightly more important than lifetime exposure to Christian education. The particular family experiences that are most tied to greater faith maturity are the frequency with which an adolescent talked with mother and faith about faith, the frequency of family devotions, and the frequency with which parents and children together were involved in efforts, formal or informal, to help other people. Each of these family experiences is more powerful than frequency with which an adolescent sees his or her parents engage in religious behavior like church attendance. (Benson and Eklin, 38)*

EFFECTIVE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION STUDY BY THE SEARCH INSTITUTE

Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and service are the rule.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 2223

Beginning the weekend of November 18 and 19, Advent and Christmastide retreat booklets will be available at all Masses. These booklets give ideas for prayer and activities during the Advent and Christmas season and are appropriate for all parishioners and families. Be sure to take one and follow along with us on the liturgical calendar during December and January!