

Note from the Director

Like most children, my 8 year old son Andrew is naturally curious and has many interests. Although I would have to say that building with Legos is probably his favorite pastime, he also has a great love for science and learning about the natural world. Anyone who knows him for an extended period of time is subjected to his questions about the world God created and the creatures that are part of it. Even though science is an interest he shares with his dad, it is definitely not a passion of mine. I like nature, I just don't wonder about its inner workings. I am content to observe that the grass is green without knowing why.



Luckily, Andrew has other caring adults in his life that share his passion for God's creation. One of the people who understands this best about Andrew, is a friend we have made at church named Linda who typically attends the same Mass as our family. Linda and Andrew have had many conversations about plants, animals, seashells and a variety of other "science" topics. Linda has been kind enough to gift Andrew with books and other artifacts that feed Andrew's love for science. Over the summer she gave Andrew a pail of seashells, and some interesting rodent skulls.

My mom always taught me that when a person shows generosity, you respond in kind by writing a thank you note. I have carried on this tradition with Andrew and he has been writing thank you notes since he was about three years old. One Saturday morning, we sat down to write a thank you to Linda, and I reiterated to Andrew he was blessed to have such a generous friend. "Yes," he responded, "but she does it because she loves me." He tilted his head for a moment and asked "Why does she love me? We are not related."

His question took me by surprise, but the answer was not a difficult one. "Linda is part of our church family," I responded. "In our church family we love and take care of each other. That is what Jesus told us to do." He nodded and quickly moved onto a completely different conversation, leaving me to ponder our exchange in my heart.

Later that evening, as I was reviewing my day, I realized that God was speaking to me through my conversation with Andrew. I think it can be universally agreed that there is an epidemic of loneliness in our country. The technology, which when used correctly, can help us communicate, often does just the opposite and prevents us from establishing true and lasting connections with one another. In fact, a 2024 study done by the American Psychiatric Association found that one in three Americans suffers from loneliness at least 3 times per week. Loneliness can lead to depression and a decline

in both overall physical and mental health.

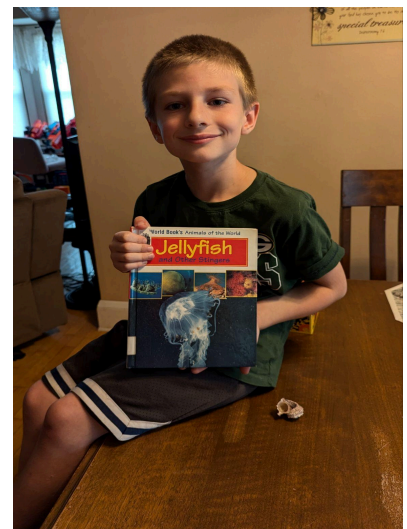
While all of that sounds very grim, we need not fear because as followers of Jesus we are never alone. The **Good News** is that we are surrounded by a very large church family. We are initiated into this family at our baptism. We can be secure in the knowledge that we are one body in Christ, and we do not stand alone. Not only are we accompanied by the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that comes to us at our baptism, we have each other to lean on as well.

Andrew knows he is loved not only by his parents, but by God, Linda, and a whole community of believers. It is this love and support that have carried Andrew and our entire family through some very difficult moments over the past four years. It is my prayer that every member of our St. Raphael community knows that they are loved unconditionally both by God and the St. Raphael parish family.

However, like any relationship, our relationship with our community must be nurtured with time spent together so we can come to know and support each other. The very BEST way to do this is by coming together to worship at Mass. But there are other ways too. If you are looking for a way to connect with others in our community here are three simple (and fun) opportunities:

1. **Attend the parish feast day celebrations:** The Feast of St. Raphael is Sunday, September 29th. Our parish will celebrate with a dinner and trivia competition following the Saturday evening Mass on September 28th, and with a pancake breakfast after the morning Masses on September 29th. Click [here](#) for more details.
2. **Serve and/or Eat Cookies and Donuts:** Our parish offers a cookie social following the 5pm Masses on Saturday/Sunday and coffee and donuts following the Sunday morning Masses. Take a few moments to come feed both your stomach and your spirit. Better yet, volunteer to help serve cookies or donuts. Not only do you get to know other parishioners, you can eat as many treats as you want! Click [here](#) to sign up to volunteer for upcoming cookie or donut socials.
3. **Volunteer as a Greeter:** Individuals and families can sign up to greet others as they enter church before Mass. A smile goes a long way in making new friends. Contact the parish office to find out how to become involved in the ministry of greeter.

However you decide to grow closer with the St. Raphael parish community, know that Josh, Andrew and I are praying for you. Please pray for us!



Family Outreach

Autumn Offers Unique Opportunities to Observe God's Amazing Creation!

With the start of a new school year and religious education programs, fall can be a hectic time. The slower, longer days of summer are replaced by shorter days filled with many obligations. During these busy times, it is even more important to take time for fun fall activities for families and to pray, celebrate, share, and live their faith together.

It's also important to reflect together on the beauty and wonder of the gift of God's creation. Autumn offers unique opportunities to observe God's amazing creation: for example, the bounty of the harvest, the changing of the leaves, the migration of birds to southern climates, and the first frosty nights of the year.

Connecting everyday experiences to a life of faith is an easy and effective way to help bring family members closer to one another and to God. This resource, ideal for families with young and elementary age children, offers four seasonal activity suggestions for family members to do together during fall to enjoy each other and the beauty of God's creation.

Fall Family Activities

THAT CELEBRATE GOD'S CREATION

1 Appreciate the Autumn

Consider the beauty of autumn: the cooler air, the foliage, the wonderful fruits and vegetables of the season. With your family, design a wreath or similar decoration that you can hang on your door, place in your family prayer space, or display at your parish church. Share the beauty of God's season by designing something beautiful for your community to enjoy, to honor God's creation and remind others to appreciate the wonder of God's natural world.

2 Leaf Sort

Take a walk through your yard, visit a community hiking trail, or simply walk through your neighborhood instead of driving to complete a local errand. Bring a small bag along and collect leaves of different varieties with your child. Ask you collect leaves, ask your child "Why do you think this one is red instead of green?" or "Can you find a leaf that is smaller than this one?" Encourage conversation and questioning. If your child asks questions about leaves that you cannot answer, look up the answers together. Finally, spread the leaves out and sort them. You might want to group them by color, size, shape, texture, type of leaf, number of points, or orientation of the veins. Even though all the leaves you collected together are leaves, each one is so unique. Wonder together about the beauty and diversity of God's creation.

3 Put it to Rest

In fall, the Earth prepares for the slumber of winter. Genesis 8:22 reminds us that all of God's creation experiences the cycles of life. Use the fall as an opportunity to talk about cycles; you might want to discuss the change of seasons, the growth of seedlings into harvested fruits, or the life and death of Jesus. Pick an old habit or behavior that you would like to put to rest. Maybe television has encroached upon family dinners and baseball practice has displaced family prayer time. Make a family pledge to end a habit and replace it with something new, to renew your faith and celebrate the beautiful life that God has given you.

4 Enjoy the Harvest

The fall is a time of harvest, of gathering the fruits of labor, of reaping the benefits of hard work. Take a trip to your local market, farm, or orchard. Discuss the different types of fruits and vegetables that you see and remark on the beauty of God's creation. Together, thank God for the beauty and abundance of the harvest. Pray the Harvest Prayer (printable family prayer card version can be found on the last page of this eBook).

Harvest Prayer

Lord, thank you for this plenty,
For the harvest great and small,
For the beauty of this season,
For the wonder
that is fall.



Sunday School

Hello Families,

I hope you have all had a fantastic summer and are transitioning well into the school year.

This month during Sunday School we will be learning about prayer and God creating everything. The students will be learning the importance of talking to God about everything in their lives. We learned about the sign of the cross and how that in itself can be a prayer. We are also going to be learning about how God created everything. We will talk about how God made everything in 7 days and how good it was.

If it's been a while since you've read the creation story, I encourage you to find your favorite bible and spend some time in prayer pondering the wonderful works of our God.

God Bless,

Gwendolyn Noto

Elementary



Praise Be Jesus for the generosity of so many families bringing in peanut butter and jelly to help “spread” the gospel! **Over 100 jars**, and **weighed in at 155lbs**, were brought in to donate to Fr Carr’s♥ This act of kindness is truly what our faith is all about- Loving God ...and Loving Others and a great opportunity for students to visually see how our community is connected.

A few reminders for our families:

- Classes begin at 4:30. Most catechists come from work and are NOT available in the classroom until 4:15. Our goal is to not have kiddos waiting by themselves in the classroom. If you need to come early, the Gathering Space is a great option.
- If you provide a snack for your child/ren, please have them eat it prior to class starting. Not all kiddos are provided a snack and may feel left out.
- If you need to pick up your child/ren early, please sign them out at the front desk(orange sheet) This is a safety thing.

Lastly, please contact us if your child will be absent from class. Often we can offer the other day class is offered or send the session covered via email.

I encourage you, as parents, to continue being your child’s first catechist, teaching the Good News of Jesus to these beautiful and joyful children of God. Simple things bring a simple joy to the heart that we can all share in, just like PB&Js!

Middle and High School Youth Ministry



Hello Everyone, my name is Katie Klug and I am the new Middle School & High School Youth Minister and RE Coordinator. I am so excited for this new journey of being part of the staff here at the parish. Some of you might know me if you go to Sunday night mass or from volunteering at the fish fries but the ministry I have been involved with the longest is our high school youth ministry (18 years). The LifeTeen program here at the parish is what got my friends involved with their faith and then they invited me and I have been here ever since.

The adult mentors (core team) really made a difference in my life and I wanted to give back to the program what I got out of it. So, I started volunteering while in college. Working with our teens has been such a blessing in my life. I learned so much more about our Catholic faith and I met so many other great adults who were on fire for their faith. Being able to give back to the teens by giving of my time has also given me the opportunity to chaperone trips to summer camp, Steubenville conferences and retreats. (*If this sounds like something you would want to help with and volunteer your time with our middle school or high school students please email me: katie.klug@raphael.org.)

This summer I was lucky enough to attend the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis with the group from the diocese. It is so hard to describe what it was like to worship with 50,000 people in a football stadium. But there were many times that I would look around during adoration and get emotional from the sheer volume of people praising God in one place. If you haven't seen any of the videos, you can look them up on YouTube and search for the National Eucharistic Congress. Here is a link for a good video: https://youtu.be/_4eKm-oB11A?si=AAaBRM2-DATea_Hy

I pray that the beginning of the school year finds you well and please know of my prayers for you!

InFORMED Highlights

Children

Address	https://watch.formed.org/brother-francis-1/season:1/videos/following-in-his-footsteps-brother-francis
Title	Following in His Footsteps Brother Francis
Description	Brother Francis shows us what it means to be a true follower of Jesus in action and deed, and how our obedience can bring light to those around us!

Youth

Address	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_yKi2OJ7oqE&t=19s
Title	How the Eucharist Changed My Life
Description	Today, Fr. Mike reminds us of the gift of the Eucharist and shares the way it transformed his own life. It is the heart of our faith, our spiritual nourishment, the bread that we live for, and the teaching worth dying for.

Parents

Address	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ih9qzKwgacg
Title	Friends and Followers of Jesus
Description	St. Raphael staff talks about the importance of relationship with Jesus and being part of a parish community.

Upcoming Events

- Check the [youth page](#) on the St. Raphael website for calendar updates.