

**St. Mary of the Annunciation Parish**  
**Religious Education**  
**24 Conant Street**  
**Danvers, MA 01923**

Dear St. Mary's Families,

Welcome to St. Mary's Religious Education for 2020-2021! Our world has certainly changed so much in the past 6 months, and so has our faith formation program. So much needed to be considered before beginning another new year. The Archdiocese of Boston strongly recommended that we delay our opening this year, so as to accommodate families trying to make the needed adjustments for a new and very different school year. And our Notre Dame Center has been permanently closed. We had much to discern in moving forward to provide a quality faith formation program that would be safe for our students, our families, and our catechists.

Precisely because we are in such a unique time right now, we feel that this is the best time, and, in fact, an opportunity to focus on the domestic church, the family! We will be using a new program this year for all of our students in Grades 1-8. Beginning this fall, our Religious Education program will be an at-home family centered program. Our mission and focus will be on the Mass. Whether you chose to attend Mass in person, or watch it live-streamed from St. Mary's at 10:00AM on Sunday mornings, sharing in the celebration of the Mass is the best way to stay connected to God and our parish family. In addition, the program that we will be using to support your understanding of the Mass and our Catholic faith is called *Pflaum Gospel Weeklies*. These are simple weekly magazine style lessons, with content that flows from the Sunday Gospel, and children learn their faith within the rhythms of the liturgical year - Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary Time. It promotes family involvement because all children are studying lessons based on the same Gospel proclaimed in church on Sunday. It offers opportunities for family prayer, questions, and discussion. In addition, each child will receive a Catechism handbook - *What the Church Believes and Teaches*. The handbook leads children to understand the basics of the Catholic faith. The weekly lessons inspire them to seek out ways to practice their faith in their daily lives.

We will support you along the journey! There are teaching guides that accompany this program. The simple, direct, and customized lesson plans link Gospel and doctrine - and apply both to a child's lived experience. There is also a new and improved website that offers each level of the *Weeklies* a variety of activities and additional teaching materials which can be used at home. We will be purchasing both print and digital versions of this program. In addition, we will gather through Zoom parent meetings to see how you are doing, offer suggestions, see what is working well, and sharing ideas! We will offer more detailed information on this program as we move forward. There will be more to come!

If you feel that you need more support, we would like to offer this program through Zoom video conferencing, at a specified time of the week, which is still to be determined. Since

this will be an online platform, we are required to have two adults in each Zoom meeting. That means that we will need additional volunteers to help make this happen. We must have a sufficient number of children and volunteers to ensure the virtual learning. If you would like to help in this area, please note that you will need to complete a CORI form, and complete the online Virtus training, *Protecting God's Children* safety program that we require each year from all of our catechists, hall monitors, and support staff. We would be happy to discuss this further with you. Simply let me know of your desire to help out!

For our families with children who are in Grade 2 this year, your children will also participate in this program. In addition, there will be traditional books for you, to help you prepare your child for the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist. We will also have Family Zoom meetings to support you and your child during this most important year!

There is one last important detail. We would like to **start this program on Sunday, October 25**. That means that we have a short time to receive registrations. **We must have your registration by Thursday, October 1<sup>st</sup>** so that we can place our order the next day. It takes 2 weeks to ship, and then we have to sort out and pack together the necessary materials for each family. We will determine a date and time for a Drive-By, Pick Up Parish Event so that you will have your materials in time for October 25. That is our hope! We will soon have additional and updated information on our webpage, [www.stmarydanvers.org](http://www.stmarydanvers.org), as well as schedules and links to the registration forms. We will send along an additional email message, along with the links to the registration forms, once they are available. Please continue to check our website. The best way to reach me right now is through email, which is [jdigennaro@stmarydanvers.org](mailto:jdigennaro@stmarydanvers.org) Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Through the many uncertainties of this particular time, there is one thing that we know that is certain. We know that God is with us... in each and every circumstance, moment, and breath of our life! God loves us with an everlasting love. He calls us to himself, and values each and every one of us. We each have a very special mission in this life, a special role to play. Let us continue to journey together, in faith, to help each other and our children to grow in that love and in a deeper relationship with our friend, Jesus!

Blessings,

Judy DiGennaro