

Religious Education and Youth Ministry 2019-2020
Anna Berkeley (Director of Religious Education)

Year Report

During this year a total of 330 children and youth were enrolled in classes from Preschool to Confirmation. We were fortunate to have 46 adult volunteers who joined teaching teams in classes from Preschool through Level 8, and 5 students assistants helping these teams. An additional 10 adult volunteers assisted with Confirmation Year 1 and 2.

Materials

Preschool –follow the book ‘God made the world’ part of the finding God program.

Levels: prep, 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8 follow the ‘Finding God – Our Response To God’s Gifts’ program from Loyola Press.

Level 2 and Level 3 used the ‘God’s gift’ sacramental preparation books also published by Loyola Press.

Registration Online registration continues to be the main way of parents registering their children, the program makes the registration process run smoothly, allowing parents the choice of times and classes they wish to choose for their children.

Sacramental classes

1st Reconciliation. This year we had 47 students participate in Level 2 classes in preparation for First Reconciliation. Unfortunately, due to the present situation it was not possible for the students to receive the sacrament this year. They will receive First Reconciliation as part of their First Holy Communion preparation next year. Fedora Leon was our Reconciliation coordinator again this year and did a wonderful job. A huge thanks to her, her husband Oliver and all the Level 2 Catechism team.

1st Holy Communion. This year we had 44 students participate in Level 3 classes to prepare for First Holy Communion. These classes were led by our talented First Holy Communion Catechist team. Unfortunately, we were unable to celebrate First Holy Communion together as a group this year. Instead the students will receive in small groups at regular Sunday Masses in the Autumn.

Confirmation Year 1

37 students attended class every Sunday morning from 10-11:30 – with a good number of them attending Mass as a group together afterwards. We had a very strong Confirmation team and together we had lots of dynamic interesting classes, service opportunities (e.g. bakesale, Samedi du Partage and the Advent Dinner) and social/spiritual events such as a scavenger hunt, Christmas Party and a SNOW retreat, which was a day of prayer and fun in Nyon and St. Cergue. We were unable to meet in person after March but continued to meet weekly online until May to keep up the Confirmation formation.

Confirmation Year 2

25 students were scheduled to receive their Confirmation this May. In preparation they attended class on Thursday evenings from 18.30-20.30. They got input from a broad range of speakers and we had some very deep and interesting small group discussions. They

participated in several service opportunities, including being student assistants in Catechism classes for younger students and we had a very enjoyable morning Ice Skating as a group in February. From March until May our Thursday evening classes also moved online. Although we missed seeing everyone in person we were able to continue benefiting from lively small group discussions online.

KAIROS At the end of October, the group attended their three day long KAIROS retreat held at John Knox retreat centre, just outside Geneva. As always it was a transformative and empowering weekend for all. A huge thanks to Mary Bernasconi and all the Kairos team and student leaders for the enormous amount of work they put into giving our students this beautiful experience.

The Nativity Mass was as always, a very wonderful celebration, enjoyed by a full church of children and parents. This year it was coordinated by Gabrielle Pagdilao, with support from Janice Leif and parent volunteers. They did a great job in organizing and planning so we could have such a beautiful nativity play and Mass.

Child Protection This year we held two child protection workshops one in November and another in January. Both were led by Matthew Hadley. All our parish catechists and youth volunteers attended along with representatives from other English-speaking churches in Geneva. These sessions were a great opportunity to discuss and learn best practices for keeping all the children of the parish safe and supported. This year official background checks were made compulsory by the Diocese. Everyone volunteering with under 18s in the parish also had to complete this requirement.

Conclusions & Future.

Despite the unexpected challenges and necessary adaptations we faced in dealing with COVID 19 restrictions from March, this year was overall a very positive one for Religious Education at St. John XXIII. We had a large number of new, enthusiastic Catechists and I was repeatedly surprised by their hard work and generosity of heart. A huge thank you to every one of them who served the children of the parish so well this year.

Next year will not be a normal year for Religious Education. Due to social distancing requirements we will only be able to provide in-person classes for sacramental preparation. We will cater for approx. 150 students in person instead of a usual number of ~330. All learning will be online until December. From January, we hope to be able to have small group classes, following the necessary social distancing and hygiene requirements in the facilities we have.

To support our remaining students, families can sign up to receive a monthly 'Catechesis at Home' newsletter which will provide ideas and resources on how to keep learning and growing as a family in faith.