



Special Issue: Faith Formation

From Our Pastor Faith Formation: A Process, Not a Program

By Father Clifford Auth

At this past Easter Vigil, the Fayetteville Manlius Catholic Community welcomed 24 individuals into the full Sacramental life of our Church. With the benefit of Deacon Craig's and Deacon Bob's pastoral leadership, these hope-filled congregants came to understand that catechesis is not a program to be finished but rather a process that must be embraced. Lifelong faith formation in the Catholic Church is the continuous process of developing a personal relationship with Christ and deepening one's understanding of the faith at every stage of development.

Over the past two years, I have come to appreciate even more fully than when I first began here the personal investment of our ministry team to the people whom they serve. Each team member brings a wealth of pastoral experience and a commitment to the dignity and value of all people. Nowhere is this more evident than in the ministry of our Parish Associates for Catechesis, Gail Capozzi and Anne Marie Voutsinas, and their respective teams. Pope Leo XIV reminds us that cultivating a friendship with Jesus is the non-negotiable foundation of the spiritual life, serving as the rock upon which all formation must be built. Gail Capozzi and Anne Marie Voutsinas not only believe this value; they live this value!

As you read through this special issue of the I.C. Good News, let us pray for all those who have played and continue to play a pivotal role in the formation of others.

May their service be a reminder that the life we live is a reflection of that which we believe.

God's will — nothing more, nothing less, nothing else.



A total of 24 people from the Fayetteville Manlius Community of I.C. Church and St. Ann's completed the OCIA program and received the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil, April 4.

Fayetteville Manlius Catholic Community Welcomes 24 New Catholics at Easter Vigil

By Deacon Craig Rheume

Immaculate Conception Church recently celebrated its largest OCIA class ever with 19 people receiving sacraments at the Easter Vigil, April 4! Five adults received all three sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation), one of whom was catechized separately by our youth minister, Claire Walters. In addition to the catechumens, seven previously baptized Christians were received into the Church through the Eucharist and Confirmation, and six baptized Catholics completed their sacraments with Confirmation. Lastly, the toddler son of one of the couples was baptized that same night.

We were blessed again this year to celebrate the Vigil with St. Ann's and five adults who received sacraments that night under the OCIA program led by Deacon Bob Street.

These included two baptisms, one candidate for full reception, and two Catholics completing sacraments.

The Holy Spirit is clearly at work in both these amazing parishes and it was such a joy to celebrate our Lord's Resurrection together, as well as to witness so many people say yes to life in Christ and His Church!

OCIA classes begin at the end of September and run through Easter. We meet on Monday nights from 7 to 8:15 p.m. The classes explore the basic tenets of the Catholic faith, God's plan for salvation, and life in the Church. If you are interested in being received into the Catholic Church or are a baptized Catholic who never received Confirmation when you were younger, please contact Deacon Craig Rheume at crheume@syrdio.org or Deacon Bob Street at St. Ann's.



Charlene Doerschm is baptized by Father Cliff Auth as her godmother, Yolanda Lourido, looks on at the Easter Vigil, April 4. The baptismal font is located in front of the main entrance, reflecting the spiritual significance of baptism as the entrance into new life in Christ.



Father Cliff baptizes Jackson Bravo, son of candidates Angela and Daniel Bravo, at the Easter Vigil, April 4.

What is OCIA?

OCIA, the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (formerly RCIA, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults), is the process by which individuals preparing to join the Catholic Church are welcomed into the full communion of the faith. Catechumens are unbaptized individuals wishing to join the Catholic Church. Candidates are baptized Christians seeking full membership in the Church. In OCIA, catechumens and candidates learn about the faith through study, prayer, and reflection. At the Easter Vigil, they receive the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, First Eucharist, and/or Confirmation.

Childhood Faith Formation

Growing in Faith: Building a Foundation That Lasts a Lifetime

By Karrie Catalino

Childhood Faith Formation instills the Word of God in children in a way that builds a strong and lasting foundation. Our students are not just learning: They are thinking, reflecting, and beginning to form their own relationships with God. This journey is supported through ongoing programs such as Elementary Faith Formation, Children's Liturgy, and Vacation Bible School, and the celebration of the important milestones of First Reconciliation and First Communion.

Children's Liturgy introduces the Gospel in a way that is meaningful and accessible to younger learners. Reconciliation, often one of the most powerful experiences, teaches students about confession, forgiveness, and God's unconditional love. It helps them understand that everyone makes mistakes but that through confession, healing and grace are always possible. First Communion invites children into a closer relationship with Jesus through the Eucharist, and Confirmation strengthens their commitment to live out their faith as they grow into young adulthood.

Teaching about the Bible is a central part of this journey. We're not just reading stories, but helping students understand how those teachings apply to their lives today. We

explore lessons about kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and service — values that guide how our students interact with others and how they see the world. In classroom discussions, students open up, share their thoughts, and begin to connect their faith to real-life experiences. These conversations allow them to explore their relationships with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in a personal and authentic way.

Service is also at the heart of all our Faith Formation programs. Each year, we participate in projects that bring our faith into action. We create blessing bags for individuals experiencing homelessness, organize food drives, and make blankets for Sleep in Heavenly Peace. These experiences teach students that faith is not just something we talk about, it is something we live.

This year marks my 10th year of teaching Faith Formation at Immaculate Conception. As I reflect on my own journey, I realize that working with these students has shaped me at least as much as I hope I have guided them. Each class, conversation, and question has helped me grow not only as a teacher, but in my own faith. It has been even more meaningful having three of my own children grow up

at I.C., experiencing these same milestones and becoming part of this faith-filled community.

One of the most rewarding parts of this journey is witnessing growth over time. I have seen young children who once sat quietly in class grow into confident teenagers who step into leadership roles, serve their communities, and inspire younger students. By meeting students where they are and guiding them at every stage of their development, we help build a strong foundation that supports their faith for years to come and allows them to form a meaningful and lasting connection with Jesus. It is lived out in their everyday lives, in how we treat others, make decisions, and carry ourselves when no one is watching. Because ultimately, what we do when no one is watching is what matters most to God.

Anne Marie Voutsinas is our Catechetical Leader for children in pre-K through eighth grade. Claire Walters, our parish Youth Minister, develops and coordinates social and outreach programs that continue to form the faith of young people outside of the classroom. If you would like to join one of our Faith Formation programs, contact the parish office at 315-637-9846.



Twenty-nine students received their First Communion on May 2. (Photo courtesy of Mike Marano, VideoMemoriesCNY.com)



Forty-two students received their First Communion on May 9. (Photo courtesy of Mike Marano, VideoMemoriesCNY.com)



At the annual Jesus Day retreat, April 25, second graders from the public schools and I.C. School make final preparations for receiving their First Communion.



Middle school and high school students act as crew leaders and mentors for younger children at Vacation Bible School. (Photo courtesy of Anne Marie Voutsinas)

Be a Changemaker at Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible School is a week of fun-filled, faith-based activities and learning for children from pre-K to fifth grade. Adult volunteers and students in grades six through 12 lead crews of younger children through the Scripture-based program. The theme this year is Changemakers Lab, featuring Bible lessons and STEAM activities to teach children that, grounded in God's love, they can make the world a better place. VBS will be offered in Dwyer Hall from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., July 21 through July 25. Check the church bulletin or parish website for registration information.



Sixth grade Faith Formation students in Karrie Catalino's Catechesis class pose with the blessing bags they made for We Rise Above the Streets Outreach, a charitable organization that provides food, clothing, and assistance to help people break the cycle of homelessness, April 22. (Photo courtesy of Karrie Catalino)



Children's Liturgy of the Word provides youngsters (ages 3-7) a way to encounter Scripture in simple terms they can understand. It helps them feel connected to the Church, excited about participating in the service, and aware of God's real presence in their lives. Confirmed teens lead Children's Liturgy in Dwyer Hall during the 9 a.m. Masses.

Adolescent Faith Formation

Confirmation Program

By Gail Capozzi

The Immaculate Conception Confirmation program is a two-year course of study designed to give high school students a complete formative experience — a spiritual, catechetical, Christ-centered experience that develops a better awareness of the Spirit in their lives and calls them to discipleship. The program consists of three components:

Head: Learning about our Catholic faith.

Heart: Growing in our spiritual lives through our relationships with Jesus.

Hand: Living out our faith in service to others.

I.C. is fortunate to have about 50-60 candidates per year from several school districts. Throughout their two years of sacramental preparation, our students put their faith into action in many ways. They partner with the First Eucharist students in our Sacrament Buddy program. The buddies pray for each other, exchange cards, and often meet to get to know each other better.

Confirmation candidates are generous with their time supporting many parish events such as Breakfast with Santa, the Easter Egg Hunt, Vacation Bible School, Children’s Liturgy, and the annual parish picnic. Many of our post-Confirmation students go on to teach the younger Faith Formation classes as well as becoming Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers.

I.C. Confirmation candidates enjoy volunteering throughout the community, too. They help out with I.C. School fundraisers and various events at their own schools. They support the Syracuse Jail Ministry, area food pantries, and sandwich making for the Samaritan Center and We Rise Above the Streets. This year they are very excited to help with the Brady Faith Center’s Summer Servants program.

Our Confirmation students are a great group of young people who form a community through faith, fun, fellowship, and prayer.



The Confirmation class of 2026, May 13. (Photo courtesy of Kristi Russo, Halfmoon Photo)

Confirmation Held

Bishop Douglas J. Lucia confirmed 39 students from I.C. Parish along with five candidates from St. Patrick’s Church in Chittenango and 13 from St. James Church in Cazenovia, May 13. Clergy in attendance included Father Cliff Auth, Monsignor Ronald Bill, Father Philip Hearn, and Deacon Craig Rheume of I.C.; Father Kevin Corcoran (pastor), Deacon John Addante, and Deacon Nathan Gunn of St. Patrick’s and St. James; Father Tom Ryan (pastor emeritus of I.C.), Father Michael Tedone (parochial vicar of St. Bernard Clairvaux Church, Brooklyn), and Father Dennis Walker (Master of Ceremonies). Students from all three churches participated in the Mass and the candidates’ address was delivered by Sophia and Sydney Maimone.



Tenth grade Confirmation students put their faith into action assembling blessing bags, Dec. 15, 2024. More than 50 bags of snacks and personal hygiene items were put together and donated to We Rise Above the Streets for distribution to people experiencing homelessness in Syracuse.



Community service is an important part of our Confirmation program. In this 2022 photo, high school students from I.C. and St. Ann’s youth ministry programs help build beds for the local chapter of Sleep in Heavenly Peace, a nonprofit organization that provides free beds to children in need. Since 2018, SHP volunteers have built and delivered more than 7,500 beds to area children. (Photo courtesy of Karrie Catalino)



On July 18-20, 2025, Claire Walters (center) and Deacon Craig Rheume (far right) brought a group of I.C. high school students to the annual Steubenville Youth Conference. (Photo courtesy of Claire Walters)

Youth Ministry

Throughout the year, Youth Minister Claire Walters organizes social and spiritual events for our parish youth. Middle school youth group meets Tuesday nights, 7 to 9 p.m., and the high school group meets Saturday nights, 6 to 8 p.m. The Youth Ministry also sponsors a monthly First Friday movie night and many other faith-building activities all year long. Watch the church bulletin for information about summer events, such as the Steubenville Youth Conference and Totus Tuus.



The Confirmation classes attend a retreat each year to hear guest speakers and participate in faith-building exercises. At the Oct. 4, 2025, retreat for the ninth grade Confirmation class taught by Gail Capozzi and Katie Feulner, the guest speaker was Shane Brown, LCSW. He spoke about the role of faith in mental health and wellness. At the end of the day, the group gathered in the I.C. groto for a Mass celebrated by Father Cliff Auth, bathed in the warm glow of the sunset. (Photo courtesy of Gail Capozzi)

Adult Faith Formation

Adult Formation Opportunities Abound

Growing in faith is a lifelong process. I.C. Parish and the Syracuse Diocese offer many opportunities for adults to cultivate and maintain a strong, mature, contemplative life in Christ, beginning with regular worship and reception of Holy Eucharist through liturgy. Here are some of the ways parishioners can learn more about our faith and enrich their relationships with God.

Men's Prayer Group: Matt FitzGibbons leads a weekly gathering of Catholic men who pray and reflect on the Sunday Scripture together in the spirit of fellowship. Men of all ages are welcome and encouraged to participate in whatever way they feel comfortable. They meet Saturday mornings in Dwyer Hall from 7 to 8:30 a.m. For more info, contact Matt at 315-278-2364 or fitzmkdlc@gmail.com

The NEST: Stacy Zdep leads the NEST, a ministry dedicated to supporting Catholic women in their vocation of motherhood. Through guest speakers and discussions, the NEST offers mothers a place to be nurtured and edified, to socialize, and thrive. The group meets monthly during the school year. For more information, contact Stacy at stacyzdep@gmail.com.

Bible Study: Mike and Stephanie Hausladen lead a variety of courses designed to help Catholics gain a deeper appreciation for Scripture. Like a book club, Bible Study participants read and reflect on a section of Scripture on their own, then gather to watch a video about the reading and discuss it. For more information, email Mike at michael.hausladen@live.com or call the parish office at 315-637-9846.

Formed: I.C. Church has a parish subscription to Formed, an online platform with an extensive library of engaging faith formation programs for all ages. Instructions for accessing the content free of charge appear below.

Social Justice Book Club: The Social Justice Committee sponsors a monthly book club dedicated to discussing a variety of fiction and nonfiction books on issues that impact society. The discussions also inform the committee on how they may better serve the community. Contact Linda Ryan at lmryan@twcny.rr.com to join.



Mike Hausladen (fifth from left) and parish minister Stephanie Hausladen (not pictured) lead the I.C. Bible Study program. At the May 14 meeting, participants take a break from learning about "The Eucharist in Scripture" to pose for a group photo. (Photo courtesy of Stephanie Hausladen)

CARE Book Club: The Center for Aging Resources and Enrichment of Le Moyne College sponsors a book club at I.C. Parish to support the spiritual well-being of older adults. Recent titles include "Praying with Our Feet," by Ansel Augustine and "Cherished Belonging," by Father Gregory Boyle. Watch the church bulletin for their fall selection.

"Catholic Conversations" Podcast: "Catholic Conversations" is the official podcast of the Syracuse Diocese. Each week, members of the diocesan communications team engage in insightful conversations with clergy, religious, and lay community members about a wide range of topics of interest to Catholics. Subscribe on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or the diocese YouTube channel, youtube.com/@syrdio.

Formation for Ministry: The diocesan Office of Adult and Ministerial Formation offers a two-year course of spiritual study and ministerial experience to prepare adult

Catholics to serve leadership roles in their parishes. Successful completion of the program leads to certification and commissioning in a particular area of ministry. The Formation for Ministry program also provides the first two years of deacon formation. Individual classes are available to Catholics wishing to learn more about their faith for personal enrichment. Contact Deacon Jeffrey Dixe at 315-470-1491 or jdixe@syrdio.org for information.

Deacon Formation: Deacons are ordained ministers who may perform many, but not all, of the sacramental functions of priests. After completing Formation for Ministry, mature Catholic men are allowed to undertake a program of instruction in theology, Bible study, sacramental study, and counseling to prepare for ordination. Contact Tom Andino at 315-472-6753 or tandino@syrdio.org for information.



Anne Marie Voutsinas, our Catechetical Leader for grades pre-K-8, poses outside the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Syracuse with Bishop Douglas J. Lucia and then-pastor Father Tom Ryan, after completing the Formation for Ministry program and being commissioned as a lay ecclesial minister, Sept. 26, 2021. (Photo courtesy of Anne Marie Voutsinas)

Get Informed About "Formed"

I.C. Church has a parish subscription to Formed, an online platform with an extensive library of faith formation programs for all ages produced by the Augustine Institute. Formed provides a gateway to inspiring reflections, fiction and nonfiction eBooks, programs for children and teens, and educational series of all kinds. Topics include the daily Mass readings, Scripture, the Sacraments, the Catechism, and much more.

It's easy to start your journey of exploration at no cost to you. Go to formed.org and choose "Formed for Parishes." Then click on "Find Your Parish Subscription." You will be prompted to create an account using your email. After you enter your email address, a one-time code will be sent to verify it (make sure to check your junk or spam folder if you don't receive the verification email after several minutes). Enter that code on the Formed website then enter the parish zip code, 13066, when you're asked to select your parish.

Check the parish website at icfayetteville.org or the "Bulletin Brief" email every Friday for a link to the weekly featured topics. Whether you are looking for a brief reflection to start to your day or a deep dive into our faith, Formed has something for you!

I.C. Lending Library is Open for Business

By Gerry McCarthy

Did you know that the bookshelves located in the hallway of Dwyer Hall are a lending library? This valuable resource comprising hundreds of titles on all different topics is available to all parishioners for borrowing. Whether you are looking for inspiration or guidance, or ways to enhance your faith and spiritual life, there is something for everyone.

About a year ago, Faith Formation Director Anne Marie Voutsinas approached parishioner Liz Loftus about orga-

nizing the library. Anne Marie knew that the parish staff wanted help with the library, and thought that Liz, who is a librarian, might be interested in this project.

Liz quickly got to work making a master list of titles. To provide easy access to the collection, instead of using a more formal system like Dewey Decimal Classification, she grouped books into broad subject categories. Subject labels are affixed to the shelves, and each book has its assigned subject written on the inside. Many of the subject categories are in alphabetical order except those that seemed better suited to group together such as Devotions, Meditations, and Prayer.

The I.C. Lending Library is available whenever Dwyer Hall is open. Borrowing is on the honor system. There is a sign-out sheet along with a basket for returns. A binder containing the master list of titles, subject categories, and authors (including local authors) is available for further assistance.

Future plans for the Lending Library include moving the collection to another location in Dwyer Hall, adding a children's section, and special displays of new titles or topics in the news. As this is the Jubilee Year of Saint Francis, books about the saint and Franciscan spirituality are now on display. If you have questions about the library or making donations, please email Liz at eloftus@hotmail.com.



Liz Loftus stands next to the I.C. Lending Library, in the Dwyer Hall corridor, which she recently reorganized and systematized for ease of use. (Photo courtesy of Gerry McCarthy)

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