

August 11, 2010

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We are excited to welcome four new staff members to St Raphael Church: Fr. Tim Sherwood as Pastor, Fr. Dominic Corona as Parochial Vicar, Jonathan Campbell our new Youth Minister and Deacon Jim Grevenites as Business Manager. We have had a flurry of activity around the office as we try to make our new co-workers feel welcome and at home. We also welcome new families to our Faith Formation Programs. I know that our returning families will help you feel right at home here at St. Raphael. New families can pick up an orientation folder at registration.

We know that family life gets more and more hectic each year. Come away to the peace of Sunday worship and faith formation with your children. Parents/guardians are first and foremost the best teachers of the faith to their children. They will follow your example of living the faith. If you have shared custody of your child on alternate weekends or if your child can not attend class on Sunday mornings, we have a Home Schooling Program for faith formation. We support parents'/guardians' ability to pass on the faith to their children with use-friendly materials and resources. If you are interested in home schooling your child please contact us at the office or tell us at the time of registration so we can give you program information. The Home Schooling parent's back-to-school meeting is September 15 at 7:30PM in the Parish Office Conference Room.

We welcome new volunteers to our Children's Faith Formation Programs: Children's Faith Formation, Sacrament Program, Children's Liturgy of the Word, VBS, and other special programs. All parents are encouraged to help sustain and build our children's programs by their volunteerism. We all need to be a part of building your child's faith. We know that our volunteers, with their own jobs and busy families, give of themselves, their time and their talent, so that the children of the parish can come to know Jesus Christ. Each year we need a number of new volunteers to become catechists and classroom aides. This can be a scary proposition for first timers but we have excellent resources that are geared to supporting non-professional teachers and making the learning experience fun and meaningful for both child and adult. You do not need to 'know it all' to help children learn of God's love for them.

All volunteers who come in contact with children in our church programs and facilities are required to have **up-to-date Diocesan Background Screening and current Safe Environment Training Certificates**. In this way we can offer the best and safest learning environment for your child. If you are new to us or if your screening or certification is older than five years, you will need to have them updated BEFORE you can volunteer for St. Raphael School, Scouts, Sacramental programs, CCD, Vacation Bible School, nursery etc. For directions on certifying or recertifying go to the Diocesan Safe Environment web site at diocese.sofn.net or catholicweb.com/DOSP_SE. We will have two catechist meetings in the coming weeks to help ready our volunteers for the first class on September 12. The first meeting, August 29 after 9:30 Mass, is for ALL classroom AIDES and CATECHISTS. The second, September 1 at 7:30PM is a hands on training for all new or first time catechists.

Please update registration forms by checking all the information. **Change any needed information including home & cell phone numbers, school, names, and email addresses right on these forms.** Additional forms for new children are also on the Narthex table. These forms can be dropped off with a check in the Parish Center after ALL **Sunday morning Masses August 15 and 22 OR** you can stop by the Faith Formation Office during office hours (9:00 – 4:00pm) **before September 1** to turn in your forms and pick up a handbook. **Even if no changes are made, your forms must be returned in order to complete your child’s registration. As part of our safe environment procedures, no children can attend class until their registration form is turned in. The fee is \$45.00 per child. Checks are to be made out to St. Raphael Church.**

The Faith Formation Handbooks will be handed out the first day of class. **Please pay close attention to the wording in the Handbook regarding dismissal procedures.** There are safety factors that have been put in place for the benefit of all our students. Parents whose children walk home or walk to a parked car in the parking lot will require a separate Walking Sign-Off form. This form can be obtained at the time of registration and must be on file in order for a student to be able to leave the classroom to walk to a parked car. No student of any grade will be allowed to walk away from their class group to catch a ride in a car parked in the driveway near the side of the old church/school building. “Walkers’ must go to a car parked in the lot.

Our handbook also has important sacramental policies of our bishop. Children and teens must attend a full school year of faith formation the school year before they begin to prepare for First Reconciliation/Communion or Confirmation. Also note that there are different policies for baptizing children depending upon their age. If your child is six years old or younger and is not baptized please contact the Faith Formation Office so they can be initiated into the faith as soon as possible.

For Parents with older children:

St. Raphael’s Adult Faith Formation Ministry is here to help with a two-part program. **Part 1 - Parenting Teenagers** is a four week program addressing many of the challenges of raising high school teens. Parenting Teenagers will be Tuesday evenings in October 7:00-9:00pm. and will be facilitated by Annett Reiter co-author of the book Launching: Parenting to College & Beyond.. Registration fee for 1 parent is \$25.00 which includes a copy of the book: Launching: Parenting to College and Beyond, which will be referred to in the sessions. Add the other parent for \$5.00 more for a great bargain – both parents for \$30.00. Registration forms can be found in the Narthex and can be dropped off or mailed into St. Raphael’s Faith Formation Office with a check made out to St. Raphael Church. Space is limited so that parents can ask questions and join in the discussions. **Part 2 - Launching Your Child into College** is a 4 week program in spring 2011 which will ready parents for their child’s transition into young adulthood. We look forward to providing these and other parent support programs throughout the year.

May the year ahead be a blessed one in the lives of all our parish families.

In Christ Jesus,

Lynn Edmonds
Director, Faith Formation

...faith development is lifelong...
National Director of Catechesis