

“This Is My Body Given For You!”

Dear Members of the Catholic Faith Community of Western Clinton County – St. George, New Baden & St. Mary, Trenton.

While this is addressed to ALL the parishioners of these two Parishes, it’s content is intended especially for the ***Parents, Students, & Catechists*** of the two Parish Schools of Religion. On Monday evening, June 27, 2022, representatives from the two parishes met at the St. George Parish Life Center to discuss the coming PSR catechetical year. Sessions will begin on September 11. Those present from St Mary Parish were Deacon John Mote, Christine Wheeler, & Patricia Ritzheimer. Representatives from St. George Parish were Colleen Kunz, Stephanie Haar, and Deacon John Fridley. Temporary Administrator Fr. Gene Neff was also present. It is important that plans be finalized for the coming academic year NOW.

A special word of “Thanks and Appreciation” to Kim Moss, who has retired, for her 22+ years of service with the PSR program at St. Mary. Kim has served her parish well during her time there coordinating the PSR Program. Thanks also to Jeff Mueth & Kelly Ferri for their service to the PSR program at St. George.

As we strive to strengthen both parishes in this partnership, we are revising the PSR program to involve families and build a strong sense of community. Through prayer, sacramental preparation, relational ministry, and liturgy we will help students learn their Catholic Christian faith.

A combination of various resources (personnel, materials, and facilities) will help the parishes move forward, working together in this Partnership. NOW is a good time to join together to strengthen the PSR program and continue to help our children grow in their Catholic Christian faith tradition.

While more information will be coming to all of you within the next couple of weeks, it is important that especially parents, catechists, and students are aware of the following:

- On the Weekend AFTER Labor Day (Sept. 10/11), the weekend Mass schedule is changed to the following: ST. MARY Masses are 4pm on Saturday & 10:30am on Sunday; ST. GEORGE Mass is Sunday at 8am.
- ***The location of the PSR program in 2022-2023 will be at St. George Parish for all PSR Classes and all Sacraments. In 2023-2024 the location for all PSR Classes and all Sacraments will be St. Mary Parish.***
- ***The first day of classes is Sunday, September 11! Catechetical Sunday, September 18, ALL Catechists, Students, and Parents are asked to attend the 8am Mass at St. George. At the Mass, the Catechists will be formally commissioned, and the Angel Statue with Children at the entrance to the Community Life Center will be blessed. PSR Classes for the consolidated PSR Program of St. George/St. Mary at St. George will begin immediately after the “Angel Blessing” at 9:15am.***

- ***In this Year of Eucharistic Revival the Theme for Catechetical Sunday, Sept. 18, 2022: "This is My Body Given for You!"***
- With all classes in one location, it is hoped that students, parents, and catechists will attend the 8am Mass at St. George Church during the 2022-2023 school year, or St. Mary Church when classes are held there in 2023-2024.
- The 1st Communion class, like the Confirmation class, is now being consolidated.
- Since ***the 2 PSR programs are being consolidated*** we expect to have the following:
 - ***The Sacraments of 1st Reconciliation, 1st Communion, and Confirmation will be celebrated in the parish hosting the PSR Program, i.e. St. George in 2023, St. Mary in 2024, etc.***
 - ***The entire PSR program will alternate annually between the two parishes: St. George during 2022-2023; St. Mary during 2023-2024, etc.***
 - All of this will be reevaluated at the end of the 2023-2024 catechetical school year.
- Also, it is St. Mary's turn to host in 2023 the Holy Week Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil); St. George Parish will host the Stations of the Cross.

While these changes may be upsetting to some of you, we have reached a pivotal period in the history of the Catholic Church in Southern Illinois. Vocations to the Priesthood & Religious life continue to decline. A church of convenience, i.e. convenient Mass schedule times, and other special services, is no longer possible. But before you panic, and/or get angry, or leave your parish/the Catholic Church, remember that when this diocese was founded, those early parishes didn't see a priest very often. Perhaps once every month or 6 weeks they were visited by a priest. The teaching of children was done mostly by their parents in the home. BUT the Catholic Church flourished. To me that says something very positive about the role and importance of the family and home, about living and learning about our Catholic Christian beliefs.

The good news: the number of our permanent deacons is increasing; both of our parishes have a strong core of lay leadership. Guided by the Holy Spirit to use gifts from both parishes to provide faith formation to children from both St. Mary's and St. George, and for those who have a strong commitment to our Catholic Christian religion, **THESE CHANGES AND ADJUSTMENTS CAN ONLY MAKE US STRONGER IF WE ARE WILLING TO SACRIFICE & WORK TOGETHER!**