

St. Raphael Parish CHILDRENS FAITH FORMATION PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK



Pastor: Fr. Timothy Sherwood
Director of Faith Formation. Miss Lynn Edmonds

THE MISSION OF CATECHESIS

Faith Formation, or "Catechesis" is derived from a Greek term meaning "to echo" or "to resound." Catechesis invites us to make our own the "attitudes of Christ" as we promote knowledge of the faith, engage in the Church's liturgical life, embrace moral living, promote a life of prayer, focus on belonging to community, and enable our missionary spirit to come alive through Christian witness. As John Paul II indicates, "The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but also in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ."
Catechesi Trendenae, 5

Parents and guardians "have the unique responsibility for the education of their children; they are the first educators, or catechists. They catechize primarily by the witness of their Christian lives...Parents or guardians are catechist for their children precisely because they are parents or guardians, not because they have developed any specialized skills...When children are baptized, parents accept the responsibility to bring up their children in the practice of the faith...the church promises to help parents foster their children's faith and assist them specifically in their role as catechist of the children".

National Director for Catechesis

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Welcome to the St. Raphael Faith Formation Program for children. We thank you for allowing us to be partners with you in the faith formation of your children. Faith Formation is both catechesis (education) and formation (spiritual nurturing). St. Raphael's children's program meets the basic level of religious instruction for children in elementary through middle school. The application and re-enforcement parents do at home increases this basic formation to its greatest level.

The Catholic Church believes and professes that, "The Christian home is the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith." (CCC 1666). Your children will learn to live the faith because you practice your faith. They will attend Sunday Mass when they are grown because you attend Sunday Mass with them now. You role model by your words and actions what it means to be an adult catholic who lives their faith fully, actively, and consciously. And you set forth a 'growth plan' by which your children can further embrace the faith as they grow. For this reason the family is richly called 'the domestic church.'

Our role at St. Raphael Church is to support, assist, and encourage you as you role model a Catholic Christian lifestyle for your family by your love and example. As you seek to nurture your child's faith we also invite parents and guardians to attend adult enrichment opportunities that may be offered annually.

In the handbook that follows you will find additional information that will facilitate your involvement in your child's Faith Formation. Please feel free to call the Faith Formation Office with questions or for further information.

We ask you to carefully read the material in this handbook. Then sign and return the enclosed form as a pledge of your covenant with us so that we can both do the best to ensure a safe and enjoyable faith formation environment for your child.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Lynn Edmonds
Director, Faith Formation

PARISH FAITH FORMATION STAFF

1376 Snell Isle Blvd NE, St. Petersburg, FL 33704

PASTOR : Fr. Timothy Sherwood 727-821-7989 FAX: 727-896-9619
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CURRICULUM

Our Sunday Visitor Publishers publish the textbooks used in all levels. All texts follow the curriculum guidelines for the Diocese of St. Petersburg. The elementary and junior high grades use the ***Call to Faith*** series. Each year students in each grade will learn content from the four pillars of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Each grade level will be learning from the same Catechetical Themes (categories) at about the same time. For example a second grader will be learning about The Trinity in Unit Two at the same time a fifth grader is learning about The Trinity in Unit Two. The development of the topic will be different but siblings will be learning the same overall topic. Parents will be able to reinforce all their children's religious formation at the same time through family discussion and the children's Family Faith Page brought home by the primary & intermediate grades.

Harcourt also offers a variety of online resources for parents and students alike that relate to the students' lessons. This is also where parents can obtain make up lessons when their child misses class. Anyone can go to www.harcourtreligion.com for these resources. St. Raphael subscribes to www.calltofaithconnect.com. This site offers significant resources for the whole parish community. Spiritual meditations to load onto your MP3 players, Scripture resources, faith learning games for children, and a calendar of St. Raphael's Faith Formation offerings. Parents who home school their children or whose children miss a class will be able to access weekly lessons online via this site. To access this site families do need to supply their email on the Faith Formation program registration form.

PRAYERS PARENTS ARE EXPECTED TO TEACH THEIR CHILDREN

Kindergarten: Sign of the Cross

Grade 1: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be to the Father

Grade 2: Act of Contrition, Simple Mass Responses, Meal Time Prayers

Grade 3: Apostles' Creed

Grade 4: Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary

Grade 5: Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary, Gloria (from Mass)

Grade 6: Glorious & Luminous Mysteries, Come Holy Spirit, Memorare

Grade 7: Nicene Creed

Grade 8: Prayer to St. Francis

PARISH FAITH FORMATION (CCD) GUIDELINES

Admissions:

1. St. Raphael Parish Faith Formation Program for children (CCD) has an open registration policy for regular program participation grade Pre-K through 8th.
2. Families who wish to enroll children in Faith Formation classes must be registered parishioners.
3. Parish Registration/Census forms are to be on file at the time of program registration.
4. We offer a Sunday morning class option and a Home Schooling option. Parents wishing to Home School their child for faith formation will receive materials and requirements

Attendance:

1. Faithful attendance to all scheduled sessions is expected. A phone call to the Faith Formation Office is appreciated to explain more than one absence a quarter (821-0155).
2. Please have students arrive prior to the 10:45 bell. Arriving after class has begun is a distraction to both students and catechists and robs your child of valuable instruction time.
3. Families are expected to attend Mass every week at Saturday vigil or on Sunday.

Behavior:

1. **Students may enter classrooms only if the adult aide or Catechist is in their classroom.** Otherwise students are to wait outside their classroom door for catechists to arrive.
2. Students are expected to model their behavior after Jesus Christ who instituted two Great Commandments: "You shall love the Lord Your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 11:27).
3. The following are some guidelines for behavior based upon these simple principles:
 - a. Students properly respect and obey adults in authority.
 - b. Students properly respect the personal space and personal property of others. (The Faith Formation Program meets in the Parish School classrooms, therefore **going inside classroom desks is not allowed at any time.** Each classroom has its own Faith Formation supply bin.)
 - c. Behavior or language that intimidates, belittles, harasses (including harassment of a sexual nature), makes inappropriate references or physically harms oneself or others will result in disciplinary action (see special Diocesan Harassment Policy page 4).
4. In the event a student engages in inappropriate behavior any or all of the following may occur:
 - a. Parental notification of infraction.
 - b. Meeting between parents, Catechist and Director of Faith Formation.
 - c. Parent attendance required at subsequent program classes on Sunday.
 - d. Temporary removal of student from Faith Formation program.
 - e. Permanent removal of student from Faith Formation program.
5. The Director of Faith Formation is responsible for ensuring that all sanctions against students are implemented in a fair and consistent manner by the Catechists and other volunteer staff.
6. In the event that a parent/guardian is not satisfied with action taken by a Catechist, they may contact the Director of Faith Formation: Lynn Edmonds.

Student Information:

1. The Faith Formation Office keeps records of a confidential nature: Attendance, discipline, last grade completed, address, phone number, date of birth, place of birth, sacraments received, marital status of parents, disabilities, allergies, emergency contact information.
2. St. Raphael Faith Formation program abides by the Privacy Act and will not disclose personal information to third parties without written permission from the persons involved. (Note: Catechists will have student's phone numbers to contact families in case of emergency.) Parents and/or guardians have a right to review any records kept by the Formation Office pertaining to their child for any reason.
3. Catechists are provided limited access to personal information as is necessary for them to perform their job. Such information would include: last grade completed, disciplinary records, address, phone number, emergency contacts, disability, allergies, and other family information when it is appropriate.
4. Please make known to us any special learning needs of your child so that he or she may be better served in the classroom. All information is confidential.
5. Health concerns should be brought to the attention of the religious education office during registration. If a child is diagnosed with a medical condition that we should know about, please inform the office and catechist as soon as possible. No medication will be administered to any student. Please contact the office if special accommodations need to be made.

PROGRAM POLICIES

Non-Custodial Parents: The Faith Formation program abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, we will provide the non-custodial parent with unofficial copies of records when such records are requested. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the parent to provide us with an official copy of the court order. This is to be done at the time of program registration or as soon as a court order would become effective during the course of the school year.

Harassment Policy for the Diocese of St. Petersburg:

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 a Christian, professional and supportive educational environment for all persons engaged in or involved with religious education programs, schools and 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 and harassment in the schools, early childhood centers, religious education and youth ministry settings;
- that each individual involved in schools, early childhood centers, religious education and youth ministry programs maintain and further develop attitudes and behaviors which express respect for others and are reflective of each person's God-given 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 expectation of staff, children, students, and volunteers to engage fully in the traditions of teaching, celebrating, participating in and being formed by the Catholic faith, including but not limited to curriculum, catechesis, the Sacraments, other liturgies, worship services and 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, texting, letters, e-mail, 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 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.

(Citation taken from Harassment Policy for Non-Employment Situations in Schools/Centers, Parish Religious Education and Parish Youth Ministry Programs of the Diocese of St. Petersburg, Florida).

Communication:

1. St. Raphael Faith Formation Office, along with the Church Universal, strives to maintain open communication with all who participate in Faith Formation. We also encourage catechists and parents to keep each other informed of student progress through informal contact at the beginning and end of each class time.
2. From time to time it may be necessary for parents to discuss issues of concern with the catechist or the Director of Faith Formation. In keeping with Church teaching and the Biblical tradition of subsidiarity, issues of concern should be resolved at the lowest possible level. Parents/guardians should attempt to resolve any issues with a Catechist by first contacting the Catechist and discussing the issue.
3. If satisfactory progress is not made, then the parents/guardians may contact the Director of Faith Formation to discuss the issue and request that action be taken. If the parent is not satisfied with the Director of Faith Formation's action, only then, should the matter be taken to the Pastor.

Use of Parish Grounds and Facilities:

The classrooms, facilities and grounds of our parish are used by the school as well as numerous ministries and organizations. It is essential that all who participate in Children's Faith Formation exercise the greatest amount of respect for the facilities that we share, so that all may be good stewards and enjoy the gifts God has bestowed.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedure:

Children will only be released to those persons, other than parents/guardians, whose names are listed as emergency contacts or on the Registration Form.. Photo identification may be required. **Please notify the office if there is someone to whom your child should NOT be released.**

EARLY DISMISSAL – While early dismissals are discouraged, sometimes it is necessary for parents or guardians to make arrangements for an early dismissal of their child. If this becomes necessary, a signed note should be given to the catechist at the beginning of class and the Director of Faith Formation should be notified. **At the designated time, the parent or guardian may go to the classroom to pick up the student. This is the only circumstance under which a child may be picked up directly from inside a classroom.**

Please help us make these procedures as safe and easy as possible for all concerned. Thank you.

ELEMENTARY (Grades Pre K-4) and JUNIOR HIGH (Grades 5-8)

Arrival A parent/guardian, not a sibling under the age of twelve, should accompany students in Gr. Pre K-2 to the classroom. Older children, if not coming directly from the church, can be dropped off by a parent/guardian at the school building.

Students must wait outside their classroom door until their catechist/aide arrives. No child is allowed in a classroom without a catechist or other authorized adult staying with the students.

Dismissal: Safety from both injury and from abduction is our top concern during arrival and dismissal. We also want to ensure a smooth and quick transition from class to home for our students. Please abide by our dismissal policy.

At 12:00 P.M., catechists are instructed to bring all students to the rear parking lot for dismissal.

Any student who is walking home or not dismissing from the car line after class must have a previously signed Permission Slip on file or they will not be allowed to leave on their own.

Parents may drive in the car line to pick up their child. The car line proceeds through the parking lot around to the back of the church property to the rear lot. A single-file line drives up along the sidewalk where students are waiting. Catechists will assist students with entering cars as they pull up. Students are to enter the car on the sidewalk side unless assisted by an adult. NO Double Lines of cars will be allowed. Please be patient and wait for the car in front of you to pull up rather than to try to pull around cars – as this reduces the safety factor for children.

OR

If parents choose, they may **park** their cars in the lot and walk to the child's classroom or the dismissal sight in the rear parking lot area to pick up their child. Please notify your child's catechist before you leave with your child.

Please Note: **FOR SAFETY REASONS** students may not be picked up in cars from any other location on the grounds. **DO NOT block the driveway with your car to pick up a child walking home or to the parking lot.**

Hurricane Plan for Program Cancellation:

Should a tropical storm or hurricane be forecast to hit our area over a weekend or if flooding due to a storm should affect our area, it may be necessary for Faith Formation classes to be cancelled. The decision to cancel children's Faith Formation classes will be based on **local (St. Petersburg, Shore acres)** conditions.

If you wish to confirm the decision to cancel classes, you may 1). call the parish answering service at 821-7989, or 2). listen to radio station **Spirit FM WBVM 90.5** for a cancellation notice. Because the decision to cancel classes may have to be made several days prior to Sunday classes, it is important to remember that the decision to close will stand firm, regardless of how beautiful the weather may be on Sunday morning. We may have had to perform extensive preparation to protect against the storm and it may take time to reopen sandbagged buildings, or to "clean-up" and prepare the property again after a storm.

Please realize loss of electricity or standing water, among other conditions may make it difficult to reach us by phone or by car. It is better to keep your family members home and safe rather than to risk adverse weather conditions to bring a student in. Our catechists and volunteer staff have family and safety obligations as well.

Volunteers Needed:

Our Faith Formation program at St. Raphael offers instruction for Pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade students. Please consider volunteering in the classroom as one of our catechists or aides as a response to your baptismal call to share the Good News. On-going training, a diocesan certification program, and personal support are available to you as a member of our volunteer staff. Assistance on Sunday mornings is also needed for substitute teaching, special tasks and projects, and Children's Liturgy of the Word held during the 9:30A.M. Mass. All volunteers who directly work with children undergo the Diocesan Background Screening and Diocesan Safe Environment Training.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation Program:

1. Parents of children that are infants to 6 years old are to contact the parish office at (821-7989) to register for Baptism class.
2. Parents of children and youth (7 years or older), are to contact Lynn Edmonds (821-0155 ex.2116) for more information regarding the Children's Catechumenate.

Sacraments of First Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation:

The Sacrament Program at St. Raphael consists of a bare minimum of one year of general religious education, immediately followed by a second year of preparation for reception of the sacraments of Baptism, First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation. It is presumed that children continue their formal faith formation every year of elementary school. Placement in all Sacrament Preparation programs is based on criteria in accordance with diocesan guidelines. Liturgies for the reception of these sacraments are held in St. Raphael Church. Baptism of children of Catechetical age takes place at the Easter Vigil each spring. First Reconciliation (Penance/Confession) is usually celebrated in December/January. First Eucharist is celebrated in May. Confirmation for teens and adults is celebrated annually. Please refer to specific sacramental preparation calendars for important dates/times leading up to these celebrations.

First Reconciliation/First Eucharist Preparation Program:

1. Families of students in the second grade or older who have not received First Reconciliation/First Eucharist are eligible to register for Sacrament Preparation.
2. Families of candidates must be registered in St. Raphael Parish and actively participating in Sunday Mass.

3. A copy of the child's Baptismal information must be provided at the time of registration.
4. The student must have completed **one full year** of faithful participation in parish Faith Formation, Catholic Parochial School, or an approved home schooling religion program **the school year immediately prior to registration for sacramental preparation.**
5. The student's religious education continues in Catholic Parochial School, parish religious education or approved home schooling while the student and parent(s) participate in the free-standing sacramental preparation process.
6. Faithful attendance is expected for scheduled sessions. Being dropped from the program may occur if attendance is poor. A courtesy call to the office explaining the absence is to be made: 821-0155.
7. Parents are required to attend scheduled preparation meetings with their children.

Confirmation Preparation Program:

1. The invitation to prepare for Confirmation usually takes place in the ninth grade or above.
2. Families of Confirmation candidates must be registered in the parish of St. Raphael and actively participating in Sunday Mass.
3. A copy of the student's Baptismal information must be provided at the time of registration for the Confirmation Preparation classes.
4. The student must have completed one full year of faithful participation in religious education or Catholic Parochial School immediately prior to enrollment. **Eighth grade is a Pre-Confirmation year. Attendance is required for ninth grade Confirmation.**
5. Faithful attendance at confirmation class is expected. Being dropped from the program may occur if attendance is poor. A courtesy phone call to explain an absence is to be made to the Faith Formation Office.
6. Parents are required to attend scheduled meetings and designated sessions with their child.
7. Candidates are required to select a Sponsor that can participate in the candidate's formation. Sponsors are to complete eligibility forms and attach a Sponsor Certificate from the Catholic parish where they worship weekly.

Right to Amend:

The Pastor and Director of Faith Formation reserve the right to amend these guidelines at any time for any appropriate reason. Prompt notification of any changes made to this Handbook or any guidelines will be made in writing to all that are registered in the religious education and sacramental programs.

Parent/Guardian and Student Agreement:

By signing the separate Handbook Agreement Signature Sheet the parent/guardians and students are agreeing to be governed by this Faith Formation Handbook and the rules and policies contained in it. This Signature Sheet is kept on file for the course of the school year. Parents/guardians and students will be asked to reaffirm their agreement with a new signature sheet each year.