

St. Raphael

Youth Faith Formation Handbook



Grades 1-6
2020-2021

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Dear Partners in Faith Formation:

What a blessing to partner with you for this 2020-2021 academic year! As your new Director of Religious Education for grades 1-6, I am overjoyed to help each of you provide opportunities for your child to grow deeper in his or her relationship with the Good Shepherd who cares so deeply for his flock.

Here at St. Raphael, our goal is to form the whole person to embrace fully Christ's mission to transform the whole world. For 1st-6th Faith Formation, this means teaching the basic tenets of our faith in ways that draw students into the mystery of God himself. Our handing on of the faith should not be merely informational, but something which transforms one's entire life and way of being!

We are so blessed to have a team of well-informed catechists who are so excited to share in this mission. Of course, we want to assure you that this is a *partnership*. After all, the Church has long professed that the work of catechesis is first and foremost the task of the parents. Without your commitment to your child's faith formation and regular Mass attendance, our efforts cannot bear fruit.

In this handbook, we hope to provide all the important details so that we can work together on this privileged task of catechesis. You will find general information on religious education here at St. Raphael Parish, an overview of each grade level's curriculum, and policies and procedures. Please take the time to review all of the information in this handbook so that you will be familiar with the program and its expectations.

Please know that given the current unpredictability of Covid-19, we are continually monitoring local, state, and federal guidelines and well as guidelines from the Diocese of Joliet. The safety of all of our students, along with the quality of their religious education, is our utmost priority. If we are able to hold in-person classes, know that we will have strict guidelines and materials to protect the health and safety of our students, parents, and catechists.

We look forward to partnering with you to help your child grow in the knowledge and love of our loving Father. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns you have at any time. Know of my prayers for you!

In Christ,

Sydney Schneider
Director of Religious Education

Staff's Covenant

We, the members of the staff, who have welcomed the Call of the Lord to be leaders in religious formation, acknowledge that the parents or guardians of students in our program are the primary educators of their children. To assist the parents or guardians in their task we promise:

- To present a curriculum that is approved by the Diocese of Joliet, that is within the guidelines published in the National Catechetical Directory and that expresses the theological traditions of the Church
- To thoroughly train all catechists in doctrine, scripture, prayer and teaching methods
- To promote a positive, creative learning atmosphere rooted in Christian values
- To select all speakers for the required parent programs with great care
- To participate regularly in the liturgical life of the Church
- To role model the Christian lifestyle in daily actions
- To nurture our own spiritual growth and educational skills by participating regularly in retreats, workshops, courses, conventions, and diocesan seminars

Catechist's Covenant

I pledge my commitment and support to St. Raphael Parish by serving as a catechist in the Religious Formation of our youth. I promise:

- To share in Jesus' mission of proclaiming and witnessing to the reign of God
- To contribute in a positive way to the goals and objectives of Religious Formation
- To attend all planning meetings and functions to the best of my ability
- To be open to accepting responsibilities in areas where I may be of service
- To follow through with my commitments
- To invite and enable my students to ongoing conversion to Jesus in holiness of life
- To abide by the policies and guidelines of "Protecting God's Children"

I ask for:

- Grace from the Father
- Compassion from the Son, and
- Wisdom from the Spirit

A. General Information

Religious Education for Our Children

Overview

Religious Education is so much more than just a learning of facts or a memorizing of lists (such as the Ten Commandments or the Seven Sacraments). It is helping one to know, to celebrate, and to contemplate the mystery of God. It is getting to know Jesus and wanting to follow him. And as that knowledge and desire progresses, that relationship with God and with Jesus is nurtured.

Religious Education also emphasizes the need for liturgy and Sacraments, with the desire that all the faithful be brought to full, conscious and active participation in the Church. By examining and transmitting the core values and attitudes of Jesus, Religious Education prepares its participants to live in a Christian community and to be active in the life and mission of the Church.

Faith Formation Diocesan Curriculum

The Diocese of Joliet has instituted a Faith Formation Curriculum which is to be followed in all religious programs in the Diocese. The four goals of this Curriculum, and how Religious Education at St. Raphael Parish meets those goals, are as follows:

Goal 1: Know and understand the basic teachings of the Catholic Church.

Students learn fundamental teachings that provide the foundation of one's Catholic faith. Such teachings include the Trinity, the Creeds, the Marks of the Church, Jesus' life and teachings through Sacred Scripture, and the origin, Tradition, and mission of the Church.

Goal 2: Know and appreciate the importance of the liturgy and of the Sacraments in the life of Catholics.

Students learn about the parts of and purpose of Mass, the sacraments and how they are signs of God's love which transform our lives, and how the Eucharist is the most important celebration of our faith.

Goal 3: Understand and appreciate that through Baptism we are called to life in Christ.

Students learn how the Commandments and Beatitudes guide them to live good moral lives. They also learn about the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy and how they are to apply such service and stewardship in their lives. And they learn to understand the presence of God's grace in their lives.

Goal 4: Recognize and engage in personal and communal Catholic forms of prayer, of Scripture study, and of other experiences that deepens one's spiritual life.

Students learn the importance of, and the types of, prayer, how Scripture can be incorporated into prayer, and how Sunday readings and homilies should be discussed and applied in their lives.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The religious formation of any child begins long before he or she is enrolled in school. At Baptism, parents are entrusted with their child's life that God gave them. It is through the living witness of parents that children first experience the faith. Children will learn the importance of attending Mass, prayer, and receiving the Sacraments by the example of their parents. This experience is irreplaceable and lasts throughout life. It is this religious formation that is the foundation of all religious formation that a child receives in a classroom. This responsibility of parents is a true ministry.

Therefore, a major emphasis in our program is ***parental involvement***. First, we encourage parents to review the lessons with their children and discuss with them what they have learned after each class. You will be provided with a copy of your child's curriculum to assist in this. This will be especially important during shortened Zoom lessons, as students may be asked to complete activities offline.

Additionally, built into the textbooks, for each chapter, are activities for the students to do with their family. The activities on these sheets support what is being presented in the chapter. We ask that you and your child together do at least one of the activities found on these sheets for each chapter. Please note that this is not student homework but a family faith activity.

Parents are also asked to attend a parent meeting to learn more information about our program and their children's grade level. Parents are also to actively be involved in the sacramental preparation programs and to help their children learn their prayers. It is also important that parents, along with their children, attend Mass and other liturgical celebrations on a regular basis.

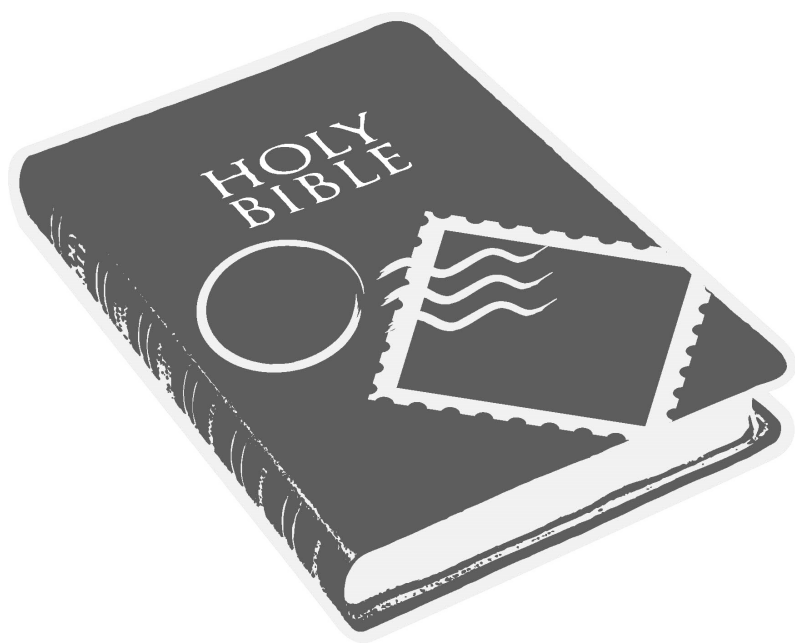
The role parents play in their child's religious formation does not end when the child starts formal classes. The Religious Education Department joins with you in this formation and is ready to assist you as parents. Key to our success is your active involvement and living as role models of God's love. Let us work as a team to help your children progress in their faith!

Prayers

The importance of prayer is continually emphasized throughout the school year. Specific prayers of the Catholic Church are introduced at the appropriate grade level. All classes begin and end with prayer, which will include traditional and non-traditional prayers. Children will be tested on their knowledge and understanding of prayers throughout the year.

If we are able to return to in-person instruction, all students will participate in praying the Rosary and the Stations of the Cross during the school year. Also, all children in grades 3 and above will be asked to participate in a Reconciliation service during Lent. If we are not able to return to in-person instruction, we will invite all families to engage in these prayer opportunities on their own.

To truly learn the prayers and allow them to soak into their hearts, children need repetition. It is therefore essential that parents model these prayers for their children and emphasize the importance of prayer by frequently praying together as a family.



SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

We invite our students to join with the St. Raphael Church community in celebrating the sacraments of First Reconciliation (First Confession) and First Eucharist (First Communion). Through parent meetings, at-home preparations, classroom study, workshops, prayer, and liturgical celebrations, the children receive the necessary preparation for a meaningful initiation into sacramental life.

Preparation for the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist begins in the first grade with instruction on the need for Jesus in our lives, and continues in the second grade with instruction on the Trinity and the importance of these two sacraments. The Catholic Church requires that a child have the opportunity to receive the sacrament of First Reconciliation before receiving First Eucharist. Our program meets this obligation, and separates the reception of the two sacraments by an appropriate time period.

Catholic formation is an ongoing process. Therefore, it is extremely important that each child attend, wherever possible, Religious Education classes for all grade levels beginning with grade 1. Students in grade 3 or higher who wish to receive the sacrament of First Eucharist will be required to complete two years of religious education in order to receive the necessary formation prior to receiving the sacrament. Interested parents should contact the Religious Education Office for further details.

Family participation in the preparation process for these sacraments is of the utmost importance! Families will be informed of, and will be expected to attend, parent meetings and other activities or events. Families are expected to provide a home faith environment that supports prayer and Scripture reading, and regular Sunday Mass attendance and participation is critical so that these children understand and appreciate the importance of these sacraments.



B. Curriculum for Grades 1-6

In grades one through six, the children begin to learn and understand what to believe as Catholics, how to pray, how to worship, and how to live out those beliefs.

Grade One

The first grade curriculum is an introduction to the Church as a community and how we are to act as members of this community. Also, the children are introduced to God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, and they learn how they are to help people and how they are to pray and be holy.

Grade Two

The second grade curriculum is in two parts. The first part focuses on the three persons of the Blessed Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The students also learn about the sacrament of Baptism and are introduced to the bible. The second part concentrates on preparing the children for the reception of the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist and focusing on the purpose of these sacraments.

Grade Three

The third grade curriculum concentrates on a study of the Church and how its members are called to carry out its mission of loving, caring, serving, praying and forgiving. The children also learn about the Seven Sacraments and the importance of each.

Grade Four

The fourth grade curriculum focuses on God's covenant with his people and the laws he gave them to live by the covenant — the Ten Commandments. Also covered are Jesus' teachings of the Lord's Prayer and the Beatitudes, the role of the Holy Spirit, the parts of the Mass, and the Works of Mercy.

Grade Five

The fifth grade curriculum concentrates on the Seven Sacraments — how they are celebrated and the ways the grace from the Sacraments deepen our relationship with Christ and strengthen us to follow him.

Grade Six

The sixth grade curriculum recaps the basic tenets of the Catholic faith from a junior high perspective. By the end of sixth grade, the children should have the necessary knowledge for the Theology of the Body curriculum in Grade Seven.

C. General Policies and Procedures

Arrival/Dismissal

Please note: If we are able to return to in-person instruction this year, the faith formation office will send out detailed instructions for our arrival and dismissal procedures.

Parents and guardians who are dropping off or picking up children before or after classes are urged to use extreme caution at all times in the Church parking lot.

No student may leave the Church grounds without being accompanied by an adult. If your child is allowed to walk or ride a bike home, you must notify the Religious Education Office in writing in advance.

Early Dismissal

In certain circumstances, we understand that there may be a reason for your child to have an early dismissal from the class. It is essential that you notify us on the day of the early dismissal explaining the reason and the time you will pick up your child. Early dismissal should be the exception, not the rule, and frequent requests for early dismissal will result in a conference with the Director.

Zoom Classes

Families will be provided a Zoom link and password in order to log into their class sessions. Please ensure that your child is logged in early for class. When you enter the password, you will be admitted into a waiting room, for security purposes. The catechist will admit the student into the Zoom room. Please ensure that your child's name is recognizable on Zoom, and please ensure that they do not use a distracting background.



Attendance

1. If your child is not able to attend class due to illness or family emergency, please contact the catechist by text or email, or the office (630-615-7642), as soon as possible. Please let us know the reason for the absence.
2. Students are to attend classes on a regular basis if there is to be continuity in their Religious Education development. The director will reach out if a student misses several sessions.
3. If classes must be cancelled due to inclement weather, your child's catechist will contact you. The parish website should also note the cancellation.



Behavior

Unacceptable behavior will initially be handled by the catechist. If the behavior problem continues, the student will be sent to the Director's office. In the event the student is sent to the office, a warning will be issued to the student. If there is a further incident, the catechist will contact the parents and notify the Director. Continuous misbehavior will result in a parent-and-student conference with the Director, and will take place before the student is allowed to return to class.

Please note the following general rules:

- No disrespect to the catechist or fellow students
- No gum, food or drink unless provided by the catechist
- No foul or inappropriate language
- No verbal or physical abuse
- No sitting on the desks or tables
- No disrespect for other students' possessions
- No screaming or shouting
- No running anywhere in the school building
- No going to the restroom without the catechist's permission
- No talking or leaving of seats if the catechist must leave the room

Also, note that no cell phones or other electronic devices are to be used during class time, whether on Zoom or in the school building. Disregard of this rule may result in the confiscation of the item.

Communication

Parents are encouraged to call catechists if they have questions or concerns. Catechists are likewise encouraged to call upon parents for assistance. Please be open to communication. It is the best way to prevent small problems from becoming crises. Parents are welcome to observe a child's class at any time. In those cases, we ask, for security reasons, that you notify us in advance. **Letters and other communication will frequently be sent home with students, so please check your child(ren)'s folder after each session for information from the staff or catechist. During Zoom sessions, communication will be via email.**

Dress Code

Students are expected to dress in a manner suitable for Religious Formation classes, whether virtual or in the school building. Therefore, clothing that has a satanic or cult symbol, gang symbol, inappropriate sign or inappropriate language are not to be worn to classes. In addition, please note the following regarding dress items and styles:

- Headgear (hats, scarves, bandanas, visors, etc.) are not to be worn in the classrooms.
- Excessively short dresses/skirts and shorts are prohibited.
- Pants and jeans worn below the waist or in an inappropriate manner are prohibited.
- Tops with excessive skin exposure are not permitted.
- Shoes must be worn at all times.
- Any form of dress determined to disrupt the educational process, is offensive in nature, or is a possible safety hazard will not be tolerated.

If you are not sure about an item of clothing, please contact the office before your child wears it.

Medications

The Medical Form you completed at the time of registration is kept confidentially in the Youth Faith Formation Office, and the catechist is made aware of any concerns. If your child's medical record needs updating during the year, please inform the office as soon as possible.

If your child needs to take a medication around the time of class, we ask that if possible it be taken right before or after class. If this is not possible, it is necessary that the Permission to Administer Medication Form be completed and returned to the Office before the medication can be administered. Note that any medication to be distributed during class time must be given to the child's catechist at the start of class, and will only be distributed by the catechist.

Safe Environment

St. Raphael Parish cares about all children. We know child abuse causes children to suffer emotional scars for many years. We all want our children to be treated with love, care, and respect. As part of its ongoing mission, the Diocese of Joliet requires that all Parish staff members and volunteers who work with children participate in a workshop called “Protecting God’s Children.” The workshop informs them about the permanent harm done to children and also teaches ways to prevent child abuse. It is designed to provide the facts about child abuse and hopefully motivate people to action in preventing abuse. In addition to participating in the “Protecting God’s Children” workshop, all volunteers are required to complete a standard application that includes a release of information to allow for background checks. Volunteers are required to read and operate by the “Standards of Behavior for Those Working with Minors.”

Also, all Catholic schools and parish Religious Formation programs in the Diocese of Joliet must offer instruction for children regarding the prevention of child sexual abuse if it is not offered at the public schools. However, such instruction is offered by the public schools in Districts 203 and 204, and therefore our Program does not offer such instruction.



Special Needs

If your child has any learning disability, physical handicap or other special need, please note that St. Raphael's offers a REACH Program for children with special needs. Please contact Jeanne McDonald, the Coordinator of the Program, at jmcdonald@st-raphael.com for details.

Family Prayer

We bless your name, O Lord,
for sending your own incarnate Son,
to become part of a family,
so that, as he lived its life,
he would experience its worries and its joys.

We ask you, Lord,
to protect and watch over this family,
so that in the strength of your grace
its members may enjoy prosperity,
possess the priceless gift of your peace,
and, as the Church alive in the home,
bear witness in this world to your glory.

We ask this thought Christ our Lord.
Amen.

A Parent's Prayer

God our Creator, make me a better parent.
Teach me to listen patiently to what my children have to say
and to answer their questions kindly.
Keep me from interrupting or contradicting them.
Make me as courteous to them as I would have them be to me.
May I ever be mindful that they are children
and not capable of the judgment of adults.
Let me provide them opportunities to help themselves
and make decisions.
Bless me with the patience to grant their reasonable requests
and the courage to deny those privileges I know will do them harm.
Make me fair and just and kind.
Amen.

