

The
ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
OF
ST. THERESA OF LISIEUX



FAITH FORMATION HANDBOOK
2011 – 2012 A.D.

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Dear Parent/Guardian,

Welcome to the Faith Formation Program of St. Theresa's Parish. Our program offers classroom instruction for Grades 1 through 11. We also offer Liturgy of the Word at the 9:00 a.m. Mass on Sundays for Pre-K thru 4th grade, and Ministry of choice in Grade 12. During the summer we offer a Vacation Bible School for age 4 to grade 5 along with volunteer opportunities for Grades 6 through adult.

The purpose of this handbook is to assist you in your role as the first and foremost religious educator and best teacher of your children). It contains valuable information regarding policies, procedures and sacramental guidelines. In addition, ***the colored page in the center list the times and dates for classes and meetings for the 2011-2012 catechetical year.***

Our Faith Formation Program wishes to supplement and extend the instruction and powerful example begun in your home and family. In order to supplement your Catholic teachings at home, we have selected a catechetical curriculum that incorporates four major and necessary dimensions: word, worship, community, and service. Each of these components must be integrated into the entire planning process in order for catechesis to be both formational and educational to benefit the "whole" student.

I, along with Fr. Richard, the Catechists and Aides who assist in this important ministry, look forward to working in close cooperation with you. May we always support each other in prayer and deed as we journey together in faith with the sole intent of bringing our young people to a greater awareness of God and the living of Gospel values.

Anne Cormier
Coordinator of Faith Formation

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REGISTRATION

All students who participate in our program must be registered parishioners of St. Theresa's. Members of other parishes may who wish to join the program must request permission from their own parish and make arrangements through the Directors of Religious Education at both parishes.

A registration form should be completed with updated contact information and submitted with the registration fee prior to the beginning of classes. The registration fee is \$25.00 for 1 student, \$50 for 2 students, and \$75 for 3 or more students. **Students will not be placed in a class until financial arrangements have been made.** Please call the Faith Formation Office to inquire about financial payment plans.

GENERAL POLICY

- Student attendance at all classes and supplemental activities is expected for Grades 1 through 11. New registrants must provide a copy of their Baptismal record.
- Students in Grades 2 and 11 attending Catholic schools must enroll in St. Theresa's Religious Education Program to prepare for the reception of the Sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation respectively. These students must attend Religious Education classes as scheduled.
- Religious Education materials are issued to each registered student. The student is responsible for his or her textbook. Should a book get lost or stolen, a new text will be issued to the student at cost.
- Students are to dress appropriately for class. **No hats or "hoodies" are to be worn in class.**
- Due to safety concerns the designated area for student "pick-ups" and "drop-offs" is located behind the Parish Hall.
- Advancement to the next grade level is based upon attendance.
- Please pick your child up on time.

2011-2012 Program Dates and Times

Grade	Day & Time
Elementary School 1, 2, 3, 4	Sundays 10:05 – 10:55 a.m.
Middle School 5, 6, 7, 8	Mondays 5:30 – 6:45 p.m.
High School 9, 10, 11	Sundays 10:10 – 11:00 a.m.

The Catechetical year begins September 18 and concludes with our First Eucharist and Confirmation celebrations in early May.

Family Masses will take place the last Sunday of the month at the 9am Mass except for December and February.

For full Program Dates and Events, please refer to the appropriate calendar by grade level.

“What is Catechesis?”

Religious Education, also known as catechesis, encompasses a broad scope and is a life-long endeavor. It is evangelizing in nature, bringing people to Christ. It nourishes faith in Christ and leads people to continue the mission of Jesus in the world. It is more than the transfer of information about Jesus and the Church. Catechesis for both adults and children aims at the conversion of heart and mind toward a Gospel way of life that ultimately transforms the world.

The aim of systematic catechesis is to help people internalize the Word of God in all stages of life in order to bear fruit, which will transform the world. The catechetical mission of the Church then centers on four fundamental tasks: to proclaim Christ’s message (Word), to lead people to worship and prayer (Worship), to participate in efforts to develop community (Community), and to motivate them to assist each other (Service).

The purpose then of catechesis is:

- To develop initial faith and to continue to nourish the Christian life of the faithful
- To make one’s faith living conscious and active
- To foster mature faith
- To bring the power of the Gospel into the very heart of culture
- To help people believe in Jesus as the Son of God which leads to life in His name

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes, programs and activities for their grade as listed on the Religious Education calendar.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are to notify the teacher in the event that their child(ren) need(s) to be absent. This will be noted as an excused absence. However, all absences require the student to make up the lesson missed. High School students should take on the responsibility of informing the teacher prior to an absence and discussing make-up work. ***Habitual absenteeism may necessitate a repeated enrollment in the same grade level.***

Parents are encouraged to contact the Religious Education Office should a special need arise. Every reasonable effort will be made to adjust the program to meet special needs.

CLASS CANCELLATION – INCLEMENT WEATHER

The Religious Education Program follows the South Hadley School Calendar, no school – no Faith Formation. Please refer to the appropriate calendar for half days.

In the case of inclement weather we will post cancellations on the 40 WGGB-TV and WWLP TV-22 web sites (they will no longer broadcast on TV/Radio for us). Catechists will also be notified and will then call or email his/her students. **Please note – We do not call the school to cancel classes.**

FAMILIES AND LITURGY

Liturgy of the Word for young children will be offered every Sunday at the 9am Mass from October to May, except for the last Sunday of the month when a family/youth-focused Mass will be held. Middle and High school students are invited to assist with our Children’s Liturgy of the Word.

The Family Mass is an opportunity for our younger members to be more involved in the liturgy. It will be followed by coffee, donuts and time for fellowship. In December, the family Mass will take place on Christmas Eve when we will have our Christmas Pageant. On Easter Sunday an Easter egg hunt will be held following the 9am Mass.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Parent or Guardian:

Parents and guardians are the first and primary teachers of their children in the ways of the faith. They play an important part in passing on the faith of the Catholic Church to the next generation of believers.

Their sacred responsibility is:

- To model the Catholic faith by attending Sunday Mass
- To teach their children the basic prayers of our Catholic tradition: The Sign of the Cross, The Our Father, The Hail Mary, Glory Be, Act of Contrition, etc.
- To ensure the regular, timely attendance of their children in the program
- To meet all registration and program requirements
- To respect all who participate in the Religious Education program

Catechist:

The Catechist (teacher) is the individual who will utilize the parish curriculum to educate the student in the truths and teachings of the Catholic Church. His/her role is:

- To be a practicing Catholic
- To follow the parish curriculum outline
- To prepare each lesson conscientiously
- To maintain a classroom atmosphere of order and respect conducive to learning
- To meet all program requirements which includes continuing education
- To inform the Faith Formation Office of any concerns regarding safety and/or disruptive behavior
- To submit to a Criminal Offender Record Investigation (CORI)
- To attend the Diocesan Safe Environment Program and sign the Code of Conduct

Student:

The student is the individual actively participating in the Religious Education process in order to learn and hopefully to implement the values and principles of the Catholic faith. Each student's role is:

- To attend all Religious Education classes
- To follow all rules and directives from the catechist
- To be respectful of self, classmates, catechists, and staff
- To behave appropriately at all times
- To attend Sunday Mass
- To participate in service/social/spiritual events

DISCIPLINE

Discipline is essentially a positive experience. Its aim is to help in the process of forming Christians, who believe in Jesus, attempt to live according to Gospel values, and who, therefore, act in a manner that reflects our Catholic faith and values. Thus students are expected to behave with:

- Respect for all members of the St. Theresa Religious Education program
- Courtesy in speech and mannerisms
- Cooperation with teachers, staff, and handbook policies
- Self-control in interactions with others
- Openness to spiritual and moral values imparted along with catechetical knowledge presented

Misconducts will be addressed according to the following:

- First Misconduct:
The catechist will remind the student of the proper conduct expected.
- Repeated Misconducts:
The catechist will inform the parent/guardian of their child's misbehavior. They will then be required to attend the class to maintain their child's behavior. If the poor behavior continues, the student will be asked to leave the program and repeat the grade level.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Grade 1, 3, and 4 will use the books Blest Are We. This series teaches the four pillars of our faith as described in the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Creed, Liturgy and Sacraments, Morality, Prayer. This is taught, reinforced and expanded year by year in a spiral approach which leads children to a deeper understanding of faith and deeper transformation of their lives as followers of Jesus.

Grade 2 – *Sacramental year* – Students will prepare for the reception of The Gift of Reconciliation followed by The Gift of the Eucharist.

Grade 5, 6, 7 and 8 – Students will work through 7 themes in a series called Call to Faith. They are The Church, Jesus Christ, Kingdom of God, Morality, Revelation, Sacraments, and The Trinity. This series provides young adolescents with ways to connect their faith to everyday living.

Grade 9, 10, and 11 – Students will use a weekly “magazine” style curriculum titled SPIRIT. This curriculum follows the Sunday gospel readings of the Church's liturgical year and brings them into dialog with young people. Every issue invites teens to pray, question, think, and share about what Jesus' message asks of them in their lives and in our world. In its regular OUR CATHOLIC FAITH back-page feature, SPIRIT presents Catholic tradition and doctrine specially written for young people. These features help teens' faith development keep pace with their brain, body, and self development. One of the goals of this program is to build a habit in teens of reflecting on the gospels. Service opportunities, both in and outside the Church, will be provided to allow our high school participants to actively live out their faith.

Grade 11 – *Sacramental year* – in addition to the high school curriculum, Students will prepare for the reception of Confirmation.

Grade 12 – Students will serve in a parish ministry of their choosing.

In addition to regular classes, retreats, Family Masses, a Christmas Pageant, and other activities are scheduled to complement the program.

CATECHESIS FOR PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The parish has a responsibility to provide for the Religious Education of those with special needs.

All persons with a disability, regardless of age, have a right to be integrated into the Church and to be accepted as contributing members. The value, worth and dignity of those with special needs are to be recognized. Their basic human needs, rights, and desires are the same as for all people. Therefore, they are invited to full participation in Religious Education and Sacramental programs.

Inclusion of people with special needs in the program benefits all involved. As participating members of the community, the parish is enriched by them.

The Bureau for the Exceptional Children and Adults of the Diocese of Springfield (Jericho in Holyoke, MA) offers assistance to parishes in creating the inclusion process. Other catechetical leaders who have worked with people with disabilities may also provide valuable insights.

HOME STUDY OPTION

The Diocese of Springfield discourages the Home Study option for catechesis since the sharing and learning of faith is community based. If the parent or guardian is requesting this course of study, he/she must submit a request in writing to the Coordinator of Faith Formation. The Pastor and the Coordinator will review each request on a case-by-case basis. Home Study is limited in use and is not allowed during sacramental years.

SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMS

A process of preparation for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation (Confession), First Eucharist (First Communion) and Confirmation provides introductory catechesis on the meaning of the sacraments, signs, symbols, rituals, and graces conferred. It also spiritually prepares one to celebrate the sacrament with faith and the commitment that the sacrament calls forth. Students are expected to attend classes specific to each sacrament. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are expected to attend the scheduled meetings involved with the sacramental programs. Your cooperation is crucial to the effectiveness of these programs.

First Reconciliation:

Preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation generally takes place in the fall. The Sacrament is celebrated in the Advent season for Second Grade.

First Eucharist:

Immediately following the Sacrament of Reconciliation, preparation for First Eucharist continues for the Second Grade students. First Eucharist is celebrated in the spring during the Easter season.

Children must have attended religion classes in Grade One to be eligible to prepare for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Eucharist in Grade Two.

Confirmation:

Immediate preparation for Confirmation takes place during Grade 11. Confirmation is celebrated in the spring during the Easter season.

Students are expected to attend classroom instruction. Additional requirements include weekly Sunday Mass, parent meetings, guest speakers, retreats, service projects, the Chrism Mass, and interviews.

SACRAMENTAL GUIDELINES

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

Immediate preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation provides an opportunity for children to focus on God's mercy and forgiveness and their own experience of forgiving and being forgiven.

- The Sacrament of Reconciliation contains four parts:
 1. Contrition – a heartfelt sorrow for one's wrong doings
 2. Confession – admitting one's sins to a priest of the Church
 3. Absolution – receiving God's pardon through the sign offered by the Church's minister
 4. Act of Penance – an effort to make amends for one's sins
- Preparation generally takes place during the fall of Second Grade
- Celebration of First Reconciliation occurs on a Saturday morning during Advent
- Parents must have provided a baptismal record that includes month, day, year, and church of the child's Baptism

The Sacrament of First Eucharist

The Eucharist is the center of the life of a Christian. Participation in the Eucharist unites us more closely to Christ and his Church and nourishes us to live as his disciples. Preparation for First Eucharist provides a special opportunity for growth in one's relationship with Christ and the community and for understanding the centrality of the Mass in our lives as disciples of Christ.

- Catechesis for First Eucharist takes place during the spring of Second Grade.
- First Reconciliation precedes the reception of First Eucharist
- Celebration of First Eucharist occurs at a Sunday Mass during the Easter season (usually the first Sunday in May).

The Sacrament of Confirmation

Preparation for Confirmation aims at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of the Christian life. To this end, catechesis should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the parish community, as well as the universal church.

- Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation generally takes place during the student's junior year of high school.
- The student is expected to attend weekly Sunday Mass in addition to special worship services. Participation in service/social/spiritual events is required.
- Attendance at the Confirmation Retreat is mandatory. Any student who misses the retreat without giving 2 weeks notice will be responsible for the cost of the makeup retreat.
- Student interviews conducted by the Pastor occur in the spring.
- An investigation of the chosen Confirmation name is necessary.
- Parents must have provided a sacramental history including the month, day, year, and church of the student's Baptism and First Eucharist.
- Selection of a practicing, confirmed Catholic as a sponsor is mandated (see sponsor guidelines below).
- Confirmation is celebrated by the Bishop or his delegate at a Mass during the Easter season.

Sponsor Guidelines

Sponsors have a unique opportunity to assist the faith development of the Confirmation candidates. In order for one to be admitted as a sponsor,

he/she must fulfill the following criteria:

- Be a Confirmed Catholic
- Be a practicing Catholic (weekly Mass attendance)
- Be at least 17 years old
- Not be a parent of the candidate
- Preferably be a Godparent from Baptism
- Feel comfortable sharing the Catholic faith with the candidate

POST CONFIRMATION MINISTRY

During the interview process the candidates for Confirmation are asked to select a ministry of choice to serve the Parish during the following year in Grade Twelve. Some of the choices include lectors, Eucharistic ministers, greeters, religious education aides, musicians, etc.