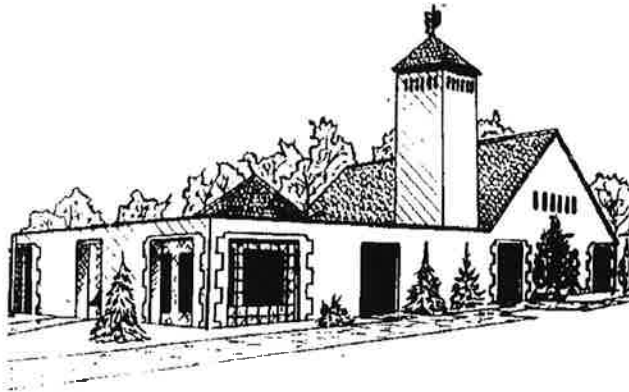


**ST. MATTHEW THE APOSTLE PARISH
2019-20
Faith Formation
Parent Handbook**



**335 Dover Chester Road
Randolph, NJ 07869
(973)584-1101**

Website: www.stmatthewsrandolph.org

Welcome to Parents

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Welcome to another year of Faith Formation at St. Matthew the Apostle Parish! With you as the primary teachers of the faith for your child(ren), we look forward to helping support you and being a part of your child's growth in faith and knowledge. At St. Matthew's we consistently strive for a deeper spirituality and knowledge of God. The hope and main goal in our Faith Formation program is to emphasize the importance of not only being educated in the classroom by our devoted and trained catechists and teachers, but also being formed by Jesus Himself at the celebration of Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation. Therefore, we invite you to participate, as a family, with us at Mass.

We have prepared this set of guidelines to foster the faith formation of your children. It is our hope that the enclosed policies will help promote an environment in which our students can best learn about the beliefs and traditions of our Roman Catholic faith community.

We ask you to read the enclosed policies and procedures carefully. They are designed to ensure the safety of our students, to promote the most fruitful use of our teaching time, and to encourage the faith lives of the children and their families. As you know, we only have a limited amount of time in communicating our Faith with your children. Therefore, we ask that as parents/guardians, you continue to pray with your family and have conversations with your children about the faith, especially after each session.

Please know that the Parish and Faith Formation staff stands ready to assist you in any way possible. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions, please feel free to share them with your child's catechist or call the Faith Formation office.

In Christ Jesus, we remain as His faithful servants,

Rev. Brian Quinn
Pastor

Moira A. Dziomba
Director of Faith Formation

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Faith Formation Mission Statement

The purpose of the Faith Formation Program at St. Matthew's is to build a foundation of faith from which our children in partnership with you the parent(s) / guardian(s) will:

Continue to grow in the knowledge of God and His church;

Live out their faith as disciples of Christ; and

Be an integral part of our St. Matthew's family.

Faith Formation Staff

Moira A. Dziomba, Director of Faith Formation (K-11)

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(973) 584-1101 x201

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(973) 584-1101 x202

Office Information

Faith Formation office hours: 9:00 am—3:00 pm M – Th,

Faith Formation Phone Number: (973) 584-1101

Fax Number: (973)584-0499



Faith Formation Partnership **Parental Role**

As parent(s)/guardian(s), you are the primary teachers of faith for your children. The St. Matthew's Faith Formation Program is here to assist you in this responsibility. Children's growth and development in their Catholic faith depends on the parent(s)/guardian(s) living lives of faith at home. Your values obviously form the values of your child. When children do not experience what is taught in faith formation classes at home, they receive a mixed message which can cause inner conflict for them. "Faith is caught not taught."



Children learn in faith formation classes that the celebration of the Eucharist as a community of faith is essential to being a Catholic. Our catechists teach that Mass attendance is a responsibility of each and every Catholic. Therefore, it is an important parental responsibility to support your children by participating in the weekly liturgy together as a family.

Faith Formation Role

- To provide a structured child-based Faith Formation Program to support parent(s)/guardian(s) in their primary role of faith formation.
- To support our families as they develop their Catholic faith.
- To provide training and enrichment opportunities for our catechists and other faith formation leaders.

Responsibilities

Responsibilities of **Families** involved in St. Matthew's Faith Formation program:

- ◇ Participate in Mass weekly
- ◇ Ensure that children attend classes regularly and on time
- ◇ Communicate any special needs or circumstances that may affect your child
- ◇ Be an active part of your children's learning and formation
- ◇ Volunteer your time and talent as a sign of support to your children's faith formation program
- ◇ Please attend Parent meetings as requested. Thank you.

Responsibilities of **Students**:

- ◇ Attend class regularly
- ◇ Behave in a Christian manner following the Student Code of Conduct (page 7)
- ◇ Actively participate in classroom activities
- ◇ Participate in Mass

Responsibilities of **Catechists** and **Volunteers**:

- ◇ Provide a loving Christian atmosphere within the learning environment
- ◇ Prepare and teach the designated grade-specific curriculum
- ◇ Continue their own faith formation with the intention of obtaining Certification from the Diocese of Paterson
- ◇ Communicate regularly with parents and encourage parental involvement
- ◇ Complete a background check
- ◇ Read and Sign the Diocese of Paterson *Living and Working with Integrity: Code of Pastoral Conduct*
- ◇ Be a Christian model following the Catechist Code of Conduct (page 7)
- ◇ Attend Protecting God's Children Program (Virtus Training) - required of all volunteers who work with children.
- ◇ Participate in Mass weekly

Student Code of Conduct

All students are expected to share in the faith learning experiences of the parish Faith Formation program. Students are expected to follow these rules:

- ◇ *Respect Yourself, Others, and Property*
- ◇ *Contribute to the Learning Environment*
- ◇ *Follow Parish and Classroom Procedures*



Catechist Code of Conduct

Catechetical volunteers have signed an acknowledgment that they have read and understood the Diocese of Paterson's "Living and Working with Integrity: Code of Pastoral Conduct," which outlines the ethical and personal conduct policies of our Diocese (copies are available in the parish office). Of course, catechetical personnel are not allowed to impose any form of corporal punishment (punitive touching) on any student for any reason. See the "Discipline" section (pg. 11) for appropriate disciplinary action that will be taken by the catechists and the director of faith formation if the need arises.



Program Policies & Procedures

Registration

Registration for Faith Formation takes place each year in the spring. Notice of registration dates is emailed to each family registered with the parish.

Parent(s) of students who are new to our program must provide Baptismal and other sacramental certificates and information regarding their child's prior Faith Formation.

Parent(s) of children in grades two and up who have not been baptized or have not received First Eucharist should contact the Faith Formation office. We will look at each situation individually and decide upon the best way to serve your child. Children must complete two years of formal education to be eligible to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.

Fees for the coming year will be published, payable, and due at the time of registration. We offer an "Early Bird Discount" of \$25 per child for families who register and pay by the given due date.

Class sessions and sizes are limited to maximize learning potential and to ensure safety. Registration is open to all parishioners on a first-come, first-served basis. Failure to register a child at the specified time may result in the possibility of not being scheduled for the session of your choice.

- ◇ Families must be registered with St. Matthew's Parish. If you are not a registered parishioner of St. Matthew the Apostle Parish, please contact Parish Secretary MaryAnn Spagnuolo at 973-584-1101 ext. 205 or MaryAnn.Spagnuolo@stmatthewsrandolph.org.
- ◇ Families must complete registration for each child enrolled in the program
- ◇ Adult family members are encouraged to volunteer their time to the Faith Formation Program – indicate on the registration form in what capacity you will serve.
- ◇ Payment of tuition may be made via check (made payable to St. Matthew the Apostle Parish), by credit card via the link provided in our registration letter, or in person by cash.

Faith Formation Calendar

The Faith Formation calendar is published annually listing session days, special events & classes, required grade-level retreats, and parent meetings. Calendar and program information may be found on our website at www.stmatthewsrandolph.org or by downloading the Parish mobile app. The app can be accessed in the following ways:

1. Go to the App Store (iphone) or Play Store (Androids) and search for “St. Matthew Randolph” OR
2. Go to the link on our web home page: www.stmatthewsrandolph.org OR
3. Go to www.parishsolutionsco.com/matthew

Downloading the Parish Mobile App is strongly recommended as updates, reminders, and inclement weather alerts will be sent through the app notification system.

Parent(s) are asked to carefully record session dates on their personal calendars and keep track of Grade Level parent meetings & events.



Arrival and Dismissal

To ensure the safety of our students, parents and children are required to comply with the following procedures:

1. Parent(s)/guardians of children in grades K-3 will receive special instructions via email for arrival and dismissal.
2. Students in grades 4-11 may be dropped off in front of the church building. Please pay attention to students who may be walking through the parking lot. Traffic control volunteers will be available Traffic control volunteers are in the parking lot to protect our children and to facilitate the arrival and dismissal process. Please follow their instructions.
3. Our Faith Formation classes for grades K-8 are two hours long, and includes Mass. Therefore, class is not over until the priest leaves the sanctuary after Mass. It is of course our hope that Parent(s)/guardian(s) will participate in Mass with their child(ren). However, in the event this is not possible, we ask that you arrive by 10:30am for the first session or 12noon for the second session. **For the safety of our students, parents of children in grades K-3 MUST come in and pick their children up in Church. Older children will be dismissed after Mass to meet their parent(s) in the courtyard.** Catechists will bring any children whose parent(s) have not arrived within 10 minutes of dismissal to the Faith Formation office where parent(s) can pick up their child.
4. Our High School Faith Formation classes for Confirmation are held on Sunday evenings from 6:30-8:00pm. Students may attend the Mass of their choice.



Attendance Policy

Twenty-five hours of Faith Formation per student per year (additional time during Sacramental years) is required. Students are expected to attend all classes. Repeated absences hinder progress in the program and may result in outreach from the Faith Formation Director.

Our attendance policy is based upon comfort and rapport. We ask you to make every effort to have your child attend all sessions. The more sessions a child attends, the more he/she will feel confident and willing to share in discussions and prayer. The overall experience is richer and more fulfilling when attendance is regular and consistent. The program is more effective when the child is exposed to all lessons.

All absences require make up work, which consists of the completion of the lessons and review for each session that the child has been absent. Parent(s)/guardians are then expected to take on the role of the Catechist and ensure that their child completes the lesson, and understands the material. Please refer to your child's class assignment schedule (posted on the website & copy in your child's text book) or contact your child's Catechist to determine which lesson needs to be made up.

Please follow the make-up procedures for completing a missed session found on the St. Matthew's website www.stmatthewsrandolph.org. There is also a label in your child's book with instructions for completing make-up work. (See page 13 of this Handbook) All curriculum questions may be directed to the Catechist. Procedural questions may be directed to the Faith Formation Office at (973)-584-1101.

Late Arrival Policy

Faith Formation time is precious. It is essential that students are on time and in the classroom when class begins. Parents should accompany any student who is ten or more minutes late to the Office.

Early Dismissal

Our Faith Formation calendar is scheduled to avoid conflict with other activities on Sundays. In addition, we are making major efforts to avoid disrupting classes once they are in session. Early dismissals are **strongly** discouraged. If there is a family or health emergency and a child needs to leave early, a parent or guardian **must come to the Faith Formation Office to sign the child out.** We ask that you do not text your child or the catechist to dismiss your child – we can't release a child unless a parent or guardian comes to the office. A designated volunteer will escort your child to meet you in the Faith Formation office. These procedures are necessary for the safety of your child(ren).

Emergency Closings

In the event that Faith Formation Class is cancelled due to inclement weather, families will be notified via our Parish Mobile App. A notice will also be posted to the St. Matthew's website and a message will be left on the phone line: (973) 584-1101.



Discipline

On the first day of class, catechists will establish a set of rules of order for their classroom with which students are expected to comply. Students are also expected to refrain from any conduct that disrupts the learning process. Action will be taken if a student chooses to put him/her or others in physical or psychological danger.

Catechists will document each disciplinary problem. The information will be given to the Director of Faith Formation at the end of class. If a problem cannot be resolved in the classroom, the catechist will send the disruptive student to the office.



Electronic Devices

In order to maintain an inviting environment for faith and spiritual development, students are asked to silence and put away all electronic devices during class. Catechists will use their discretion regarding classroom management to ensure that devices do not impede the educational process.

Visitors

Parent(s) or guardian(s) are welcome and encouraged to visit the classrooms. As a courtesy to our staff, we encourage you to contact your child's Catechist if you would like to visit a classroom.

To ensure the safety of our children, all visitors must sign in at the Faith Formation Office. All visitors must obtain and wear an ID badge before going anywhere in the building. Other than students, catechetical personnel, and the parish staff, no persons are permitted in the halls, classrooms or bathrooms during Faith Formation sessions without the express authorization of the Director of Faith Formation. Catechists and volunteers are asked to contact the office in person or by hallway intercom (dial intercom 200) immediately if they notice any unauthorized persons in the building.

visitor

Curriculum- Grade Level Outline

St. Matthew's follows current guidelines and approval of USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) and is in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. We offer our children a consistent level of catechesis (instruction).

Grades K, 1 and 3-6

Loyola Press "Finding God" Series - spiral curriculum:

Grades K, and 1

Loyola Press "Finding God" Series

- ◇ Children are introduced to and revisit concepts from one year to the next. This deepens their knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith.
- ◇ The nature and scope of material will remain consistent throughout a student's faith formation.
- ◇ The curriculum integrates the fundamental themes of Catechism, Scripture and Catholic Social Teachings.

Kindergarten: God Loves Us

Grade 1: God Found Everything Good - God & Creator

Books go home weekly. Quarterly/seasonal newsletter and parent/child resources are available on the website: www.Loyolapress.com

Grade 2 Sacramental Year

Our Sunday Visitor "Encounter with Christ"

Books go home weekly.

Grades 3-6

Pflaum, Gospel Weeklies

Pflaum Gospel Weeklies come in nested sets of 8 weeks. The lesson of the day for each child will be used in class. Lessons for dates we do not have a class, will be placed in the children's tote bag and are to be completed each week at home, and returned to their catechist at the next Faith Formation session.

Grades 7-8

Dynamic Catholic, Decision Point

Supplemented with a Retreat Experience

Grades 9-11

Ascension Press "Chosen"

Grades 9-11: Supplemented with

- Retreat Experiences
- Group Service Projects

Curriculum Family Connection

- ◇ Families have access to curriculum including lessons, supplemental materials, quarterly reviews, seasonal material, etc.
- ◇ Knowledge and understanding of the curriculum allows families and the parish to work together to enhance the Catholic faith and traditions in our children's lives.

Procedure for Make-up Session

Grades 1-11

- ◇ As stated in our Attendance Policy (page 10), ALL absences regardless of the reason, require make-up lessons.
- ◇ Detailed instructions and grade level syllabus can be found on the St. Matthew website: www.stmatthewsrandolph.org under the “Faith Formation” tab.
- ◇ Please contact your child’s Catechist to determine the lesson to be made up
****Most Lessons are Smartphone and tablet friendly.****

Teaching Touch Safety Program

The job of ensuring children’s safety is a challenging undertaking. The prevention of child sexual abuse requires more than adult awareness, education, and training about the nature and scope of the problem. We must give our children the tools they need to overcome the advances of someone who intends to do them harm. The *Teaching Touch Safety* program is a program designed to assist parents and teachers in this important task. The *Teaching Touch Safety* program helps give children the tools they need to protect themselves from those who might harm them. Students in Grades 1 and 4 will be offered the opportunity to participate in Teaching Touch Safety presentations each year.

The program is from the creators of *Protecting God’s Children™*, the program which is required of all parish volunteers and employees who regularly work with children and is part of our ongoing efforts to help create and maintain a safe environment for children and to protect all children from sexual abuse.

As a parent, you have the right to choose whether your child participates and will be offered the opportunity to opt-out of the program for your child.

Parental Concerns & Procedures

A parent who has a question or concern is urged to follow these procedures:

1. Contact the student’s Catechist to discuss the situation and work with him or her to arrive at possible solutions.
2. Request a conference with the Director of Faith Formation if the concern is not resolved with the Catechist. The Director will make every effort to resolve the problem and initiate reconciliation.
3. The pastor may be asked to assist if the parent feels the issue has not been resolved.

Non-Custodial Parents

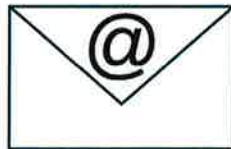
Custodial parents should inform the Faith Formation office of the rights of non-custodial parents as they pertain to the child's participation in the program as well as release from the program.



Emergency/Parent Contact Information

Parents are responsible for ensuring that the Faith Formation Office always has on file the current phone number of a parent or other designated adult who may be called in case of emergency. The phone number must be of a person who would be available during class times, and who would be present within 10 to 15 minutes of a phone call.

Emails are frequently used for family communication; therefore kindly send updates for an email address change to the Faith Formation office to ensure that you do not miss important information and updates.



Health & Safety Procedures

Health Services

If a student is seriously hurt or ill, the Director of Faith Formation the Assistant or Volunteer Nurse on duty will determine the severity and decide if:

- ◇ 9-1-1 should be called
- ◇ The parent or guardian should pick up the student
- ◇ The child is able to return to class

If we are unable to reach the parent, guardian or emergency contact person, and it is deemed to be a true medical emergency, the Faith Formation Office will call 9-1-1. If a child is hurt due to an accident, a report will be filed in the Faith Formation office within 24 hours of the incident. No medication of any kind including both prescription and over-the-counter will be administered to, or taken by, a student during the Faith Formation program. If there is a nurse on duty parent(s)/guardian(s) may request in writing that the nurse on duty administer said medication.

Allergies

Your child's health and safety is our number one concern. Parents should contact the Faith Formation office for any special needs or arrangements that may be necessary for their child before the first day of class. All allergies should also be noted for the safety of your child. This includes the use of an epi-pen.

Special Needs

Our program makes every effort to mainstream all children with challenges into a grade level appropriate setting. Parents should feel free to call the office and schedule a meeting to discuss their child's needs so that we may serve you better. If we have enough volunteers, special needs children will be assigned a "Faith Buddy" to shadow them and help them get acclimated to their class.

*NOTE: All information is confidential.

Child Abuse Reporting

New Jersey State Law requires any person who has "reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to child abuse or acts of child abuse to report the same immediately to the Division of Child Protection & Permanency by telephone or otherwise."(N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.10 et seq.) The law imposes the obligation of notification on every person, and it cannot be delegated to any other person. The report to DCP&P (Phone # 1-877-652-2873) must be made prior to advising the Pastor, Director of Faith Formation, Youth Minister or any other person. Failure to make such a report is punishable as a disorderly persons' offense. Under State Law, child abuse includes but is not limited to sexual abuse, and encompasses any conduct or lack of action that impairs or creates a substantial risk of impairing the physical, mental or emotional condition of the child. Catechists reporting a case of child abuse to the DCP&P are required to immediately notify the Faith Formation Office.

Safety & Security

After consulting with the Morris County Prosecutor's Office, St. Matthew the Apostle Parish has enhanced its safety and security measures. Please note the following:

- ◇ The main hallway door will remain locked while class is in session.
- ◇ All who enter the building are required to check-in at the office
- ◇ Safety Monitors patrol the halls during class sessions
- ◇ At dismissal, children in grades K-3 must be picked up in Church by a parent.
- ◇ In the event of an emergency evacuation, exit routes are clearly posted in each classroom. Children will be instructed how to leave the building by the prescribed route in an orderly and silent manner.

- ◇ Lock down procedures will be reviewed with the children. When the lock down signal is given, all doors are locked and students and catechists will go to their room's "safe corner" where they will remain in silence until the all clear signal is sounded. (*Catechists will familiarize their classes with their classrooms' exit routes and "safe corner" area).

This handbook is primarily a means of communication. It is meant to provide you, the parent or guardian, with helpful information regarding the St. Matthew the Apostle Parish Faith Formation Program. We reserve the right to amend this handbook as necessary. Parents will be notified in writing if changes are made to any procedures or information contained in this handbook.

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