

*Our Lady of the Valley & Holy Cross
Parish Communities*



Faith Formation Handbook

Mission Statement

In partnership with parents, “the first to communicate the faith to their children and to educate them”, the Faith Formation Ministry of Our Lady of the Valley and Holy Cross Parishes strives to nurture a deep and personal relationship with Jesus Christ through the Word and the Eucharist and to build a strong foundation in and understanding of the tenets of the Roman Catholic Church for the children.

Introduction

Faith Formation classes assist parents, **the primary educators**, to prepare their children in the best way possible for full initiation into the community of believers through the reception of the Sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation. These sacraments call us and them to full communion with Jesus in the Church and full participation in the life of the community.

Families attending weekly Liturgy is a primary component of our Faith Formation Program and is a pivotal aspect of Catholic life. As the primary religious educator of your child/ren, we need to stress that if you choose not to attend Mass with your child/ren, there is a disconnect between your religious education practice and denial of an essential element of our Catholic identity.

Faith Formation “PLAN”

Catechesis, or Faith Formation, is the process of communicating the beliefs, values and practices which make people “Catholic Christians.” It is the work of handing down, from one generation to the next, the faith that has come down to us from the Apostles, and the way of life to which that faith calls us.

It is the hope of the Faith Formation program that each child will be one who:

Prays, **L**oves, **A**cts with justice and is **N**ourished by faith. The goal of the program is to teach the Roman Catholic tradition through prayer, worship, and community.

This Handbook is divided into two parts: **Curriculum and Policies**.

Curriculum includes:

- ◆ Course of Study
- ◆ Family Faith Formation and Prayer

Policies include:

- ◆ Attendance
- ◆ Arrival/Dismissal/Emergency Procedures
- ◆ Discipline/Behavior
- ◆ Cell Phones/Electronic Devices
- ◆ Classrooms/Homework/Class Assignments
- ◆ Illness
- ◆ Cancellations/Emergency Closings
- ◆ Emergency Contact Information
- ◆ Change of Address, Telephone Number and/or Email Address
- ◆ Child Abuse Policy
- ◆ Illegal Substances and Weapons
- ◆ Visitors
- ◆ Student Records
- ◆ Registration
- ◆ Sacramental Policies/Requirements

Curriculum

Our Faith Formation Program offers a spiral curriculum that builds upon knowledge year after year and is designed in accord with the directive of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Diocese of Paterson.

Family Faith Formation:

Parents/Guardians have the primary responsibility to educate their child/ren. Through their words, guidance and example, parents/guardians form the child/ren's first experience of faith and continue to be the child/ren's most important faith teachers. Be sure to talk with your child/ren about God and the Church, and spend time in family prayer. Be as involved as possible in what your child/ren are learning in Faith Formation classes, and reinforce these lessons at home. Please become familiar with your child/ren's textbooks and grade requirements, as well as the need to aid them in their class assignments and homework. To aid you in their prayer development, we have listed below the prayers that your child/ren are asked to know by each grade level:

Grade 1: Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

Grade 2: All of the above plus Act of Contrition and Mass Responses

Grade 3: All of the above plus Apostles' & Nicene Creeds and Rosary

Grade 4: All of the above plus Mysteries of the Rosary, The Confiteor, Grace Before and After Meals

Grade 5: All of the above plus Stations of the Cross, Prayer of Saint Francis

Grade 6: All of the above plus the "Memorare" Prayer

Grade 7: All of the above plus the Canticle of Mary

Grade 8: All of the above plus the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit

Policies

Attendance:

Students are expected to be present for each class unless illness or other serious reason prevents attendance. Please call the Faith Formation Office (973-694-4585 Ext. 7248) if your child/ren will be absent. Excessive absences may prohibit the continuation of the child in the Faith Formation Program (as noted in their Commitment Covenant signed at the time of registration).

Sports and other extra curricular activities are not acceptable excuses for absence or early dismissal from, or late arrival to Faith Formation classes.

The Faith Formation Office will be following up with any student who is absent by phone or email to ascertain why they were absent and to assign the make-up work which is expected to be completed by the next class session and shown to their catechist at that time. We ask the parents/guardians to help their child/ren with this work and to have it completed and ready on time.

In an effort to keep parents involved in the Faith Formation of their child/ren, homework may be assigned. Please help your child/ren with this.

Arrival/Dismissal/Emergency Procedures:

Arrival: For Grades 1-4 we ask that a parent/guardian escort their child/ren to their classroom. For Grades 5-8 (on either Sunday morning or Monday evening), you are asked to drop your child/ren off and have them enter by the door by the Business Office (this is the disabled entrance at the rear of the school building). Once it is verified that the Catechist has arrived, students will be sent to their classrooms.

Please make sure your child/ren arrive on time for class.

Sunday-First Session: Classes begin at 8:30am and end at 9:45am

Sunday-Second Session: Classes begin at 10:30am and end at 11:45am

Classes on Sundays are scheduled such that if a family wishes to attend mass immediately following a class they may do so. However, families are welcome to participate in whichever Mass best fits their schedule on a weekly basis but we ask that you are present **for the full Mass** (which means if your child is attending the 8:30am Faith Formation session, they cannot attend 8:00am mass; likewise with the 10:30am session and the 10:00am mass)

Monday Evening: Classes begin at 7:00pm and end at 8:15pm.

DISMISSAL

Sunday Sessions:

Parents are asked to come to the class to pick up their child/ren. Under no circumstances will a student be released to anyone other than a parent or guardian (unless written permission has been received prior to the class date by the Faith Formation Office).

Since it is possible that some Catechists may wish to attend the 10:00am or 12:00pm Mass, if a parent is late in coming to the classroom to pick up their child/ren, the Catechist will bring the child/ren to the Business Office and the parent/guardian will pick their child/ren up from there.

Monday Sessions: Students will be dismissed from Father Rugel Hall. For the safety and protection of the students, the doors to the hall will remain locked until 8:05pm for dismissal at 8:15pm. We ask parents who may come early to please wait in Father Rugel Hall until the students have been brought down from their classrooms for dismissal. Parents must come inside to pick up their child/ren. For safety purposes, we will not release students without a parent present. Please remember to drive slowly and safely within the parking lot as children and adults will be walking to their cars.

Family Emergency:

If a family emergency arises necessitating your child/ren to be dismissed early, we ask that a **parent or guardian come to the Business Office.** Someone from the Business Office will then go to the class and excuse the child/ren. No student shall be dismissed early for any other reason.

Discipline/Behavior:

Students are expected to follow the "Student Code of Behavior" as listed below:

- ◆ Students are expected to attend class each session and Mass every week.
- ◆ Students are expected to come to class on time and prepared with their textbooks.
- ◆ Students are expected to project an image of Christian consideration, sensitivity and respect, being mindful of language, dress and behavior.
- ◆ Students are expected to refrain from inappropriate touching, verbal harassment and peer sexual harassment.
- ◆ Students are expected to respect other persons and/or property.
- ◆ Students are expected to refrain from actions that could result in injury and/or damage to property.
- ◆ Students are expected to attend all scheduled activities, arriving promptly, and staying for the entire event.
- ◆ Students are expected to maintain the spirit of the event.
- ◆ Students are expected to report problems of any kind to a trusted adult.
- ◆ Students are expected to abide by the rule that the **use of cell phones is prohibited** during class, Mass, retreat days or any other events (in an emergency, students may use the phones in the Business Office).

Catechists will deal with behavior issues immediately. After two warnings, the Catechist will send the disruptive student to the Business Office and his/her parent or guardian will be called. If disrespectful behavior persists, the Faith Formation Office may ask the parent/guardian to attend class and/or discuss their child/ren's continuation in the program.

Cell Phones/Electronic Devices: Students are **not permitted** to use cell phones or other electronic devices from the time they enter the building until they are picked up by their parent/guardian. Cell phones and electronic devices must be turned off and kept out of sight for the entire duration of all class sessions and activities. We ask parents/guardians to please work with us in understanding that their child/ren will not be able to receive any messages during class sessions. Catechists are asked to reinforce this policy with their students. In some situations, catechists will collect cell phones and leave them in sight on a desk in front of the room.

Classrooms/Homework/Class Assignments:

- ◆ **ABSOLUTELY NO** food or beverage of any kind is allowed in the classrooms – this is to keep us in compliance with our lease with Benway School.
- ◆ Students must respect the property in the classrooms and leave desks, chairs and other personal property as found.
- ◆ Books will be given to the students **to take home**; each book will contain a label with the student's name, class session, room number, grade and catechist name. Please remind students to bring their books with them each week.
- ◆ Students will primarily be placed in classes randomly. At times, a class may be kept together from one year to the next. This is mostly done in Grades 1 and 2 while they are preparing for Penance/Reconciliation and First Holy Eucharist.
- ◆ Parents/Guardians are welcome to express concerns or questions directly or by email to the Director of Faith Formation.

Illness:

If your child becomes ill during class, you will be notified by telephone and asked to pick up your child.

Cancellations/Emergency Closings:

If the Wayne Public Schools are closed or have an early dismissal due to inclement weather, then Our Lady of the Valley Faith Formation will cancel classes for that day as well. If a parish decision is made due to inclement weather, notification will be provided on Our Lady of the Valley Church's website and an email message will be sent to each email address supplied during registration. A recorded announcement in the event of class cancellation will be on the main line of the Parish Center 973.694.4585.

Emergency Contact Information:

Parents/Guardians are responsible for insuring that the Faith Formation Office always has the **current** telephone number on file of a parent or other designated adult who can be called in the case of an emergency.

Change of Address, Telephone Number and/or Email Address:

Please notify the Faith Formation Office immediately if you should have a change of address, telephone number and/or email address.

Child Abuse Policy:

If a Catechist and/or staff of the Faith Formation Office suspects a child has been abused, New Jersey State Law requires that the proper law enforcement agency be notified immediately.

Issues of Child Custody:

In the case of separation or divorce, Our Lady of the Valley Church, as instructed by the Paterson Diocesan Office, requires that the custodial parent file a court-certified copy of the custody section of the divorce decree or a court-certified copy of the custody decree with the Faith Formation Office. If no such copy is on file, church representatives will presume that both parents have custodial rights. Church representatives will make all reasonable efforts to insure that children are released only to the appropriate parent at the appropriate time according to the court-mandated custody arrangements. However, parents must accept the primary responsibility for such arrangements and should instruct their child/ren as to which parent should have physical custody of them on any given day. We ask that this information be updated as needed with the Faith Formation Office.

Illegal Substances and Weapons:

Drugs, alcohol, tobacco and weapons of any kind are not allowed on church property. If a student is found to be in possession of any of these, the student will be detained until the police and a parent/guardian is notified.

Visitors:

Other than students, Catechists, Catechist Aides, Business Office Assistants and Parish Staff, no persons are permitted in the halls, classrooms, or restrooms during Faith Formation classes and activities without the express authorization of the Faith Formation Office. Visitors, including parents, are asked to report to the Business Office before proceeding into the classroom areas. Parents are welcome to attend their child/ren's classes but are asked to first register in the Business Office before doing so. Catechists are asked to contact someone in the Business Office immediately if they notice any unauthorized persons in the building.

Student Records:

The Faith Formation Office maintains a record for each student in the program. These records include: the dates of the sacraments that have been received and other important facts. All information is kept confidential. If there is any information which you feel is vital to note in your child/ren's record, please contact the Director of Faith Formation so that we may arrange an opportunity for you to meet with someone on staff to include the information needed.

All students entering the program must submit a copy of their Baptismal Certificate and when applicable, must also submit their record of sequential Faith Formation from their previous parish.

If you move to another parish (making it necessary to leave our program), we ask that this request be made in writing (which will automatically remove you from our parish census). Upon receipt of this request, the Faith Formation Office will then forward the necessary formation information to your new church once we have received this request from your new church (also in writing).

Registration:

To participate in the Faith Formation Program each family must first be registered with our parish (which includes filling out an updated Census form). Registration for Faith Formation classes will take place, in person, in the Spring. At the time of registration, each family will be asked to sign a "Commitment Covenant" which includes conditions for being accepted into our Faith Formation Program. The criteria for acceptance is that each family agree to:

- ◆ Faithfully bring your child/ren to church on a **regular** 12 month basis.
- ◆ Bring your child/ren to Faith Formation on a **regular** basis, prepared and **on time** for class.
- ◆ **Faithfully and conscientiously** * support your parish community.

(by either using We Share and submitting slips or the Parish Envelope System only)

**As always, any financial hardship or inability to make weekly contributions should be brought to the confidential attention of one of our priests.*

Sacramental Policies/Requirements:

Preparation for the Sacraments of Penance/Reconciliation and First Holy Eucharist consists of two (2) years of formal classroom instruction (normally beginning in the first grade).

In addition to class time, there will be additional parent meetings, activities, special retreat times and practice sessions throughout the year. Attendance by one or more parents/guardians is mandatory. A separate listing of these sacramental dates will be supplied at the time of the Parent Meeting.

The children will receive Penance/Reconciliation prior to First Holy Eucharist. Children will receive First Holy Eucharist during normal weekend liturgy normally scheduled in May. Assignments of the specific time and date of the liturgy will be done during the second year of preparation.

Students wishing to enter into the Confirmation preparation program in Grade 9 must be able to submit proof of sequential Faith Formation attendance for Grades 1-8.

Faith Formation Office

If there is a need to contact anyone in the Faith Formation Office,
the following numbers/contact information may prove helpful:

Sister Dorothy Dee: 973-694-4585 Ext. 7245; SrDorothy@olvwayne.org

Judi Barbarito Cocilovo: 973-694-4585 Ext. 7208; jcocilovo@olvwayne.org

Faith Formation Office:

973-694-4585 Ext. 7248; ourladyofthevalley_faithformation@olvwayne.org



Our Lady of the Valley and Holy Cross Parish Communities

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973-694-4585

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