

The Sisters-Loretto Convent
P.O. Box 508
Wheaton, Illinois 60189

Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan 49783
360 Maple Street
Area Religious Education Center

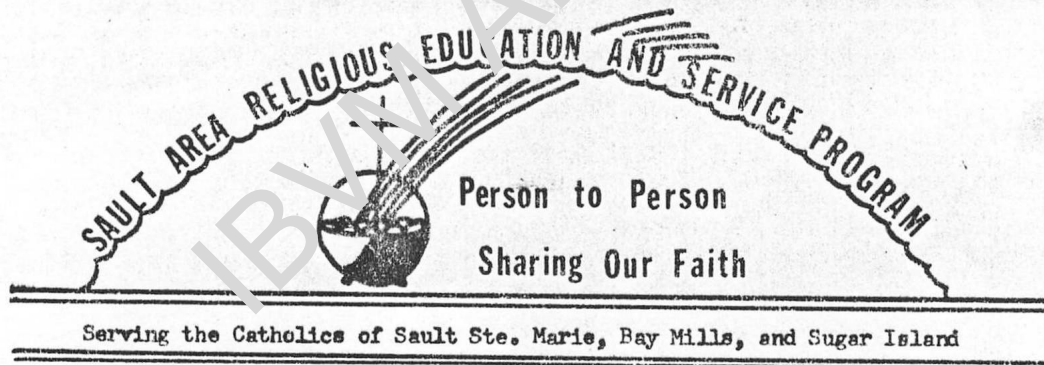
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Miss Marie Brummel
Sister Marietta Brummel
Director of Religious
Education

Many thanks for your cooperation, encouraging words and for being who you are. May your family and summer be marked with the gentle touch of God's loving hand.

Sister Frances Galt, who is no stranger to the Sault area as she returns to work with us. She has a familiar face at St. Isaac Jogues, for about twenty summers, and at St. Mary's. She has spent the last few years working with Father John Hascall at Assinibois.

Mary Ann and Tom Kelly who have greatly enriched our high school and adult education offerings will be cutting back their involvement in the Program. Their vision, dedication and expertise have been a great source of support.



My dear parents,

As most of you know, the Sault Area Religious Education Program was developed when the Catholic schools closed. The program now serves the members of St. Marys, Nativity, St. Josephs, Sacred Heart, Blessed Kateri and St. Isaac Jogues Parishes. In the eyes of the Diocese it is a recognized 'school' with a Board of Education and a constitution. For this reason, a parish is not free to withdraw nor the basic structure of the program be changed without the Diocesan Board of Education's and Bishop's approval. A paid staff of four grade level coordinators, a director, and several volunteer Junior High coordinators provide inservice education for catechist as well as teach many of the classes. At present we have 51 catechists. The 12 bus presidors and 55 prayer sponsors have a supportive role. We also have a program secretary, janitor and two bus drivers. Our A-V and curriculum library offers a wide range of materials for catechists and families.

Parents of students in grades 1-6 have their choice of released time classes or Wednesday night classes. Junior High and High School students are educated outside of class time, with the exception of Blessed Kateri which is on released time.

Student enrollment is about 692 with the breakdown being as follows: 1-6: 483;
7-8: 151; 9-12: 58.

Parishes are of varying sizes and this is reflected in their student enrollment:

St. Josephs ----- 259	St. Marys ----- 168	Nativity ----- 105
St. Isaac Jogues - 74	Blessed Kateri- 62	Sacred Heart - 24

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Private and small group work is offered to special education students and adults. While quite a few students are mainstreamed we have at present 3 private classes for children and about 38 handicapped adult sharing their faith with us. We have been steadily adding retreat experiences for our children and youth. This is offered outside the regular class time. Two mini-retreats were offered for grades 1-6: "Come to Bethlem" and "An Afternoon With Jesus", 44 and 35 children took part respectively. Seventy-three Junior High and thirty-one High School students participated in the Blitz Youth Rally this Spring. Twenty High Schoolers were involved in the Fastathon. We are also involved in a cooperative venture with the Manistique and Sault deaneries to provide grade level retreats for those in grades 9-12. This serves us as well as the rural parishes. Older youth are frequently part of the retreat team.

The staff worked with both St. Josephs and Nativity parish to provide family day experiences, or retreats.

In addition to several general teacher education sessions, coordinator's strive to tailor weekly preparation of catechists to fit their needs and experience level.

Developing lay leadership is an important concern for the Church of the Sault. For this reason the Religious Education Program underwrote the registration expenses to the Pastoral Conference in October and Spring Leadership Conference in April. This was open to all parishioners. An Administrator's Workshop will be held in May.

Both the sacramental and adult education programs call for close cooperation between the parishes and program. We have a monthly pastoral team to help facilitate this.

In a study recently completed for the Diocesan Education Office, I was surprised to find that over 28 adult learning and prayer experiences had been offered by our parishes and the religious education program. Roughly, 325 adults took part.

The program also offers consultant, secretarial and pastoral services when the need is expressed.

We are aware and grateful for the generosity of the parishes who make their buildings and services available to us. Although Junior High classes take place in most parish buildings, St. Mary's School is used during the week for grades 1-6 and other meetings. Nativity provides shelter and snowplowing for our buses. St. Joseph's Place Apart and Loretto Convent usually are our Retreat Center. Blessed Kateri provides their own classrooms and bus service for our work at Bay Mills.

The program operates with a budget of almost \$81,000. The assessment paid by the individual parishes is, at present, the only source of income.

In the near future the Sault St. Marie Pastoral Ministry and Education Study will begin. It will address these questions: "What parishes will maintain a resident pastor? What parishes will remain open without a resident pastor? What parishes will be closed? What ministries need to be developed in those parishes without a resident pastor? What educational model will best serve the community?" (It is not a foregone conclusion that anything is going to be closed.)

A little background would be helpful. In keeping with Diocesan educational policy, one of the parishes who was contemplating withdrawing because of financial reasons and a desire for a more family-parish centered program, asked for a comprehensive study of the program. Because a study of parishes was already planned by the Diocese, it was decided to be in the best interest of all concerned to combine the studies.

Sad to say, some people have taken this to mean their parish is going to close. This is based on fear rather than fact. The study will be thorough and last for many months. The question is: What is the best, pastorally and educationally, for the Catholics of the Sault area. Pray for the success of this study. It is too easy to let the memories and hurts of our closed schools fill us with fear and mistrust. Decisions made on attitudes like this will betray us. Something very good can emerge but we must grasp the challenge and respond whole-heartedly and with trust in God.

This letter is long but it is necessary if you wish total view of the program, rather than just to restrict our work to children. The enclosed questionnaire will help the Board and staff plan for next year. Answer what you can and if you have something to say we didn't ask about write it down anyway!

One last thing. Sister Mary Quinn will be leaving us to be Superior at Wheaton, Illinois. Sister has given herself to us for the last seventeen years and will leave a big part of her heart here. A home town vocation, she has worked with the primary grade children and been our bookkeeper. We appreciate that she remained to assist building a quality religious education program when her much loved St. Mary's school closed.