



St. Isidore the Farmer Area Faith Community

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Dear families of the St. Isidore the Farmer Area Faith Community,

Peace in Christ!

I am happy to be writing to you about the upcoming faith formation year. We have been working hard on preparations and there are a few things I would like to share with you leading into this upcoming year.

After going through the surveys that we sent out this past spring and having visited with a number of parents and our parish councils, we are going to be having full time religious education at Sacred Heart for grades 1-9. The desire was expressed to have faith formation every week rather than once a month. Sacred Heart has shown that they have the teachers necessary to do this. Grades 1-6 will be escorted from the Murdock Elementary School at the end of the school day to Sacred Heart Church every week for their classes. Grades 7-9 will attend class in the evening at Sacred Heart. The 10th and 11th graders will continue to participate in weekly joint classes with the students from Benson at the Benson High School.

St. John's will hold classes for Grades K-11. Grades K-8 will meet after school at the St. John Education Building. Grades 9-11 will continue their weekly faith formation classes in the evening.

For the St. Francis site I am proposing a sabbatical year for most grades this year, except for the sacramental years of 2nd, 10th and 11th grades. These three grades will have weekly classes during the year in the evening. What do I mean by a sabbatical year? Over the past year I've really been reflecting and praying about everything that has happened at St. Bridget's, St. Malachy, Visitation and St. Francis. My first year in this area there were some very significant and difficult situations that we found ourselves facing. From the conversations Bishop LeVoir asked us to have about the merger of St. Bridget's, St. Malachy and Visitation oratory into St. Francis parish, the deep hurt that people were feeling over the school building being torn down and the lawsuits that were brought against St. Francis, I've had a continued sense that there is a deep need for healing and community building. The proposed sabbatical year would allow for biweekly faith building on Wednesday evenings at St. Francis church for parishioners of these parishes. The focus would be on growing in our faith together, building and deepening a vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ and one another, learning about our faith, learning practical ways in which one can grow in their prayer life and having a spiritual retreat from February 14th-17th at Broom Tree retreat center (located southwest of Sioux Falls). This time would also allow for people to have an opportunity to share some things that they are carrying in their hearts and to know they need not carry life's burdens alone (i.e. the book I sent every household written by Bishop Barron). If there are parents who want their children to still have faith formation opportunities every week, both St. John's and Sacred Heart are happy to welcome students for the year to their programs at their sites.

In Christ,

Fr. Jeremy Kucera