

Dear Parents/Guardians,

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

The program is structured with the belief that "families are partners" in the Faith Formation of their children. 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 our Lord.

We pray that our Lord will be with you and your family in the months ahead. May He, 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 He 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*

Diane Lewis  
Youth Ministry Director

*Angie Rebbert*

Angie Rebbert  
Faith Formation Director

## ARCHDIOCESAN IMMUNIZATION POLICY

St. Francis de Sales Parish and the Archdiocese of Baltimore affirm our collective commitment to providing religious education, including Vacation Bible School, with the safety and wellbeing of all children as our primary focus.

Although proof of immunization is not required to participate in a religious education program, you should take notice that if your child is not immunized, he/she is considered at risk for the disease or diseases against which vaccination offers protection. Vaccine preventable diseases still exist, and especially can spread quickly in child group settings, such as a religious education program. If an outbreak of the disease against which a child has not been fully vaccinated occurs during a religious education program, the child's risk of contracting the disease increases significantly.

Participation in religious education, including Vacation Bible School, at the Parish is completely voluntary. By enrolling a child who has not been vaccinated in religious education at the Parish, parents and guardians recognize, appreciate, and assume the risks associated with lack of immunization. This voluntary enrollment similarly means that parents and guardians understand and agree that St. Francis de Sales Parish and the Archdiocese of Baltimore are not responsible or liable for any disease contracted by a child who is not immunized while participating in an educational program at the Parish.

## ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE POLICY

- † **NO ONE** may enter or leave through the second-floor doors. **EVERYONE MUST** enter through the breezeway doors on the first floor.
- † The first-floor hall monitor will be at the door upon arrival. **All parents MUST show their card and WALK their child/ren to class.**
- † At pick-up time, parents will need to show the card to the first-floor hall monitor in order to enter the building.
- † Parents will need to initial the attendance sheet with the catechist when child/ren are picked-up.
- † A Pick-up Authorization form for **EACH CHILD** must be completed. Only persons you have listed on the authorization form will be allowed to pick-up your child.
- † If someone else is picking up your child/ren, **their name needs to be listed on the Pick-up Authorization form and they will need to show their driver's license to the hall monitor/teacher.**

## ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is necessary for continuity in learning. The child's catechist and the Faith Formation Office Assistant track attendance.

- 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.
- 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.

## 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. 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.

Each catechist and aide over the age of 18 **MUST** complete all required **VIRTUS** training (archdiocese youth protection) and agree to a criminal background check.

Volunteer classroom aides between the ages of 14 thru 17 are required to attend a **WORTHY OF THE CALL TRAINING 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, catechist 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 always be locked for the safety of our children. Everyone must enter through the lower level doors. 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 his/her classroom area until a parent, older sibling (Grade 6 thru High School) or designated adult listed on the Pick-up Authorization form **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 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.

## **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".

## **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 scheduled assignments at weekend liturgies. Parental support is essential. Contact the parish office for more information.

Children's Choir - Children in Grade 2 and older may join. Rehearsals are usually on Thursday evenings at 6:00pm. The Director will provide a rehearsal schedule. Children sing at holiday services & Faith Formation celebrations. Contact the parish office for more information.

## **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 “freestanding” 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 to celebrate any sacrament.

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.

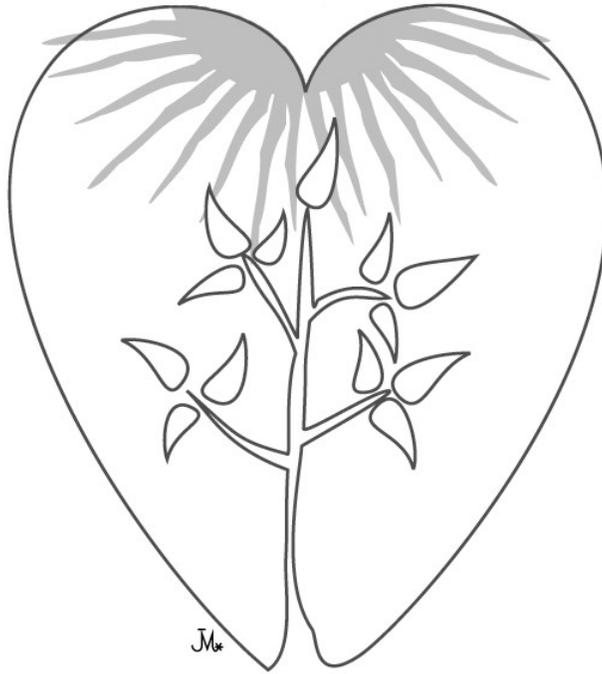
In cases of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist, the parish registration records help us to determine that your child may be ready to celebrate a sacrament because of their age or grade. Please notify the Faith Formation Office if you are expecting your child to celebrate Reconciliation and/or Eucharist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

Confirmation is celebrated at the end of a two-year program that begins no sooner than the child’s first year of high school. Parish records help us identify when your child may be ready for this program. If your child is entering their first year of high school or older, and you do not receive information about our Confirmation program, please contact the parish office and request the information.

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 410-676-5119.

# FAITH FORMATION GUIDELINES



*Growing with Jesus*

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES CHURCH

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