

Church of Saint Joseph Faith Formation

2007-2008 Handbook

Program Notes, Policies, and Procedures

*The desire of our hearts is
to be a vibrant
sacramental Catholic
community that prays,
learns, and serves to
witness to the power of God
in our lives and in the world.*



St. Joe's Faith Formation Contact Information

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Matt Jessop, Director of Faith Formation Grade 7—10 and Youth Ministry

Phone: (952) 442-3703

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*Individual catechists, by grade can be contacted through the Faith Formation Director by calling the above number. Faith Formation catechists are volunteers from within the parish community, who have stepped forward to teach the fundamentals of the Catholic faith and to encourage a deepening of one's relationship with God through prayer, participation in Mass, and frequent reception of the Holy Sacraments.

Faith Formation Mission Statement

Faith Formation at St. Joseph's Parish begins with the Gospel. As a parish, we are called to support, journey with and explore Our Faith together. We strive to accomplish this by training parents, sponsors, and catechists and by providing educational services, resources, and opportunities for all members of the parish.

Our Goals

+To assist parents, the primary educators of the Faith for their children, as they foster growth in faith consistent with the teachings of the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

+To give children experiences on appropriate levels of development and understanding which will enable them to comprehend and recognize God in their personal lives.

+To provide a basic knowledge and understanding of the teachings of the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

+To provide a setting that allows diversity through parish wide experiences of prayer, celebration, sharing and service.

+To provide continuing spiritual growth through adult enrichment program opportunities, bible study, prayer groups and Liturgical experiences.

This **PARENT HANDBOOK** is intended to be a source of information for your reference. It is also intended to aid us in creating a safe and effective learning environment for the students and teachers who participate in it. Please read this booklet and keep it for future reference regarding our policies and procedures.

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Time and Location of Classes

Sundays

9:15am—10:15am: Kindergarten through Grade 3	Education Center
10:30am—11:40am: PreK 3yr and 4yr olds	Education Center

Wednesdays

6:30pm—7:45pm: Grade 4 through Confirmation	Education Center
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Attendance Policy

Class Attendance: Weekly attendance is required. If a student is going to miss class, the Faith Formation Director should be notified by leaving a voice mail or speaking to the director personally. **Please call Erin Campbell for pre-k-6th at 442-2384 ext 127 and Matt Jessop for 7th grade through Confirmation at 442-3703. Please honor this. IT IS A SAFETY ISSUE!**

Attendance will be taken each day and parents will be notified at the 2nd absence. In all grades, the third absence will require a meeting between the Faith Formation Director, The Family and possibly the Pastor or another representative of St. Joseph. If this going to be a problem, please contact us before hand. This is a strong priority for our program and our goals as a growing community in Jesus Christ.

Mass Attendance: We encourage families to worship together at Mass each weekend. Parents have the responsibility to see that they and their children do not take this obligation lightly. To purposefully allow your child to miss Mass on any given Saturday evening/ Sunday or Holy Day of Obligation dynamically negates all the teaching efforts of Faith Formation program. Missing Mass does have a profoundly negative effect on your son's or daughter's journey to and with God.

Drop Off Policy

For all Pre K through Grade 3 students, parents must drop off and pick up their child at their respective classroom. For the safety and protection of our more vulnerable children, we are asking the teachers of these classes to check in and check out all the students each morning at the beginning and dismissal of Faith Formation. Only the parents, an immediate family member or a guardian designated by the parent will be allowed to pick up a child after having been dropped off in our care. If there are any questions, feel free to call the Faith Formation Director. **Parents are asked to pick up their children no later than 10:20am, allowing their catechists enough time to participate in Mass at 10:30.**

Class Cancellations

Individual classes may be canceled when the regular teacher will not be present and a substitute teacher cannot be scheduled or in the case of severe weather conditions. When these circumstances arise, every effort will be made to contact the members of the class and the parents to inform them of the cancellation.

Sunday classes are not usually canceled due to severe weather. When they are, the information will be recorded on the Faith Formation Director's voice mail (442-2384 ext127) by 8:00am of that particular Sunday morning.

Wednesday classes will be canceled when School District 110 (Waconia) closes early due to weather conditions.

Behavior and Discipline

It is not the role of the Faith Formation catechists to discipline those enrolled in our program. In the event of inappropriate behavior, a judgment call must be made by the catechist. The following process will govern disciplinary action within the classroom:

Verbal Warning: Catechist gives the student an official verbal warning that his/her conduct is in appropriate for class. This will be documented and sent home as parent notification of the issue. This need not be signed by the parent.

Written Warning: Catechist gives the student a written warning with a detailed outline of the problem in the classroom. The warning is to be signed by the appropriate parent and/or guardian and given back to the teacher for record keeping.

#2 Written Warning: Catechist gives the student a 2nd written warning with a detailed account of the problem in the classroom. The warning is to be signed by the appropriate parent and/or guardian and given back to the teacher for record keeping. In order for the student to gain access to the class, a meeting is called between the Faith Formation Director, the Catechist and the Parent concerning the child's behavior and a corrective action plan is discussed to ensure a positive learning environment for the student, the class and the teacher. If problem in the classroom continues, the Faith Formation Director and the parents of the child will discuss alternate methods of faith formation for the child.

The course of action is specific to the particular students. Specific student, family and/or classroom circumstances will be considered in each of the above cases.

In the case of an individual receiving sacramental preparation (Confirmation), if a satisfactory solution cannot be reached, it will be suggested that the individual involved may need to mature more to receive the sacrament and it will be recommended that he/she wait until the following year to continue preparation for the sacrament.

These rules are in place to make sure that all students and catechists feel safe, welcome, and respected. Really all any student needs to remember is the Great Commandment.

Facility

Faith Formation classes are held in the Education Center. Students are to enter and exit through the 1st Street main entrance doors (parking lot side). For safety, we ask that all drop-offs and pick-ups be made on the 1st Street entrance; all other doors will be locked from the outside. When there is a change in this procedure, parents will be notified.

1. Candy, gum, soft drinks and snacks are not acceptable during Faith Formation classes. Catechists may make exceptions in the case of a special class celebration.
2. Toys, games and electronic devices (beepers, radios, cell phones, IPODS, etc.) are not allowed in class.
3. The facility needs to be respected at all times. This includes the classrooms and desks, which should be left the way they were found before Faith Formation.
3. Any threatening or illegal behavior will be reported to the police immediately.

Reporting Abuse

Mandated Reporter Law. If an administrator, catechist or any other volunteer who works with our program has reason to believe that a student may have been the victim of abuse or neglect, he or she is legally required to make a direct and immediate confidential report to Carver County Social Services at 952-361-1600. Anyone making such a report is advised to inform the Faith Formation director immediately.

If you as a parent or parishioner have first hand knowledge of any child abuse or are made aware of any child abuse caused by a volunteer, teacher, or staff member of St. Joseph Church in Waconia, **please, by all means, without hesitation, immediately** report this behavior or abuse to Carver County Social Services at 952-361-1600. You may also notify the pastor at 952-442-3700

If an ordained clergy member of St. Joseph Church in Waconia is the abuser, **immediately** report this behavior to the Vicar General or the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis at 651-291-4400.

Protection of Children and Youth Initiative

The Protection of Children and Youth Initiative (PCYI) of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis has one goal: shielding our children from abuse. The initiative has two components: one is training for clergy, teachers, volunteers and others who work with children. The other is age-appropriate, church-approved safe environment lessons for children in our Catholic schools and religious education programs. It is our goal here at St. Joseph Church and School to partner with parents and families in creating safe and sacred places for children and young people.

We train our teachers, volunteer, and catechists with a program called VIRTUS. VIRTUS training is a three hour awareness session which better equips adults to protect children in the world around them. It is required of all clergy, deacons, school and parish employees as well as all volunteers who are in regular contact with children under the age of 18. VIRTUS is mandatory for all those who work with children and those that are vulnerable. St. Joseph Parish has been providing this training since the spring of 2005.

As another measure of the initiative, all paid employees of St. Joseph Parish in Waconia are required to have background checks for terms of employment. In addition, all catechists and other volunteers who work with children or vulnerable adults, and who might act in an authoritative capacity with children, or who might be alone with a child in the course of their volunteer activity, are required to undergo background checks, as mandated by the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Those under the age of 18 are required to provide two references instead of having background checks.

The second half of PCYI is teaching our children about personal safety. We have three different programs that we use during the school year to accomplish this. Each of these programs is age-appropriate and respects parents' role as their children's primary educators. You can review all of these materials at any time in Erin's and Matt's respective offices.

Pre-school – 4th Grade: KidWISE Institutes Inc.'s "Family Safety Fair," in which families of children in preschool through 4th grade attend an informational fair together. The "Family Safety Fair" empowers parents to teach their kids about safety in a non-threatening setting. This Fair happens in the early part of the spring.

5th - 8th Grade: KidWISE Institute Inc.'s "Out of Harm's Way: Personal Safety Curriculum," which focuses on Internet safety, bullying prevention and appropriate touch. "Out of Harm's Way" teaches middle school aged children about their right to say no, to protect themselves, to create healthy boundaries through an idea called "Personal Power." There are four classes throughout the year.

9th - 12th Grade: St. Mary's Press' "Creating Safe and Sacred Spaces." Ninth- and 10th-graders will learn to recognize the warning signs of abuse and how to respond to potentially abusive relationships. Eleventh- and 12th-graders will focus on skills for building healthy relationships. There are two sessions about this during the year.

Who is Your Child's Catechist?

Your child's catechist is someone who wants to share their faith, who wants to serve our parish community, who cares about youth, who loves Catholicism, who shares their talents, who prays, who teaches, who answers questions, etc. Your child's catechist is a volunteer. Someone who is giving their time freely to help your child grow in faith. We thank our catechists for all they do and welcome others to join us. If you are interested in partaking in this important ministry, please call Erin Campbell or Matt Jessop in the parish office.

Faith Formation for Pre-K and Kindergarten

Pre-K and Kindergarten students need lots of activity in the classroom. We use a lectionary based program from Pflaum Publishing called *Seeds* (Pre-K) and *Promise* (Kindergarten). By using a lectionary based program, we can teach the children the same stories we hear at Mass, but at their level. We pair this program with crafts, songs, and snack. Pre-k meets during 10:30am Mass and Kindergarten meets from 9:15am until 10:15am. Both meet in the Education Center.

First Grade and Third through Sixth Grade

This year we will continue to use *Finding God* from Loyola Press for grade one, three, four, five and six. "*Finding God* is a systematic catechesis program, which means that all grades build upon one another so that children learn, review, and live out the Scripture, doctrine, and traditions of our faith. *Finding God's* unique emphasis on spirituality and prayer helps children deepen the relationship with Jesus." Catechists have audio prayer cds and song cds for use in the class room. These different types of activities help engage all types of learners. This program is designed to actively engage parents in catechizing their children. Look for family take home pages and newsletters from this program this year! There are also daily reflections and kids activities on their website: www.findinggod.org. If you would like more help with reviewing Faith Formation material at home, they also publish a family learning guide. Contact Erin Campbell if you are interested in ordering this.

Bible Partners in First Grade

NEW THIS YEAR AT ST. JOE'S! Bible Partners is an exciting program that gives kids confidence in reading the Bible at a young age. In first grade, students will be paired up with an older parishioner once a month to read a couple of stories from *The Early Readers Bible*. It is a great opportunity for older parishioners to directly model their faith for our First Graders, and to incorporate some intergenerational learning into our Faith Formation program. If you know an older parishioner that would like to be involved in this program, please invite them! This will start at the end of October.

Bible Partners in Fourth and Eighth Grade

NEW THIS YEAR AT ST. JOE'S! Using St. Mary's Press *Breakthrough Bible*, we will be pairing up an eighth grader with a fourth grader to read together the upcoming Sunday's readings, answer questions about them, and maybe even bond. We are empowering the eighth graders to be mentors and models of faith for our fourth graders (plus fourth graders think eighth graders are SO COOL!) The Bible Partners program will meet once a month to help both grades in Bible literacy. If you are interested in purchasing a *Breakthrough Bible* for your youth at home (ideal for grades 4-7), please call Matt Jessop.

Religion Standards in Grades 3 and 5

In 2005 the Archdiocese of Saint Paul/Minneapolis released Religion Standards for Kindergarten through Grade 8. These standards outline what children should know about the faith and have experienced in their faith by certain grades according to the six tasks outlined by the General Directory for Catechesis (Knowledge of the Faith, Liturgical Education, Moral Formation, Teaching to Pray, Community Life, and Missionary Initiation). Grade 3 and 5 are our testing years, but don't worry this is no standardized testing! Students will go head to head against their parents in game show style games about these standards. This will happen 4 times over the year. Get ready parents, it's time to dust off your old Catechism!

Service in Grade 6

As an advocate of Catholic Social Teaching, we will be offering a service opportunity for the sixth grade class and their families this year. The sixth grade class will help plan this event throughout the year, and complete it in the spring. As Saint Francis said "Always speak the Gospel, and if necessary use words." Children in sixth grade are at a great place to not only learn about what it means to be just, but also how to act justly. We are expecting at least one parent from each child's family to participate in this activity.

First Reconciliation/ First Eucharist in Grade 2

This year we will be using the publisher RCL for our sacrament preparation in Grade 2. RCL focuses on scripture, tradition, and experience, which makes it a well rounded experience for those preparing for these sacraments in our parish. It is our goal to not only prepare the children for these sacraments, but also their parents. This is because some practices have changed since their youth and getting to Reconciliation is not always the easiest thing... There is a mandatory parent meeting for each sacrament that helps to do this. We also expect our parents to be at Mass with their child every weekend during this important year. To ensure this, and to help make Mass a teaching opportunity, parent's will complete with their child two "Sharing Mass with My Family" worksheets per sacrament. This important year is a year about celebration and in drawing more closely to God through the sacraments. Yippee!

Grades 7 and 8

A change has been made in the materials being used for our youth in grades seven and eight this year. We have switched from "Discovering" from St. Mary's Press to the "Finding God" Jr. High series from Loyola Press. Our Faith Formation 1st thru 6th grades currently use the "Finding God" series and this change allows us to have more continuity from elementary to Jr. High. I also feel that the materials are better and are presented in a manner that will appeal to our Jr. High youth more than the "Discovering" series. The grade seven book is called "Following Jesus." It takes students on a journey thru the Gospels and the life of the apostle Paul. The eighth grade book is called "Celebrating Church." It teaches students about the history of our church thru the holy women and men that came before us and sets these people as examples of faith for young people looking for God in their lives.

An exciting addition is that our Jr. High youth are going to have a NET retreat this year. The retreat is Oct 3 from 5:00-9:00 pm at the parish center. This retreat takes the place of a regular class and attendance is required just as in a normal class period. This marks the beginning of a coming change where in order to be confirmed students must have at least one retreat experience per year beginning in grade seven.

Confirmation 2007-2008

Our confirmation program is undergoing a major change this year. No more will we be thinking of it in terms of Year One or Year Two. No more ninth grade or tenth grade. High school youth will be placed in classes regardless of age. That means ninth graders will be sharing classes with tenth graders (or even older students if necessary). Also, the student will no longer be in the same classroom for the entire year with the same catechist and the same classmates. We do this by changing the class format. Registration for confirmation will be more like a college registration format with students registering for up to three different classes per year. The year looks like this:

Session One (Fall): Sept 19-Nov 28

Session Two (Winter): Dec 5-Feb 13

Session Three (Spring): Feb 27-Apr 23

Students will be registering to take a different class during each of these three sessions. There are five required "Core" classes that students must take. There are also three "Elective" classes students can choose from.

The Required Classes are:

Creed

Morality

Liturgy and Sacraments

Prayer

Confirmation (*cannot be taken in the student's first year of preparation*)

The Elective Classes are:

T3 – The Teen Timeline (Bible Study)

Theology of the Body for Teens

Social Justice

A student may take as many of the elective classes as he/she wishes. However, if the student wishes to take the traditional two years for Confirmation preparation, he/she will only have (6) six sessions to complete the (5) five required courses. That leaves time for only one elective class. **Here is a sample schedule:**

Session One 2007-08: Creed

Session Two 07-08: Prayer

Session Three 07-08: T3

Session One: 2008-09: Morality

Session Two: 08-09: Confirmation

Session Three 08-09: Liturgy and Sacraments

Students register for classes each fall. Students are free to take the required classes in any order he/she wishes and can be confirmed in two years as long as the student satisfactorily completes the required classes in that time. **Class choices for tenth graders wishing to be confirmed this spring are Prayer, Liturgy and Sacraments, and Confirmation.**