

*BE DISCIPLES –*

*PROCLAIM THE FAITH –*

*MAKE A DIFFERENCE!*

## **The Pastoral Plan for the Catholic Community of Billerica**

**St. Andrew -- St. Mary -- St. Theresa**

**2015 – 2018**

(Rev III - May 2015)

### **Our Collaborative Purpose**

The purpose of the Catholic Community of Billerica is to use our love of God and welcoming spirit, to lead all people to grow in love of Christ and His Church.

### **Our Collaborative Values**

*Love* – Live the Great Commandment. Our collaborative will live this value by...

- Meeting people wherever they are on their journey
- Celebrating the Liturgy with joy and reverence
- Being merciful and forgiving
- Serving God and our neighbor
- Listening before responding
- Loving unconditionally

*Christ Centered* – Say “Yes!” to Jesus and become a disciple. Our collaborative will live this value by...

- Praying - every activity begins and ends with prayer.
- Reading Scripture
- Deepening the knowledge of our faith
- Giving freely of ourselves to bring others to Christ.

*Leadership* – Stir a desire in our people that draws them to Christ. Our collaborative will live this value by...

- Acting with integrity
- Proclaiming the truth with conviction
- Thinking and acting boldly
- Committing to the mission

### **Our Collaborative Writers**

We wish to recognize the dedication and hard work of Pastoral Plan Writing team, who toiled for many hours to create this plan: Cindy Payne, Don Casey, Ed McLean, Jack Bertolucci, Kathy Strang, Maureen LaRosa, Mike Sullivan, Pamela Newfell, and Richard Lee. Without their tireless effort over many months, this plan could not have been completed.

## **Our Collaborative Vision**

**BE DISCIPLES, PROCLAIM THE FAITH, MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

## **Our Collaborative Priorities for 2015 – 2018**

Over the next three years, the priests, deacons and lay staff and parishioners of the Catholic Community of Billerica will focus our efforts on the following three pastoral priorities and associated goals in order to fulfill the vision of Disciples in Mission and foster the New Pentecost in our local church.

### **Priority:** *Promote Vocations*

- *Goal:* 20-30 high school men to participate in at least one event to explore diocesan priesthood by March 31, 2016.
- *Goal:* 30-50 couples to participate in either Marriage Renewals or Marriage Blessings for Sacramental Marriages by December 31, 2016

### **Priority:** *Form Intentional Disciples*

- *Goal:* 50-100 Parishioners share their journey of faith in an open, formal forum by November 30, 2017
- *Goal:* Increase the number of parishioners in ongoing Faith Formation by 100-200 by September 30, 2016.
- *Goal:* Create 1-3 Faith sharing groups for adults under 30 by September 30, 2016.

### **Priority:** *Become A Welcoming Community*

- *Goal:* 3 teams of hospitality leaders to oversee 3-6 ministers of hospitality at each weekend mass by June 30, 2016.
- *Goal:* 75-100 new families to our collaborative by September 30, 2017.

## **Priority:** *Promote Vocations*

The Catholic Community of Billerica ...

The *Promote Vocation* goals for this plan will be led by the ***Billerica Collaborative Vocations Team***, with the support of the Pastoral and Finance Teams, as well as the Parishioners. This team was founded in the fall of 2014, based on the superb work of the St. Andrew Vocations team for the preceding several years.

*Goal:* 20-30 high school men to participate in at least one event to explore diocesan priesthood by March 31, 2016.

Some milestones and strategies that the Vocations Team will use to assist with this priority are:

- o Adopt a seminarian effort
- o Shadow-a-priest program
- o Saint Andrew Dinners
- o "Visit the seminary" days
- o Elijah Chalice (already underway)
- o Mass Intentions for seminarians
- o Religious Education classes send support letters to first year seminarians
- o Priests speaking to their vocational call from the pulpit

*Goal:* 30-50 couples to participate in either Marriage Renewals or Marriage Blessings for Sacramental Marriages by December 31, 2016

Some milestones and strategies that will aid with this priority are:

- o Renew Marriage Vows at Mass
- o Mentor newly married couples
- o Sponsor visitor from Tribunal
- o Invite all JP marriages from Baptismal Prep to get marriage blessed
- o Ask about validations in the Bulletin
- o Promote Sacramental Marriages (pulpit / secular press / catholic radio 1060)
- o Support World Marriage Day

**Priority:** *Form Intentional Disciples*

The Catholic Community of Billerica ...

*Goal:* 50-100 Parishioners share their journey of faith in an open, formal forum by November 30, 2017

Some milestones and strategies that will aid in the fulfillment of this priority are:

- o Enhanced RCIA Inquirer Phase (\$)
- o Pulpit talks of faith from parishioners
- o “Faith speaks” secular reach out (Theology on Tap?) (\$)
- o Sponsor a mission night (\$)
- o Support formal retreats (ACTS, Cursillo, Ultreya, Contemplative) (\$)

*Goal:* Increase the number of parishioners in ongoing Faith Formation by 100-200 by September 30, 2016.

Several milestones and strategies that will aid in the fulfillment of this priority are:

- o Meeting Christ In Prayer (\$)
- o Why Catholic?-like programs (\$)
- o Holy Hours
- o Days of recollections/retreats (\$)
- o Alpha for Catholics (\$)

*Goal:* Create 1-3 Faith sharing groups for adults under 30 by September 30, 2016.

Some milestones and strategies that will aid in the fulfillment of this priority are:

- o Explore existing programs
- o Customize a program that meets the needs of the Catholic Community of Billerica

*Goal:* Increase mass attendance by 250 (10% of 2500 for Billerica) by September 30, 2018.

Some milestones and strategies that will aid in the fulfillment of this priority are:

- o Rework Religious Education to encourage active participation of Parents (\$)
- o Improve liturgy experience (\$)
- o More secular outreach

**Priority:** *Become A Welcoming Community*

The Catholic Community of Billerica ...

*Goal:* 3 teams of hospitality leaders to oversee 3-6 ministers of hospitality at each weekend mass by June 30, 2016.

Several milestones and strategies that may assist with the fulfillment of this priority are:

- o Announcements at the beginning of Mass will include a greeting to all newcomers
- o Greeters at all Masses and all doors (\$)
- o Information Booth (\$)
- o Office at the main entrance to the church (mass cards, mass intentions)
- o Personal welcome
- o Nursery/babysitters for church (\$)

*Goal:* Add 75-100 new families to our collaborative by September 30, 2017.

Several milestones and strategies that may aid in the fulfillment of this priority are:

- o Thermometer of new families (\$)
- o Effective Christmas and Easter Liturgies

## Our Religious Education Vision

As part of our Pastoral Plan, we are re-working our approach to Catholic Religious Education for Billerica. This as a critical component of forming *intentional disciples*. Therefore, we include the *Welcome Letter* to parents, as well as the *Program Description*.

### Religious Education: *Parent Welcome Letter*

Dear Family,

We wholeheartedly welcome your family to the 2015-16 Billerica Catholic Religious Education Program! We are all - parents and children alike - called to grow in our relationship with our God throughout our entire lives.

This fall we will be making many changes in our Religious Education/CCD Program. We ask that you carefully read *all* the materials that we have attached, and that you call the Religious Education office at 978-667-3733 with any questions you may have.

Attached you will find several new forms and documents for 2015-16:

- 1. Program Description.** With this year's changes, we have paid special attention to a complete description of the new program. If you were not able to attend any of the information sessions we offered, you can find a detailed program summary in the attached document and at <http://BillericaCatholic.org>. *Please read this, as the changes affect you and your children.* A summary of the highlights:
  - *Classes will be held every 2 weeks - Grade 1-5 will alternate weeks with Grade 6-High School.*
  - *Grade 1-5 parents must register for, and attend classes with, their children.*
  - Classes will be offered throughout the week and weekend, some at different times than previous years.
  - Children may register for and attend any class, regardless of class location and your home Parish. The same class subjects, content and presentation will be offered across all classes, regardless of location.
- 2. Family Registration Form.** Please print a copy, complete the form, and return it to the above address, with your payment. To best serve your family, *it is important that you return your completed form as soon as possible, as we fill classes on a first-come first-served basis.* Even if you do not know your schedule at this time, we invite you to register now, and change your class time when you know your fall schedule, if necessary. Included in this form is also a volunteer sign-up page. We invite and encourage everyone to volunteer to help make our program shine! If you are not able to print this form, we have paper copies at the Religious Education office.
- 3. New Student Registration Form.** If you are new to Religious Education in Billerica, or have a student who is new to the program (including a first grader), please also print a copy of the **New Student Registration Form**, complete it, and include it with your **Family Registration Form**.

We are making these changes to improve the way our children learn the Catholic faith in our world today. We plan to use the latest educational methods and tools to share the Good News of Jesus

Christ and the Church. We recognize that making program changes may be challenging, but we are confident that they will bear good fruit.

As always, please contact Deacon Phil at [deacon.phil.dibello@gmail.com](mailto:deacon.phil.dibello@gmail.com) for any questions you may have.

Also, please pick up a Parish Bulletin when you attend Sunday Mass for Religious Education information and events. For the *latest* information and updates, visit us at <http://BillericaCatholic.org>

Yours in Christ,

*Father Shawn W. Allen, VF*  
Pastor

*Deacon Phil DiBello*  
Director of Faith Formation  
[deacon.phil.dibello@gmail.com](mailto:deacon.phil.dibello@gmail.com)

## Religious Education: *Program Summary*

### Why make changes?

The Catholic Community of Billerica has been evaluating the effectiveness of its religious education programs over the past year. Do existing programs help children and families build a firm foundation of Catholic Teaching? Have our programs led more families to attend Mass? Is there a growing desire to receive the Eucharist each week? Are we living examples of our faith?

We see answers in the number of people attending Mass. Attendance is down, as it appears that many of us are caught up in the demands of our day-to-day lives. Many struggle with finances and with other family stresses and anxieties. We lead crazy, hectic lives where we are always trying to fit in another lesson, practice, or trip.

Something must change if we are to ensure our children will lead a full Catholic life, including attending Mass and the Sacraments weekly.

- Is there time for Jesus in our lives and the lives of our children?
- How can we slow things down and engage our spiritual lives?

The Archdiocese is challenging each collaborative to become *Disciples In Mission* and to align our youth Religious Education toward making *disciples*<sup>1</sup> of our students and of their parents/guardians, regardless of age.

### What do we want to accomplish with these changes?

Our first goal is to create an environment in which our children can fall in love with Jesus Christ, and in which their parents/guardians can be transformed into disciples of Jesus Christ with a growing desire to attend Mass.

We also are charged with the responsibility to improve the structure and frequency of youth Faith Formation across our three parishes.

Finally, our goal is to use Religious Education to bring together our three parishes to present the message of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church more effectively throughout all of Billerica.

In order to do this, we have relied on feedback from the Summer 2014 Parent Survey. We have interviewed and learned from expert Directors of Religious Education from nearby parishes. We have sought the counsel of our own priests. Finally, we have relied heavily on the U.S. Bishops via the *National Directory for Catechesis*, and our own Cardinal Seán in the *Disciples in Mission* charter.

Most importantly we have prayed to our Lord that he might guide us to further his mission here on earth.

---

<sup>1</sup> A disciple is someone who studies their faith, who prays and reads Scripture every day. They speak about their faith and their God with others. They seek to know God's call in their lives. Disciples share the Good News because they have Good News to share!



## Program Overview

2015-16 Religious Education for Billerica will be one program that blends the best practices from each parish program.

- There will be one curriculum, presented in one style, regardless of where and when each class is held. Students and their parents/guardians may register for and attend any session in any classroom in Billerica.
- Each student will receive the Sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation in their home parish.
- We will teach individual grades in groups - Grades 1-2 together, 3-4-5 together, and 6-7-8 together. High School Grades will be taught separately.
- *The church teaches us that parents are the primary teachers of the faith for their children. Since one of our goals is to engage parents/guardians in their children's faith experience, we require that a Grade 1-5 parent/guardian attend each session with their child.* Accommodations will be made for parents/guardians with children in multiple grade groupings.
- We will offer multiple class times throughout the week and on weekends, to better meet your family's needs.
- Your family may switch your session days from time-to-time during the year to allow for illness or other scheduling conflicts, by calling the Religious Education office at 978.667.3733. Switching may be limited due to class size limitations. Your family will be allowed up to 3 session time switches per child per year.
- Each Grade (1-High School) will meet every 2 weeks. Grades 1-5 will alternate weeks with Grades 6-10. This leads to approximately 14 classes per school year for each child. Parents/guardians will receive a session calendar in September.
- Grades 1-2 and 3-4-5 will use the same style of age-appropriate teaching and same curriculum. This style will use interactive lessons, augmented with crafts and activities.
- Our target class size for Grades 1-2 and 3-4-5 will be 25 students with their parents/guardians to assist in their child's learning. Each child will have grade level materials to use in class and at home.
- Grades 6-7-8 will use the same teaching style as High School— a group (30-60+ students) presentation interwoven with small group (8-10 students) table activities or discussions. There will be volunteer Small Group Leaders at each table.
- Grades 6-7-8 will use the Pflaum *Visions* curriculum and High School/Confirmation will use the CHOSEN series from Ascension Press.
- The entire 2-year High School curriculum will focus on Confirmation. High School classes will meet on the weekends, surrounding a Mass.

## Who will lead this effort?

In our model, one Coordinator of Religious Education (CRE) will be responsible for Grades 1-2, one CRE for Grades 3-4-5, one CRE for Grades 6-7-8 and one for High School/Confirmation *across Billerica*.

Our Grade 1-5 Coordinators will each teach/present several (4-5) of the classes in each two-week cycle. In Grades 6-HS, our Coordinators will act as one session Presenter / Facilitator and will be supported by other Presenters / Facilitators and Small Group Leaders for the activities and discussion.

We will have one or more Team Teachers for each level as well as volunteer Catechists who will teach the weekly sessions.

An Associate Director of Faith Formation will assist the Director of Faith Formation in coordinating the entire Billerica Catholic Religious Education program.

In order to efficiently deliver one program, there will be one Religious Education office, with one address and one phone number.

## The Sacraments of First Reconciliation (Penance) and First Eucharist (Communion)

Preparation for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist is a *two-year process that begins as a student enters their first year of Religious Education*. Children whose first year of Religious Education is Grade 1 will receive their First Eucharist in Grade 2, but children whose first year of Religious Education is *Grade 2* will receive their First Eucharist in *Grade 3* (and so forth).

- We will use a separate book outside the regular classes for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist preparation, administered at home by parents/guardians, with assistance from the Coordinator of Religious Education.
- Parents/guardians will attend a First Reconciliation meeting in the fall and a First Eucharist meeting in the spring. Workshops will also be presented for the candidates of these first sacraments.
- Mandatory rehearsals will be required for all First Eucharist children and a parent/guardian.

## The Sacrament of Confirmation

Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation is a *two-year process that begins as a student enters High School Religious Education*. Youth who enter High School Religious Education in *Grade 9* will receive Confirmation upon the completion of their second year, which may be *Grade 10*. Youth who enter High School Religious Education in *Grade 10* will receive Confirmation upon the completion of their second year, which may be *Grade 11* (and so forth).

- A Confirmation Parent/Candidate Meeting will be held each year to provide further information about the program and class schedule.
- Mandatory rehearsals and retreats will be required for all Confirmation candidates and a parent/guardian.

### Home Study Program (Grades 1-8 only)

Families who choose Home Study will receive materials that students complete at home with the assistance of their parents/guardians. Periodically, they will be expected to return an assessment to the Religious Education Office.

- Home Study materials will be distributed in September and then periodically throughout the year, as needed.
- Home Study First Reconciliation and Eucharist students and parents/guardians will be expected to attend all scheduled meetings, rehearsals and workshops.
- Home Study will not be an option for the Confirmation Program.

### Tuition and Costs

We encourage families to register for 2015-16 Religious Education in the spring of 2015, so that we may plan appropriately for your family's participation.

- If your family is concerned about the fees, a payment plan may be arranged. Please speak with a member of the Religious Education Staff about your situation; don't let this delay your registration.
- Grade Level Teachers, Presenters, and Small Group Leaders will be eligible for discounted program fees.