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October 3rd, 2014

Dear Parents,

As some of you already know, it was on my mind to reform our CCD program this coming year. However, as I was moved to reform our school ministry more immediately than I had planned, my ideas for CCD were pushed back.

As envisioned by the Second Vatican Council, this coming year I am asking parents to take the reigns of their children's religious education. If the normal schedule of CCD works for your family, please continue; if it does not, please teach your children at home. Either way, use this year as a time to invest in a strong Catholic movie, film, and book collection for your family. A study of our Catholic Culture spans nearly 2,000 years that could never be described as "boring"...so please, don't make it so. A wonderful resources in this pursuit can be found at Ignatius Press (www.ignatius.com) & Tan Publishing (www.tanbooks.com). If I might suggest, Fr. Robert Baron's "Catholicism" series would be a great place for every family to start; filmed on location in the Holy Land and throughout Europe Fr. Baron seeks to rekindle the flames of Catholic faith in every heart.

This year I will be asking each family to focus upon 10 Catechetical Questions each week. These questions will be provided through our introduction of the Revised Baltimore Catechism. Unfortunately, as these updated editions have become very popular, they are currently on back order. As soon as I have these books, they will be added as a supplement to the standard curriculum of our school, CCD, and our home-school programs.

The mainstay of education for children has always been memorization. In grade school we each memorized our multiplication tables. We memorized our spelling words. We even memorized our history, "In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue." Memorization is a wonderful tool because it plants the seeds that blossom throughout our lives. Memorization thus becomes a diving platform from which our children will feel more confident delving ever deeper into their faith in years to come.

Whether your child is enrolled in St. Mary School, they attend CCD, or are taught at home, there must be a standard. And, as the Pastor, I am charged with the responsibility of setting that standard. Thus, no matter what route your family chooses to take in the coming year, each child "preparing for a Sacrament" (Communion, Confession or Confirmation) will be asked to submit to examinations, one after Christmas vacation, and another in late Spring. I compiled

these examinations this past summer; they will be posted on our Parish Website (paris.cdlex.org) and our School Website (sms-ky.org) 2 weeks before their scheduled exam. And, unless your child possesses a photographic memory, I would not advise you to wait until 2 weeks before to begin studying. If there is a learning disability on the part of a specific child, I only ask that you please notify me discretely as soon as possible.

Also note, that if your family chooses to attend, CCD is only to be seen as "a supplement" for what your child learns at home. Like a vitamin that can only be absorbed when we eat it with a meal, CCD is meant to enrich what is being received throughout the week. And, for the sake of stability I would ask that you commit to whatever decision you make. Children who are enrolled in CCD should not drift in and out so as to put our volunteer teachers in a constant state of catching students up. This would be an unnecessary burden to teachers and an atmosphere of confusion for their students.

For far too long we have depended upon others to hand on our faith to our children. I ask parents to please join me in taking back the responsibility that is rightfully our own. I have no doubt that you will have questions along the way. That is what I am here for, to be a resource for you. It is my hope that the experiences that we will have with our families during this time of catechesis will awaken in each of us both a reminder and a fervor for our ancient Catholic Faith.

I ask that you not be fearful of this responsibility, you are not alone, we are a "community of faith" that will share idea's and best practices as we go along. Passing on our faith is by no means "rocket science", it only takes an open heart and a willing spirit. Although each family will be provided with catechism's by the parish I will also be using some parish funds to purchase a resource library of books and films for your use. As Christian Parents you have "Grace" on your side. Remember, at your child's baptism you were empowered by the Holy Spirit to be "the first teachers of your child in the ways of faith" (Roman Ritual).

Please note that the days of service intended for those preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation "are not" optional, nor are the retreats scheduled for those preparing for Confirmation and Communion. Any field trips organized by the parish in the course of the year should be seriously considered, but are optional. These aspects of our program will be preserved, because they hold an integral place in the formation of our children.

Sadly, our teenagers are beyond the age of memorizing fundamentals, yet I realize that their faith also needs to be enriched. Specifically, they need to understand "why" we believe "what" we believe. To this end I would like to invite our young people to join me for lunch in the Rectory after the 10:30am Mass once a month to continue their exploration of Catholicism. In order to maintain an atmosphere of trust and confidence as we explore pertinent topics of sexual

morality and other "hot topics" of Church teaching, I will be dividing our young people into two groups. The 1st weekend of each month I will host our young ladies; the 3rd weekend of each month I will host our young men. We will begin with our young men on Sunday, October 19th; please make it a point to join us.

I do ask that you please pray for me this year as I seek to alter the trajectory of our Parish Family. Please be advised that next year my aim will be the formation of our Parents. If you have any ideas that I should consider, please feel free to forward them to myself or Jennifer Frye. And, as knowledge of these reforms have just been made known to you I ask that you please discern & decide which route your family will take by the end of October.

In Christ's Joy,

Fr. Daniel Fister