



DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE BISHOP'S OFFICE

REV. CLIFFORD H. AUTH
Chancellor/Vicar of Administration

November 14, 2007

Dear Religious Education Team,

It has come to our attention that you have mailed a letter to parents of children who were formerly enrolled in the parish catechetical program at St. Mary's Parish, inviting them "consider our diocesan approved program right here in Jamesville."

St. Mary's in Jamesville has been formally (canonically) merged with the Church of the Holy Cross in DeWitt. While we acknowledge the challenge of transition and change, we would encourage the remaining families to enroll their children in the catechetical program at the Church of the Holy Cross in DeWitt. Sr. Ann Marie Bail, CSJ, formerly the catechetical leader at St. Mary's, now ministers at Holy Cross, and is certainly willing to do all that she can to ensure that children and families from St. Mary's are welcomed and fully integrated into the catechetical program at Holy Cross.

Additionally, your letter to parents invites first and second graders to receive the sacraments of First Penance and First Eucharist at St. Andrew's Parish in Syracuse.

The Diocesan Guidelines for First Penance and First Eucharist offer the following as among the pre-requisites for participation in direct preparation for the sacraments:

"The child is expected to have been previously involved in the liturgical life of the parish faith community by regular attendance at Sunday Eucharist with his/her parents."

"The child is expected to have participated in parish or Catholic School religious education for at least one year before he/she begins the direct preparation for the the Sacrament of Penance/Eucharist."

Given those pre-requisites, and the general understanding that children reach the age of reason at about age seven, the Diocesan Guidelines assume that children would not receive First Penance and First Eucharist before second grade.

For all of the above reasons, it is inaccurate to claim that the religious education program you are offering is "diocesan approved." No such approval has been granted, nor will it be forthcoming.

We hope that you will make every effort to correct any misunderstanding by parents, and invite them to become full members of Holy Cross Parish, where they will be welcomed warmly.

With every prayerful wish, we remain,

Sincerely yours,

Rev. Cliff Auth
Chancellor

Sr. Katie Eiffe, CSJ
Religious Education Director

Cc: Rev. Msgr. Robert Yeazel, Kathy Fitzgibbons, Sr. Ann Marie Bail, CSJ,
Rev. Msgr. Richard Kopp, Theresa May

