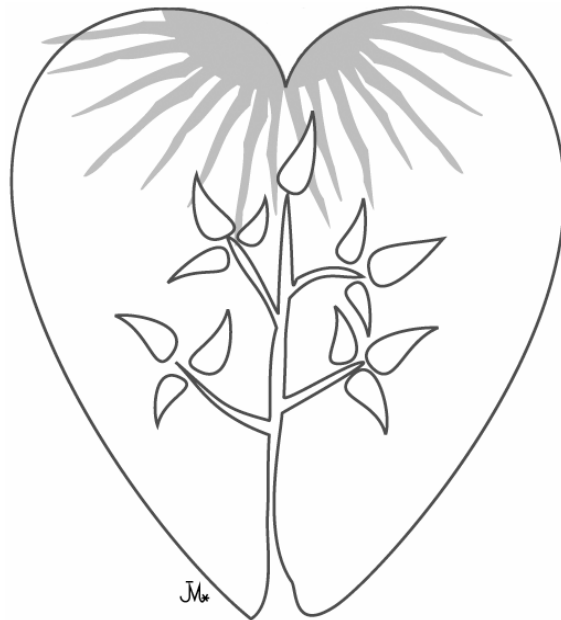


***ST. FRANCIS DE SALES CHURCH  
FAITH-FORMATION OFFICE***

*1450 Abingdon Road  
Abingdon, MD 21009  
410-676-3354*

***FAITH FORMATION  
GUIDELINES***



***Growing with Jesus***

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Welcome to St. Francis de Sales Faith Formation Process. The parish staff and all those who minister as catechists and classroom aides look forward to your participation and are eager to share faith with you and your children.

The process is structured with the belief that “families are partners” in the Faith Formation of their children. In order to provide the best possible environment for faith to grow, parents/guardians are expected to regularly participate in Sunday Mass with their children. This practice helps your children to develop their faith-life and to live what they experience in their weekly sessions. We use some of the finest resources available and are fully approved and endorsed by the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

These family guidelines contain general information, as well as policies, that will positively enhance participation and help your child develop the specific attitudes, knowledge, and practices necessary to grow in relationship with their family, the Catholic Christian community, the world, and with God.

We pray that God will be with you and your family in the months ahead. May God, the source of all life, protect you. May God deepen your faith, build up your hope, and constantly increase the gift of love in you. May God keep your children strong in body, in mind and in spirit. May the peace of Christ Jesus abide in your hearts and home.

Diane Lewis

Betty Burlin

Patrick Perkins



St. Francis de Sales Youth Faith Formation Team

## ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is necessary for continuity in learning. The child's catechist and the Faith Formation Office Assistant track attendance. If a child misses two consecutive sessions and the catechist has not been contacted, parents will receive a follow-up call from the catechist or the Faith Formation Office.

- 1) If your child must miss a session due to illness or other circumstances, please contact your child's catechist to discuss the lesson covered in class to learn the homework assignment. Our enrollment **no longer** permits the flexibility of attending class on another evening.
- 2) If your schedule or your child's schedule is so irregular, that it seems impossible to attend consistently; your family should consider Home Study for the year as a viable option.

## AWARD CERTIFICATES

K thru Grade 5 students will receive a Certificate of Completion at the end of the year. These awards are presented at the final session in the Spring.

## BOOKS/MATERIALS

Children in K thru Grade 5 use their books at home between classes in order to do follow-up with parents as well as assigned homework. Middle and High School students use a different structure in their faith formation.

## CATECHISTS (CATECHISTS) AND CLASSROOM AIDES

Catechists are all volunteers from the parish. Each catechist is asked to work toward certification with the Archdiocese of Baltimore through local and in-house workshops and special training meetings. The parish Director of Faith Formation oversees the training process. Each catechist and aide must also participate in STAND training (archdiocese youth protection) and agree to a criminal background check.

Volunteer classroom aides are not required to have extensive training or attend any special meetings; however, they do work closely with the catechists and may even be asked to teach a class occasionally. Catechists are encouraged to develop a close working relationship with their assistants and to motivate them to take an active part in the weekly session. Aides also do the usual tasks of distributing supplies, checking assignments, taking attendance, and monitoring the rest room area.

We encourage parents to volunteer their time and talent as a hall monitor, catechists or classroom aide. It is possible to volunteer on the same evening as your child/ren attends class.

## CLASS ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

K thru Grade 5 parents are asked to park the car in the lower lot and bring your children to the classroom. The upper level doors will be locked at all times for the safety of our children. Everyone must enter through the lower level doors. Upper level doors can be used to exit the building. As sessions are only 1 hour 5 minutes in length, **BEING ON TIME IS ESSENTIAL**. Please do your utmost to cooperate.

At dismissal time no child K thru Grade 5 will leave their classroom area until a parent, older sibling (Grade 6 thru High School) or designated adult comes to the room to pick them up. This is purely for safety reasons which we hope you understand. Parents are asked to park the car and walk into the building. **DO NOT PARK IN THE DRIVEWAY AT ANY TIME** as this impedes traffic. Please be aware of traffic entering and exiting the property.

## DISCIPLINE

The parish assumes that good behavior is the norm and responsibility of each child and their parents. Class time is brief and since various objectives and tasks must be met in order for quality learning to take place, there is little time for correcting problem behavior.

If your child is on a special behavior program at home or school, please let the Faith Formation Office know this, as well as the child's catechist. In this case, we mirror the methods used at home or at school and usually provide a one-on-one aid for the child with special needs.

Our regular procedure for helping a child adjust their behavior in K thru Grade 5 is:

- 1) One-minute time out in the class area, with monitoring & follow-up by catechist or aide.
- 2) 2<sup>nd</sup> time: 3-minute time out in the class area, with monitoring and follow-up by catechist of aide.
- 3) 3<sup>rd</sup> time: There will be immediate consultation with the parent after class at this point. (The catechist will look to the parent for guidance in the situation, and there will be agreement as to how future situations will be handled in class or followed up with some action in the home).

## EMERGENCY CLOSING

Weather-related or any emergency cancellation of class will be announced by radio only: WBAL (1090) AM, WAMD (97) AM, WLIF (102) FM, from noon to 5:00 p.m. **As a rule of thumb, if Harford County Schools close or cancel after school activities, so will we!** Also, you can call the voice mail of Diane Lewis (410-676-3354 x 115) for information.

## EVALUATION OF STUDENT WORK

Parents are the best monitors of student progress. Currently, evaluation of students is based more on informal methods rather than formal testing. There is no way for the parish to "fail" a child in religion, because there is no way to grade the child's "faith". However, many factors contribute to a child's "knowledge of the faith" in both the head and the heart. In "our book" the heart is as important as the head. Christian faith development in any person, whether they are children or adults is enhanced by: regular prayer and reading scripture in the home; keeping Catholic customs and traditions alive in the home; plus attending Sunday worship. In this way, the classes serve to clarify and "fine-tune" what is already experienced, so that it is better understood. This is the partnership established between family "Domestic Church" and the parish, the local community of the "Universal Church".

## HOME ASSIGNMENTS

During the weeks of each month when children do not attend class, students in K thru Grade 5 may be assigned a review page or scripture story, which must be completed prior to the next class. The work is very brief. Parental reinforcement or practice in the home, i.e. 5<sup>th</sup> graders should memorize the Nicene Creed, is essential. We ask your assistance in making these assignments fruitful for your children. The written homework will be checked at the next class. Please contact your child's catechist regarding make-up work if your child has missed a class.

## LITURGICAL MINISTRY FOR CHILDREN/YOUTH

Altar Server – Grade 4 and older children/youth who have received First Eucharist are welcome to train to assist regularly at Liturgy. Servers have a schedule of seasonal meetings they attend, and are expected to fulfill their schedule assignments at weekend liturgies. Parental support is essential. Phone John Campo 410-836-8178 for more information.

Children's Choir – Children in Grade 2 and older may join. Rehearsals are 6:15pm on most Thursday evenings. The Director will provide a rehearsal schedule. Children sing at holiday services & Faith Formation celebrations. Phone Julie Parrish, 410-569-6152 if interested.

## PRAYER

The experience of different forms of prayer is a regular expectation in the Faith Formation process. A special “quiet time” will be set aside for prayer in the classrooms.

## SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMS

First Eucharist and First Reconciliation programs are “free-standing” from the Faith Formation program, meaning they are separate and in addition to this program. It is the Archdiocesan Policy that these celebrants have ONE YEAR PRIOR PLUS THE CURRENT YEAR of Faith Formation participation in order to celebrate any sacrament.

The times have really changed! Children/youth do not automatically receive sacraments according to their grade level. It is perfectly normal for children/youth that are old enough to celebrate First Communion or Confirmation to be in the same classroom with another who is preparing for Baptism. Children/youth prepare for the sacraments when they, along with their parents, are “ready” and meet the Archdiocesan requirement.

In cases of First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation, the parish registration records help us to determine that your child may be ready to celebrate a sacrament because of their age or grade. If eligible, you should receive a letter inviting your child to prepare for sacraments in early October. Please notify the Faith Formation Office if you are expecting your child to celebrate Reconciliation and/or Eucharist and do not receive this letter. The letter will outline the sessions, which are necessary to attend in order for the child to be adequately prepared to celebrate the particular sacrament. Subsequent reminders of these sessions are published regularly in the parish bulletin.

In cases of Baptism preparation, for anyone from infant age through adults, the family should contact the parish office to begin the process of preparation for this sacrament.

Further information on each process is available by contacting the program coordinators at 410-676-3354.