

July 28, 2009

Dear Parents of Junior High Students,

We look forward to welcoming your child this fall to the **Junior High Religious Education Program**, which includes students in **Grades 6, 7, and 8**. Classes are scheduled to begin on **September 13, 2009**. In an effort to avoid conflicts with sports and other after school activities, junior high sessions are held on **Sunday mornings from 9:30 AM-12:00 Noon, which includes attendance at the 11:00 Mass**. Students will have the option of sitting with their class during Mass or joining their family if also in attendance.

These challenging years of adolescence can be stressful for parents and youth alike, and we at St. John wish to offer ongoing support in your parenting goal to raise your young teen in the Catholic faith. That faith will sustain them and become an integral part of their decision making as they face the day-to-day challenges of adolescence. Together with you, we will work to encourage your adolescent to make participation in their Religious Education a priority, as well as fun, inviting, and interactive for them. Here is what one student had to say about the Junior High Religious Education program:

“St. John (Junior High) Religious Education has been a great experience! I’ve learned a lot about my faith. The teachers are great! They’re great role models for me. They teach by using activities and discussion to understand the lessons, instead of reading a textbook and doing a worksheet. I’ve made many close friends through the classes. I like seeing my Catholic friends at CJHS and other youth activities. I would recommend Junior High Religious Ed classes to anyone.”

The curriculum we use is **Harcourt Religion Publishers’ Call to Faith** program, which has been approved by the Diocese of Evansville. Divided into six-session mini courses, this curriculum offers the opportunity to deliver material in a youth ministry type setting, rather than a school-like classroom setting. With a diversity of prayer and a carefully crafted activity strand in every lesson, **Call to Faith** truly connects young adolescents to the worship, learning, service, and community life of the parish. **Call to Faith** encourages youth to rely on their faith as they navigate the changes and challenges of life today – providing meaningful opportunities for faith formation. You can learn more about this curriculum by visiting the Harcourt Publishing website at **your.harcourtreligion.com**.

Individual catechists are assigned to teach each text subject, and the students rotate through each subject at six session intervals. Supplemental activities and seasonal studies are incorporated throughout the year to round out the program and provide the youth with the opportunity to interact with their peers in the other classes. Eighth graders will complete the program as they come together to study **Liturgy** and plan and participate in Sunday Liturgy during the 5:30 PM Youth Mass in May.

Enclosed you will find a registration form. To assist us in planning sufficiently for your child, we ask that you **please return your completed registration form by August 19**. The **registration fee is \$45.00 per child**, or \$100.00 for three or more children enrolled in any religious education grade level.

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However, the registration fee is **discounted to \$35.00 per child**, or \$90.00 for three or more children if the registration is **received by Monday, August 19**. Registration fees for non-parishioners are noted on the registration form. Please know that the registration fee and cost of a Bible, as noted below, will be confidentially lowered or waived should it present a financial hardship. Registration fees are also waived for families whose parent(s) are serving as catechists in any religious education program.

Each student is required to have a copy of **The New American Bible; The Catholic Youth Bible** published by **St. Mary's Press**. If your child does not already have a copy of this Bible, we will have it available to purchase on the first day of classes for a price of only **\$8.00 each**. (These Bibles sell for as much as \$25.00 in the bookstore.)

For many students, junior high also marks a new dimension in their life as Catholics - the beginning of a **youth ministry** program. As directed by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, **"youth ministry works to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person, while seeking to draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the faith community."** Throughout the year, your adolescent will be invited to participate in various youth ministry activities, which include all sixth, seventh, and eighth grade youth of our parish from all public and St. John schools. In participating in these activities, your child will feel more and more at home in his/her parish, as s/he develops new and lasting friendships and an eagerness to participate in religious education and parish life. **The Junior High Youth Ministry Newsletter** will be mailed to you and your child with details of the activities as they are planned throughout the year. We hope that you will encourage your child to become involved with their **St. John Junior High Youth Ministry**.

Maybe you, or someone you know, would like to also join our religious education or youth ministry programs. We are currently **seeking parents and young adults to serve as catechists** in this program, as well as **youth ministry volunteers**. Complete (though not too time consuming) training and materials are provided, and we strive to offer ongoing support. The requirements are simple: to relate comfortably with young people; to give directions and lead activities with a group of ten to fifteen participants; to give short presentations from outlined material; to speak with comfort and conviction about one's faith and experiences as a Catholic Christian. If you are interested in learning more about becoming a catechist or volunteering with youth ministry activities, please indicate so at the designated space on the registration form.

Feel free to contact me at the parish office should you desire further information about becoming a catechist, or if you have any questions or comments about the program overall. Again, we look forward to supporting your child's faith development and to meeting you and your child in September.

Sincerely,

Cindy Shoulders
Coordinator of Religious Education
and Junior High Youth Ministry