

HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS

2019-2020

ST. JUDE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM



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MISSION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROCESSES AND PROGRAMS OF ST. JUDE

Jesus became what we are so that we might become what He is: holy. Our mission is to teach parents and students how to deny themselves, carry their cross, and imitate Jesus - to become holy.

PURPOSE OF HANDBOOK

The purpose of this handbook explains the responsibilities of the parents whose children participate in our programs. The parents remain the primary teachers of their children. Parents are expected to adhere to their responsibilities stated in this handbook.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND THE COVENANT PROMISE:

The Covenant Promise is an overview of the commitment we ask you and your children to make as part of your yearly commitment to St. Jude's Faith Formation Program. Parents are asked to read and sign the promise at the beginning of each school year. The promise will also be signed by the CRE. Signed promises are kept in the parish file. (Covenant on page 9)



ELEMENTARY FAITH FORMATION (FF) PROGRAM GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

ADMISSION POLICY

St. Jude's Faith Formation program has an open registration policy for regular program participation in classes grades K through 12th. Parents who wish to enroll children in Sunday FF classes must be registered parishioners here. If a child is preparing for First Penance, First Communion and Confirmation, a copy of their Baptismal Certificate must be provided at the time of sacramental program registration.

Sacraments of First Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation:

Children wishing to receive the sacraments must have completed a minimum of one year of formal religious education prior to registration for the reception of First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation. Placement in all Sacrament Preparation programs is based on criteria in accordance with diocesan guidelines. First Reconciliation (Penance/Confession) is usually celebrated the fall of each year. First Eucharist is usually celebrated in May. Confirmation for teens and adults is celebrated annually. Unbaptized/uncatechized children seven years of age or older must participate in the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA).

First Reconciliation/First Eucharist Preparation Program:

- Families of students in the second grade or older who have not received First Reconciliation/First Eucharist are eligible to register for Sacrament Preparation.
- Families of candidates must be registered at St. Jude and actively participating in Sunday Mass.
- A copy of the child's Baptismal certificate must be provided at the time of registration.
- The student must have completed one year of faithful participation in a Faith Formation program or Catholic school immediately prior to registration for sacramental preparation.
- Faithful attendance is expected for scheduled sessions. Poor attendance at mass or class can result in postponing the reception of a sacrament. A courtesy call to the office explaining the absence is to be made to: 352.347.0154.
- Parents may be required to attend a scheduled preparation meeting with their children.

Confirmation Preparation Program:

- The invitation to prepare for Confirmation takes place in the eighth grade or above.
- Families of Confirmation candidates must be registered at St. Jude and actively participating in Sunday Mass.
- A copy of the child's Baptismal certificate must be provided at the time of registration.
- The student must have completed one year of faithful participation in a Faith Formation program or Catholic school immediately prior to registration for sacramental preparation.

- Faithful attendance is expected for scheduled sessions. Poor attendance at mass or class can result in postponing the reception of a sacrament. A courtesy call to the office explaining the absence is to be made to: 352.347.0154.
- A parent or sponsor may be required to complete a mandatory sponsor instruction to explain their respective roles with their student candidate.
- Candidates are required to select a sponsor who is a practicing, fully initiated Catholic that can attend and participate in the candidate's formation. Sponsors are to complete eligibility forms and receive pastor approval for their role as sponsor. Written guidelines will be provided to parents who will then present it to their child's sponsor.

RCIA - Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults/Children

- This class is for unbaptized children over the age of 7 or for children in fifth grade or older who have not received their First Communion.
- Families of candidates must be registered at St. Jude and actively participating in Sunday Mass.
- A copy of the child's Baptismal certificate (for those who have been baptized) must be provided at the time of registration.
- Faithful attendance is expected for scheduled sessions. Poor attendance at mass or class can result in postponing the reception of a sacrament. A courtesy call to the office explaining the absence is to be made to: 352.347.0154.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

- Faithful attendance to all scheduled classes is required. If your child is absent, please call the FF office (352.347.0154) to explain the absence of your child. This will be considered as an excused absence. Your child will be expected to make up all missed work by the following scheduled class. If the absence is not reported or if the reason for the missing class is not deemed valid, the absence will be marked as unexcused. More than 3 unexcused absence could result in the delaying of the student's reception of the sacraments, if not made up.
- **If a student misses two sessions in a row, the catechist will call the family to inquire about the child and give the parent(s) the opportunity to pick up the missed assignments.** Every effort should be made to make up missed classes.
- Please have students arrive promptly to class. Class runs from 8:45 am to 9:45 am for grades kindergarten through 4th; 11:15 am to 12:15 pm for grades 5th through high school.
- Families are encouraged to attend Mass on the weekends. Please make certain that your child attends class and Mass every weekend. We are concerned that some families consistently come to Mass late, or not at all. This not only reflects a lack of interest in God and the Church, but sets a bad example for the children. Please make sure that your child is signing in each Sunday on the clipboard near the church door entrance. It will be you or your child's responsibility to make sure this is done.

Children's Mass

Children's Mass is scheduled once per month during the school year. The students are required to attend this Mass. The Children's Masses are a part of their education. We believe this so strongly that to receive a perfect Mass attendance certificate, they must attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Days and the Children's Sunday Masses. ***Mass is an obligation of love all year long.***

BEHAVIOR POLICY

Students should enter classrooms only if the volunteer Catechist is in the assigned classroom. 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 your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 11:27)

The following are some guidelines for behavior based upon these simple principles:

- Students properly respect and obey adults in authority.
- Students properly respect the personal space and personal property of others.
- Behavior and 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 up to possible dismissal. A home study option may be provided with FFD direction for progression to the next year.

The Coordinators of Religious Education are responsible for ensuring that all sanctions against students are implemented in a fair and consistent manner by the catechists and volunteer staff. An appeal process will be implemented for those dismissed from the program and then referred to the Coordinator.

FOOD ALLERGY POLICY

- Students with severe food allergens will have Emergency Action Plans on file in the FF office.
- Peanut butter and snacks containing peanuts, nuts, or nut oils are not allowed in the classroom or play areas without the permission of the CRE or the catechist.
- Please do not include any nuts, etc in homemade snacks that will be shared by the students.
- In classrooms with identified allergic students, only foods without the offending food ingredient may be brought in for class consumption.
- In accordance with Diocesan policy, if your child requires the use of an EpiPen and cannot administer it themselves, you must stay with your child during class or designate another adult to do so.

FIRST AID POLICY

While every precaution is taken to prevent accidents, it is good to have a plan of action when accidents occur. If an accident occurs or if a child needs to be sent home because of an illness, parents or emergency contacts will be notified. Parents are asked to alert the school in writing of any physical or emotional handicap or problem a student may have. School personnel will administer first aid to stop bleeding. School personnel will also take a temperature by back of the catechist's hand on child's forehead. If professional assistance is needed, 911 will be called by CRE or designee. Every effort will be made to contact parents if the situation allows.

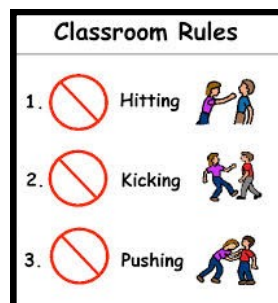
Registration forms should include parent-reported information on special needs, medical allergies, etc. Please make sure that we have this information on file.

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION POLICY

Should state or county officials declare a natural disaster, such as a hurricane or storm watch that may affect our area, do not report to class. Remain at home and seek appropriate, safe shelter. The FFD will communicate instructions to parents and catechists via phone and/or email.

FAITH FORMATION CLASSROOM RULES

- Students will respect self and each other.
- Students will respect person in authority in all areas of the parish.
- Students will be courteous.
- Students will take good care of property and possessions.
- Students do not take things that belong to others.
- Students will walk in the halls and church in an orderly and quiet manner. Conduct all classroom business with safety in mind.
- Students do not settle matters with violence; therefore students will not exhibit any physical or verbal aggressive behavior. (As members of a Christian community we are obliged to settle our differences in a peaceful manner). **Expressions of violence will lead to immediate expulsion.**



RESTROOM PROCEDURE:

Aides will escort primary grade students to the restrooms. It is expected that students use the restroom before classes to minimize or eliminate distractions and missed instruction. A pattern of restroom breaks will be investigated to determine the necessity. Parents will be advised if it becomes a problem.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER

Any change of address, phone number, email or emergency phone number should be given to the FFD immediately.

NOTES

ST. JUDE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
COVENANT PROMISE

As parents we are aware of the need for continuing Christian conversion and development in our own lives and we are aware of our responsibility to share our faith by word and example with our children.

We are deeply concerned about the religious development of our children. We appreciate the assistance of dedicated fellow Christians who so generously share their time, effort, and talent to help us in this most important work and with them we make this covenant before God.

We will share our beliefs and help our children learn their lessons and prayers.

We pledge to assure in every way possible that a positive attitude and respectful behavior of our children will be exercised during classes, liturgy, sacramental and prayer experiences. Each week we discuss the lesson taught that Sunday and assist with the memorization of prayers and lessons (as needed). We will strive for perfect attendance for our children, at mass and classes. We will completely and prayerfully support the Faith Formation Program at St. Jude. We are aware of our own need for continuing religious growth and development as we share our faith we our children.

To this end, we promise:

- To attend Mass on Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation.
- To be the best example of a faith and joy-filled Catholic possible to our children.
- To pray daily (privately and as a family) and to teach our children the importance of this habit in their daily lives.

Parents/Guardian Signature

Date

Coordinator of Religious Education

Date