

From the Desk of Susan Wallace, Coordinator of Religious Education ...

I would like to share with you some good news from Edward Cardinal Egan, Archbishop of New York, regarding upcoming changes with regard to religious education programs throughout the Archdiocese.

Over the past several years, a number of Pastors and Religious Education Directors and Catechists have indicated to the Cardinal a need for longer class sessions and more formal family-centered catechesis throughout the Archdiocese.

In the Cardinal's recent letter to all Pastors and Directors and Coordinators of Religious Education, he stated, "In 1989, the norms established for religious education programs throughout the Archdiocese called for 30 class sessions, with each session to run 70 minutes. Following the publication of the *General Directory for Catechesis* in 2000, the time for each class session was increased to 75 minutes. More recently, with the publication of the *National Directory of Catechesis*, it became necessary to once again ensure that our catechetical programs are providing our young people with the very best training and formation in our Catholic Faith."

"New norms" for religious education programs throughout the Archdiocese have now been established and they will be fully implemented, effective September 2007. The Cardinal has requested that a handful of parishes pilot the "new norms" this September and we are one of those parishes.

The "new norms" call for a minimum of 30 class sessions per academic year, with each session running 90 minutes. No class session is to exceed 90 minutes and there will be 5 additional hours of formal family-centered catechesis to be included in each academic year's program. Classes will begin in mid-September and conclude mid-May.

In order to implement these "new norms" we are now offering classes on Monday through Friday from 4:30 pm to 6:00 pm and again from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm on Monday through Thursday evenings. Unfortunately, our Saturday program could not continue in its present format because students only came once a month for three hours. That is three hours short of the Cardinal's minimum requirement of six hours per month and the Cardinal stressed that each class session could not exceed 90 minutes. Please note that although we will be providing many additional hours of religious education, tuition will only be raised \$5.00 per family to offset increased heating costs.

With more than 2000 students in our Religious Education Program, many additional volunteers are needed in this faith-filled ministry to help out as Catechists, Substitute Catechists, hall monitors, classroom aides and family day volunteers. If you can help or would simply like more information, please call me at 962-5586. I hope and pray that many of you will come forward to help us pass on the faith to our young people. It is so important.

In conclusion, the Cardinal's "new norms" will provide each youngster with 50 hours of solid Catholic catechesis per academic year and what better gift could we possibly give our child. I will continue to pray for each of you and for all of our families in Religious Education that these "new norms" will be accepted as a positive step in helping our young people continue along their spiritual journey. Thank you for your prayers and support. God Bless You.