

ST JOSEPH CHURCH

# FAITH FORMATION

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## **Parent Handbook** 2022-2023 Edition

St. Joseph Church  
Bogota, NJ

Nourishing Households of Faith



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## Right to Amend

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*This handbook is primarily a means of communication. It is meant to provide you, the parent/guardian, with helpful information on how we intend to go about our work. St. Joseph's Church Faith Formation Program reserves the right to amend this handbook as necessary. Parents will be notified, in writing, if any changes are made to any procedures or information contained in this handbook. Latest Update to this handbook 5-14-22*



## **ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH**

201-343-4316

115 E. Fort Lee Rd. Bogota, NJ 07603

[www.stjosephbogota.org](http://www.stjosephbogota.org)

Dear Parents and Guardians,

God has blessed each of you with your wonderful children. Our Catholic faith teaches us that you have been given the great dignity and role of fatherhood and motherhood and that as parents you will carry out your duties of education, especially religious education for your children. The Christian family is the first place for education in prayer. Thank you for all you have done so far in sharing the love of God, the experience of prayer and the life of faith with your child. We continue to encourage you as parents to always walk closely with your children as they grow in knowledge and practice of the Catholic faith.

Our faith also teaches us that the parish is called to be a fraternal and welcoming family where Christians become aware of being the people of God. Each of you cooperate with that by sending your children to the St. Joseph's Faith Formation program. Our mission here at St. Joseph's is to collaborate with parents to form a new generation of Catholics who know and love Jesus Christ and live as his disciples in the community of the Catholic Church. We are very proud of our parish's Faith Formation program. We are truly grateful for entrusting the staff and catechists of St. Joseph's Faith Formation program to help guide your children along the path to holiness and joy in the Lord .

We are presenting you with this handbook that outlines how we can work together for the best spiritual formation of our children. It shows the course of studies for the regular program as well as the special preparations needed for the children about to receive Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation. We ask that you read this handbook carefully as it outlines our hopes and expectations for your children's formation. We also invite all our families to participate in our parish, and give the children a sense of belonging and community. We want to help form your children in the faith and prepare them to face the challenges of the world with a deeper knowledge and love of God, His Church and Jesus our Savior.

Thank you for letting God lead you in the ways of the Catholic faith. May this year be a time of grace and growth for all of us in the St. Joseph's Faith Formation family. Please feel free to call upon the staff of the Office of Faith Formation with any questions.

Sincerely in Christ,  
Rev. Scott Attanasio  
Pastor



Dear Parents and Guardians,

We want to extend our warmest welcome to you and your family, as you enroll in our parish faith formation program. We are aware of how precious your children are, and we thank you for entrusting us with their care by bringing them to our program.

We are here to share our faith and the love of Jesus with your children. Our catechists will work with them regularly and try to convey to them the message of the Gospels by word and example. However, it is important that you remember that your role as catechist at home is more important than our class time. Children will learn what they see and live everyday, rather than what they hear. Therefore, we must work together to provide a strong faith-based foundation that your children can build their lives upon as they continue their faith journey into adulthood. Developing a strong faith and value system from early childhood is the best way to ensure that they will make sound decisions and have the tools they will need to handle life's challenges as they mature.

We look forward to working with you this coming year in order to help your children develop a better understanding of our Catholic way of life. We hope to provide you with resources that will enhance your parenting skills within the context of our Catholic Christian traditions. If you need any information or help during the year, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Faithfully in Christ,

Jennifer Zwernemann  
Director of Faith Formation

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## MISSION STATEMENTS AND OBJECTIVES

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### ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH MISSION STATEMENT

We, the people of Saint Joseph's Parish, by the grace of God, born again in the waters of Baptism, seek to create a community where our mutual faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, encourages us to continue growing as disciples.

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### OFFICE OF FAITH FORMATION MISSION STATEMENT

We, the Office of Faith Formation of St. Joseph's Parish, having answered a call to proclaim God's love by word and deed, serve and support parish households in their faith journey and development. We strive to reinforce the faith example set at home and to foster an intimate relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ in the heart of every member of our parish community. We aim to provide an environment where the faithful can explore and better understand the Catholic Christian faith and way of life. We hope to facilitate a process by which they can accept the challenge and call of Christ to daily discipleship.

### OUR OBJECTIVES

We work to fulfill this mission in the following ways:

- By providing the practical resources and support that families need in order to foster the faith development of their children.
- By being attentive to the varied needs of the average modern-day family.
- By providing a healthy environment for young people to experience the love of Jesus and the Catholic faith.
- By supporting catechists in their own formation process so they may in turn provide quality Religious Education for our young people and families.
- By setting forth a curriculum that is comprehensive, age appropriate, and firmly grounded in Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.
- By presenting this curriculum in a way that lovingly, relevantly, and effectively facilitates the learning and active participation of all those enrolled in our programs.
- By leading families through a process of sacrament preparation that will prepare the minds and hearts of candidates to experience God's grace.
- By including programming options for members of our community with special learning needs.
- By appreciating the diversity of the Body of Christ and providing information and effective communication with those for who English is a second language.

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## FAITH FORMATION OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION

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**Director of Faith Formation:** Jennifer Zwernemann (jZwernemann@stjosephbogota.org)  
**Program Coordinator:** Liz Garcia (lgarcia@stjosephbogota.org)  
**Mailing Address:** 115 Fort Lee Rd., Bogota, NJ 07603  
Attn: Faith Formation  
**Phone Number:** (201) 343-4316  
**Fax Number:** (201) 883-9392  
**E-mail:** [faithformation@stjosephbogota.org](mailto:faithformation@stjosephbogota.org)  
**Parish Website:** [www.stjosephbogota.org](http://www.stjosephbogota.org)

**Office Hours:** Due to frequent Faith Formation Sessions and parent meetings, actual office hours vary significantly. Please be sure to call ahead before stopping by.  
**Typical hours are as follows:** Tues. 4:00pm to 8:00 pm, Sun. 11am – 4pm Other times by appointment only.

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## PARISH CONTACT INFORMATION

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**Pastor :** Rev. Scott Attanasio (frscott@stjosephbogota.org)  
**Parochial Vicar:** Rev. Eduardo Bustamante (freddie@stjosephbogota.org)  
**Mailing Address:** 115 Fort Lee Rd., Bogota, NJ 07603  
**Phone Number:** (201) 342-6300  
**Fax Number:** (201) 883-9392  
**E-mail:** [mychurch@stjosephbogota.org](mailto:mychurch@stjosephbogota.org)  
**Parish Website:** [www.stjosephbogota.org](http://www.stjosephbogota.org)

**Parish Office Hours:**

Monday – Thursday: 11:00am to 4:00pm  
Friday: 11:00am to 7:00pm  
Saturday: 9:00am to 4:00pm

### PARISH MASS SCHEDULE

**Saturday Evening:** 5:00pm  
**Sunday:** 8:00am and 10:00am  
**Sunday Mass in Spanish:** 12:00pm  
**Weekdays:** 8:00am  
**Holy Days of Obligation:** Consult parish bulletin for Mass times

- Motherhood of Mary January 1
- Ascension of our Lord 40 days after Easter
- Assumption of Mary August 15
- All Saints Day November 1
- Immaculate Conception of Mary December 8
- Birth of Our Lord December 25
- **Sacrament of Reconciliation:** Saturday, 4:00pm to 4:45pm and by appointment.

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## COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

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**We are here to serve** the faith formation and development needs of our children, youth and adults. In order for us to achieve that goal, **effective communication is necessary**.

**Important Reminder:** It is important that our records be as accurate as possible. Please remember to contact our office if you should change your phone, address or e-mail information.

**We protect your privacy by not distributing your contact information to any other organization.** If you have an email address that you check regularly, please be sure to provide that to us. Email is only used for important reminders and announcements (e.g. parent meeting reminders and last minute class cancellations).

**If you have any questions, concerns, comments, or suggestions please feel free to share them with our office.** You may contact us by mail, fax, phone or e-mail as indicated on page 4 of this handbook. We also encourage you to stop by and visit with any concerns or questions. *Please call ahead as our office hours vary.* Please note that, in order to ensure the safety of our children, **all visitors must first report to the Faith Formation Office.** Our doorbell is located by the first school double doors (next to the priests' double garage.) Please ring the doorbell marked **"Faith Formation"**.

**We will contact you and send you information using a variety of methods.**

- We will contact you by **phone and/or e-mail** through our **Flocknote** system with IMPORTANT reminders and announcements, including class cancellations.
- We will email monthly updates with important information.
- We have a **Faith Formation page in the parish bulletin** that is updated weekly. All meetings, calendar reminders, and special announcements are listed in the parish bulletin. Please take one every week before you leave Mass.
- **Our Parish Website** is kept up to date with links to all program calendars and important forms.
- Information may be **mailed to your home** by first class or bulk mail. Please be sure to read all mail carefully and promptly since most material is time sensitive.

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## MASS ATTENDANCE

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**“The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch,  
but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ.”**

*Catechesi Tradendae, Catechesis in Our Time, 5*

Our curriculum is always presented within the context of the liturgical year. Children and families learn primarily about the faith by worshiping together, fully engaging in the prayer of the Church throughout the year and participating in parish life. Our regular religious education sessions are intended to complement, not substitute for regular Mass attendance.

**All families registered in our program are expected to attend Mass regularly. Since it is such an integral part of our program, children will frequently be asked about Mass attendance and the Sunday Scripture readings are often a part of their lesson. Weekly Mass attendance will help your child to participate fully in and class.**

**PLAN AHEAD:** We find that the most effective strategy in successfully getting your family to Mass every week is to **plan your weekend schedule ahead of time.** Perhaps on Friday evening, as you look at your weekend activities, be sure to set Mass attendance as a priority, review the Mass times at St. Joseph's (and neighboring parishes if necessary) then determine together what Mass you will attend. If you are having difficulty finding time to attend Mass regularly it may

be a good time to take a closer look at your family's activities and to prayerfully discern adjusting that schedule in order to ensure that regular participation at Mass is possible.

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## CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

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Our Curriculum is intended to provide children and their families with knowledge of the teachings of our faith based on Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

**Every year children and families will learn about the seven major themes of faith:**

- **Revelation** – How does God reveal himself to us through Scripture, the Church, and our daily lives?
- **Trinity** – How does the mystery of God; Father, Son and Spirit live in us and challenge us to discipleship?
- **Jesus Christ** – Who is Jesus, why did He come among us, and how can I develop a relationship with Him?
- **The Church** – What is the Body of Christ and how is each person a member of the Body?
- **Morality** – What are God's laws of love and how can we follow them more faithfully?
- **Sacraments** – How does the church worship and how does God's grace fill us in the sacraments?
- **The Kingdom of God** – What is the Kingdom of God and how can we work for justice and peace?

These themes are presented every year in a manner that is appropriate to each grade level. Therefore children continue to develop the themes and build upon previous knowledge. For this reason **it is important that children participate in our program every year, particularly the years between First Eucharist and Confirmation.** Since faith formation is a lifelong process, we encourage young people will stay connected to the parish and participate in our youth ministry programs after Confirmation.

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## FAITH FORMATION PROGRAMS

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### FAMILY CATECHETICAL PROGRAM (MONTHLY FAITH FORMATION SESSIONS)

- **The Faith Formation Family Program Sessions begin in September and ends in April**
- **The schedule for the monthly Faith Formation program is as follows:**  
**Sunday Session Grades 1 – 8 and Special Needs class:** 8:15am to 9:45am (followed by the 10am Mass)  
*Parent session is in English*  
**Tuesday Session: Grades 1 – 12:** 6:30pm to 8:00pm (Mass attendance on the weekend)  
*Parent session is in English*
- This program **helps families to participate** in our faith formation program together, encourages the **Faith development of adults**, and **provides resources for parents** to work with their children at home.
- **Families come together** and attend monthly sessions. Families begin the gathered sessions working together. Children then go to age appropriate groups. While in their groups the children review the lessons and participate in varied activities, parents have the opportunity for faith development in a casual interactive setting. Their sessions include presentations, prayer, and discussions. They also receive resources that will enable them to continue working on the lessons at home with their children.



#### **REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

- **Attendance:**
  - A family commitment to attend the sessions together. (*“Family” means that the child must be accompanied by at least one parent.*)
  - Attendance at all monthly sessions (September – April) (*See attendance policy for details*)
- **Work at Home:** A family commitment to work on the home lessons with their children in a thorough and timely manner.
  - Grades 1 through 5 complete work in the children’s Faith Formation books. Each month three short chapters are assigned to be completed by the next session.
  - Grades 6 through 8 complete work online. Students will receive their “Alive in Christ” books and will be required to complete a brief online assessment each week. Assessments are sent to the email address of their parent’s choice. Families who do not have regular access to email may choose to have the students complete the work in the workbook. This will be checked in person by the catechist when the child comes to sessions.
  - Grades 9 through 12 will complete work via a variety of modalities as assigned by the catechist.
- **Weekly attendance and participation at Mass.**
- **Yearly participation in the sacrament of Reconciliation.** The dates of the parish Reconciliation services are given in September. Families must attend at least one service during the year.
- **Teens in grades 7 through 12 are also required to attend special middle school and high school program sessions throughout the year.** A calendar of required sessions is distributed at the start of the program in September. (*See below*)
- Teens coming to our programs for the first time without prior religious education either through a catholic school or parish faith formation program are required to attend an extra class in order to be better prepared for Confirmation.

### **MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL SESSIONS (GRADES 7 THROUGH 12)**

The Faith Formation Middle School and High School program is comprised of teens in grades 7 through 12. The program aims to expose young people to a variety of experiences that will help them to more actively engage in their Catholic Faith. As young people mature in faith, it is of critical importance that the subjects taught be relevant and the methodology employed be in line with youth culture. Through a combination of small group gatherings, the use of media, religious education work online, prayer experiences and service projects students are better able to understand how the teachings of our Catholic faith are applied. Our Catholic faith is not just “learned” in our mind, it must be alive in our HEARTS and expressed in our LIFE.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL & HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

- **The Middle School and High School Program runs in conjunction with the Family Faith Formation sessions.**
- **Middle School and High School Faith Formation sessions will take place approximately 2 times a year on Tuesday evenings, 7:00pm to 9:00pm. A calendar detailing the specific dates and topics is distributed in September. The following will take place during these sessions:**
  - **Small Group Time:** During the small group gatherings/sessions the young people meet with their catechist in a small group. During their time together the catechists use a variety of teaching methods.
  - **Service Projects:** These projects will be aimed at reaching out to both the local and global communities and will afford the opportunity for the young people to be in direct contact with those who we are serving.
  - **Prayer and worship:** Prayer services and prayer experiences will take place most frequently in the church or school gym. These experiences will incorporate music along with a variety of forms of prayer.

## ATTENDANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

**Attendance:** Please note that due to the fact that our program sessions are typically once a month, ATTENDANCE WILL BE MONITORED CAREFULLY and students may only miss a class for illness or an emergency, not sporting events or similar events. We remind you that students may NOT be penalized by coaches for attending a class or event at their church that is part of their religious observance. In order to help you better communicate and coordinate with your child's various activities, our office provides letters in cases where students need to be excused from another activity. We understand it is impossible to eliminate all scheduling conflicts, therefore any concern or scheduling problem that arises should be addressed by calling our office in order to determine the best course of action.

**Accountability:** Students who fail to complete the assigned chapters and/or online work will be required to do so before the end of the school year. If work is not completed the child may be asked to complete the work during the summer. In cases where there is a special situation, such as an extended illness or family crisis, that prevents the family from completing the work at home the family must contact the office in order to make arrangements. Failure to attend sessions, to stay up to date with the work required without communicating with our office is a clear indication that the family is not fully engaged in the Faith Formation process. Therefore, in cases where the child/teen is preparing for a sacrament, such as Confirmation, the sacrament will be delayed until the following year.

## HOME SCHOOLING

“As the primary educators of their children, parents have the right and the duty to choose the kind of educational environment that they determine best suits their children’s educational needs. Therefore, home schooling is a viable option for the general education of children. The home-based catechesis of children is a cooperative effort between the children, their parents, parish leadership, and the diocesan bishop.”

*(National Directory for Catechesis)*

- In rare occasions there may exist a need for a family to home school due to health concerns, family circumstances, or other situations that prevent a child from coming to classes regularly. In these special cases, permission is granted for the parents to work at home with their children all year.
- Home-schooling families **must be registered parishioners and attend Mass regularly.**
- Please let the Faith Formation Director know if you or your child’s health prevents you from coming to Mass. Arrangements can be made for you to be visited at home by a priest or Eucharistic minister.
- Children are required to work in their book as well as to complete **online assessments** regularly.
- The Director of Faith Formation is available throughout the year for on-going guidance and instruction.
- **Parents typically attend two meetings during the year.** These meetings provide the opportunity for parents and children to meet with the director or a catechist, ask questions, and receive additional resources; and for the Director to assess and evaluate the progress of the students.
- Children in the home-school settings participate in the parish administration of the ACRE assessments at the time of their administration in the parish.
- Children preparing to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation must participate in the regular parish sacramental preparation programs. They may not solely receive their immediate catechetical instruction in the home-school setting. They especially must attend the other important parts of the preparation process: **parent meetings, retreats, and rehearsals are community experiences.** Therefore families who have chosen to home-school their children must be included in these experiences.

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## **SACRAMENT PREPARATION**

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It is important to remember that sacraments are not ends in themselves, but rather are gifts of God’s grace that we receive in order to strengthen us for our faith journey and continued growth. Families are encouraged to take sacrament preparation seriously and consider the importance of the daily practice of the faith, participation in parish life, and weekly attendance at Mass.  
Continued faith formation is encouraged after the celebration of the sacraments.

## INFANT BAPTISM

Children are baptized during a regular Sunday Mass. Parents attend a special preparation session prior to the celebration of the Baptism of their child. Please call at the main Parish Office to make arrangements for Baptisms. *(See page 4 for contact information.)*

## **RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION FOR ADULTS (RCIA)**

Adults who wish to be baptized, adults baptized in other Christian denomination seeking to be received into the Catholic Church and baptized catholic who desire to complete their initiation by celebrating Confirmation and Eucharist, participate in the RCIA process. Preparation usually begins in the fall and sacraments are administered during the Easter season. At least one full liturgical year of formation and preparation is typically required for un-baptized adults. Those interested in more information may contact the main parish office.

## **UN-BAPTIZED CHILDREN 7 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER**

### **RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION FOR ADULTS (RCIA) ADAPTED FOR CHILDREN**

Children of catechetical age (i.e. 7 years of age or older) who wish to be baptized, must also participate in the RCIA process. Although their catechesis is age appropriate, they participate in all the rites of the RCIA and are fully initiated into the Church at the Easter Vigil. Full initiation means that they celebrate all three sacraments of initiation; Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. A minimum of two years of preparation are required for a thorough process. Parents interested in registering their children should contact the Faith Formation Office.

## **ARCHDIOCESAN POLICY ON SACRAMENT PREPARATION FOR COMMUNION AND CONFIRMATION**

**FIRST COMMUNION:** The Archdiocese of Newark requires a minimum of *two full consecutive years* of general catechesis/Faith Formation/CCD in order to receive First Communion. In addition to this, children and their families take part in the sacrament preparation program as outlined below.

**CONFIRMATION:** In order to receive Confirmation the child is required to attend Faith Formation sessions every year from the time he/she celebrates First Communion until Confirmation. Failing to attend classes in the years after the celebration of First Communion will result in a significant delay in the preparation for Confirmation. Children returning to faith formation sessions in middle school will not be Confirmed in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Rather they will be admitted to the preparation program, as outlined below, when it is determined that they are mature enough to do so.

Transcripts will be required for children transferring from another parish or Catholic school.

## **RECONCILIATION / CONFESSION**

**Preparation for the sacrament of Reconciliation typically takes place in the fall of 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade.** Older children are encouraged to come forward and prepare for the sacrament if they have not already done so. They will prepare in an age-appropriate group. The program is a combination of family gathered sessions and home study. **Typically, the First Reconciliation celebration is in February** Children must have attended faith formation sessions for at least one full catechetical year prior to their *preparation* for the sacrament.

## EUCHARIST

**Preparation for Eucharist follows the reception of the sacrament of Reconciliation.** This program is also a combination of family gathered sessions and home study. Regular Mass attendance is critical to adequately prepare the children for Eucharist. Participating in Mass every Sunday helps the child understand that they are preparing for a life time of coming to the Lord's Table. It creates a deeper desire to receive Jesus in the Eucharist and makes their first Communion Day truly memorable. **The children receive First Eucharist with their families Saturday morning /afternoon Liturgies during the Easter Season.** Children must have attended faith formation sessions for at least one full catechetical year prior to their *preparation* for the sacrament.

*Although these sacraments are typically celebrated in the 2nd grade, that is not always the case. Readiness for the reception of a sacrament is not determined only by age. The sacraments are received when the parents, Pastor, and Director agree upon the child's readiness and all the program requirements have been satisfied.*

## CONFIRMATION

**Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation formally begins in the fall.** This program calls for the active involvement of candidates, parents, sponsors, catechists/religion teachers, group leaders, and priests. The candidates meet on several Sundays between October and April. This preparation period focuses on understanding the full meaning of this sacrament in the life of the young person now and in the future. **Requirements include** attendance and participation in weekly Mass, participation in the Confirmation Family Conference, completion of a stewardship/community service project, attendance at the Confirmation preparation Sunday sessions, participation in the Confirmation retreat, and submission of all required forms in a timely manner. **The date of Confirmation is determined by the Confirming Bishop's availability and the date requested by the Pastor.** Customarily at St. Joseph Church, Confirmation has been celebrated during the Easter Season.

*Although Confirmation is typically celebrated in the 8th grade, that is not always the case. Readiness for the reception of a sacrament is not determined only by age. A young person is Confirmed when the parents, Pastor, and Director agree upon his/her readiness. Significant factors in determining readiness include: The extent of the child's prior religious education, the child's desire to be Confirmed independent of their parent's wishes, participation in weekly Mass and the life of the parish community, and the successful completion of all program requirements.*

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## **BOOKS, RESOURCES and MATERIALS USED**

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### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BOOKS

Text books serve as guides for our catechists in class, as well as for you at home. **Your participation through home study pages is crucial to your child's faith development.** Review of the class at home will help the lessons come alive and will ensure that they understand how their faith relates to their daily living.

Below is a list of the textbooks and resources we use for different age levels.

### **MONTHLY FAMILY FAITH FORMATION PROGRAMS**

**Grades 1 through 8: “Alive in Christ”** (*Publisher: Our Sunday Visitor*) This book explores the 7 themes outlined in our Curriculum Overview in a way that helps children deepen their faith through compelling stories and Scripture. It also uses appealing visuals, activities, prayers, and seasonal celebrations.

- Online support for family involvement is found at [www.aliveinchrist.osv.com](http://www.aliveinchrist.osv.com).

**Grades 9 through 12: “One Faith One Lord”** (*Publisher: Sadler*) High school students use this book during their first year of Faith Formation in prior to participating in the Confirmation preparation program.

### **FIRST RECONCILIATION AND FIRST COMMUNION PREPARATION**

**Grades 2 and 3: “God’s Gift: Reconciliation” and “God’s Gift: Eucharist,”** (*Publisher: Loyola Press*)

- Online support for family involvement is found at [www.loyolapress.com](http://www.loyolapress.com).

**Grades 4 and Older: “Call to Celebrate: Reconciliation & Eucharist”** (*Publisher: Our Sunday Visitor*)

### **CONFIRMATION PREPARATION**

**All Grades:** The Confirmation candidates do not receive books. The program utilizes resources from the following programs:

**“Confirmed in a Faithful Community”** (*Publisher: St. Mary’s Press*)

**“One Eight Confirmation Program”** (*Publisher: Lifeteen*)

### **RCIA FOR CHILDREN**

**Elementary Age Children:** Children preparing for Baptism, Communion and Confirmation use a variety of resources. Resources may vary from year to year depending on the age of the child in question. Resources are typically used from the publishers listed above used for other programs.

### **BOOK DISTRIBUTION**

- Books are given to children on the first day of classes.
- If a young person loses a book he/she must purchase one at an additional cost.
- Bilingual books given to families when parents attend the Spanish sessions. They are also available upon request.

### **FAITH FORMATION PROGRAMS AND SACRAMENT PROGRAMS**

Children generally will be taking their books home since our Sunday Family Program and our Sacrament Programs all require that families complete some of the lessons at home. All children are expected to always bring their books to class.

## **MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

Grades 6, 7 and 8 will bring their books home in order to complete their work at home and online. They are expected to bring them every time they come for their regular monthly session. They are not expected to bring them to the special Middle School and High School sessions.

## **BIBLES**

**Bibles are distributed to all students in the 6th Grade.**

Bibles can be brought home and children are encouraged to read them daily. **Children in grades 6 through 8 are expected to bring their Bibles to Faith Formation sessions.** Lost Bibles are replaced at an additional cost.

Bibles are always available for purchase. If you do not currently own a family Bible, please contact our office for some recommendations or to purchase one. If you choose to purchase a Bible for your family, be sure to purchase a Catholic Bible. The recommended version/translation is the New American Bible. This translation of the Bible is simple, yet complete and faithful to the original Hebrew and Greek texts. It is also the version used at Mass on Sundays. Some excellent children's, middle school, and teen Bibles are available at [www.smp.org](http://www.smp.org).

## **ONLINE RESOURCES**

Additional online Faith Formation resources are available online and updated regularly on our parish website. [www.stjosephbogota.org](http://www.stjosephbogota.org).

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## **CATECHIST INFORMATION**

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### **YOUR CHILD'S CATECHIST AND SMALL GROUP LEADER**

You will be informed of who your child's catechist is on the first day of classes. He/she may also send home a welcome letter for you and your child.

All of our catechists are volunteers. We are extremely fortunate to have so many willing and generous parishioners take on the rewarding challenge and responsibility of bearing witness to our Catholic faith. Their presence in the lives of our children demonstrates how valued these children are to our parish community. We are very grateful for their faithful service and dedication to St. Joseph Church.

**We aim to maintain group sizes that are suitable for effective learning and classroom management.** However, class size is determined by the number of volunteer catechists.

We depend on your willingness to share your faith, time and talent with our children. Following is a list of catechist positions. Our needs vary from year to year.

## **CATECHIST'S POSITIONS ARE AS FOLLOWS**

### **Faith Formation Program Catechists:**

- All grades: Sunday Session (monthly) 8:15am – 9:45am (approximately 10 Catechists)
- Special needs: Sunday (monthly) 8:15am – 9:45am As needed
- All grades: Tuesday Session (monthly) 6:30pm – 8:00pm (approximately 10 Catechists)
- Grades 7 - 12: Tuesday evening special sessions 7:00pm to 9:00pm (approximately 8 small group leaders)

### **Sacrament Preparation Team:**

- First Reconciliation/First Eucharist team (8 small group facilitators)
- Older children Reconciliation and Eucharist (2 catechists)
- Confirmation team (10-14 small group facilitators)

### **Substitutes:**

Substitute catechists are needed for all of the above sessions. If you are typically free during any of the above mentioned times, but can not make a monthly commitment, consider giving your time occasionally as a substitute.

## **CATECHIST FORMATION**

Catechists are encouraged and supported in their own faith development and practical training through a variety of opportunities available to them:

- Catechist orientation and training sessions on site at St. Joseph Church
- In-Service Workshops presented by Archdiocesan staff and other catechetical professionals
- Grade Level Meetings three times a year
- Archdiocesan Certification Courses and Catechetical Convocation Day
- Online Training through the University of Dayton
- Appropriate teaching manuals, a full year's subscription to Catechist magazine, and "The Catechism of the Catholic Church."

## **CALL FOR CATECHISTS**

If you feel God calling you to this ministry please contact the Faith Formation Office to set up a meeting with the director. At that time you will be provided with an application and a more detailed explanation of responsibilities and expectations. Together we can explore your interests, gifts and skills and how they can line up with the needs of our various programs. Many of our catechists have no teaching experience. But, driven by their desire to witness Christ and to pass on the faith to our young people and with the training provided, they have developed into excellent catechists. Do not hesitate and do not fear. If God calls to this ministry, there will be an opportunity for you to serve and God will provide you with the gifts you need to do so well.

## **SAFE ENVIRONMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL PERSONNEL WORKING WITH MINORS**

We strive to ensure a safe learning environment for all children. All catechists are required to complete a Volunteer Application, agree to a criminal background check, sign a Code of Ethics / Professional and Ministerial Code of Conduct, attend the "Protecting God's Children" workshop and keep that certification current on a yearly basis through online training.



## ABOUT OUR VOLUNTEER SUPPORT STAFF

Our volunteer support staff is a critical part of our faith formation efforts for the parish. If you do not feel called to the catechetical ministry, there are still a variety of ways in which you can help our program such as Faith Formation session volunteer, parent meetings, hospitality, phone calls, set-up and clean-up for sacrament preparation sessions, etc. For more information see our volunteer sign-up form or call the Faith Formation Office.

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## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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**In order to ensure effectiveness and safety in our Faith Formation Programs, we would appreciate your cooperation in the following.**

### ADMITTANCE

- **We welcome all children** in First Grade through high school to Religious Education.
- **Children who move into our parish community** and can verify that they have begun religious education for the current year in another parish are admitted into the program all year, provided there is space in the desired classroom.
- **Parents who register children for our programs after October 1<sup>st</sup> may have to take the Home Schooling option for the remainder of that school year in fairness to our catechists who already have a designated number of students.**
- **Students prepare for sacraments with the support of their own parish community.** They are to enroll and prepare in the parish where the family is registered and regularly attends Mass. Students enrolled in St. Joseph Academy are not automatically considered enrolled in our sacrament programs. Families must carefully examine where they consider their faith community truly is and enroll the child there. Exceptions are at the discretion of our pastor, the Faith Formation Office staff and the pastor of the other church.

***Please note that we follow the archdiocesan policies and requirements for sacrament preparation. If a child is enrolled in our program after the second week of classes, that may no longer be considered a full year of faith formation. This will be taken into consideration when reviewing the child's faith formation record in determining their eligibility for sacrament preparation. A full year of formation will be noted for new parishioners who enroll their children after the second week of classes and can verify that they have been attending religious education classes in their former parish. In these cases a transcript will be required.***

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## REGISTRATION PROCEDURE

- A pre-requisite for enrolling in any Religious Education Program is **registration of the family as active worshipping members of the St. Joseph parish community.** In special situations children may be admitted from other parishes with the consent of their proper pastor as well as with the permission of our pastor.

- Children already in our programs **must re-register each year.**
- In order to ensure that we have space of all of our current students, registration for current students opens in the spring time for the following year. Shortly thereafter registration opens for the entire parish. We encourage all families to register early as it helps us to plan more effectively for the following year.
- A discounted fee is offered to families re-registering BEFORE July 1<sup>st</sup>. Fees increase after July 1<sup>st</sup> in order to compensate for the extra expenses incurred by our office due this later registration.
- **New families** must make an appointment to meet with the Director or Program Coordinator to complete the registration process.
- **Only the parent or legal guardian of a child is permitted to sign their registration form.**
- Families will receive a Parent Handbook upon registration. No children will be admitted to class without a signed verification that the parents have received the parent handbook. Parent handbooks are always available on the parish website.
- If the child is baptized, parents/guardians are expected to provide a copy of the child's baptismal certificate upon registration.
- **Program fees should be paid at the time of registration.** Fees help us provide adequate materials, supplies, books, resources, catechist training and more. A family is able to pay the program fees in installments throughout the year if they make prior arrangements with the office. *(Please see the current year's registration form for detailed fee information.)*

*No child or family will be kept from participating in our program because they are unable to afford the fee. However, a family in financial difficulty must meet with the director and discounts must be requested in writing directly to the pastor. Each family situation will be held in confidence.*

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## **ATTENDANCE & TARDINESS**

- **All children are required to attend all scheduled classes.** Because each month's experience is unique, it is extremely important for your child to maintain a good attendance record. In the event that your child transfers to another parish our office will provide you with a transcript that will reflect their attendance record.
- **If it is necessary for a student to be absent from class, a parent/guardian must notify the office before class in order for their absence to be recorded as "excused" or "sick".**
- **Parents will be notified:**
  - If families in our monthly program miss any sessions without prior notification.
  - If children in our Middle School & High School program exceed more than 2 unexcused absences.
  - In case of excessive excused absences.

In such cases a parent conference may be required. Frequent absence will delay the reception of a sacrament during a preparation period.

- **In the event of a prolonged absence**, the Faith Formation Office must be informed in order to better support the child's continued education. Parents/guardians are responsible to see that their child makes up all missed work and assignments. The option to "home school" is available as well.
  - **Appointments made during religious education times do interfere with your child's religious education.** We therefore request that, whenever possible, you consult the calendar and try to arrange all dental, medical and other appointments on days when your child is not having faith formation sessions.
  - Since our regular classes only meet monthly, we ask that you strongly consider making faith formation a priority over other extra curricular activities (e.g. sports). If there is a scheduling conflict, please be sure to advise us immediately so that we can work together to find a solution that does not compromise the child's religious education. In the event where a coach or athletic instructor requires a note to be excused from a game, our office will gladly provide you with one.
  - All families are expected to be here on time for the start of their session. If a child is late more than 2 times during the year this situation will require a parent conference.
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## **ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL**

**We appreciate your cooperation in following these guidelines  
in order to keep your children safe.**

### **(MONTHLY FAMILY PROGRAM)**

- **Our Sunday Programs Families enter the school building through the Faith Formation doors and gather in the cafeteria. NO child/teen is permitted to stay for the session or leave for dismissal without his/her parent or designated adult.** Children and teens will be taken by their catechist, up to their classroom, together as a group. Parents will gather in the gym. No child is permitted to enter a classroom unless the catechist is present.
- **Our Tuesday Program Families will enter the school building through the Main doors of the school and gather in the gym.** Children and teens will be taken by their catechist, up to their classroom, together as a group. No child is permitted to enter a classroom unless the catechist is present.
- **Middle School Session will be dismissed through the Main Doors of the school building.**
- **The outside school doors always remain locked.** This is done for the safety of the children in order to prevent strangers from entering the building. (Parents wishing to visit the office or the classroom during Faith Formation session for children only, must come to the office first.)
- **Children/teens who arrive late must come to the Faith Formation Office first** and then be accompanied up to class by a staff member.

### DISMISSAL PROCEDURE FOR SESSIONS WHEN PARENTS ARE NOT PRESENT.

- **Our Sunday Program students will be dismissed through the main door of the school.**
  - **Our Tuesday Program dismissal will be through the main door of the school.**
  - Children/teens are not permitted to leave the premises without a parent/guardian unless prior permission has been granted..
  - **These procedures remain the same even in inclement weather.** Please be sure your children are dressed appropriately.
  - **No student may leave the school building before the regular dismissal time unless excused by the Director or Program Coordinator.** This must be accomplished by sending in a note from the parent/guardian stating the reason for the need of an early dismissal. Parents picking children up early must come to the Faith Formation Office.
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### EMERGENCY CLASS CANCELLATIONS

- **We follow the same schedule as the Bogota School district** regarding emergency closings due to inclement weather.
  - Families are informed of class cancellations via our **Flocknote** system. Please be sure your contact information is always current by informing our office immediately if you change your phone number, email or address.
  - **Class cancellations will also be posted on our Faith Formation webpage and social media pages if time permits.**
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### FIRE SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPARATION

- **Catechists have instructions** to follow in case of fire, lock down, or other emergency.
- **Fire drills and Lock Down drills** are conducted yearly in the fall. Children are accustomed to these drills in their regular school setting. However, we conduct drills yearly in order to ensure that they are familiar with our building and procedures.
- **There is a crisis management plan** in place in order to ensure the safety of any children attending programs in the event of a natural disaster or other type of emergency. This plan has been approved by the Bogota Police Department. The plan is the same as the plan followed by St. Joseph Academy.
- In such a case, our emergency plan will be executed and the children will first be evacuated or taken to safety. **Once we have determined that they are indeed safe, we will begin to contact the families via our emergency Notify Now system.** In the event that this online system is inaccessible, Faith Formation staff will have phone numbers available and will have the catechists contact the parents of the children. Once again,

we remind you of the importance of ensuring that you have up to date contact information for your family, including an emergency contact.

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## **HEALTH CONCERNS AND MEDICATIONS**

- It is important that you **inform the Director or Program Coordinator of any special health situations** your child may have. There is a place for this on the registration form.
  - **We will not dispense medication of any kind.** If your child is taking any type of medication that needs to be given during Faith Formation hours, a parent must be present. Please inform the Faith Formation Office if your child needs to bring emergency medications to class (e.g. Epi-pen, emergency inhaler, etc.)
  - Please remember to **keep the office informed** of any changes to your child's health or any new diagnoses made during the year.
- 

## **SPECIAL NEEDS / DISABILITIES**

- It is important that you **inform the Director or Program Coordinator of any special learning needs** your child may have in order to better facilitate learning and incorporate methods that are appropriate for your child. There is a place of this on our registration form.
  - If your **child is classified in your school district and receives special services**, we encourage you to inform the director. This information may be helpful to the catechist in planning lessons that better meet the needs of your child.
  - In these cases, **with the consent of the parents, the catechist will be informed of any concerns.**
  - **Information will be held in confidence.**
  - **In cases where the child attends a special education program** or is in a self-contained learning environment/classroom, we encourage you to speak with the director. It is possible that our Sunday special needs faith formation classroom is the best setting for your child.
  - The Director, Program Coordinator, the catechists and the parents work together to determine the best learning environment for the child.
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## **FOOD/REFRESHMENTS**

- Food and refreshments will be given to the families during our regular Sunday Family Programs and during special events and celebrations.
- Please be sure to indicate any allergies at the time of registration and to inform the office of any changes during the year.
- No food or refreshments may be distributed in classrooms.

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## PICTURE PERMISSION

- No child will be photographed without parental consent. Parents give consent for their child to be photographed on our registration form.
  - Please be aware that we occasionally take pictures of students in classes or assemblies. These pictures are usually for our Faith Formation Office use. (e.g. to decorate bulletin boards, prayer in the classroom, etc.)
  - Photographs of children may occasionally be posted online via the parish website and parish social media page.
  - In the event that permission is necessary in order to feature a special event via the media (e.g. newspaper, television or internet) a special Media Release Form must be signed by the parents.
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## CELL PHONE USE

- No child or teen is permitted to use a cell phone while in session.
  - Parents needing to contact their children must contact the office.
  - If a child/teen uses a cell phone while in session, the following procedure will be followed:
    - 1<sup>st</sup> warning: Child/teen will be asked to put the phone away.
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> warning: Catechist will take and hold the phone until the end of the session.
    - 3<sup>rd</sup> warning: Catechist will take the phone and turn it in to the Faith Formation office. The phone will be held at the office until a parent comes to pick it up.
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## SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

- **St. Joseph's Church has a zero tolerance policy regarding abuse of any kind.**
  - All catechists and volunteers have:
    - Completed a thorough Volunteer Application
    - Had an interview with the director or the program coordinator
    - Undergone a criminal background check
    - Read and Signed the "Archdiocese of Newark Policies on Professional & Ministerial Conduct."
    - Attended a special workshop on child abuse prevention entitled "Protecting God's Children."
- All certificates and records of compliance are on file in our office and a record is kept at the chancery.*
- No child is allowed to be in an unsupervised, one-to-one situation with any staff or volunteer in a remote or unobserved area.
  - EVERYONE'S cooperation is needed in order to ensure a safe environment for our children. Any parent who suspects any type of abuse should notify the proper authorities directly. Parents should also notify the

Director immediately. The Director will notify the pastor and will also notify the proper authorities, if parents have not done so already. Pursuant to state law, we are required to report suspected child abuse, and we will also follow diocesan policy on such matters.

- The policy of abuse for the Archdiocese of Newark is available for anyone who wishes to review it. Please visit the Archdiocesan website at [www.rcan.org](http://www.rcan.org) to view the policies or contact our office if you do not have access to the internet.

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## **DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic the Archdiocese of Newark continues to serve the young people of (Saint Joseph of Bogota New Jersey)

Parish program facilitators will deliver virtual programming and content for its participants, through online platforms. The program(s) will use software, tools and applications provided by third-parties that participants, parents/legal guardians, volunteers and/or staff will access via the internet and use for purposes of communication, programming, and potential content creation. These platforms may include but are not limited to: Google Classroom, GoToMeeting, Webex, and Zoom.

To enroll in any of these programs, you must provide your consent and release for your child to participate in these online applications for distance-based, virtual program purposes. Please be aware that each application collects different information about its users and has its own privacy terms and conditions to which members must adhere and which parish or diocese cannot control or assume responsibility. Please review these carefully before registering your child.

Our commitment to keeping the children and youth we serve safe is always our number one priority. To that end, we will actively monitor participant activity of children while engaged in our digital learning platforms. It is parents' responsibility to monitor their child's internet usage as a whole, including their use of any internet sites that are outside of our digital learning platforms. All online activities contemplated hereunder must also comply with the Archdiocese of Newark Safe Environment Protocols and must also follow any use requirements developed by the Archdiocese of Newark and/or the Department for the Protection of the Faithful.

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## **GENERAL EXPECTATIONS**

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### **PARENTS**

- Be an active part of their children's learning and the primary example of faith and discipleship for their children.
- To provide for my child's regular participation at weekly Mass.
- To provide for my child's regular attendance and punctuality at all faith formation and sacrament preparation sessions.
- To contact the Faith Formation office if my child is unable to attend a session.
- To complete all home assignments with my child.
- To talk with my child about what he/she learned at sessions and review homework assignments when applicable.
- Communicate any special needs or circumstances that may affect their child within the classroom.
- Communicate any concerns, questions, or suggestions.
- To pray with my child at home.
- To do something to continue my own adult faith development (participating in weekly Mass, reading, attending workshops, small group discussions, sacrament preparation meetings, etc.)

### **CHILDREN AND TEENS**

- Behave in a Christian manner at all times showing respect and being cooperative with adults and other students.
- Actively and cooperatively participate in classroom activities and discussions.
- Attend sessions regularly and complete any assignments.
- Bring all required materials.
- Dress appropriately and respect their own bodies by dressing modestly.
- Respect others' property and school property.
- Do not eat or drink in the classrooms.



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## DISCIPLINE POLICY

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All students are expected to share in the faith learning experience of the parish program. They do so by meeting the expectations above to the best of their ability. We want the children in our program to experience the Gospel values at all times. Therefore, if a child's behavior disrupts the learning process for him or herself or for others, the following steps will be taken:

- **At the first incident** a verbal warning will be given by the catechist and the child will be reminded of the expectations.
- **At the second incident** the child/teen will be sent to the office for a discussion with the Director.
- **At the third incident** the child is removed from the class and the parents are contacted.

**All efforts will be made to work with the child and the family** in order to resolve the issue in the most effective way possible.

**However, if the problem persists and cooperation is not evident by the child or parent, we reserve the right to remove the child from our regularly scheduled sessions.** In such a case it may be necessary to continue the child's religious education at home.

This is another reason why consistent communication with our office regarding special needs or special family circumstances is important. Often these situations can impact a child's behavior. In order to best address your child's needs we hope to be well informed and any information you can give us is helpful to our catechists. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

**Persistent problems with discipline may also impact the readiness of a child preparing for a sacrament. In that case, a parent conference may be necessary.**

**The following page is for parent's/guardian's information. Each child/teen in grades 7 through 12 receives a Code of Conduct on the first day of class. The contract must be signed by the child/teen and his/her catechist. Signed copies will be filed in the office.**



**ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am the parent or legal guardian of  
\_\_\_\_\_.

I have read the DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY, I fully understand it, and I voluntarily agree to be bound by its terms. I represent and certify that I am the parent or legal guardian of the minor.

Parent/Legal Guardian NAME (REQUIRED):

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Legal Guardian SIGNATURE (REQUIRED):

\_\_\_\_\_

Email (REQUIRED): \_\_\_\_\_

Address (REQUIRED): \_\_\_\_\_

City (REQUIRED): \_\_\_\_\_

State: New Jersey



**AUTHORIZATION, CONSENT AND RELEASE FOR  
ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION INVOLVING MINORS FORM**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am the parent or legal guardian of  
\_\_\_\_\_.

I give permission for my child to participate in (Faith Formation monthly sessions and all activities during the Faith Formation year September 2022-May 2023)

I understand that I will have access to everything provided to my child and be made aware of how digital media is being used, be told how to access the sites, and be given the opportunity to be copied on all material sent to my child via digital platforms.

I authorize and consent to staff and/or volunteers of the Parish to communicate with my Child electronically, including via the above-referenced video conferencing tools in accordance with the program(s).

I have read this Consent and Release Form, I fully understand it, and I voluntarily agree to be bound by its terms. I represent and certify that I am the parent or legal guardian of the minor.

Parent/Legal Guardian Name (REQUIRED): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature (REQUIRED):  
\_\_\_\_\_

Email (REQUIRED): \_\_\_\_\_

Address (REQUIRED): \_\_\_\_\_

City (REQUIRED): \_\_\_\_\_

State: New Jersey



Dear Parents of Middle and High School Program students (Grade 6 through 12)

Welcome to a new year of Faith Formation. To make our Faith Formation sessions as beneficial as possible for all students we are requiring that every **child** and **his/her parent** sign this Contract. **Contracts will be reviewed and signed at the first parent meeting. Your child will not be permitted to continue in class until we have a signed Code of Conduct.**

We are trying to live the Christian faith the way that Jesus Christ taught us to. This will bring us happiness and peace, and will create that atmosphere for others too. The attitudes and actions listed below will contribute to making this place one where your children can grow in faith and in the love of God.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Jen Zwernemann  
Director of Faith Formation

.....  
**\*\*\* CODE OF CONDUCT CONTRACT \*\*\***

I agree to participate in this course by:

Having **RESPECT** for myself, other students, and all adults present. If a student behaves inappropriately or disrupts the class the discipline policy will be followed as stated in our parent handbook.

**FOLLOWING ALL RULES**, and **HONORING** all requests, including:

- **NOT BRINGING** candy, gum, or snacks to the classrooms.
- **ELECTRONIC DEVICES** are not to be used. I understand that if my device is seen or heard it will be taken and returned after class. At the second offense the device will be returned directly to my parents. At the third offense there will be a parent conference.
- **LISTENING** when others are speaking.
- **FAITHFULLY ATTENDING CLASSES** (Excessive absences will require make-up work to be completed and may delay the celebration of a sacrament. Only serious reasons such as illness are acceptable excuses. Please be proactive in communicating with the office when absence is necessary.)
- **ARRIVING ON TIME FOR CLASSES** The opportunity to pray and learn about the Catholic faith is jeopardized when a child is consistently arriving late, as arrivals are very disruptive. After 2 late arrivals, parents will be contacted by phone.
- **COMPLETING ALL ASSIGNMENTS, Including the ONLINE WORK and GOSPEL QUESTION OF THE WEEK**, on time and to the best of my ability.
- **BRING REQUIRED MATERIALS** each week, including Workbook, Bible, and any other materials requested by the catechist. If student loses his/her book or bible parent will have to purchase another book.
- **WALKING TO AND FROM CLASSES** in an orderly respectful way.
- **TAKING CARE OF ALL** Church, school, and personal property.
- **DRESS CODE** – Clothing must be modest and no one will be permitted to wear any clothing with inappropriate language.

Please PRINT child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Catechist: \_\_\_\_\_

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## PARENT GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

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Upon registering your child at the Faith Formation Office either the Director or Program Coordinator reviewed this page with you. Your signature on the registration form indicates that you will fulfill these obligations to the best of your ability.

**I fully understand my responsibilities regarding my child's religious faith development:**

- **To provide for my child's regular participation at weekly Mass.**
- **To provide for my child's regular attendance at all faith formation and sacrament preparation sessions.**
- **To complete all home preparation assignments with my child.**
- **To talk with my child about what he/she learned at sessions and review homework assignments when applicable.**
- **To contact the Faith Formation office if my child is unable to attend a session.**
- **To pray with my child at home.**
- **To do something to continue my own adult faith development (participating in weekly Mass, reading, attending workshops, small group discussions, sacrament preparation meetings, etc.)**

**I realize the parish program can only complement and support my efforts as a parent to raise my child according to the Catholic Faith tradition.**

**I also realize the confusion caused in my child if what they learn in Faith Formation sessions is not consistent with what is taught and practiced in the home.**

**You are the primary educators of your children and God believes you are up for the task!**

“Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators.”<sup>1</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education, Gravissimum Educationis*

Furthermore, this role is irreplaceable<sup>2</sup> and, as stated by the Second Vatican Council, “so important that only with difficulty can it be supplied where it is lacking.”<sup>3</sup>

“It cannot be forgotten that the most basic element, so basic that it qualifies the educational role of parents, is parental love.”<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation: *Familiaris Consortio*

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<sup>1</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education, Gravissimum Educationis* [document on line] (1965)

<sup>2</sup> GDC, par. 226.

<sup>3</sup> *Gravissimum Educationis*, par. 3.

<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation: *Familiaris Consortio* [document on line] (1981), par 36

“Parents are the first and most important educators of their own children, and they also possess a *fundamental competence* in this area.”<sup>5</sup> John Paul II demonstrated a great confidence in parents, including parents of this generation. He wrote this in his “Letter to Families” in the Year of the Family, 1994. His letter also demonstrates that he was fully cognizant of the social and cultural pressures modern parents face.

**We pray for God’s continued blessing upon your vocation as a parent  
and as your child’s primary religious educator.**

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<sup>5</sup> John Paul II, “Letter to Families” [document on line] (1994)