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July 24, 2020

Dear Parents,

It's time to register your child for 2020-2021 religious education classes and youth group at St. Joseph's Church. We look forward to starting classes as we accompany St. Joseph's youth on their faith journey.

We hope that this letter finds you and your family in good health. We are living during unusual circumstances, but know that the power of prayer is amazing and so is God. We pray that you and your loved ones remain safe and healthy, and that you are able to find joy even in these challenging times.

"God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good." (Catholic youth chant)
"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." Romans 12:12

Following guidelines from the Diocese of Monterey (in conjunction with local, state and CDC guidelines), our religious education program will include virtual/home study when conditions merit – and on-site classes when it is safe to do so. We will communicate with families as to which phase we are in (home study or on site classes) as we get closer to the start date. While the path has changed, our dedication to providing a safe, faith-filled experience for each student has not.

When we are able to meet in person -- precautions include, but are not limited to*:

- Temperature checks for all children and adults
- Physical distancing (within the class as well as during drop off and pick up).
- Hand sanitizer upon entering class
- Masks required for all students and adults
- Separate supplies and books for each student
- Class rotations (either grades 2 and 3 will meet – or grades 1 and 4/5 – but not all grades on same day)
- Sanitizing building before and after each class

*These are the guidelines currently in place and are subject to change as the situation evolves.

When we meet virtually:

- Students in grades 1-5 will have digital access to their book. As they complete activities online, their catechist reviews and provides feedback. As often as we are able, we will share videos of St. Joseph's catechists and staff teaching the chapter. Additionally, we are preparing a 'how to' for parents to aid in teaching their children from home.
- Confirmation students will meet via ZOOM. Online work will be via Called to Mercy modules.

As our office is currently closed per state, county and Diocesan guidelines – we are unable to offer in person registration this year. Registration forms are on our website, <https://stjchurch.org/form-center-1>. **In our efforts to have contactless registration-- please print, complete and scan/email your completed form (4 pages) to Marge Callahan at mcallahan@stjchurch.org.** Second option -- fax to (831) 455-9357. Third option – mail to us at P.O. Box 7158, Spreckels, CA 93962 (attn: Religious Education). If you are registering a child for the first time, please submit a copy of your child's Baptism and First Communion certificates (as applicable).

Religious education fees* can be paid online or via check/money order (as our office is closed, we are unable to accept cash payments this year).

- To pay online with a credit or debit card – you can either visit our secure website <https://stjchurch.org/> and click the 'Donate Online' button or use your smart phone and the QR code at the top of this letter. Input amount under 'Religious Ed. Classes' and note child's name(s) in the accompanying memo line.

- To pay via check or money order – please mail to us at P.O. Box 7158, Spreckels, CA 93962 (attn: Religious Education) and note your children's names on the memo line.

*No child will be denied religious education classes due to an inability to pay. For financial assistance, please contact Marge at mcallahan@stjchurch.org.

Please register by August 31, 2020. All registrations received after August 31st will be assessed a \$20 late fee per child.

The start date for classes will be delayed this year:

- Grades 1-5, Faith Formation II and RCI for Youth will start in October 2020.
- Confirmation I will start in January 2021.
- Confirmation II will start in August 2020.
- Youth Group starts in October 2020 – we will assess how to meet as we get closer.

Class sizes are limited by Diocesan adult to child ratios (1 to 12) and are filled on a first come/first serve basis. The days and times for St. Joseph's religious education classes are as follows:

- Grades 1-5 – Sunday (10-10:45am), Monday (5-5:45pm) or Tuesday (5-5:45pm)
- Faith Formation II and RCI for Youth -- days and times are arranged in conjunction with families
- Confirmation I and II -- Wednesday (7-8:30pm)
- Middle School Youth Group – Thursday (6:30-8pm)
- High School Youth Group – Thursday (7-8:30pm)

Unfortunately, we are unable to offer a program for our littlest learners (preschool and kindergarten) this year. Please contact us about resources to continue your child's faith formation at home.

The sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion are received in the third grade. Preparation for these sacraments is a two year class (beginning in second grade). Parents of third graders are asked to attend a Parent Workshop (date TBD – if circumstances warrant, workshop will be virtual this year).

Faith Formation classes are available for children in grades 4 and higher who have been Baptized, but have not received First Communion. Faith Formation is a two year program. Please contact the Religious Education office for more information.

Rite of Christian Initiation (RCI) for Youth classes are available for children ages 7 and up who have yet to be Baptized. Please contact the Religious Education office for more information.

Confirmation is a two year program for high school students who are ready to continue their journey of faith. Sessions are usually held on Wednesday evenings. Parents of first year Confirmation teens are asked to attend a Parent Workshop (date TBD – if circumstances warrant, workshop will be virtual this year). Teens have retreats (first year candidates have a Saturday retreat – second year candidates have a two day retreat) and community service.

Confirmation I Families: We are delaying the start date for first year Confirmation teens until January 2021. Community building is a core part of their Confirmation preparation. Given the inherent difficulties in building community while meeting virtually, we're hoping that the teens will be able to gather in person as they start their journey. The Confirmation I class calendar will likely run January – June, 2021 – meeting up to twice per month.

Teens are invited to join our youth group (POPs Place Jr. for grades 6-8 and POPs Place for grades 9-12). Teens may join at any time during the year and there are no fees. Gatherings are once or twice a month on Thursday nights. Questions – contact our Youth Group Leader, Christina Brigantino at cbrigantino@stjchurch.org. All are welcome!

St. Joseph's religious education program is volunteer based. If you are interested in sharing your love of our Catholic faith and enjoy working with young people, please consider joining this important ministry. If you would like to help, please fill out the volunteer section on your child's registration form. All adults who are assisting with children must be fingerprinted by the Diocese and complete an online training program. Contact the Religious Education office for clearance forms and information. If you are a catechist or aide in your child's class, please deduct \$30 from the fees for that child. Thank you for volunteering in our parish.

St. Joseph's is committed to making reasonable accommodations for learners with special needs. Please contact us to see how we can best help your child.

We communicate with families via email. Please provide your family email address (and candidate email

address for Confirmation I and II) on your registration form. Additionally, we are looking at using the REMIND app as another tool to communicate with our families.

If you are not currently registered as parishioners at St. Joseph's Church and wish to do so, a parish registration form can be found at <https://stjchurch.org/form-center-1> .

Please read the weekly church bulletin (<https://stjchurch.org/bulletins>) or visit our website for class schedules and other important Religious Education information. Registered students will be emailed a calendar of classes in the coming weeks.

I appreciate your understanding and support as we work together in educating the youth of our parish.

May God continue to bless you and your family.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carrie Aragon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Carrie Aragon
Director of Religious Education