St. Francis of Assisi Parish
Faith Formation
Policy
Handbook



As the parish of St. Francis of Assisi, a Roman Catholic Community we believe that it is the mission of the parish to support parents in the privilege and obligation of passing on the faith to their children. We therefore enter into a partnership with parents to fulfill the awesome responsibility to carry out the promise made at the Baptism of their child to raise their child in the Catholic faith.

This partnership is formed to provide a solid foundation in the process of Faith Formation. Faith Formation requires systematic learning, experiential awareness of God, and most important worship.

Partnership of the Parish and Parents

Parish – It is the responsibility and privilege of the parish to provide a Faith Formation program that is based on solid Catholic doctrine following the Magisterium of the Catholic Church; to provide well trained Catechists, adequate class material, and a space that is conducive to learning.

Parents – It is the parent's privilege and responsibility to worship with their children and the parish community each and every weekend and Holy day by attending Mass, teaching the age-appropriate prayers, attending all parent meetings and seeing that home lessons are completed.

Faith Formation Program

Calendar - The systematic learning takes place during the months from October to May. In general, if there is no school there will be no Faith Formation classes. A detailed calendar will be provided.

Grades - Children and youth will be grouped by grades indicating the level of completion of the curriculum in accordance with Diocesan guidelines.

Attendance – is very important as each class builds upon each other, thus building a solid foundation of knowledge and faith. If a student is unable to attend a class, please call/text the Faith Formation Office at 774-364-2158. Check with your child's teacher upon returning to class for any make up work.

Behavior – Courtesy and respect must be shown to Catechists and Aides both adult and youth. Respect and courtesy must be shown to all students and classmates. (In general, only one voice should be heard at all times in the classroom situation, this provides the best possible learning environment). Students are asked to show the proper respect for church property, follow directions and complete tasks given by the adult in charge.

Location – All classes are held at St. Joseph's Chapel hall, 29 South Street, Barre, MA.

Evaluation - As stated in the Diocese of Worcester's - Handbook for Religious Education - "The systematic learning curriculum must include the means to determine whether the stated goals and objectives have been achieved". An "Inventory Test" (provided by the Office of Religious Education) for each grade level is given to the student at the beginning of the year to determine what the child knows and give the Catechist an insight on what they need to include in their lesson planning. The child is then retested at the end of the year to determine if their knowledge has improved. We believe the process of forming a solid foundation of knowledge requires progression building upon each level. Learning styles and learning differences will be taken into consideration. Parents are asked to notify the Administer of Religious Education of any special learning needs at the time of enrollment. A certificate of "Completion of Grade" will be awarded upon the satisfactory completion of the goals and objectives as set forth for each level. After the successful completion of stated goals and objectives the student will then be assigned to the next grade.

Schedule – Classes for Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (pre-k ages 3, 4 & 5) and grades 1 – 6 are Sunday mornings beginning with the 8am Mass followed by class from 8:45am – 9:45am. Your family has the option of attending the other weekend Masses and just dropping off your child for class on Sunday at 8:45am.

Grades 7, 8, 9 & Confirmation meet Sunday evening 6pm-7:30pm. A yearly retreat and/or service project may be required as the opportunities arise. As stated in the Diocese of Worcester's - Handbook for Religious Education – "Since they are a major part of the spiritual growth process, retreats should be offered to people of all ages on a regular basis".

Enrollment – We welcome all children ages 3 and up to our program who want to learn about the Catholic faith. To enroll in Faith Formation classes families must be registered in our parish system. Parish registration can be completed by contacting the parish secretary at 978-355-2228 x2 and available upon request from the Administrator of Religious Education. Usually, Faith Formation enrollment will be available in mid-August. This will give us the ability to order sufficient texts, supplies, and materials along with working out the organizational aspects of the program prior to the beginning of the year in early October.

We ask that families enroll in a timely fashion because the earlier a family enrolls the better able, we are to handle individual issues and work out any issues should they arise. It is the sole responsibility of the ARE (Administrator of Religious Education) to assign each child a class assignment. Families enrolling for the first time are asked to provide a copy of their child's Baptismal and First Communion certificates if applicable. If your child(ren) have never been to Faith Formation classes or have been away from the program we would love to have them join our program.

Fees – An enrollment donation of $40.00 per child for Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, grades 1 – 9 and Confirmation is requested. Checks are payable to:
St. Francis of Assisi Parish.
This enrollment donation helps defray the costs of the Faith Formation program. If for any reason the fees are a heavy burden upon a family, please contact the ARE or Pastor and accommodations will be arranged.

Textbooks – Textbooks are provided and are the property of St. Francis of Assisi Parish.

Instruction at Home – We acknowledge that parents are the primary teachers of their children. The occasion may arise in which parents may wish to take on the task of the systematic instruction of their own child(ren). In order to issue a certificate of completion, parents must enroll their child(ren), follow the curriculum for the appropriate age level and the child must complete the assignments and take and pass all evaluations. The ARE will supply a textbook, a curriculum and administer both the mid-term and final exams. All children instructed at home are eligible and encouraged to take part in any special events that are part of the Faith Formation program. For example; Family Mass, Epiphany play, Crowning of the statue of the Blessed Mother, Retreats, Service Projects, etc. Sacramental preparation cannot be done as home instruction. All sacraments must be prepared for within the context of the parish program.

Sacrament Preparation – "Children that have attained the use of reason, who can offer proof of Baptism and who have been deemed ready by a suitable process of discernment and immediate catechesis may be admitted to the (Eucharist) sacrament after according to their capacity by penance". Canon #914 With this Canon of the church in mind we offer preparation of the sacraments annually. In our experience here at St. Francis of Assisi Parish most children desire to receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist when they are 7 or 8 years of age or in Grade 2 of Faith Formation. Having said this we also acknowledge that none of us (including our children) develops spiritually at the same rate, therefore age nor grade should be used to determine readiness for the sacraments. We look at each child as the individual God our Father created to determine his/her readiness for the reception of the sacraments be it First Penance, First Eucharist or Confirmation. Each child will be prepared according to their readiness.

The single most important aspect of a child's Faith Formation is family's weekly participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Confirmation – A Confirmation candidate is usually a Freshman or Sophomore in High School. The successful candidate will have a history of participating with the faith community at the Celebration of the Eucharist and also participation in the Faith Formation program or an approved alternate form of instruction for a minimum of four years. Confirmation preparation like the preparation of the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist is offered annually and discernment for readiness should be made on an individual basis.

Safety – The well-being of each and every child is paramount for both parents and the parish. We want you to know that we follow all Diocesan mandates regarding a Safe Environment. All personnel both paid and volunteers are required to submit an application for a CORI check and take the Safe Environment Training class before they are part of the Faith Formation program.

When dropping off or picking up your child we ask that you come into the hall. This is especially important for children who are in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and grades 1 – 3. When picking up your child we do however ask that you wait in the hall until the Catechist has dismissed the children. This is important for classroom order and also for safety.

As a matter of safety, we ask that you call/text the Faith Formation office at 774-364-2158 if your child will be absent from class.

Late arrivals: We ask that all students who arrive late no matter what age report to an adult in charge in their classroom. We ask that all students arrive promptly and be present at the start of class. This provides the best possible classroom environment. When students arrive late it disrupts the flow of the class and takes away from the learning experience for both the student arriving late and the rest of the class. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Communication – is very important to keep a partnership running smoothly. Communication between students, parents, catechists, ARE, and the Pastor is also very important. Parents are always welcome to call/text the Faith Formation Office at 774-364-2158. If you want to speak with Father directly, they should call the Rectory number at 978-355-2228 x3.

It is the responsibility of the Administrator of Religious Education to see that all parents are kept informed therefore, the ARE will supply each family with the following:

Copy of the Policy Handbook
Calendar of the Faith Formation program
Schedule of Parent Meetings
Name and Contact information of Catechists

The Parish uses the online program Flocknote as the main form of communication. The parish website www.saintfrncisofassisiparish.com and the weekly bulletin also has the same information available. The best place to get information is Flocknote, the parish website and the weekly bulletin. Letters may on occasion be sent home as a courtesy but the ARE is not required to do so.

Catechists may occasionally send a page for you to do with your child at home. It is used as an aide to inform parents of what your child is learning and reinforce a lesson in the classroom.

Parents are always welcome to sit in on a class at all levels.

Our Promise – We believe that it is our responsibility to help parents who are natural and best teachers of their children to catechize their children in the Catholic faith. God blesses parents with children for the sole purpose of the sanctification (to make holy) of both parents and their children. We promise to work with parents to the best of our ability to offer the very best Faith Formation program.

Thank you for taking the time to read this Policy Handbook.

Thank you and God Bless.

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A Roman Catholic Community
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Rectory – 978-355-2228
Faith Formation Office – 978-355-2228 x5
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