



St. Rita Catholic Church

6254 Valley Knoll Drive
Rockford, Illinois 61109

“Love God above all things.”
Quote from St. Rita of Cascia

Dear Religious Education Families,

I would like to announce that we are starting this fall a brand new, innovative Religious Education program! Several years ago, some of the staff from my last parish and I went to a Diocesan workshop on Evangelization. The speaker told all the parishes to throw out the current model of RE! Statistics show that the “drop and go” method of RE is not making disciples of children, and that kids are falling away and leaving the Faith in record numbers. Stats show this - and it's no wonder. Kids are tired after a full day of school ... and then come here and sit for more hours. It just doesn't work. Plus today's kids have attention spans that are shorter due to the iPad and iPhone and so on.

What will work? The whole family needs to be together and learn together. There is a different type of RE program that has been sweeping the country and now has come to a number of parishes in our Diocese! This new program has produced such an energy and a joyfulness with families across the country! Our new program which we are calling F.I.R.E. (Family Immersed Religious Education) is going to be wonderful. Here is how it works.

It is only one Saturday a month. The entire family comes to Wahl Hall a little bit before the 4:30pm Mass. You drop off your family's dinner at a table and head in to Mass. After Mass, you come in to the hall and sit and have dinner with your family. There will be fun discussion questions you will talk about as a family while eating.

Then you will go into the church - the whole family (on a side note, HS kids or siblings home from college and even grandparents or any family are always welcome at every class. Babies as well. Grandparents are welcome too.) In the church is the lesson. We will use videos and different teaching techniques to keep you engaged and to really help you understand things about our Catholic Faith! Each one hour session will also include a family game and family prayer time.

What are the benefits of this new program? The whole family is going to learn and be excited about coming here to Mass. I promise. You only have to come once a month. It is a Saturday late afternoon - not a school day where the kids are already tired. You still have your full Saturday free and are home shortly after 7:30pm! You will get time to eat and talk as a family (I know how hard this can be to make happen). You will play games as a family, pray as a family and learn as a family. I have been amazed how much the families around the Diocese and country love this program and how many High School kids that went through the program come back each month!

There will be homework that goes home with your kids that covers other things they need to know (since obviously only so much can be covered once a month) ... but the kids can do it when it works into the family schedule and when they are not tired. It gives the mom and dad a chance to be the primary educators of the Faith as it is intended to be - by helping with the work they take home which is grade appropriate. The kids bring the homework back each month.

Catechists... WE NEED YOU. Although it won't be in the same traditional way, we need you to check in homework, light family prayer candles, distribute games and many other things!

I see that we had been doing a Family style RE here at St. Rita and this has been successful. The kids and the families love it. Although this will be structured differently - there are some similarities, but we are taking it further.

Parents – we want your kids to LOVE being Catholic and when they go away to college and beyond to have had such a great and unique experience here at St. Rita's in this F.I.R.E. program -- that they wouldn't even think of leaving the Faith or not coming to Mass wherever they live! We want them to fall in love with Jesus ... and that is what this awesome new program is going to make happen! I will be fully involved in this program...and I am always around to answer questions as is Teddy Pfundstein and other members of our parish staff. We have flyers in the narthex with more information. Registration has already started. Take a flyer and hand it to a family that you know does not have their kids in RE. This might just interest them. And for our Catholic School families, this program is for you as well! We want you here also. And really, everyone in the parish with or without kids ... any age is welcome to come to the 630-730 pm session in the church and learn more about our Faith. We all need to continue to learn, no matter our age.

Also, as you may recall, Joetta Haas had made the decision at the beginning of the summer to step down as our parish Director of Evangelization and Catechesis to work for her parents. If you are interested in getting involved with our new program as CRE, let me know and we can talk some more.

Lastly, I would like to ask everyone here at the parish whether you have kids or not, to pray for the kick off of this awesome new program! Let the Fire of the Holy Spirit come down upon our parish through this new program in a powerful way!

In Jesus and Mary,
Fr. Grady