



CHURCH OF SAINT THERESA

63 WINTER STREET, NORTH READING, MASSACHUSETTS 01864

Greetings Parishioners!

I hope that you've been able to enjoy the longer days of daylight as we head into spring! This update is very important, as it will discuss some upcoming changes to our Faith Formation program here at St. Theresa Parish that are happening due to changes issued by the Archdiocese of Boston. So please read to the end, especially if you have a middle or high school student. Feel free to reach out to me by email or phone with any questions you may have.

Back on January 18th of this year, Cardinal O'Malley issued a letter letting us know that he is changing the customary age that students will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation from 10th grade (where it is now) to 8th grade in the Archdiocese of Boston. We have the next 2 – 3 years to adapt our classes and programs to accommodate this change.

I was honored to be asked by Bishop Mark last spring to serve on the diocesan committee that gathered information to help the cardinal evaluate the proposed change. We worked through the summer and fall to gather information related to what other dioceses are doing, and what our local Faith Formation professionals and pastors thought about the proposed change. Ultimately, the committee was overwhelmingly in favor of the change. The change was presented to the diocese council of priests in the fall, and the cardinal issued the final decision in January.

So what does this change mean here at St. Theresa Parish? Our Faith Formation team (myself, Deb Charewicz, Amanda Heffernan, and Bridget Hadorn) have been meeting with Fr. Brian over the past few months to discuss possibilities and plan our implementation. We also consulted with the Parish Council.

We are planning for a two-year transition process, so I will explain what our program will look like in the coming year (Fall 2024 – Spring 2025) and the following year (Fall 2025 – Spring 2026).

For our program year 2024 – 2025, we are planning to keep our classes for students entering grades 1 – 7 in fall 2024 the same as they are this year. That means that we will offer Family Catechesis for students in grades 1, 3, 4, and 5; Communion prep for students in grade 2 & up; and our Middle School Summer program with a Fall/Spring option for students in grades 6 and 7. There will be no summer program in Summer 2024 for students entering 8th grade this fall. These students entering 8th grade this fall will be joining those entering grades 9 and 10 and will attend class in the coming Fall/Spring term on Sunday afternoons/evenings. In the Spring of 2025, we will be offering the Sacrament of Confirmation to our 8th, 9th, and 10th graders who have attended these classes and fulfilled the requirements.

For our program year 2025 – 2026, we are planning to keep our classes for students entering grades 1 – 5 the same as they are this current 2023 – 24 year. We are planning to offer Family Catechesis for students in grades 1, 3, 4, and 5, and Communion prep to students in grade 2 & up. We will no longer offer our Middle School Summer Program, and our 6th graders will be attending classes in the Fall/Spring term on Wednesday or Thursday nights. The 7th and 8th graders will attend their classes on Sunday afternoons/evenings. In the Spring of 2026, we will be confirming the 8th graders.

One of the major reasons that the cardinal has made this change is that he wishes to strengthen the participation of our youth and their families in our parishes. As such, we will be working out the details of the new program/curriculum for Confirmation in the next several months. If you have a student or students this age, please keep a watch for more information.

As the summer is nearing, we are planning to open our registration for the 2024 – 2025 year very soon. Watch for that announcement in the bulletin. If you have friends with students this age who may not be on our email list, please forward this message to them.

Thank you for your attention and reading this long message to the end! We are excited about these upcoming changes to our offerings and are looking forward to continuing to partner with parents to help our students grow in their love of Jesus and his Church. Have a great day, and again, and **if you have any questions about any grade, please reach out directly to me at grades1-5@sttheresanreading.org** or 978-664-2962. Thank you!

Brenda Terranova, Faith Formation Director, St. Theresa Parish, North Reading, MA