

August 7, 2020

St. Philip the Apostle Religious Education Office
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Website: st-phil.org

Dear Families,

I pray this letter finds you well and enjoying a beautiful summer. As you surely remember, last year's classes ended so abruptly that we were unable to send any information home with your children. I hope you have received all of the registration information that has been sent out electronically via School Messenger. If not, forms are available on our parish website at st-phil.org.

I have been working on and praying about the upcoming school year and what our religious education program might look like. I was required by the Diocese of Joliet to submit a plan for the fall including: building procedures, cleaning protocol, social distancing, and contact tracing requirements for COVID-19. Fr. Steve Bondi, Parish Business Manager Steve DiBrito, St. Philip the Apostle School Principal Julie Noonan, RE Administrative Assistant Barb Nicolai, and I have discussed all of the options for in-classroom learning. Taking into account the safety of our religious education students and volunteers, funding limitations, and space restrictions which make it difficult to have classes in the school building, we have reached a consensus and will implement a family-centered, remote-learning religious education program for the 2020/2021 school year. It is my intention and hope that this will be a wonderful and prayerful experience for families. For that reason, we will provide textbooks along with a schedule for learning. I am developing an on-line Gospel Weekly, which will be available through our website, as well as many more digital resources to use as needed and desired. The only grades that will be required to attend virtual class sessions will be Grades 2 and 8 who are preparing for the Sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation. Their classes will be held via Google Meet or a similar platform. Attendance is required for the students to receive their Sacraments. Catechists for the remaining grades will contact the families on a regular basis to check in and stay in touch. Should the State of Illinois return to Phase 1 or 2 and require students to work from home for their public school classes, I do not want families to have the added stress of more screen time with religious education work. I hope your religion studies will become a time of family prayer and faith discussion, rather than a log-in on the computer. It is our intention and plan to return to in-classroom learning in the fall of 2021. I hope you will stay with us this year so your child does not miss important preparation for the next grade level. As in the past, tuition for home study is the same as in-classroom study.

I will be in contact with you regarding dates and times for pick-up of materials and, as always, will keep you informed of any changes and on-going updates. Please know you and your family are in my prayers as we move forward in these trying times. It is my hope you will be safe and healthy throughout.

God's blessings,

Nancy McKnight, Director of Religious Education