

G.I.F.T. Information

Welcome to the Religious Education Program of “Growing In Faith Together”. The following is information regarding the scheduling, policies and procedures that will be followed in the new Program.

This program encourages lifelong learning. It invites each of us to practice our faith daily and to share it within our families. There will be many benefits to your children and your family as a whole. As a family, you will learn firsthand what your child is hearing and learning about our faith. You will meet more neighbors and parishioners in our Immaculate Conception community. You will spend time together as a family and community. You will grow in your faith and learn and develop new family faith traditions. **In matters of Faith, Parents are the primary Catechist of their child.**

You will receive a calendar for all sessions. The label designates your assigned session (A, B, C, D) and children’s classroom. The dates that you will attend G.I.F.T are under your assigned day. You are to attend the same session each month, September through April. You are required to attend all 8 monthly sessions.

It is mandatory that at least one parent attend the session with their child/children. However, we do realize that there may be situations in which this is not possible. In that case, a responsible adult involved in the child’s life may attend. (grandparent, godparent, aunt, uncle)

Curriculum

Prayer (Each family will receive a “Prayer for Catholic Families” Book” at their first session)

Students will receive a study sheet of all prayers that they are to know and will be tested on.

In each level, parents are asked to share and help their child(ren) to learn the following prayers:

Level 1: Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

Level 2: Ten Commandments, Act of Contrition

Level 3: Review Our Father/Hail Mary/Glory Be/Sign of the Cross/Sacraments

Level 4: Apostles Creed /Hail Holy Queen

Level 5: Rosary/Mysteries (Pamphlet)

Level 6: Stations of the Cross (Booklet)

Level 7: Mass Responses

Level 8: Review of all Prayers, Beatitudes, Corporal & Spiritual Works of Mercy

Worship

Family worship at Mass is the most important part of our curriculum. As the primary and principal educators of your children, it is important that you are faithful to Church. Worship with your children at weekend Liturgy. Let them see young and old alike at Mass in community prayer and celebration. Remember that they cannot bring themselves, so you, who are their greatest influence, must show them the way.

Family Life Education

As mandated by our Bishop, our program includes the Family Life Education.

1. Young people need skills and knowledge for family living, both now and for the future when they too may become mature Catholic parents.
2. Young people need to understand their own physical, emotional and spiritual development, as well as the diversity of people around them.
3. Young people need to cultivate a deep respect for all life, especially, human life.
4. Young people need to relate to others outside the family, and thereby take their responsible place in society.

POLICIES

Accountability

Children 'learn' faith through experience: especially by watching and imitating those whom they love. Whole community catechesis offers families the opportunity to model their commitment to their own faith development, while sharing in the formation of their children.

Because faith is better 'caught' than 'taught', faith education at Immaculate Conception has come out of the classroom and into the very heart of the parish. Intergenerational gatherings once a month combine prayer and a shared meal. When added to weekly Mass participation, this allows families to learn in an environment that fosters the faith and development of all its members.

Cell Phones

Students are not permitted to use cell phones during Faith Formation. Cell phones must be turned off and kept out of sight for the duration of the program.

Note to Parents: Please refrain from the use of cell phones during the G.I.F.T. program. Your children will follow your example as to the respect you show during the program. Plainly speaking it is rude to text or check emails during the activities. Please silence your phone.

Attendance

We know that family schedules/emergencies might require a change on occasion. If this should happen, please contact the Religious Education Office, prior to your assigned session. We will then arrange for an alternate date for that month. Each month all classes will be working on the same topic. **You are only allowed to switch one time.**

With four separate offerings of each monthly session, there's really no reason to miss one! You are welcome to request to switch to an alternate offering by e-mailing the Religious Education Office at ccd@icspotswood.com.

In case of emergency or illness, please advise us as soon as possible, this will allow us to adjust our order and to be good stewards of food and materials.

Each of the four monthly sessions offered throughout the year will build upon different aspects of our faith and will complement each other. Frequent absence/lateness will make it impossible to follow the learning thread. Perhaps more importantly, a family who comes only occasionally will not develop the sense of "belonging" that is so crucial to the G.I.F.T. Program. Please do not schedule doctor/dentist appointments or sports activities during G.I.F.T. Our dates and times have been firmly set on the Church calendar.

Behavior

Jesus has asked us to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. As we all strive to follow Jesus, we will be aware of showing respect and courtesy to each other. Parents, your encouragement and cooperation are expected in helping your children to live God's law of love especially while on church premises. Children who are unable to behave in an appropriate manner during gatherings or Sacramental Catechesis may require their parents to remain with them at all times.

Participation in Faith Formation at Immaculate Conception Church is a privilege extended to our families through the prayerful dedication of staff and volunteers. If a family is unwilling to cooperate in a reasonable way with the 'Code of Behavior', they may be asked to leave and other arrangements for faith formation and sacramental catechesis will be made.

Code of Behavior

- Families will conform to the attendance policy stated in this handbook.
- Families will treat Immaculate Conception as their spiritual 'home' and responsibly care for all Church and School property.
- Families will support and encourage an environment of cooperation.
- Children will cooperate with the adult catechist so that a good learning environment can be maintained for all.
- Children are responsible for completing all in-class and at-home assignments to the best of their ability.
- Children, who exhibit any inappropriate behavior, will be asked to withdraw from the program.

Custody

In cases where access to students by a particular parent is restricted, a copy of the court document **MUST BE ON FILE IN OUR OFFICE.**

Sacramental Preparation Programs

The process for preparing for First Penance, First Communion (1st/2nd grade) and Confirmation (7th/8th grade) will continue within a family model. There will be four additional classes for 1st, 2nd, 7th, and 8th grades. These mandatory classes will be 1.5 hours and are to be attended by the child and at least one parent. **(Parents optional for 1st and 2nd grade)** A separate calendar is provided with the dates and times.

First Communion- 2nd Grade Communicants

The first Prep class for First Penance/Communion will be on 10/1/17. The class is 12:30p – 2:00p. You will also receive your Sacramental Packet in your September Session Family Folder

Confirmation – 7th and 8th Graders

The 7th and 8th grade students and at least one parent are asked to attend the Confirmation Prep Class starting with October 2, 2017. The class is 7p – 8:30p. You will receive your Sacramental Packet in your September Session Family Folder.

Session Structure

All Families will check in at a table based on the first letter of your last name at the entrance of the cafeteria. You will receive a Family Folder.

Opening: There will be opening prayer. You will partake of a simple meal. Complete a family table activity. Family discussion of Monthly Topic. (Approx. 45-60 min.)

Middle: Children will lineup by grade with their Teacher. Children will go to their classroom. Parents will take small children to Room 3 for Adult supervised child care. Adults will have session in Cafeteria. (Approx. 90 min.)

Closing: All children return to cafeteria. Closing Prayer. Please make sure that your space is cleaned up. **Leave Empty Family Folder in the bin on the table as you leave.**

Each session will be handled the same. All times are approximate and should run anywhere from 2.5 to 3.0 hours. There will be a prayer intention table with a journal on the table. We encourage you to write your intentions in the journal and we will include all intentions in our closing prayer.