



St. Jerome Catholic
Church
Faith Formation
2016 - 2017
Handbook

"The Lord never tires of forgiving. It is we who tire of asking for forgiveness."

-Pope Francis(Pope's First Angelus pope, March 17, 2013).

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SAFE ENVIRONMENT EDUCATION

St. Jerome Faith Formation Programs follow the Safe Environment Guidelines for children as set forth by the Diocese of St. Petersburg. Each year a Safe Environment workshop will be presented in the classroom. This workshop addresses ways in which we can help to keep children safe from abusive situations. A separate workshop for parents will be offered each year.

EMERGENCY CANCELLATION OF CLASSES

In the event of an emergency situation, such as tornado or hurricane, Faith Formation classes will generally be canceled. A recording will be left on the Faith Formation phone line. Please call the Faith Formation office if you have any questions at 727-595-3100 ext 305. There will also be a message posted on the Parish website www.stjeromeonline.org. Please note that once classes are canceled, even if a storm later diverts, we will not reschedule classes for that day.

CHILD ABUSE

The staff members, catechists, and assistants are required to report any acknowledgment or suspicion of child abuse or neglect to the abuse hotline 1-800-96-ABUSE.

VOLUNTEERS

Parent/guardian volunteer participation is welcomed and even encouraged. Volunteers are needed in various areas of the Faith Formation Programs. Anyone interested in volunteer service such as clerical and office help, catechists, aids, hall monitors, etc. should contact the Faith Formation office at 727-595-3100 ext 305. Some work can be completed at home. Background checks and safe environment training may be required.

RIGHT TO AMEND

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. It is not meant to cover every situation that may occur. St. Jerome Faith Formation office reserves the right to amend this handbook as nec-

accused, will be respected to the extent possible, but will be consistent with legal obligations and with the necessity to investigate allegations of misconduct and to take corrective action when this conduct has occurred.

Reporting and investigative procedures

Individuals involved with the Parish Religious Education programs must report their concerns to their Catechetical Leader, the pastor, or the Diocesan Director of Faith Formation. If an individual is uncomfortable reporting to the above persons, the report should be made to the office of the Executive Director of the Diocesan Department of Catholic Formation and Education.

Individuals who engage in behavior which violates this policy are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion, dismissal, discharge and any legal consequences which may result.

Individuals should recognize that knowingly and willfully bringing false accusations of harassment or discrimination can have serious effects on innocent individuals and may subject such individuals to expulsion, dismissal, discharge, and any legal consequences for his/her behavior.

Retaliation against individuals who in good faith file a complaint of harassment or participate in an investigation is prohibited.

PUBLICITY RELEASES AND PHOTOGRAPHS

From time to time, publicity releases for newspapers, television, our parish website, blogs, parish videos, Facebook, and other media may be prepared about events occurring in the parish. These may or may not be accompanied by photos or videotape of students. A Promotional Media Release form will need to be completed for each student.

COMMUNICATION

We are here to serve the faith formation needs of our children, youth, and adults. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions please feel free to share them with your child's catechist or call the Faith Formation Office at 727 595-3100 ext 305. Visit our Parish Website at www.stjeromeonline.org. Like us on Facebook at St Jerome Faith Formation or St. Jerome Youth Ministry. KidNews Today is a publication intended to give information about particular issues for families.

ST. JEROME LIFELONG FAITH FORMATION

St. Jerome Lifelong Faith Formation celebrates the dignity and sacredness of each person as a child of God and recognizes the uniqueness of each family as the domestic church. We affirm parents in their role as primary catechists and the most important factor in the faith development of their children. We strongly affirm the belief that faith formation is a lifelong process.

LIFELONG FAITH FORMATION MINISTRY RESPONSIBILITIES

For this purpose we will strive to:

- Provide an environment that promotes the Gospel values of Jesus Christ.
- Provide opportunities for prayer, reflection and liturgical celebrations that stimulate a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Provide intellectual challenges appropriate for each level.
- Invite and encourage parents, as well as catechists from the parish community to participate in opportunities to deepen their faith as witnesses of the Good News.
- Encourage open communication between catechists and families.
- Offer programs that invite family and parish participation and promote ongoing conversion to Jesus Christ.
- Foster stewardship as a way of life, recognizing that everything we have is a gift from God; and thereby encouraging each person to serve and support the community, each in his/her own way, according to each one's abilities.

TEACHINGS FROM THE CHURCH

The following quotes from documents of the Catholic Church that will help in understanding the mission of Lifelong Faith Formation here at St. Jerome Catholic Church.

"Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God. The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents." *Catechism of the*

Catholic Church #2226, 1994

Parents are the primary educators of their children and are responsible for the spiritual growth of their children. Our goal is to partner with you in this awesome responsibility.

“Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole liturgical and sacramental activity, for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Jesus Christ works in fullness for the transformation of human beings” *On Catechesis in Our Time #23, John Paul II, 1979.*

As Catholics, we have an obligation to attend Mass each weekend and teach our children by word and example. Faith Formation classes do not take the place of Mass nor does it fulfill our obligation to participate at Mass.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Make Faith Formation a family priority.**
- **Attend Mass weekly and on Holy Days of Obligation. Promote full, active, and conscious participation in the liturgy.**
- **Foster your child’s prayer life at home.**
- **Read, pray, and discuss Scriptures, especially the Sunday readings.**
- **Promote Stewardship as a way of life.**
- **Participate in the life of the parish, by attending parish functions.**
- **Encourage open communication between the catechists and families.**

Together as a Catholic “Faith Team”, we, by virtue of our Baptism, can bring to fulfillment the values and promises of the Reign of God.

HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION 2016-2017

November 1	All Saints Day
December 8	Feast of the Immaculate Conception
December 25	Christmas
January 1	Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
May 25	Ascension of Jesus

dignity.

- To encourage a heightened sensitivity toward behaviors that others may find offensive and intimidating, whether these behaviors refer to race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, familial status, veteran status, or disability.

This policy is not intended to otherwise limit the expectations of staff, children, students, and volunteers to engage fully in the traditions of teaching, celebration, participating in, and being formed by the Catholic faith, including but not limited to curriculum, catechesis, the Sacraments, other liturgies, and worship service ministries.

Explanation of Harassment:

Harassment can result from a single incident or from a pattern of behavior involving verbal, written, or physical conduct or communication.

Harassment encompasses a broad range of behaviors, which could include, but are not limited to:

1. Physical, mental or verbal abuse
2. Insults, jokes, or derogatory slurs based on one or more of an individual’s protected status(es)
3. Unwelcome sexual advances or touching
4. Implicit or explicit requests for sexual favors
5. Unwanted sexual comments (serious or humorous)
6. Unwanted sexually suggestive telephone calls, letters, email, etc
7. Comments or jokes based on issues of modesty and developing social awareness
8. Unwanted forced involvement in activities (e.g. physical, religious, etc.)
9. Coercion of religious styles or personal beliefs upon a participant
10. Intimidation in front of a group or forced personal sharing in groups
11. Inappropriate media or music use which would violate this policy

Confidentiality

The right to confidentiality, both of the complainant and of the

serious responsibility, therefore **students will not be permitted to walk through the parking lots, or outside the dismissal area without the accompaniment of a parent/guardian or their designated adult.**

Arrival:

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are greatly encouraged to park and escort their children into the Education Building no sooner than 15 minutes before class time so that they may participate in the community prayer before classes begin.

Dismissal:

Students should be picked up immediately after class is dismissed directly from the classroom in the Education Building for the safety of students **Do not call your child to come to your car.**

DIOCESAN HARASSMENT POLICY

Policy:

The Diocese of St. Petersburg requires that each parish, Catholic school, or early childhood center establish and adopt this policy that prohibits any form of harassment by any individual. The Diocese of St. Petersburg strives for the establishment of Christian, professional and supportive educational programs, schools, early childhood centers, and parish youth ministry programs in non-employment situations. No parish, school, or early childhood center will be responsible for off campus harassment, unless it occurs at a parish, school, or early childhood center sponsored event.

Purpose of the Policy:

This policy intends

- That each individual is free from physical, psychological, or verbal intimidation harassment in the schools, early childhood centers, religious education, and youth ministry settings.
- Each individual involved in schools, early childhood centers, religious education, and youth ministry programs should maintain and further develop attitudes and behaviors which express respect for each person's God given

STEWARDSHIP AS A WAY OF LIFE

A spirituality of stewardship recognizes that everything we have is a gift from God: our time, our talent, and, our treasure. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, in their pastoral letter Stewardship: A Disciple's Response, describes the Christian steward as one who:

1. Receives God's gifts gratefully
2. Cherishes and tends them in a responsible manner
3. Shares them in justice and love with all
4. Returns them with increase to the Lord

You can foster stewardship as a way of life with your family by:

- Making time for God in prayer and worship
- Sharing time and talent for the common good
- Nurturing faith in order to share it with others
- Giving of your treasure cheerfully
- Promoting vocations for the abundant harvest
- Preserving the earth for future generations.

(Excerpted from Stewardship: A Way of Life. Klemberding, Glodava.)

ATTENDANCE

Students are to be punctual and to stay until the end of class. Regular attendance is a commitment to your child's spiritual development; excessive absences are discouraged and may require a child to repeat a grade.

If your child will be absent, please notify the Lifelong Faith Formation Office at 727.595.4610 ext. 305.

*******Only registered students will be allowed in the classrooms******

PROGRAMS

Availability of classes is dependent on the availability of physical space and the generosity of volunteers who teach and assist in the classes. We encourage you to join our team of dedicated catechists, assistants, and others devoted to providing a meaningful community experience for our children.

God does not call the qualified...He qualifies the CALLED!"
You may feel inadequate or unworthy, but God works through both. Pray about giving of your time and talent to help our young parishioners grow in the faith and knowledge of our Lord.

Grade Level Faith Formation Classes:

Sundays: Sunday Faith Formation is the traditional classroom setting of teaching the doctrine of the Catholic church, scripture, and includes faith sharing.

10:15am—11:30am Grades 3 through 8

Lifelong faith formation also uses a teaching method called Catechesis of the Good Shepherd for pre-k to 3rd grade. There are four different class times that use this teaching method, which is based on the Montessori way of teaching. This method proves to be very successful in that attendance has increased and it helps this age group to learn and grow in their faith in a way made just for them.

ACCEPTANCE AND PRIORITY PLACEMENT

It is a privilege to be able to learn and share faith in a group setting. Every effort will be made to make faith formation classes available to all, based on the resources and staff available. However, with the availability of classes depending on the generosity of volunteers, we may have to prioritize the placement of students.

First priority will be given to registered and practicing parish members. That is, registered parishioners who are active in the parish by attending Mass regularly. Placement is on a first come first serve basis.

Second priority registered parishioners who may not be practicing their faith to the fullest.

REGISTRATION

All students must register for classes each year through the Faith Formation office before classes start. Every family, whether new or returning to the program must be registered in person. It is necessary to have a current signature of a parent or guardian's consent, and an update of diocesan policies. To maintain a high quality of learning and faith sharing, class size is limited.

- Differences among all peoples are to be accepted and respected as Jesus has taught. Children are taught and expected to be mindful of their worlds and actions, so they are not a source of pain to others.
- Catechists and assistants deserve full support and cooperation. This includes listening, following directions, and participating in the activities of the class.
- Students are expected to have a responsible and Christian attitude regarding proper attire and behavior while on church property. Students will not be permitted to wear inappropriate clothing. Modesty is always advised.
- Cell phones, iPads, toys or other devices not required for class are not permitted to be used in the classroom.
- Any words or actions which show disrespect for the dignity of all persons will not be permitted.
- Respect for parish and school property should reflect a sense of good stewardship. Respect toward property, whether it be that of the parish, a catechist, another student, or a student's own is required at all times.
- Students are responsible for leaving the classroom neat and orderly; assisting in the preservation of our books and other shared resources.

Students who interfere with other students' rights to achieve the above goals by being persistently disrespectful or persistently disruptive will have their parents called. If the child's behavior does not improve, after a meeting with the parent/guardian to resolve the problem, the student will be dismissed from the class and provided with home schooling materials.

BOOKS AND MATERIALS

We use the Loyola Press Sunday Connection Weekly religion series, Call to Faith Books, and the Bible for 3rd through 8th grade. The Teach at Home program will also use the Call to Faith Book published by Our Sunday Visitor and will use online help to assist the families. You may visit http://calltofaith.osv.com/parish/for_families/prayers to explore the program.

SAFETY FOR ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Our parking lots are extremely busy. Your child's safety is a

C. Mystagogy (follow-up)

Christian Living has to be learned and a child's religious life needs to be continually nurtured. Family life, parish life, and systematic catechesis work together to form this good.

The purpose of initiation into the sacraments is for a graced relationship with Christ. Participation is the liturgical/sacramental, catechetical, and apostolic life of the parish matures and deepens that relationship.

Sacramental Student Records

Families are responsible for the following:

First Reconciliation and First Communion

- Baptismal Certificate
- Student's and Parent's attendance at all preparation sessions and the retreat and completion of assignments.
- Parish membership number (on your offertory envelope).
- Weekly participation at weekend Mass and Holy Days of Obligation

Confirmation

- Baptismal Certificate
- Sponsor's Name and Certificate from Sponsor's parish
- Parish membership number (on your offertory envelope).
- Parent attendance at required meetings.
- Student's attendance to retreat and all preparation sessions
- Confirmation Name
- Completion of service within St. Jerome Parish Community.

DISCIPLINE AND BEHAVIOR

It is our goal to provide our students an environment of sharing and learning which promotes spiritual development and the advancement of the Reign of God with respect for the life and sanctity of all God's creation.

Faith Formation classes are a time for sharing in God's Kingdom. This sharing is a privilege and must be treated as such.

Students are taught and expected to respect the sanctity of life and the uniqueness of all persons. This means that:

REGISTRATION FEES FOR GRADE PRE-K—GRADE 8

Registration including Material Fee:

\$70.00 for first student

\$60.00 each additional student in the family

- No child will be denied entrance into class or Sacramental Preparation for financial reasons. Financial assistance or scholarship may be sought by contacting the Director of Lifelong Faith Formation. These matters will be held in confidence.
- Registration fees go to offset the cost of running the Faith Formation programs. Fees are used for such items as prayer books, classroom materials, resource materials, background checks for catechists, catechist guides, catechist training and certification, celebrations, postage, shipping, copier and copy fees, etc.

Sacramental Preparation is separate and free standing.

Special Education:

Every effort will be made for accommodations of individual needs based on the resources we have available to the Faith Formation Programs.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION CLASSES

Confirmation

Confirmation is a Sacrament of Initiation that has an intimate relationship to Baptism and the Eucharist. Sacramental preparation for teens is offered to those teens wishing to be Confirmed who have completed 7th grade Faith Formation Classes or Access through the parish Faith Formation program or Catholic Schools.

Immediate preparation for Confirmation requires participation by the parents/guardians as well as the candidates (those being confirmed) and sponsors. The exact dates for preparation, retreat and additional requirements are discussed at the Confirmation Information Meeting held in the fall. Dates will be announced.

Confirmation is a community celebration that takes place at one

of our regular scheduled weekend Masses.

First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion

We value teaching that parents are the primary educators' of their children. Our goal is to assist parents in this awesome responsibility. Recognizing that families can have very hectic schedules, we carve our sacred time for parents and children to come together at the parish, with other families, to focus on the importance of reconciliation and Eucharist, as well as the importance of being a reconciler and Living Eucharist for others. Dates will be announced.

First Holy Communion is always a community celebration. At St. Jerome, we strive to illuminate the reality that the children are joining the community at the Table of the Lord. For this reason, First Holy Communion is celebrated during various Sunday Masses in accordance with our regular Mass schedule. The First Communicants and their parents approach the altar together to receive the Body of Christ, thereby giving witness to the larger community of their commitment to the promises they made at their child's baptism.

Children and youth wishing to celebrate this **Sacrament need to have completed Faith Formation classes in the parish program or a Catholic school in the year prior to reception of the Sacraments. Typically first grade.** Immediate preparation occurs in the year the Sacrament will be celebrated. Retreat and additional requirements will be discussed at the Sacramental Preparation meeting for parents.

Sacramental Preparation Fees

First Reconciliation & First Communion	\$65.00 per student
Confirmation	\$75.00 per student

Sacramental Preparation programs, are under the supervision of Lifelong Faith Formation and are freestanding programs.

These fees partially help to cover the costs of books, speakers, extra materials, retreats, liturgical celebration, and mystagogy celebrations for the sacraments.

Registration for Sacraments:

If your child is a candidate for receiving a Sacrament this year, please refer to the following section on Sacramental Preparation.

Sacramental Preparation

- Sacrament involves relationship with Jesus, and presumes faith.
- Readiness, not age or grade is the criterion for the reception of a sacrament.
- The celebration of the sacrament is the action of the community.
- The family has an essential role in the preparation for and celebration of a sacrament.
- Immediate preparation and reception of the sacrament is done in the parish to which the family is registered and participating, since the pastor has the canonical right and obligation to administer the sacraments to his parishioners.

Process of Preparation

A. Remote Preparation:

Is a period of evangelization and systematic religious education prior to the year of immediate preparation. This guideline is met through participation in the Catholic school or parish religious education program.

The practice in our diocese is two years of remote preparation. Students need to be enrolled and actively participating in Faith Formation classes either in the Parish Program or a Catholic school.

B. Immediate Preparation:

The process of immediate catechesis for Sacraments are FREE STANDING PROGRAMS, that is, involves separate preparation from any Faith Formation program in which the candidate may continue. A separate registration fee to cover costs of books, retreats, speakers and other materials will be charged.

According to Diocesan guidelines, sacramental preparation required further student and family involvement. Parent preparation meetings are an important part of this process, and therefore, attendance is required.