



**SACRED HEART CHURCH
FAITH FORMATION
PARENT HANDBOOK**

**Grades 1 - 8
Sacramental Preparation**

Forming Disciples in Jesus Christ

"Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,
teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you..." (Mt. 28:19-20)

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A Message from the **Catechetical Office of the Archdiocese of Newark:**

Catechesis: A Source of Energy for the Life of the Church...

Catechesis involves the intentional and systematic efforts to nurture the faith of adults, youth and children in developing their relationship with Jesus and growing toward maturity of faith and to living committed lives as disciples of Jesus. It includes the preparation for adult initiation, infant baptism, and formation for the sacrament of Confirmation and Eucharist and Reconciliation.

Catechesis has four aims:

- **to proclaim the Christian message**
- **to prepare for prayer and worship**
- **to build community**
- **to motivate for Christian living and service.**

In order to achieve these ends, catechesis involves an essential collaboration with the Catholic Christian family, the parish community and with catechists who serve at all levels of the ministry. Since catechesis is about faith-sharing, it is a people intensive ministry. It requires faith-filled, skilled and knowledgeable people who are striving to grow in faith themselves and who desire to share that faith with others. The people who serve the Christian community as catechists, carry out, in the name of the Church, the systematic and intentional efforts to enable people to grow in their faith. This makes the parish one of the most critical and central focal points for the carrying out of the catechetical ministry. It is in support of the local parish's catechetical efforts that most of the catechetical energies at the diocesan, national and even the universal levels are aimed.

Please visit:

<https://www.rcan.org/office-and-ministries/catecheticaloffice/catechetical-office>
to learn more about the mission of the Catechetical Office at the Archdiocese Newark.

A Message from the Sacred Heart **Faith Formation Office**

We, at Sacred Heart Church, are pleased to offer a variety of programs for those interested in faith formation. We have our youth programs from first grade through to our junior high Confirmation Preparation Program. Our programs and materials are presented by our volunteer catechists, who so generously share their time, talents, faith, gifts and their love of Church, with the youth.

Our program supports the catechists with ongoing training, materials and suggestions of how to best present the materials and meet the learning styles of all our students. Therefore, it is important that parents share with us any special learning, medical and/ behavioral concerns or disability issues that their child may have so that we can do our best to accommodate their child's needs. All student and family records are held in strictest confidence at all times.

Sacred Heart Church offers a welcoming environment for all children who participate in the Faith Formation Program. We strive to complement the family shared experience of love and caring for one another, by bringing God alive in their daily lives. Each child will learn about Catholic teachings, prayers, practices, morals, values, responsibilities and mission helping them grow in their faith and deepen their personal relationship with Jesus. We strive to make all disciples in Christ.

A Journey of Faith

Using a traditional classroom model, our students formally begin in first grade. Students learn about the Catholic Church and its teachings while developing their faith and personal relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit within them. As a journey of faith, this is accomplished over time with active participation in the faith community as an integral part. Topics are introduced in developmentally appropriate stages. Key topics include: the learning of traditional prayers; how to use and read the Bible; the Ten Commandments; the Trinity; the Rosary; Prayer- types and styles; Catholic Social-Justice Teachings; Church History; and the Marks of the Church- one, holy, catholic, and apostolic and what it means to be a Catholic Christian in our world today. Intertwined within this program is the Parish Sacramental Preparation Programs for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist, as well as Confirmation.

All our programs are in conformity with the guidelines and policies of the Archdioceses of Newark. Further, Sacred Heart Church staff and volunteers, who come into regular contact with children, have completed and are current with the requirements of the Archdiocese of Newark, Office of Safe Environments.

Please review this handbook in its entirety. All of the guidelines that are outlined within this guide will be followed throughout the year. Failure to adhere to these guidelines may require removal from the program.

Faith Formation Program (Grades 1-7)

Overview of the Text Materials: Finding God Series

“The perfect place to start a life of intentional discipleship is with *Finding God*. Employing the spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Finding God* provides all the tools to engage the whole child— mind, heart, and soul—uniquely guiding children to practice prayer and reflection, to explore Scripture, and to find God in all things.

Finding God: Our Response to God's Gifts is based on a spiral curriculum that integrates the fundamental themes of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* with Scripture and Catholic Social Teachings. As children are introduced to and revisit concepts and vocabulary from one year to the next, their knowledge and experience both broaden and deepen as they grow in faith as committed disciples of Jesus.”

The Finding God Series is used by students in Grades 1-7.

Students may register for the Faith Formation Program at Sacred Heart in the Spring before their 1st Grade year. Students returning to the program must register each year in order to reserve a spot in class. Parishioners that are new to Sacred Heart may contact the FF office at any time to register their children in our program. Attendance at Faith Formation class study or a Catholic school is required in order for children to be eligible to make their sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Communion, and Confirmation. Any students that have gaps in their religious instruction will need to complete makeup work upon their return to the program.

First Reconciliation and First Communion Preparation

Overview of the Text Materials: Together in Jesus: Reconciliation and Eucharist

Together in Jesus: Reconciliation and Eucharist offers powerful, meaningful lessons to help children and their parents understand, prepare for, and celebrate the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. Engaging children's hearts and minds through prayer opportunities and active learning. *Together in Jesus* leads children to a life of faith and discipleship.

Students in Grade 2 may register for the sacramental preparation program after successfully completing Grade 1 of faith formation in class or attending a Catholic school.

*** All families that register for our Faith Formation Program must be registered parishioners of Sacred Heart Church.**

Confirmation Program

Overview of the Text Materials: Gifted With the Spirit - Junior High Edition

Junior high lessons begin with the call to prayer, cover Catholic tradition clearly and in depth, include a Scripture search to strengthen biblical connections, and offer lively activities to keep young minds engaged. A *Called to Serve* feature suggests works of mercy or justice the young people can perform to serve others outside of their class sessions. A recall to prayer provides a reflective closure.

Lesson Elements

Every lesson of *Gifted with the Spirit* begins and ends with prayer. Each lesson includes hands-on Bible activities to help young people develop greater familiarity and comfort with Scripture. Lessons also include a *Catholic Literacy* feature, definition of faith words, journaling opportunities, individual and group activities that invite the young people to put their faith into action and suggestions for service.

Students in 8th grade may register to join the Confirmation Program after completing religious instruction in class for Grades 1-7 or at a Catholic school. The Confirmation Program is a 2 year program – beginning in 7th grade here at Sacred Heart. The sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion must be made prior to receiving Confirmation. Any students that have missed faith formation during one or more grade level must successfully complete a makeup plan before registering for Confirmation.

We ask that prospective Confirmation Candidates and their families prayerfully consider their commitment to the program before registering. A commitment to the program includes mandatory requirements of class attendance, completion of all necessary paperwork and assignments, a Confirmation retreat, and regular Mass attendance.

*** All families that register for our Faith Formation Program must be registered parishioners of Sacred Heart Church.**

Registration Fees

One Student	\$125
Two Students	\$155
Three or more students	\$185

*** Registration fees are for all grades 1-8**

Bridges to Faith

Curriculum Catch Up Program	\$50
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Sacrament Fees

Reconciliation / First Eucharist	\$50
Confirmation	\$100

Inclement Weather

We follow the inclement weather directives of the Rochelle Park school system. If Midland School has an early dismissal or snow day, Faith Formation classes are also closed. Parents will also be notified by email and text message through our Flocknote system in the event of a cancellation.

If you have any questions about classes being cancelled, please call (201) 843-1722 or email faithform@wearesacredheart.org

Parental Involvement

As stated in the documents of Vatican II, "...As it is the parents who have given life to their children, on them lies the gravest obligation of educating their family. They must, therefore, be recognized as being primarily and principally responsible for their education" (Cf. VAT. II Declaration on Christian Education, n. 3: (1965).

Sacred Heart Faith Formation classes act as a support to parents and guardians as the primary teachers of the faith to their children. Please keep in mind that each child should be learning their prayers and the foundations of their faith at home. We ask that parents and guardians take the responsibility of making prayer and Mass attendance an integral part of family life.

Volunteers

Our programs cannot be run without your help. We are always in need of volunteer catechists, assistant catechists, and substitute catechists. For those new to the program, the catechists are responsible for teaching the class and the assistants help the catechist with lessons, attendance, projects, etc. Substitute catechists fill in for the catechists and may specify the grade they would like to substitute for. All volunteers must complete mandatory Archdiocesan paperwork including a background check and attend a Protecting God's Children workshop.

*** All catechists children attend our program for free.**

Mass Attendance

It is our obligation as practicing Catholics to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days. It is a vital part of the religious formation of all, regardless of age. It is essential that Catholic children participate in the liturgical life of the parish through weekly attendance at Mass. Families are encouraged to attend the 10:00 am Mass as there will be CLOW (Children's Liturgy of the Word) in the lower Church Hall.

Our Mass times are as follows:

Weekend

Saturday: 4:00 and 5:30 pm

Sunday: 10:00 am and 12:00 pm

Weekday

Monday-Saturday: 8:00 am

Please see our bulletin or website for a listing of Holiday/Holy Day Mass times.

Class Attendance & Drop Off/Pick Up Policy

Sunday Classes (Grades 1-4)

Drop-off: Students may be dropped off in the lower church hall from 10:50 am to 11:15 am and are supervised by a staff member. After 11:15 am, all of the outside doors are locked until class dismissal.

Pick-up: All students must be picked up by a parent or guardian in the lower church hall. Students will not be released unless a parent or guardian is visible for pick up. If someone else is going to be picking up your child, you must notify the office or your child's teacher.

Absences: Students in Grades 1-4 are allowed two excused absences from class. If a third absence occurs without a provided doctor's note or extenuating circumstance, the student will be placed on home instruction. Students will be responsible for completing work that is missed in class during an absence.

Wednesday Classes (Grades 5-8)

Drop-off: Students may be dropped off in the lower church hall. They may enter through the Church door located in the small parking lot behind the church. This is the only door that will be unlocked at drop-off time – doors are open from 6:50 pm to 7:15 pm and are supervised by a staff member. After 7:15 pm, all of the outside doors are locked until class dismissal. ***Please do not drive your vehicle into the small church parking lot. You may park in the main lot across the street.**

Pick-up: All students will be dismissed through the Church door located in the small parking lot behind the church. If someone else is going to be picking up your child, you must notify the office or your child's teacher. ***Please do not drive your vehicle into the small church parking lot. You may park in the main lot across the street.**

Absences: Students in Grades 5-8 are allowed two excused absences from class. If a third absence occurs without a provided doctor's note or extenuating circumstance, the student will be placed on home instruction. Students will be responsible for completing work that is missed in class during an absence.

Walking Home: Students who are allowed to walk home must provide a note to the Faith Formation office from their parent or guardian.

*** If a student has excessive absences, they will be required to repeat the classes the following year.**

*** If a student is in a Sacrament program and has excessive absences, they may be delayed receiving their Sacrament until all material is completed.**

Books and Supplies

Students will be supplied with grade level appropriate books each year that they are responsible for bringing to class each week, along with a writing utensil. If a student misses class, they will be responsible for completing the lesson(s) that they missed. The current price of the book will be charged to replace a lost book. Students and catechists will be provided any additional classroom and art supplies that they need during class.

Learning Environment

Students will be expected to follow classroom rules and regulations. Courtesy, cooperation, and respect are expected from students towards each other and the catechists. Care must be taken of all Sage Day School property including tables, chairs, walls, school projects, etc. Cell phones should be used for emergency purposes only. No texting during class time; all cell phones are to be turned off. Any use of a cell phone to bully or harass another student (example: taking photos to post on social media) will not be tolerated.

Student Regulations

- Dress appropriately—no hats or hoods.
- Students should act respectfully toward all adults and use their last name to address them.
- No food or drink should be brought into the classroom. Only water will be permitted.
- No toys or games.
- Students may not write on chalk or dry-erase boards unless it is for the purpose of the lesson.
- Cell phones should be used for emergency purposes only. Any cell phone that is observed in use during class will be collected and given back to a parent at dismissal.

Disruptive Behavior Policy

First step: Catechist will speak to the students in class, notify the director and email the parent.

Second step: The student will be sent to the Faith Formation director. The director will call the parents and notify them of the situation.

Third step: The student will be placed on home instruction.

*** If excessive or extremely disruptive behavior occurs, the student may be asked to leave the Sacred Heart Faith Formation program.**

Change of Address / Phone Number

Please notify the Faith Formation Office if your home or email address, or phone number(s) change during the year. We frequently email meeting notices and important information.

WE MUST BE ABLE TO REACH YOU BY PHONE AT ALL TIMES WHILE YOUR CHILD IS ON SACRED HEART PROPERTY.

Health and Safety

The health and safety of all of the students in our Faith Formation program is our utmost priority. Please list any and all allergies, medical conditions, and/or special needs that might impact your child while they attend our program on your registration form. All information is kept confidential.

EPI PENS: The Archdiocese of Newark has instituted an EpiPen Policy to be followed by all Faith Formation Programs. A copy of that policy is attached to this handbook.

If your child is attending the Sunday Program for Grades 1-5 and requires an EpiPen, please fill out the **Option C form** located on our parish website. Option C requires that a parent or guardian (or person delegated to administer an EpiPen) attend class each week with their child in order to administer an EpiPen if necessary.

If your child will be attending the Wednesday Program and requires an Epi Pen, please fill out the **Option B** form located on our parish website. Option B requires the student to carry their own EpiPen and allows them to administer it themselves if necessary.

Snack Policy

Due to the rising numbers of food allergies in the students in our Faith Formation Program, we will no longer be allowing food, candy or parties. Students should eat prior to coming to class.

NO FOOD is allowed in the classroom during the school year except bottled water. If your child arrives to class with a full snack (example: Starbucks beverages, Dunkin Donuts, etc.) they will have to leave their snack in the lower church hall until after class.

COVID Guidelines

As we return to in-person instruction this year, whether your child is coming weekly or a few times a year, we would like to make sure everyone uses precaution in keeping our community safe. Please read this letter carefully and in its entirety so that everyone is aware of protocols for this year.

*** All students and teachers are required to wear a face covering while in the building and classrooms.**

Parents/Guardians should monitor their children for signs of illness. **Children who are not feeling well should not attend Faith Formation class.**

For school settings, NJDOH recommends that students with the following **COVID compatible symptoms** be promptly isolated from others and not attend school:

- | | | |
|---|-----------|---|
| At least 2 of the following symptoms: | OR | At least 1 of the following symptoms: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Fever (100.4 or higher)● Chills● Rigors (shivers)● Myalgia (muscle aches)● Headache● Fatigue● Congestion● Runny nose | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Cough● Shortness of breath● Difficulty breathing● New loss of taste or smell |

**** For students with chronic illness, only new symptoms or symptoms worse than baseline should be used to fulfill symptom-based exclusion criteria. ****

COVID-19 Exclusion Criteria for Person Who Have COVID-19 Compatible Symptoms or Who Test Positive for COVID-19:

- Ill individuals with COVID-19 compatible symptoms who have not been tested or individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 should stay home until at least 10 days have passed since symptom onset and at least 24 hours have passed after resolution of fever without fever reducing medications and improvement in symptoms.
- Persons who test positive for COVID-19 but who are asymptomatic should stay home for 10 days from the positive test result.
- An alternate diagnosis (including a positive strep test or influenza swab) **without a negative COVID-19 test** is not acceptable for individuals who meet COVID-19 exclusion criteria to return to school earlier than the time frames above.

COVID-19 Exclusion Criteria for Close Contacts:

- While **CDC and NJDOH continue to endorse 14 days** as the preferred quarantine period– and thus the preferred school exclusion period – regardless of the community transmission level, it is recognized that any quarantine shorter than 14 days balances reduced burden against a small possibility of spreading the virus.
- **When community transmission is High (orange)** exposed close contacts should be excluded from school for 14 days.

- **When community transmission is Moderate or Low (yellow or green)** exposed close contacts should be excluded from school for **10 days (or 7 days with negative test results collected at 5-7 days)**.

****Exposed close contacts who are fully vaccinated and have no COVID-like symptoms**:**

- Do not need to quarantine or be excluded from school following an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. It is however recommended that the person get tested 3-5 days after exposure.
- Should still monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days following an exposure.
- If they experience symptoms, they should isolate themselves from others, be clinically evaluated for COVID-19, including SARS-CoV-2 testing and inform their health care provider of their vaccination status at the time of presentation to care.

**SACRED HEART FAITH FORMATION
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AGREEMENT FORM**

Your signature below indicates that you have read, understand, and agree with the Policies and Procedures found in the Sacred Heart Faith Formation Parent Handbook.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

* Please sign and return to the Faith Formation office no later than **September 30, 2021**