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Dear families,

A warm word of welcome to all our new and returning families. Looking ahead to the start of the new school year and new catechetical (faith formation) year it is time to update St. Raphael families. Our current times present us with unique opportunities to expand our horizons in faith formation. A decision was made this spring, just on the cusp of the Covid -19 crisis, to choose new resources to arm ourselves with for elementary faith formation. We have chosen to switch publishers and materials. Both our past and new publishers have provided excellent catechesis to our children for decades. However, we have chosen to go with the new *Christ in Us* by Sadlier publishers because of their newly expanded online resources. These additional resources will be of great help to parents teaching their children from home and catechists (teachers) in our Sunday morning program.

At this time, I think a delay in Sunday morning in-person class is best to help protect children from the virus, at least until St. Petersburg cases settle down. I do expect us to return to the classroom experience in October, however that depends on the state of the virus and availability of volunteers to teach classes. Nevertheless, I believe children should start right in at the beginning of September with formal faith formation led by their parents with support from St. Raphael's. To that end we will be setting up home instruction for the month of September for all our families. By then you will have had time to settle into the *weekday* school routine. Also, this will give parents a chance to experience our new curriculum and be an important part of their children's formal faith nourishment.

On the Registration Forms email attachment, I ask parents to sign up for Teach at Home option ONLY IF they plan to teach their children themselves all school year long. Otherwise Grade K – 5 sign up for the Sunday classes even though we will all start out with home schooling for September. Those parents who have joint custody or who travel randomly during the year yet want their children attending Sunday classes when they can are asked to sign up for the Sunday Class option, even though they may home school make-up sessions at times. We will return to the classroom environment as soon as possible and we will need teachers for Grade K – 5. Please contact me ASAP if you are willing to consider begin a classroom teacher.

We will be using Sign-Up Genus for Sunday class families so that parents can take their turn as a classroom aide when we return on campus. Our new textbook series has many wonderful supports and resources for parent and teachers.

We offer two options for our Middle School students. Grade six through eighth can use the Teach-at-Home option for year-round home study, or they can attend our monthly parent and child session held on the second Thursday of each month, 6:30-8:00PM. As with our Sunday program our Middle School will have a Zoom home session for September. To choose the once a month option both student and at least one parent need to attend the class together.

Registration is now open. Complete the attachment form and return it to me, then save the class schedule to your computer. Families will be able to pick up their new books and resource packet from the church Narthex on Sunday August 23rd and 30th. It is vitaly important! for children and families to be watching Mass on-line if they are not in attendance on campus. I know how easy it is to fall out of the Mass attendance habit. By setting aside time to watch Mass together children will be keeping the third commandment: Keep Holy the Sabbath (I.e. attend Sunday Mass). It will also be a great time for our families to hear the homilies of our new priests and get to know them. Fr. Curtis and Fr. Lou bring a youthful energy to our parish and I am excited about all they offer us.

If you know of friends, neighbors or relatives who should join our children's faith formation program please pass their name and email on to me so that they can be included in our registration email. Please contact me if you will consider teaching one of the grade levels on campus this year (Gr. K-5) or if you have questions. I look forward to the day when we can all be together again.

In Christ,

Lynn Edmonds
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Empowering Parents to Pass on the Faith