



St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church Youth Faith Formation

Family Handbook 2018

YOUTH FAITH FORMATION STAFF

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Welcome

We welcome your children to participate in the parish Youth Faith Formation programs! We strive to offer quality programs that provide faith formation for your children as well as the opportunity to pray together and form community with the other members of our parish. Assistance offered for students with special needs.

Goal

The mission of St. Francis of Assisi Parish Youth Faith Formation programs is to consistently and constantly extend Jesus' invitation to discipleship and to provide students with age-appropriate catechesis guided by biblical faith, the teachings of the Church, and a clear vision of the Gospel. This is accomplished by building upon students' life experiences, fostering family involvement, developing spirituality and involvement in liturgical prayer, encouraging moral development and challenging students to experience faith in a spirit of joy.

We Support You - the Domestic Church

While goals are important, they become meaningless without our working together. Parents' involvement at home, teaching and living the faith, supports and reinforces what we are teaching in class. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that "the role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute", and further..."the right and duty of parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable".

YOUTH FAITH FORMATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ACCIDENT/ILLNESS

If your child becomes ill or has an accident during youth faith formation programs, the parent/guardian or emergency contact will be notified. Basic First Aid will be given and an accident report will be filed.

ATTENDANCE

To receive the maximum benefit from the Youth Faith Formation programs, students are asked to arrive promptly and to attend all sessions. If your child will be absent, please call the office to inform the staff (**515-440-1030 ext. 154**).

Attendance Policy

It shall be the policy of the St. Francis of Assisi Faith Formation Council that Youth Faith Formation participants attend all sessions to receive the maximum benefit from the programs. Excessive absenteeism will result in a conference with the Director of Faith Formation and/or the Pastor.

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ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL

Sunday School: Please bring your child to the classroom each week. Do not leave your child unless a catechist or assistant is present. Pick up your child at the classroom. Do not knock on the door to ask that your child be dismissed early. Wait for the catechist to open the door to signal that class is over.

Elementary: Children will not be allowed in the classroom before class begins. They are asked to remain in the main hallways until directed to go to their classrooms. Children will be dismissed from their classrooms except **for kindergarten and first grade students who must be picked up at their classrooms by a parent or older sibling**. Please arrange a designated meeting site with your children after Youth Faith Formation sessions.

BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS

Blood and other bodily fluids will be considered infectious. Reasonable precautions (rubber gloves, disinfecting with bleach) will be used.

CANCELLATION OF CLASSES

If the West Des Moines schools cancel classes for the day, St. Francis Youth Faith Formation sessions will automatically be cancelled as well.

- Check the parish website at www.saintfrancischurch.org.
- You may receive an automated phone message via OmniNotifier sent through the Youth Faith Formation office. Please listen to the message and do not call the Youth Faith Formation office.

CELL PHONES/IPADS/TOYS/LASER POINTERS, ETC.

Cell phones, Ipads (& other items like these), laser pointers, toys, and CD players are not to be brought to Youth Faith Formation sessions by students. These items and/or other distractions from the classroom environment may be confiscated by the catechists or Youth Faith Formation staff. St. Francis of Assisi is not responsible for the safety of such items.

FACILITY USE

We share the building with many other parish groups including the day school. Children will not be allowed in any room unsupervised and are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful manner.

FOOD

Please do not bring any food or craft items made from food products into the building including but not limited to gum, nuts, candy, pop, and other snack items.

HEALTH INFORMATION

Please inform the office regarding any health concerns that may affect your child during Youth Faith Formation sessions. This information will be shared with your child's catechist as needed.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The Church recognizes the supreme responsibility of parents as the first and foremost teachers of their children in matters of faith. Your example, prayer life and participation in the weekly Sunday liturgy and other sacraments speak volumes to your children. There are many ways to be formally involved in the Youth Faith Formation programs. Parents are needed as catechists, assistants, substitutes, hall monitors and nursery workers. Please contact the office if you are able to help. Training and all tools needed for these volunteer positions are provided.

As a parent, you are welcome to visit your child's classroom. Please check in with the office. Also, please help your children learn their prayers and review any papers or materials they may bring home.

PARKING LOT PROCEDURE

Please enter the parking lots from the north circle drive (off Woodland Avenue) or from the far east drive (off Ashworth Road) and proceed along the building until reaching the north or south doors near the educational building or the north or south church doors to drop off or pick up your children. If you park, please use the designated spaces and do not park in the car lines. Please use extreme caution when driving in and through the parking lots.

PICKING UP A CHILD EARLY

If you pick up your child before Youth Faith Formation sessions are over, you must notify the Youth Faith Formation staff before your child may leave. The hall monitor in the main hallway will assist you.

VISITORS

Please contact the Youth Faith Formation Office for approval before bringing a visitor to class. Visitors need to check in at the Youth Faith Formation office before going to class. Visitors are expected to follow all program guidelines as well as the rules of the catechist. Please do not bring visitors for more than one evening.

VOLUNTEER SCREENING

All volunteers who have contact with children must complete a screening form and Virtus training. This screening is for the safety and well being of our children and the protection of the parish and volunteer.

SKATEBOARDS/SHOES WITH WHEELS—Not allowed on premises.

SECURITY

The safety and security of all students is important to the staff of St. Francis. For this reason the exterior doors of the building will only be unlocked for the drop-off and pick-up period. Please plan accordingly:

- Wednesday Night Early Session:
 - Drop off between 4:20 – 4:35 p.m. Class starts at 4:30 p.m.
 - Pick-up between 5:35 – 5:50 p.m. Class ends at 5:45 p.m.
- Wednesday Night Late Session:
 - Drop off between 6:05 – 6:20 p.m. Class starts at 6:15 p.m.
 - Pick-up between 7:20 – 7:35 p.m. Class ends at 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday School
 - Drop off: 9:20 – 9:35 am
 - Pick-up: 10:30 – 10:45 a.m. (or immediately after the 9:30 a.m. mass)

If your children arrive more than five minutes after class starts, they will need to come to the main SOUTH exterior door by the parish office, all other exterior doors will be locked. Please plan accordingly and be on time.

Sacramental Programs

The Church recognizes parents as the primary educators of their children as they are the first teachers in their children's lives. According to the United States bishops, parents have the "right and duty" to be intimately involved in the sacramental preparation of their children. This obligation springs from the commitment made by the parents at the child's baptism to form them in the Catholic faith. All parents of children preparing to celebrate sacraments are expected to participate in all parent meetings, family experiences and the celebrations of the sacraments.

FIRST RECONCILIATION & FIRST EUCHARIST

Preparation for the celebration of the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist is offered during the second grade year.

CHILDREN'S CATECHUMENATE

Children who are above the second grade and have not yet celebrated the sacraments of Reconciliation and/or Eucharist are invited to participate in preparation for these sacraments. Contact the director to make arrangements.

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

All students will have the opportunity to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation at a communal service during the year. These celebrations will occur during class time. Schedule of Reconciliation times can be found in the Youth Faith Formation calendar.

CONFIRMATION

The sacrament of Confirmation is conferred during the sophomore year of high school. Preparation for the sacrament will take place during the freshman and sophomore years. The Confirmation process is not organized by the Youth Faith Formation Office. For more information about this sacrament, please contact the High School Faith Formation Office at 515-440-1030 ext. 103.

ENROLLMENT FOR SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

It shall be the policy of the St. Francis of Assisi Faith Formation Council that there be an evaluation of any students entering grades two through eight who was not associated with a Youth Faith Formation programs or Catholic school in prior years. It shall be the responsibility of the Director of Faith Formation to conduct the evaluation of each applicant to determine the student's level of faith formation and explain the process for completion of the sacramental preparation.

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Special Needs Ministry Resources for Youth Faith Formation

- Individualized Religious Education Plans
 - Confidential, Student-Specific Plan
 - Identify Long-Term and Short-Term Goals
 - Identify Learner Needs and Accommodations, etc.

- Support for Integration into Classes
 - 1:1 or Small Group Student Assistants Available
 - Curriculum Modifications/Accommodations
 - Adapted Materials Available
 - Ongoing learning for Catechists

- Religious Education for All Children “REACH” Classroom
 - Self-Contained Classroom with Trained and Professional Catechists
 - Specialized Curriculum Adapted to Meet Unique Learning Needs
 - Multi-Age
 - Hands-On, Music, Movement, Art, Sensory

- Adaptive Sacramental Preparation

For more information, please contact:
Office: # (515) 440-1030 Ext. 155

Jess Streit, Special Needs Ministry Coordinator
Email: jstreit@saintfrancischurch.org

Curriculum

PRESCHOOL

The Sunday School program is for 3 and 4 and 5 year olds (not yet in kindergarten) and uses the Allelu program, published by Our Sunday Visitor Religion Publishing Company.

KINDERGARTEN – GRADE 5

The students in grades k-5 use the Finding God series published by Loyola Press. The title, “Finding God: Our Response to God’s Gifts”, reflects the inspiration of St. Ignatius of Loyola and is designed to help students to recognize the presence of God in their lives and to know God in a personal way. The series weaves together experiences in prayer, Scripture, Catholic Social Teaching and liturgy. The themes of the children’s program are: God, Jesus, The Church, The Sacraments and Morality and these themes are incorporated in each grade level.

GRADE 6

The students in grade 6 use the St. Mary's Press series, "Discovering." We use the following mini courses: Exploring the Story of Israel & Celebrating Eucharist. This series is designed to address the younger teen's real-life issues and help connect their lives with their Catholic faith.

CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Another option for Youth Faith Formation at St. Francis is Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS). CGS is an approach to faith formation with children (ages 3-12) that began in Rome over 50 years ago. In 1954, Sofia Cavalletti, a Biblical scholar, and her co-worker, Gianna Gobbi, a trained Montessorian, began to develop this approach to the religious formation of children. It is rooted in the Bible, the liturgy of the Church, and the educational principles of Maria Montessori. Maria Montessori was a devout Catholic who believed faith formation has an essential role in the development of the child.

Saint Francis of Assisi EDGE - 7th & 8th Grade Youth Ministry Program

Saint Francis of Assisi EDGE, is our parish's youth ministry program for all 7th & 8th grade youth of our parish who attend public, private, and home schools. This is a program where our youth can learn about their faith, find a Catholic community, and experience Jesus all while having fun and serving others. As young adolescents are moving from a child-like spirituality, it is our goal with EDGE to help them develop an adult faith commitment to Jesus Christ and the Catholic Community.

EDGE Program Areas

1. **Faith Formation:** These EDGE nights will help our youth learn and grow in their Catholic faith. The themes of the nights will be catechetical, issue, or social nights. EDGE nights will take place every Wednesday based on the Youth Faith Formation Calendar. Registration is required through Youth Faith Formation for the school year.
2. **Social Events:** These events will be offered to create a community for our youth. These will be on-site at Saint Francis or off-site and offered throughout the year. Registration and permission slip is required for each event.
3. **Service Opportunities:** These opportunities will be held throughout the year to help our youth put their faith into action. Space may be limited depending on the opportunity. Registration and permission slip is required for each opportunity.
4. **Spiritual Activities:** These activities will give our youth the opportunity to deepen and learn more about their Catholic faith throughout the year. Registration and permission slip is required for each activity.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI FAITH FORMATION COUNCIL

The Faith Formation Council plans, promotes, and advocates for the lifelong formation in faith of all members of the Catholic community. The Council also advises and assists other existing councils, committees and ministries regarding formation needs, concerns and best practices. The Council is composed of the pastor and parishioners who go through a discerning process and serve three-year terms. Also in attendance is a Parish Council liaison as well as the faith formation program administrators. Copies of the Council minutes are posted on the parish website. They meet the third Thursday at 6:30 p.m.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

It shall be the policy of St. Francis of Assisi Faith Formation Council that if an occasion arises that a parent feels a problem has occurred at religious education, the parent will use the following procedure:

1. Contact the Director of Faith Formation. The parent may be asked to attend a meeting with the catechist, Director of Faith Formation and/or pastor to reach a solution.
2. If a parent does not feel an agreement has been reached, the problem may then be taken to the Faith Formation Council Chair.

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GREIVANCE PROCEDURE GUIDELINES

It shall be the policy of St. Francis of Assisi Faith Formation Council that as a Catholic faith community, open communication between parents, students, teachers, staff and administrators is encouraged in all programs under the Board, including day school, preschool, religious education and youth ministry. It is the intent of the St. Francis of Assisi Faith Formation Council that all such interaction shall be conducted in a respectful Christian manner, as we believe Christ has taught us "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace."¹ In all such interactions, all parties involved shall strive to "be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven [us] in Christ."² We believe that in following Christ's example, we can create an environment in all our education programs that allows our children the best opportunity to grow and achieve academic, spiritual and social success.

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BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

Youth Faith Formation General Rules for Students:

- Everyone is to be treated courteously and with respect. This includes other children, catechists, assistants, volunteers, staff and parents.
- Students will come to class prepared to learn and willing to participate in activities in their class. No student will be allowed to interfere with the learning and participation of other students.
- No loud talking, yelling or running in the building.
- No food (including gum, pop, or candy) brought into the building.
- Respect the authority of the catechists and staff.
- Respect all property and share in the care of your classroom.

Youth Faith Formation Parental Responsibilities:

- Attend Mass as a family each Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation.
- Recognize the importance of faith formation at every grade level.
- Give priority to attendance at weekly Youth Faith Formation sessions.
- Inform the Director of Religious Education of any special needs or circumstances that may affect their child in Youth Faith Formation sessions including health and/or learning issues (i.e. ADD, allergies, reading difficulties, etc.)
- Participate in sacramental events for Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation.
- Model a Catholic Christian way of life at home.

¹ Ephesians 4:2-3

² Ephesians 4:32

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Discipline is defined as the training that develops self-control, character, and orderly conduct, as well as acceptance of or submission to authority and control. The Faith Formation Council and the Youth Faith Formation staff of St. Francis of Assisi have the authority and responsibility to set discipline codes and maintain good order in the classrooms and church. The children in the Youth Faith Formation programs are entitled to learn and develop in a setting which promotes respect for self, others, and property. Catechists, parents and students are charged with cooperating to develop mature, healthy and responsible individuals capable of self-control. It is essential that all students give the catechists their full cooperation.

BREACH OF DISCIPLINE is any conduct of students which interferes with the maintenance of school discipline.

Acts of behavior which tend to conflict with the educational program or which are antagonistic to the welfare of other students will not be tolerated. Examples of different classifications of breach of discipline are:

- A. Verbal outbursts which disrupt a class and/or loss of self control; this includes, but is not limited to, loud and boisterous conduct which disturbs the orderly, efficient and disciplined atmosphere and operation of the Youth Faith Formation programs;
- B. Open defiance involving refusal to conform to the rules and regulations, such as refusal to comply with the request or direction of catechists, the Director of Faith Formation, other Youth Faith Formation personnel, or Youth Faith Formation volunteers;
- C. Profane and obscene language, material, or obscene gestures;
- D. Chronic violation of Youth Faith Formation rules;
- E. Personal misbehavior such as threats, harassments, intimidation, or extortion;
- F. Display of racial bigotry or intolerance;
- G. Willful destruction of parish/ Youth Faith Formation property or others' property;
- H. Setting fires or false alarms.
- I. Physical attack on others, threats of physical attack, physical violence or other threats;
- J. The use, possession, purchase or sale of alcoholic beverages, drugs or drug paraphernalia; or tobacco products;
- K. Possession of weapons such as guns, knives, fireworks, or other dangerous objects or lookalikes;
- L. Violation of the Criminal Code of Iowa.

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH DISCIPLINE ISSUES

The catechist will deal promptly with any inappropriate behavior. If the student chooses to continue the inappropriate behavior after sufficient warning, the following procedure will be implemented:

- The student will be removed from the classroom and given a choice to either return to class and cooperate or go to the Youth Faith Formation Office. If the child is sent to the office, parents will be contacted. A discipline report will be filed.
- If the behavior reoccurs, the student will be sent to the Youth Faith Formation Office. Parents will be contacted. A second discipline report will be filed.

- Recurrent misbehavior will result in a conference with the parents, the Director of Religious Education and/or the Pastor.
- Actions such as fighting, danger to others, insubordination, or insolence will result in removal from the scene and an immediate parent conference.
- In the case of repeated failure to behave and/or gross violations of the discipline policy, the student may be suspended from the Youth Faith Formation programs. Parents will be given materials and assume the responsibility for instructing their child for the remainder of the year. Re-admission to the Youth Faith Formation programs will not take place until the Director and the Pastor have met with the parents and child and are satisfied that the behavior problem is under control.

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