

St. Bronislava Parish

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Fr. Edward J. Shuttleworth, Pastor

August 30, 2020

Feast of Blessed Bronislava, patron of our parish

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Thank you for taking the time to join us in 2020-21 for Faith Formation. In these times of change, and some uncertainty, we have chosen to meet the challenges of continuing to provide our families with exciting and inspiring Faith Formation.

I'm writing you today about a wonderful new opportunity at St. Bronislava: **Family Faith Formation**. Developed by St. Paul Parish in Ham Lake, Minnesota, **Family Faith Formation** is a proven and effective means of providing religious instruction while at the same time strengthening and transforming families. Since my arrival at St. Bronislava four years ago, I've been discussing with our Religious Education Staff the merits of a family centered catechetical program. Given the current challenges of traditional classroom instruction in time of pandemic, now seems like an opportune time for our parish to embrace this approach.

I know that parents are under a lot of added stress these days and in no way do I want to add to the pressure you're feeling. I would not make such a change if I were not convinced that **Family Faith Formation** will *help* your family in this challenging time and beyond as both you and your child grow in faith. I promise you that inviting God more deeply into your family life will yield abundant and amazing grace! Today, I want to reflect on why **Family Faith Formation** makes so much sense.

The Bible teaches us the importance of raising children well: "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it." (*Proverbs 22:6*.) The foundations we provide for our children now will last them a lifetime. In fact, as a Christian parent, how you raise your child has *eternal* consequences. This was made explicit when you presented your son or daughter for baptism. As the priest or deacon handed you a lighted candle he exhorted you to "keep the flame of faith alive" in your child's heart, "so that when the Lord comes, she may go out to meet him with all the holy ones." (*Rite of Baptism*)

Saint Pope John Paul II said that Christian parents carry out "a true and proper ministry" towards their children, helping them to develop both as human beings and as disciples of Jesus Christ. (*Familiarus Consortio*, 21.) Parenthood is indeed a special vocation – a calling from the God who entrusts you with the awesome responsibility of raising a child. Nothing can replace your vital ministry as a parent. In fact, as the Church teaches, parents are the first and foremost educators of their children:

Our Mission
Bearing Witness to CHRIST in Word and Deed

“Their role as educators is so decisive that scarcely anything can compensate for their failure in it. For it devolves on parents to create a family atmosphere so animated with love and reverence for God and others that a well-rounded personal and social development will be fostered among the children. Hence, the family is the first school of those social virtues which every society needs.” (*Gravissimum educationis*, 3.)

We sometimes equate education with amassing information, but here the Church means something much broader and deeper. We’re talking about forming the whole person – mind, body and soul – to become their most authentic self in response to God’s grace. That’s something that cannot be accomplished in a classroom, no matter how gifted a particular teacher or catechist may be. It can only happen in the environment of a loving and faith-filled family.

Family Faith Formation is intended to help foster that kind of environment in the home. It is a way of allowing you as a parent to exercise your God-given ministry in a way that will actually strengthen and enhance your family life. **Family Faith Formation** provides a weekly opportunity for you to have a *conversation* with your children about faith and what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. We provide you with the guidance and the tools you’ll need. And God will provide the grace that has the power to deepen your love for each other and transform your family in amazing ways.

I’m sure you may have specific questions about how **Family Faith Formation** will work. Jody Glodowski, our Elementary Faith Formation Director, has included a summary and resources along with registration. Also, visit the parish website. Be assured that this program gives you lots of flexibility in terms of the weekly lessons. I’d simply ask two things from you as a parent. First, be open to the possibility that Family Faith Formation will be a real avenue of God’s grace for both you and your child. Second, ask the Holy Spirit to rekindle your own love for Christ and his Church, especially if the “flame of faith” has grown a bit dim. Remember, God is depending on *you* to keep that flame of faith alive in the heart of your son or daughter. We’re here to help you do just that!

God bless you and your family!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Father Ed". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letter of "Father" being a large capital 'F' and the signature ending with a long, sweeping tail on the 'd'.

Father Ed Shuttleworth