

Dear High School Youth and Parents,

We hope that you and your family are doing well in the midst of so many things changing day to day. We know that there are so many uncertainties going into the fall and next year. We hope to have a better understanding of how we will move forward over the summer. We will also continue to offer an at home study program if needed.

For those of you that are unfamiliar with our confirmation preparation, we begin in 9th grade and focus on four aspects including catechesis, community, service, and prayer to form disciples of Jesus Christ. After learning and growing in relationship with each other and our God, we celebrate the sacrament of confirmation at the end of 10th grade. We hope this letter gives you a more solid understanding of our program to be ready to start in the fall!

Our tentative schedule for the year includes our catechetical sessions and retreats. It is based on the local high schools' calendars but could change over the summer. We will also be promoting local, regional, and national youth ministry events through email so keep an eye out for those!

To make our program work, we need everyone to participate including parents. Our website has a form for youth and parents to give us their contact info (www.youthwithheart.com/contact) We use a secure communication platform called Flocknote to email and text. We'll be asking for parents to volunteer to serve at one of our Chosen sessions or other events.

To learn more about the program and your role in preparing your child for Confirmation, please take some time to review our website to learn more about the expectations - www.youthwithheart.com/confirmation-information.

We hope that you are as excited about this opportunity as we are! To make registration a little easier this year, we have created a fillable form and payment option on our website at www.youthwithheart.com/registration. We also offer independent study if you need alternative preparation. We ask for your patience, support, and prayers over these next few months as we embark on another year. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me by email.

You are always in our prayers!

Peace,

Dan Lawler
Director of Faith Formation for Youth and Young Adults

(over)

Visit us at www.youthwithheart.com or email dlawler@youthwithheart.com

Catechesis

During our sessions, groups meet at 9:00 am with 9th grade in the Parish Center and 10th grade in the Upper Room. We spend some time introducing our topic for the day. After the large group session, groups will break out to meeting rooms to watch the Chosen videos and discuss them together. Ascension Press created Chosen, a video based series that dives into our Church's teaching. They gathered valuable resources for our leaders, parents and sponsors to join in our faith formation. The goal of the program is to offer teens a powerful, life-changing experience as they prepare to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The Chosen series is based on the RCIA process (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) for people joining the Catholic Church. It is meant to be comprehensive and viewed in order with discussion. We understand there are serious reasons to miss a session and we try to work with you. If you are unable to attend a session, you need an adult to view the videos and discuss the lesson with you so plan at least one hour per make-up session. This year, Ascension Press created a digital platform for Chosen to allow our young people and families to interact with the books and videos virtually in your own homes. The important point is that preparing for the sacrament of confirmation is not about watching videos and checking requirements off a list but about preparing young people to be disciples of Jesus Christ and training them in the practice of the faith. This responsibility belongs to parents from their baptismal promises which is supported by these resources.

Community

Small groups are formed at the start of 9th grade with attention to creating diversity and continue growing together over two years. We offer social events and activities scheduled throughout the year which will offer opportunities for relationships and friendships to be formed based on shared values and beliefs. Our retreats offer a chance for them to get to know one another on a deeper level.

Service

The primary goal of youth ministry is for young people to become disciples of Jesus Christ. At St. Margaret Mary, high school youth are expected to develop a habit of service. We hope that our youth understand the difference between volunteering and service as ministry to others. Each year, participants are required to submit at least 20 hours each year but hopefully much more. A portion of this work should be done individually and preferably with a long term commitment to establish a relationship with an organization. Groups should attempt to participate in at least one service outing together such as Feed My Starving Children, PADS, or another service agency. Service hours can be submitted on our website as they are completed. The best way to determine if you are doing the kind of service we are looking for is to ask yourself, "Am I continuing the ministry of Jesus"?

Prayer

Through our formation and events, we connect young people to the rich tradition of prayer in our Church in both personal and communal ways. During retreats and sessions, we teach and provide opportunities to pray together and develop habits of prayer. The source and summit of our approach to prayer is the Eucharist. We expect that families are attending Mass on a weekly basis and praying at home as our Church teaches. Everyone is encouraged to join us at 11:00AM Mass after each Chosen session for a vibrant, youth-led celebration.