



OUR LADY of MERCY
CATHOLIC CHURCH

701 South Eola Road, Aurora, IL 60504

www.olmercy.com | 630.851.3444

4 August 2020

Dear Families in our K-5 Religious Education Program:

For the past couple of months, like the public school districts, we at Our Lady of Mercy have been discussing how best to offer religious education classes this fall that will put the safety of our children, families, catechists and staff a priority.

To that end, we have decided that for this year it is best that we not conduct classes for K-5 in our parish facilities. The requirements of social distancing severely reduces the number of children we can accommodate in our classrooms. Other Diocesan and State requirements just make it more feasible to offer a family based program done at home instead of in classroom instruction.

This family based program has been reviewed by myself, our RE Staff, and with a parent committee. All agree that this program is easy for parents to lead, is not overly time consuming, and has many advantages. The program is steeped in our faith story, is done with all your children K-5 at the same time, once a week at your convenience. Parents will be provided all the support they need from Mary Jo and our RE Staff. It is hoped that in the spring we will be able to offer some in-person family gathering/activities in our facilities.

Please see Mary Jo's description of the program below. We think that once you experience it you will be very pleased. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation in these very challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic and the safety requirements imposed by the Diocese and State.

Sincerely in Christ,
Fr. Don



OUR LADY of MERCY
CATHOLIC CHURCH

701 South Eola Road, Aurora, IL 60504

www.olmercy.com | 630.851.3444

An Invitation to ALL Families with K-5 Children

Get Caught Up in our Faith Story!!!

An old saying is true: "Faith is caught, not taught." Faith is caught from those people who are closest to us. This is the key reason why the heart of our parish, K-5 faith program is being built upon the Pastoral Center's *Growing Up Catholic- Faith Stories series*. *This is a whole family model of faith formation beautifully designed for families with children and youth.*

By August 12, we will offer families the opportunity to register for this simple but powerful and fun way to play "catch" with one another. By October 1, families who accept our invitation to engage *Faith Stories* will receive colorful, easy to follow leaflets, each one with a specific faith story to explore.

Parents, you will take the lead and share the Faith Stories leaflets at home. A too often forgotten teaching of the Church is that parents receive the grace of the Holy Spirit to evangelize their children (# 2225, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*). Tangibly, the leaflets will have clear, concise direction written for you, the parents. Preliminary preparation is minimal because **Faith Stories** is **NOT** a lesson, **but a faith sharing time**.

Faith Stories blesses the entire household with the opportunity to discover and grow their love for the Lord AS A FAMILY! I am convinced God is using the pandemic to **GROW FAMILIES AS HIS DOMESTIC CHURCH- the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith** (#1666, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*). As such, **Faith Stories** requires NO DEVICES, NO SOCIAL DISTANCING, and NO MASKS! What it does ask of you is an openness to the Spirit as you sit alongside your child(ren) sharing the stories of God's saving love. *What a gentle way to teach by example the real presence of Christ- "caught" by having you guided and equipped to take the lead of your family's faith journey.*

How will the IMPORTANCE of CATECHISTS and CONNECTING to the larger R.E. faith COMMUNITY occur? As a catechist of thirty-two years, I know the call to echo the Good News of Jesus Christ is a real and lasting vocation of the Church. *Adults with this vocation will sign-up and find joy in connecting with a few families (using zoom) during or around the fourth week of the month (October - April).*



OUR LADY of MERCY
CATHOLIC CHURCH

701 South Eola Road, Aurora, IL 60504
www.olmercy.com | 630.851.3444

A catechist or catechist couple will gather 3 to 5 families (via zoom) for twenty to thirty-minutes to explore an open-ended question that directly relates to one of the recent ***Faith Stories*** learning activities to further ponder and share beyond the scope of the immediate family. Why? ***"The Catechist Small Community Connection Time"*** is a way for *families to build relationships with one another through our shared faith and prayer together. What a great gift to give to one another!*

How will I support you as the primary influence of your children's faith? I am here for you! I am blessed with a strong desire and commitment to your family's growing faith. Below are a few exciting ways I look forward to nourishing your family's faith as a Domestic Church.

Some families may look forward to ***"Faith Stories Enrichment."*** This will consist of online activities I am organizing that will extend and enhance catechetical themes within the ***Faith Stories*** series. By October 1, ***"Faith Stories*** Enrichment" will become a monthly R.E. webpage feature on our parish website.

Next, I have planned a monthly ***"Family Faith Focus"*** also made available online. This will include a specific topic of our Catholic faith with ***Learn, Act, Pray, and Play*** components- all working together to draw families closer to JESUS!

Beginning the first Sunday of Advent, November 29, I will share a weekly ***"Encounter Jesus"*** prayer experience that prepares families to hear Jesus speak to our hearts through the Sunday Gospel.

The ***Faith Stories*** series, the ***Catechist Community Connection Time***, the monthly online ***Faith Stories Enrichment*** activities, the ***Family Faith Focus*** webpage as well as the weekly ***Encounter Jesus Gospel*** prayer experience are all invitations to catch faith together as a family, encounter Jesus and live as His disciples as His Domestic Church.

For more information about these family faith opportunities, please contact Mary Jo Trapani at 331-707-5378 or Email, maryjot@olmercy.com.