



St. Raphael Catholic Church

Children's Faith Formation Handbook

Grades 1-6

**Jesus said,
"Let the children come to me"**



**Youth Faith
Formation**

Contact Information

St. Raphael Youth Faith Formation Office
1215 Modaff Road
Naperville, Il 60540

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630-355-4545

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Our Mission

The mission of St. Raphael's Children's Faith Formation Program is, with the assistance of the parents, to help the children **know Christ, love Christ, and follow Christ**. This means that, regardless of age, the program helps the children...

- **Know and Understand the "Good News"** – Younger children learn about Jesus and how to "love God and one another". Older children learn about the life of Christ and the tenets of the Catholic faith such as the Sacraments, Commandments, Beatitudes, etc.
- **Develop and Deepen Their Faith** – Children realize the importance of Jesus in their lives and how they need to rely on him for help.
- **Pray** – Children learn how to pray and why it is important.
- **Serve Others** – Children learn the importance of helping others without expecting something in return.

Grades 1 – 6

Children's Faith Formation is a partnership between the family and the church. Our goal is to raise faith-filled children together. Formal faith formation begins in Grade 1. Classes are taught onsite and will meet on the days and times specified below

Monday: 4:45-6:00 pm

Tuesday: 4:45-6:00 pm

6:30-7:45 pm

Dear Partners in Faith Formation:

Welcome to the 2022-2023, I feel truly blessed to be your Director of Children's Faith Formation and I am excited to start this brand new year with your family. As we begin a new year we may still encounter some challenges but I feel very confident that we will be able to overcome any obstacle that is put in our way. I promise to provide you with any support that is needed in order for your family to continue. Every member of St. Raphael is on their own journey toward Christ and a lifetime of discipleship. Our Catholic faith formation is a lifelong process of spiritual growth, increased understanding and commitment to the faith and traditions of the Catholic Church. Following Jesus Christ is a lifelong journey.

As mothers, fathers and care takers you are the absolute best teachers of the faith for your children! No catechist or priest, no matter how effective, can replace the influence you alone have on whether or not your child has a living faith in God, in the Catholic Church, and in the Sacraments. Religious Education is unlike any other subject at school, because it requires faith. And for faith to be passed on, children need examples to follow. Again, there is no one who influences your child more than you, especially when it comes to passing on

your belief in Jesus Christ! Our amazing and dedicated Catechists are committed to this partnership with you and they should be your first contact with any issues or questions.

This handbook contains important information and I ask that you take the time to read it thoroughly, and please sign the acknowledgment that you should have received in your welcome packet. You will find general information on the Children's Faith Formation program here at St. Raphael's along with each grade levels curriculum and expectations.

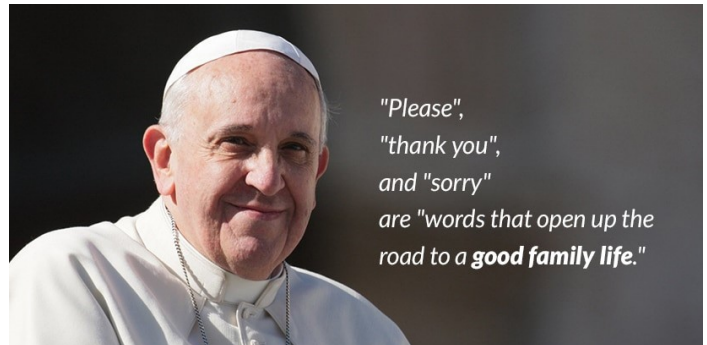
Always know that I am here for each of you, I have been involved with Religious Education since the time it was called "CCD". I have been on every side of Religious Education, a student, a volunteer, a Catechist but most of all a parent. I understand the struggles and the time commitment that is being asked of you and I will never ask anything that is not within reason. Your child's faith is what is most important and I do understand that every family is at a different stage with their faith practices. So I ask that you commit to doing your part and I promise we will do ours.

We look forward to partnering you and your family to help your child/children grow in their knowledge and love for Christ. If you have any questions, concerns or comment please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

Peace and God Bless,

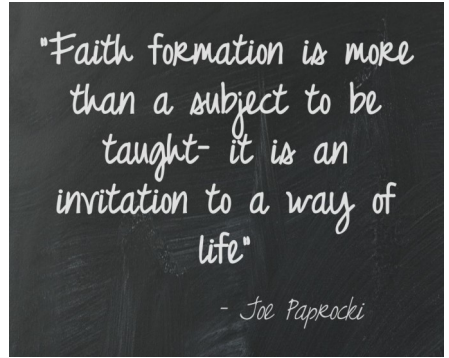
Michele Kmety

Director of Children's Faith Formation



Staff's Commitment

We, the members of the staff at St. Raphael who have welcomed the Call of the Lord to be leaders Faith Formation, acknowledge that the parents or guardians of students in our program are the primary educators of their children. In order to assist the parents and guardians in their role 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 be a role model for 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 Commitment

I pledge my commitment and support to St. Raphael Parish by serving as a catechist in the Children's Faith Formation. 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 Faith 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

General Information

Faith Formation for our Children

Overview

Faith Formation is so much more than just 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.

Faith Formation 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, Faith Formation 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 Faith Formation 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 services and stewardship in their lives. And they learn to understand the presence of God's grace in their lives.

Goals 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 Faith Formation of any child begins long before he or she is enrolled in any program. 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. The single most powerful force in a child's religious formation is the spiritual personality of the parent. We know the parental factors that make a significant difference in promoting faith in children and youth include:

- ◆ Parents' personal faith and practice
- ◆ A close and warm parent-child relationship
- ◆ Parent modeling and teaching a religious faith
- ◆ Grandparent religious influence and relationship

It is critically important that parents are authentic examples of what they claim to believe. Their authenticity includes faithful living as well as sharing with their children their struggles and failings.

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. 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 understand that this is not homework for the student but a family faith activity.

Parents are asked to be actively involved in the sacramental preparation program and to help their children learn the required prayers. It is also important for parents, along with their children, attend Mass and other liturgical celebrations on a regular basis.

The role of the Faith Formation Department joins with you in your child's formation and is ready to assist you as the primary Catechist. The key to our success is your active involvement and living as role models of God's love. I pray that we work as a team to help your child/children grow in their faith.

Prayers

The importance of prayer is continually emphasized throughout the instructional year. Specific prayers of the Catholic Church are introduced in the appropriate grade level. All classes will begin and end with a prayer, which will include traditional; and non –traditional prayers. Children will be tested on their knowledge as well as their understanding of prayers throughout the year. Throughout the year we will come together and participate in several prayer opportunities, and I feel it’s important for you as parents to experience these with your children.

“Prayer leads us forward in hope” – Pope Francis



Sacramental Preparation

We invite our students to join with the St. Raphael Church community in celebrating the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion. Through parent meetings, at-home preparations, in class study, retreats, prayer and liturgical celebrations, your child will receive all necessary preparation for a meaningful initiation into sacramental life.

Preparation for the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion begins in 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 Communion. Our Children's Faith Formation program meets this obligation, and separates the reception of the two sacraments by an appropriate time period. Children in grade 3 or higher who wish to receive the sacraments of First Reconciliation will be required to complete two years of Faith Formation in order to receive the necessary formation prior to receiving the sacrament. Interested parents should contact the Youth Faith Formation office for 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 beauty and importance of these sacraments.



Curriculum 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 for others 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 seventh grade.

Religious Education Apostolate for Christian Handicapped (REACH)

The REACH program helps students:

- Play, work, and pray happily with others.
- Develop a sense of awe, wonder, respect, gratitude and stewardship for God's creation.
- Develop a sense of community and worship.
- Know that God loves, protects and provides for them.
- Recognize that prayer is talking with God.
- Explore in active ways the Bible stories that form the Catholic Christian faith.
- Celebrate their place in God's family.

The REACH program welcomes children who:

- Are at least 6 years of age by September 1st.
- Need a program at a slower pace with simplified lessons and a small student to instructor ratio.
- Want to feel a part of a faith community. Want to learn more about God's love.

Our REACH Program

Children are grouped according to age and/or ability. Each group has a Lead Catechist and each student is assigned a Helper Catechist. Classes are held twice a month on Saturday mornings from September to April. Sessions are from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. and follow a routine. Each class begins with prayer. Students then work on a craft that relates to the day's lesson.

The Lead Catechist then conducts a formal lesson and concludes the lesson with

prayer. Finally, all the groups come together for snack time, singing, sharing, and socializing.

One of the special events at REACH happens in December. Families are invited to attend the REACH Advent mass. Students participate in all areas of the mass and prepare a special program. The mass is followed by a reception and a visit from Santa.

The REACH program also provides sacramental preparation for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation



Please contact Jeanne McDonald, the Coordinator of the Program, at jmcdonald@st-raphael.com for more details.

Attendance

Regular attendance is necessary to ensure that your child receives the fullness of the faith formation that is offered by St. Raphael. Furthermore, consistent classroom instruction is needed to ensure that your child is obtaining the necessary knowledge to properly grow in their faith and receive the sacraments. Much like attendance in elementary/middle school, absences can have an adverse effect on your child's growth. Therefore, if your child is absent more than four times during faith formation year a meeting may be necessary in order to facilitate an effort to get your child caught up with his or her classmates.

If your child is not able to attend class due to illness or family emergency please contact the catechist by email or call the Faith Formation Office as soon as possible, with your name, the child's name and the reason. 630-615-7614

If early dismissal is necessary, notification shall be given to your child's catechist and or the Youth Faith Formation office.

If classes are cancelled for any reason, your child's catechist will contact you. The parish website will also note the cancellation.



Behavior



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

All students should understand the following general rules:

- ◆ Be respectful at all times to the catechist and to your fellow students
- ◆ No gum, food or drink unless approved by the catechist
- ◆ No foul or inappropriate language at anytime
- ◆ No verbal or physical abuse
- ◆ No sitting on the desks or tables
- ◆ No disrespect for other student's belongings
- ◆ No screaming or shouting
- ◆ No running at anytime while in the school building
- ◆ The student must have the catechist's permission to use the restroom
- ◆ No talking or leaving their seats unless instructed by the catechist
- ◆ **No cellphones or other electronic devices are to be used at anytime during class time. If this rule is not followed the item will be confiscated and returned at the end of class.**

Communication

Parents are encouraged to call catechists if they have any 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 larger than they need to be. Parents are welcome to observe a child's class but arrangements must be made in advance due to security reasons. Please contact the Director if this is something you would like to arrange.

Dress Code

Students are expected to dress in a manner that is suitable for Faith Formation classes. Therefore, clothing that has a satanic or cult symbol, gang symbol, inappropriate signs or language are not permitted to be worn to class. In addition to the previous the following also applies:

- ◆ Hats, scarves, visors, bandanas, etc. are not to be worn in the classrooms. Hats should be removed once entering the building.
- ◆ Excessively short dresses/skirts and shorts are prohibited.
- ◆ Pants and jeans worn below the waist or in an inappropriate manner will not be allowed.
- ◆ Tops with excessive skin showing will not be permitted.
- ◆ Shoes must be worn at all times
- ◆ Any form of dress determined to disrupt the class or offensive in nature, or a possible safety hazard will not be tolerated and the parent will be called to come and pick up their child.

Medications

The Medical Form you completed at the time of registration is kept confidential in the Youth Faith Formation Office, and the catechist is made aware of any concerns. If your child's medical record needs updating at anytime during the year, please inform the office as soon as possible. If your child needs to take a medication during 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 administer. 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 and their safety is of the utmost importance. 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 Faith 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.



Prayer For My Family

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the gift of my family.

We pray that you oh, Lord will be the center of this home. 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, that the Church is alive in our home. Forgive us our sins and help us to extend that forgiveness unto each other. Guide us and protect us, Lord. Root us in your word.

Let our actions be ones that bring honor to your Holy name.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer For Parents

Dear Lord,

Today, I once again bring my child to You. Please show me how to parent this precious gift that you have given me. Help me to be the best mother that I can be. I pray that your Holy Spirit will teach me, Your wisdom will guide me, and Your love will move me. Most of all, Lord, I give this child to You. Please make him/her a servant after Your own heart. In Jesus Name I pray. Amen.

Family

For where

your treasure is,

there will *your heart* be also.

-Luke 12:34