

ST. PATRICK'S PARISH, MENASHA

FAITH FORMATION PARENT HANDBOOK 2017 - 2018



Our Mission Statement:

We, the people of St. Patrick's Catholic Community
through prayer and action,
are committed to living the commission of Jesus
through **open hearts and helping hands**,
as faithful stewards of each other and the world around us.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
We Believe.....	3
Our Focus.....	3
The 5 Precepts of the Church	3
The Seven Sacraments.....	4
Spiritual Works of Mercy, Corporal Works of Mercy.....	4
Catechists.....	4
Parent Volunteers.....	4

POLICIES

Registration.....	5
Class Times.....	5
Participation.....	5
Entering, Gathering, Departing Class.....	5
Attendance.....	5
Parent Meetings/Family Gatherings.....	5
Early Dismissal from Class.....	5
Cancellation of Classes.....	6
Off-Site Activities.....	6
Take Home Materials.....	6
Homework.....	6
Behavior and Discipline.....	6
Medications.....	6
Guests.....	6
Emergency Procedures.....	7
Enrollment Guidelines for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, Confirmation	7
First Reconciliation.....	7
First Eucharist.....	8
Youth Confirmation.....	8
Elementary, Middle & High School Curriculum Overview.....	9
Elementary& Middle Grades Curriculum	9
High School Curriculum.....	10
Special Preparation of Children.....	10

ST. PATRICK'S FAITH FORMATION

Children receive their hunger for a personal relationship with Jesus directly as a gift from God. It is the job of parents and family, assisted by the faith community, to nurture and cultivate the spiritual growth and formation of children. St. Patrick's Faith Formation program partners with you as parents and guardians to foster a loving relationship between your children and Jesus Christ, and to educate them in the essential truths of our Catholic faith. Faith Formation classes and activities will help your children grow closer to Jesus, as well as to build a strong faith foundation to deal with all of life's challenges. Through prayer, study, sharing, service, and worship experiences, children and youth will develop a solid Catholic faith that will prepare them to become adult Disciples of Christ.

WE BELIEVE...

"The experience of God in the family, whether named or not, enters each person at a fundamentally deep and lasting level... We don't need to import God into the family. God is already there. The family is the first and foremost setting where each of us is formed and encounters the love of the living God! Love begets love. Plain and simple. And love is happening in families. In various degrees and ways." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Familystyle, Dr. David Thomas & Mary Joyce Calnan, page 126)

WE BELIEVE...

- That the home is the most influential force in the life of a child and that the family has primary responsibility for forming the faith of children.
- That faith formation programming supplements the family's faith development process.
- That Catechists are faith-filled people called by God to be a witness for Jesus Christ and to share the Good News of their faith to bring others to Christ.

OUR FOCUS:

- To provide a safe and supportive environment for the growth of each student in the spiritual and moral aspects of his/her life.
- To give each student the opportunity to be heard, understood and valued as a precious child of God.
- To help each student recognize God's love in all aspects of life.

THE 5 PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH

1. Attend Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation and rest from servile labor.
2. Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year – especially if there is unconfessed serious (mortal) sin.
3. Receive Holy Communion *at least* during the Easter season.
4. Fast and abstain on days of penance established by the Church.
5. Provide for the material needs of the Church with time, talent and financial resources according to your ability.

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

1. Baptism
2. Penance
3. Holy Eucharist
4. Confirmation
5. Marriage
6. Holy Orders
7. Blessing (Anointing) of the Sick

CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

“...Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:31-46).

Feed the hungry.
Give drink to the thirsty.
Clothe the naked.
Shelter the homeless.
Visit the sick.
Visit the imprisoned.
Bury the dead.

SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

Counsel the doubtful.
Instruct the ignorant.
Admonish the sinner.
Comfort the sorrowful.
Forgive injuries.
Bear wrongs patiently
Pray for the living and the dead.

CATECHISTS*

Each year, parents and other parishioners volunteer to serve as catechists, aides, and substitutes in our Faith Formation Program. They do an incredible job and we owe them an enormous amount of support and gratitude. Training and resources are provided.

***Participation in a Protecting God’s Children workshop and a criminal background check are REQUIRED.**

PARENT VOLUNTEERS*

The success of our programs relies upon the generous support of so many volunteers! There are a variety of other opportunities for parents to enrich our program such as office help, making a presentation, hall monitor or childcare on Wednesday’s during class, and helping with special events.

***Participation in a Protecting God’s Children workshop and a criminal background check are REQUIRED.**

POLICIES

REGISTRATION

All children attending Faith Formation classes must be registered. Family Faith Formation Registration packets are emailed or sent via regular mail. Registration Forms are also available in the Parish Office and on our website at www.stpatricksmenasha.org.

CLASS TIMES

Classes for grades 1– 10 meet on Wednesday evenings from 6:15 – 7:30 p.m.

PARTICIPATION

You only get out of something what you put into it. This is true of Faith Formation too! Encourage your child to participate in class and ask them to tell you about what they experienced in class. Boredom is guaranteed if they and you don't get involved.

ENTERING, GATHERING, AND DEPARTING CLASS

Please drop off and pick up children as close to the entrance as possible. Parents of children in grades 3 and under are required to bring students to their classroom.

Please be **prompt** in picking up your child(ren) at 7:30 p.m. Children will be required to wait inside to be picked up, as we do not want any child to be left alone outside without supervision.

ATTENDANCE

Please establish Faith Formation as a top priority – if you don't, neither will your child. Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes, Masses, retreats and family events.

- Arrive on time, but not more than 10 minutes before class begins. There is not always supervision prior to that time.
- **Students in grades 1 – 3** are to be walked to the classroom and picked up at the end of class.
- Doors to the building will be locked between 6:30 and 7:15 pm while classes are in session. If your child arrives after 6:30 they will need to ring the bell for admittance to the building.
- Please call the Parish at 725-8381 x 0 or email jhesprich@stpatricksmenasha.org if your child will be absent. We will call parents of students who are absent without notice.

PARENT MEETINGS / FAMILY GATHERINGS

Parents are strongly encouraged to attend all **FAMILY NIGHTS** – please note that all youth classes run in conjunction with family nights and attendance will be taken. Your children want you there!

Parents with students in sacramental preparation programs are required to attend parent/child meetings, which provide you with information about the sacrament and its celebration as well as give you a significant role in helping your child prepare for the sacrament.

EARLY DISMISSAL FROM CLASS

When necessary to take your child out of class before the scheduled dismissal, please provide a signed note to the catechist.

CANCELLATION OF CLASSES

If the Menasha public schools close due to inclement weather, Faith Formation Classes are also canceled. If weather conditions deteriorate later in the afternoon or early evening, (when school closing is no longer an issue) ***please use YOUR BEST JUDGMENT in regard to sending your child.*** If time permits, ***an announcement will be made on the radio on 1150 AM-WHBY and 94.3 FM-WROE.*** In addition, ***an announcement will be placed on our voicemail system,*** so you can call the office at 725-8381 and listen to the main menu for directions to cancellations.

OFF – SITE ACTIVITIES

Permission slips, signed by a student’s parent or guardian, must be on file before that child will be allowed to participate in an off-site activity such as a retreat or field trip.

TAKE HOME MATERIALS

Students in grades K – 10 will regularly bring home information or assignments. **Please make sure you ask your child each week what they have to share.** In addition, we will use email, weekly updates, the church bulletin, parish newsletter, Facebook and pulpit announcements as other avenues to disseminate important information.

HOMEWORK

We realize that students’ schedules are hectic, so we are careful not to assign busy work. When outside work is necessary parents are encouraged to work with their child to complete the assignment.

BEHAVIOR & DISCIPLINE

Please convey to your child/children that their catechists are volunteers who give of their time to share their Catholic faith. They do this because of their love for God and their love for God’s children. They deserve to be treated with respect.

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a Christian manner, showing respect for all catechists and other students, before class begins, while class is in session and after class has been dismissed. ***All electronic devices should be turned off during class time unless they are being used for a class activity. If this request is ignored the catechist will take the device away until the end of class.*** Disruptive behavior will be dealt with in the following manner:

- 1) Catechist will remind the student of proper behavior and the behavioral expectations.
- 2) The Coordinator will handle continued disruptive behavior.
- 3) If discipline problems continue, parents will be required to meet with the Coordinator.

MEDICATIONS

If your child requires any medication during class time, either prescription or non-prescription, the medicine must come to the office in its original container with a label containing instructions on dispensing of medicine.

GUESTS

Guests are welcomed in the class but are required to check in the Faith Formation Office first. Parents, please call first if at all possible.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

During class times on a staggered schedule, students and catechist will practice for emergency events that might occur. These events may include but are not limited to: fire, tornado, bomb threat, or other emergency situations. These practices are to ensure that all will be prepared if an emergency should arise.

ENROLLMENT GUIDELINES FIRST EUCHARIST, FIRST RECONCILIATION & CONFIRMATION

Students entering our program after first grade must be enrolled in a Faith Formation program the year prior to receiving a Sacrament or it must be confirmed that they have received home schooling. Prior Faith Formation participation or home schooling is needed to ensure the child's understanding and appreciation of the Catholic faith and the Sacraments.

- A Baptismal Certificate is **REQUIRED** before the reception of the Sacraments.
- The Sacraments of First Reconciliation & First Eucharist are usually celebrated in the Second Grade except for older children coming into the program who have not yet received them. .
- The Sacrament of Confirmation is usually celebrated in the Eleventh Grade.

Individual situations will be reviewed at the discretion of the Pastoral Leader and Coordinator

FIRST RECONCILIATION: SACRAMENT OF HEALING

The Sacrament of Reconciliation celebrates God's healing and forgiveness. When the priest prays the words of absolution, we experience the mercy of God and are more able to forgive those who have hurt us. The First Reconciliation Celebration usually takes place in late November or early December.

First Reconciliation preparation is a partnership between the home and the parish. Parents must attend family sessions to receive the information and materials needed to help prepare their child for reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Parents will be given the background information needed to understand the process, the moral development of children, and the "how to" of Reconciliation. There will be a retreat experience before the reception of Reconciliation for students and their parents.

Each student will be paired with a parishioner who has volunteered to be his or her "Prayer Partner". The Prayer Partner prays for the child during his or her preparation time, participates in some of the preparation activities and is invited to attend the celebration of the sacrament. The students reciprocate by praying for and sending cards to their Prayer Partners. Each year, wonderful connections are made between families and Prayer Partners.

FIRST EUCHARIST: SACRAMENT OF INITIATION

The Eucharist is the central celebration of the Church. We listen to the Word of God during the Liturgy of the Word and witness Jesus' sacrifice of love when we celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist. As Catholics, we believe that Jesus is *actually present* to us in the Eucharistic Bread and Wine. Children receive First Eucharist in late April or early May.

Parents and families play an integral part of the First Eucharist preparation process that helps children get ready to receive Jesus in the form of Eucharist into their hearts and lives by:

- Attending an introductory meeting to learn about the preparation process and expectations.
- Participating in a Church Search to learn more about the Mass and the Liturgy of the Eucharist
- Focusing on prayer as preparation to receive Jesus
- Taking part in comparing setting the family table with setting the Lord's Table in order to increase understanding of the Eucharistic celebration

Just as in the preparation process for First Reconciliation, a Prayer Partner will be paired with the student.

YOUTH CONFIRMATION: SACRAMENT OF INITIATION

The Sacrament of Confirmation is a celebration of the gift of God's Spirit in our lives. The gift of the Holy Spirit conforms believers more perfectly to Christ and gives them strength to become adult Disciples of Christ.

The Confirmation program requires that students have participated in Faith Formation programming throughout their school years, either at the parish, Catholic school or through home schooling. The year of formal preparation for the Sacrament is best seen as a continuation of catechesis as well as a time of discernment. Expectations for students preparing for Confirmation:

- Be in Junior or Senior year of high school and at least 16 years old.
- Attend the Parent/Student Orientation in fall.
- Attend classes as scheduled.
- Spend time with a chosen sponsor exploring your faith.
- Attend an overnight retreat.
- Complete the Parish and Community Service components.
- Participate in an interview prior to the Celebration of the Sacrament.
- Attend with Sponsor (or a parent stand-in if necessary) the Practice before Confirmation.

Engaging in this process will help the student make the best decision regarding whether or not they are ready to be confirmed.

ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

OVERVIEW: The following overview is offered to facilitate the partnership the Catechists and the parents share in teaching about God and the Catholic faith. We encourage parents to expand on the various topics by finding teachable moments in everyday life, participating in family nights, and accepting the invitation to visit their child's classroom. We also encourage parents to strengthen their knowledge of the faith and the curriculum by participation in Adult Faith Formation opportunities offered in the parish, online and throughout the Diocese.

ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE GRADES CURRICULUM

The elementary portion of our program is designed to build a solid foundation for children to grow in the knowledge and love of their faith. Each grade level builds upon the previous to broaden and deepen the child's faith experience.

The *Christ Our Life New Evangelization Edition* (Loyola Press) is being used in all elementary and middle grades. The focus of this series is the four fundamental themes of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Creed, Sacraments, Morality and Prayer.

GRADE ONE: *God is Good.* TOPICS: *God is Our Good Father; God Sent His Son as Our Savior; Jesus Shows Us He Is Good; Jesus Shows His Great Love.*

GRADE TWO TOPICS: *God Cares for Us.* The primary focuses for this level are the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist. **TOPICS:** *God Gives Us Life and Love; Jesus Calls Us to Give Ourselves in Love; Jesus Gives Us the Gift of Peace; Jesus Gives Us the Gift of Himself; The Church Celebrates God's Care.*

GRADE THREE: *We Believe.* TOPICS: *God Calls Us to Faith; God Is Great and Good; God's Plan Is a Plan of Love; Jesus Brings Us to the Kingdom; Jesus Is with Us on Our Way.*

GRADE FOUR: *God Guides Us.* TOPICS: *We Come to Know God; God Strengthens Us to Be Holy; We Love God; We Love God's People; Jesus Leads Us to Happiness.*

GRADE FIVE: *We Worship.* TOPICS: *We Worship God as Catholic Christians; We Celebrate the Eucharist; We Celebrate God's Healing Love; We Follow Specials Ways to Holiness; We Worship God by Living in Love.*

GRADE SIX: *God Calls a People.* TOPICS: *God Reveals a Plan of Love; God Forms a Family of Faith; God Guides the Chosen People; God Leads the Chosen People; Prophets Prepare the Lord's Way.*

GRADE SEVEN & EIGHT: *Jesus the Way, the Truth and the Life.* TOPICS: *Christ the Way; Jesus Christ the Truth; Jesus Christ the Life.*

HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Students in grades 9 and 10 will meet the same evening schedule as the classes for grades 1 – 8. The *Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth* will provide the overview of Catholic beliefs and practices at a high school level.

The *Teen Timeline Bible Study and the Reason Series* may be used to supplement the lessons from the Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth. *The Teen Timeline* makes scripture come alive for Catholic teens. It shows the “big picture” of salvation history and relates it practically and directly to the lives of our Catholic youth and helps teens wrap their minds and hearts around the Scriptures and see the Bible as a relevant part of their lives. *The Reason Series* is a comprehensive program for high school students designed to provide students the evidence they need to be more certain about a transcendent super-intelligent creative power - God. Based on the award winning book, *New Proofs for the Existence of God: Contributions of Contemporary Physics and Philosophy*, by Fr. Robert J. Spitzer, S.J., Ph.D., *The Reason Series* explains the evidence for God from physics (along with the topics of evolution, the Bible vs. science, and aliens, etc.).

SPECIAL PREPARATION OF CHILDREN

AGES 7 - 18

(For catch up, First Eucharist, First Reconciliation or Confirmation)

This preparation is for baptized children who have not had ongoing formal faith formation. Students participate in individual instruction designed to bring them to the level of their peers when they can begin attending regular Faith Formation classes.