



ST. ANDRÉ BESSETTE PARISH

P.O. Box 547, Malone, NY 12953 • 518-483-1300 • Fax 518-483-1307

August 21, 2017

Dear Parishioners:

It's with great enthusiasm that I announce the start of an exciting new approach to religious education here at St. André's:

A FAMILY OF *Faith*

As I've already shared with you from the pulpit and in the bulletin, the basic idea behind this new program is *to teach the Catholic faith to parents, that they might then teach the faith to their own children.*

On hearing about this concept, some parents have expressed the concern, "But I'm not trained as a teacher! And I'm worried I don't know enough about our religion!" As Jesus told us so often, I repeat: *Do not be afraid!* Who do you think has been teaching in our religious education classes all these years? Parents just like you! Sure, a few of them have had careers as teachers...but it's been pretty rare to find a trained theologian among them. As a parent, you will be provided with the material and tools you need to accomplish this crucial task. And there's something more that you've already been given...

Whenever a child is baptized in the Catholic Church, the child's parents are reminded that, in asking for his or her baptism, they are accepting the responsibility of training their son or daughter in the practice of the faith and the duty to bring him or her up to keep God's commandments. The religious education of their own children is part of the God-given vocation of parents, and the Lord never calls us to do something without also giving us everything we need to accomplish it. So, on top of the essential material and tools our parish will provide, *God has given you his grace to do this!* And that's something no teacher in the classroom could ever claim.

The back of this page should answer most of your questions about what this program involves. Please read it very carefully. Then complete the enclosed registration form and return it to the parish office as soon as possible—no later than Wednesday, September 6. All families must be registered in advance to take part in this new program.

The first parent session for *A Family of Faith* is scheduled for Sunday, September 10, 9:15am-10:45am, and will be held in the parish hall at St. John Bosco Church. Childcare will be available in Frassati House (St. John Bosco rectory). Please be prompt.

I look forward to embarking on this new venture with you and allowing Jesus to transform St. André's into *a family of faith.*

In Christ's peace,

Fr. Joseph Giroux
Pastor

Do you have a few questions?

■ **Why is St. André's Parish making this big change in religious education?**

To put it bluntly: because our "traditional" Sunday School/CCD program is no longer working. Its past success depended on families regularly participating in Sunday Mass and actively practicing their faith at home...but these can no longer be taken for granted. *A Family of Faith* fosters both.

■ **How does *A Family of Faith* work?**

A *parent session* (90 minutes) is held near the beginning of each month, to help parents deepen their own knowledge of the Catholic faith. (While only one parent is required to attend, both are highly encouraged to do so—which is why childcare will be provided.) There are two *at-home lessons* (30-45 minutes each) to be completed per month, with additional activities to help make the Catholic faith a part of your family's daily life. And then there is a *community meeting* (90 minutes) near the end of each month, which is for the entire family, to build community and ensure accountability.

■ **Where is this all happening? And what's the schedule? We're a busy family!**

There's a lot more flexibility in *A Family of Faith* than in a traditional religious education program. Parent sessions (and most community meetings) will be held in the parish hall at St. John Bosco Church from 9:15am-10:45am, in order to allow your family to attend Mass either beforehand or afterwards. You determine when to do the two monthly lessons—at home, on your family's schedule, and at your child's level. The program runs from September to May. A calendar for the year will be provided at the first parent session.

■ **Who is this for? What if we don't have children or our kids are grown?**

The at-home lessons are geared for kids in grades K-8...but all parishioners are most welcome to get involved. Teens can help teach younger siblings, or assist with childcare. All adults can come and benefit from the teaching during the parent sessions, and those without their own children might consider volunteering to accompany and mentor another family that could use a helping hand.

■ **What about First Penance, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation?**

Specific preparation to receive these Sacraments is something separate from *A Family of Faith*, and additional information will be provided. However, families who have children that will receive one of these Sacraments either this year (2107-2018) or next (2018-2019) must either participate in *A Family of Faith* or be enrolled at Holy Family School.

■ **Who is running this program?**

A team of more than a dozen volunteers from the parish is coordinating *A Family of Faith*. Be sure to thank them when you meet them at parent sessions and community gatherings, and say a prayer for them as you benefit from all of their hard work behind the scenes.

■ **Why is there a cost for registration?**

We believe this small investment by each family will make a big return, while also encouraging a family's ongoing involvement. The annual fee of \$25 does not even cover the cost of the books used for the program (leave alone other expenses and materials) and will help to ease our very tight parish budget. *Please know that no family will be turned away because of an inability to pay.*

■ **Do you want to learn more about *A Family of Faith*?**

Visit the publisher's webpage at <https://sophiainstituteforteachers.org/shop/family-of-faith>.

1. Child's Name: _____
Church/Place of Baptism: _____
Date of Birth: _____ Age: _____ Sex: Male Female
Grade this Fall: _____ Food Allergies: _____
I/we would also like this 1st Penance/1st Holy Communion Confirmation
child to prepare for... [2nd Grade & older] [7th Grade & older]

2. Child's Name: _____
Church/Place of Baptism: _____
Date of Birth: _____ Age: _____ Sex: Male Female
Grade this Fall: _____ Food Allergies: _____
I/we would also like this 1st Penance/1st Holy Communion Confirmation
child to prepare for... [2nd Grade & older] [7th Grade & older]

3. Child's Name: _____
Church/Place of Baptism: _____
Date of Birth: _____ Age: _____ Sex: Male Female
Grade this Fall: _____ Food Allergies: _____
I/we would also like this 1st Penance/1st Holy Communion Confirmation
child to prepare for... [2nd Grade & older] [7th Grade & older]

4. Child's Name: _____
Church/Place of Baptism: _____
Date of Birth: _____ Age: _____ Sex: Male Female
Grade this Fall: _____ Food Allergies: _____
I/we would also like this 1st Penance/1st Holy Communion Confirmation
child to prepare for... [2nd Grade & older] [7th Grade & older]

Attach any additional pages or information as necessary

Please return this completed form (by mail or in the Sunday collection basket)
to the parish office as soon as possible—no later than **Wednesday, September 6.**

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