

## Answering the Call to be a Catechist at St. Augustine Parish

Creativity, imagination and vision interweave themselves within the tapestry of my life. But being self-critical becomes the over-riding needle that pierces the fabric of my days. In these last seven years I have come to realize that the essence of our faith, God's Word, Scripture, proclaimed each Sunday may not be as inherent and life-giving as it could be for our children and young people and their families. To know about Jesus is important but to "**know Jesus**" is essential for living our faith. **Faith and worship** go hand in hand.

By using **the Pflaum Gospel Weeklies** which is handout booklet that goes home each week to involve parents and to foster attendance at Sunday Mass—for the whole family, the Gospel can become real, relevant and resultant.

The process is developmentally appropriate according to these divisions:

- **Promise for Grade 1** helps children begin to participate in worship with an active understanding. Storytelling, prayer and fun activities relate children's own experience to the Gospel. Bright colors and sturdy paper make the manipulative activities, manageable for young learners. Lively, involving, weekly "lessons in love," can also be shared with parents.
- **Good News for Grades 2 and 3** guide these children to more involvement in Sunday worship as they see how the readings tie into their own lives. Realistic stories and Gospel narrations, plus fun -to-do hands-on activities—support formative learning. Sacrament preparation is also done for Gr. 2 with **Making Things Right** for Reconciliation and **Called to His Supper** for first Eucharist along with a folder of six lessons for parents to use at home for each sacrament.
- **Venture for Grades 4, 5 and 6** lead our young people to make moral choices and explore an expanding faith through Gospel dramatizations, current events, and original stories linked to the Gospel and children's own lives. Saints' lives (illustrated as comics) and imaginative activities demonstrate applications of the Gospel message and "THINK" questions reinforce doctrinal concepts.
- **Visions for Grades 7 and 8** emphasize social justice, moral reasoning and service to others through current-interest articles and life-dilemma stories. Discussion starters help young teens explore links between today's issues, the Sunday readings (including Old Testament) and their own lives.

The complement to the program is the book, ***What the Church Believes and Teaches***, that each young person receives, and refers to weekly, in learning the Catholic compendium of our faith, including prayer, tradition, sacraments and morals.

But in order to teach, within even the best program of instruction, a catechist must inspire "attention" and be able to get it! This is the crux to all learning. Though "a true teacher is not a sage on a stage, but a guide by the side," that definition presupposes ATTENTION! I have discovered that most catechists, especially if they are not professional teachers, find getting children's attention, the most difficult aspect of their ministry. I will help you. **In order to teach, a catechist must be present for the entire orientation meeting.** I will have clearly defined expectations and steps to follow for each lesson. The online teaching guide will help make your ministry convenient and easy. Teacher preparation will be concise and time effective. The flow of many defined activities and sources will be readily available. Weekly emails will help every catechist to prepare simply and efficiently.

**I try to position two catechists in every class of 12 to 14 children or young people--one or two primary catechists with an assistant catechist.** I discourage a team of three or four catechists with each taking a different week because children need routine and consistency of approach. Grades 1 will begin their session with religious music and movement in the cafeteria for the first 15 minutes, led by choreographer and teacher, Jodi Jamieson. Grades 2, 3 and 4 will begin with liturgical music.

Both contemporary and traditional hymns will be taught by our master musician and choir director, Michael Ward in Kenny Hall for the first 15 minutes. The hymn/s will be an introduction to the Gospel of that Sunday.

For Grades 5 through 8, the added dimension of writing will be included at the end of the lesson for these grades in the Good News notebook. They will have the opportunity of writing their own convictions, new vocabulary words, and words of Scripture that they live by, from the prompts related to the Sunday Gospel, that will become their testament of faith as disciples.

Second grade catechists will be required to do extra preparation during the year because of the magnitude of the sacramental year for these children.

If you wish to review the **Pflaum Gospel Weeklies** please go to website [www.gospelweeklies.com](http://www.gospelweeklies.com) and you can watch a short video under online resources.

**Classes begin on Sunday, September 20 for the Sunday program and on Wednesday, September 16 for the Wednesday program. The exception is for Wednesday first graders who will begin on September 30.**

Class times — **Sundays** for Gr. 1-8: 9:00 to 10:15 a.m.  
— **Wednesdays** for Gr. 1-4: 3:30 to 4:45 p.m. and Gr. 5-8: 7:15 to 8:30 p.m.

**The orientation meetings for all catechists and catechist assistants are as follows:**

**Grade 3 and 4:** Thursday, September 3 at 1:00 p.m.

**Grade 2:** Friday, September 4 at 1:00 p.m.

**Grades 5 through 8:** Thursday, September 10 at 1:00 p.m. and 7:15 p.m.

**Grade 1:** Thursday, September 17 at 1:00 p.m.

**All meetings, an hour and 45 minutes in length, take place in the back stage room or the front of Kenny Hall depending on the size of the group. Entrance is through the front door of Kenny Hall on the Larchmont Avenue side.**

*—Sister Suzanne Duzen, SS.C.M.*