

Faith formation never ends

MILLERSVILLE - Being an Apostle means more than attending Sunday Mass and praying before dinner.



At Our Lady of the Fields Parish in Millersville, it is never too early to grow that spirit.

Its evangelization includes a robust Children's Faith Formation department, one in which 594 children are enrolled in the K-8 program for

2017-18, with another 102 in preparation for confirmation.

"The goal of our faith formation program," said Monsignor Jay O'Connor, pastor, "is to have all involved encounter Christ in prayer, learning and service. (It is) a key component of our evangelization ministry to all who are learning the practice of our faith and encountering Christ."

Andrea McGill Reddinger coordinates Children's Faith Formation, with assistance from some of the 150 volunteers involved in evangelization and fellow staffer Lisa Hogan, who's also a parishioner.

"This was how I was raised, the way I've raised my children, and it's a part of our life," Hogan said. "I have a 17-year-old and twins who are 15. They've gone through all the formal education programs and their sacraments, and now they're volunteers as well, serving the ministry through ushering."

Our Lady of the Fields attempts to reach parishioners at every point of their lives, with young adults meeting in downtown Annapolis for Theology on Tap, discussing their faith over refreshments.

“Our mission is to help people listen to God’s word and live it in all the phases of their life,” said Thomas Little, pastoral associate for Evangelization and Faith Formation. “This office is set up to serve the entire parish.”

His department organizes retreats, such as one for catechists, who learned more about Ignatian Spirituality. Inspired by St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, its core characteristic is finding God in all things – and using that awareness to reflect on one’s actions and life.

“The whole point,” Little said, “is that it tries to discover, ‘how is God at work in my life and part of everything that happens to me?’ Faith Formation is about starting there, and then allowing the Word of God to form your life.”

Little said there is a false security in “chasing numbers” in evangelization, and that the real question is how closely members of the faith community follow their mission.

“We hope the entire family discovers the importance of Christ in their lives, and that relationship with God is primary,” Reddinger said. “Once that (is) first, all else will fall in line, and their own relationships will benefit. They, in turn, can be Christ to other people.”