



*St. Catherine of
Sweden
Faith Formation
Handbook
2019-2020*

Note to Parents:

As we begin this new year of Faith Formation, please be assured that the catechists and staff of the St. Catherine of Sweden Faith Formation program are deeply committed to helping your children to grow in their faith and become life-long, intentional disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We are grateful for the opportunity to participate with you, the primary educators of your children and their best teachers in the faith. Your children learn to become followers of Christ primarily through the example you set when you pray together as a family, seek to serve one another and the wider community, and actively participate in the Mass and the sacraments. Please take some time to familiarize yourself with this handbook. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to a wonderful Faith Formation Year, and we sincerely thank you for the immense privilege of allowing us to walk beside your children on their journey of faith!

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OUR PROGRAMS:

St. Catherine of Sweden Parish is committed to helping to develop the faith life of all its members, from preschool-aged children to adults. Following are the programs offered for the children and youth of our Parish:

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a Montessori-based religious education program for children ages 3-6. This year, we are also offering “Level II” of *The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd* for our First Graders, as part of their preparation for their reception of the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion next year. *The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd* is rooted in scripture and the liturgy, and includes prayer, song, the re-telling of scripture, and hands-on work that is completed independently by the child.

Traditional Faith Formation

Our traditional Faith Formation combines the talent and knowledge of our faithful and dedicated volunteer catechists with the Diocesan-approved textbooks *Alive in Christ* (Grades 2-6). The curriculum covers topics such as Scripture, the Creed, Morality, the Sacraments, and the Liturgical Year. The Old and New Testaments are studied extensively in Middle School. *Alive in Christ* Faith Guidebooks *Jesus Christ*, *Revelation* and *Trinity* will be used in Grade 7. Starting in 7th grade and continuing with 8th Grade, students will follow the highly acclaimed *Chosen* textbook and video series as part of their more immediate preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation, which will take place in the Fall of their 9th grade year. Age appropriate Bibles will also be incorporated into the curriculum for all grade levels. In addition, special retreat days are offered for 2nd, 7th, and 8th grades, and a traditional “Seder Meal” is celebrated as part of the 6th grade Old Testament curriculum. “Family Days” (Gr. 1-5) and Family Faith Formation

Masses (Gr. PreK – 8) are offered to give students an opportunity to grow in their faith not only personally, but in the dynamic of a faith-filled community.

Homeschool Program

Parents of students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 may choose to instruct their children at home, using the *Alive in Christ* textbook series. Students who are homeschooled are required to complete online “E-Assessments”, following the schedule given to homeschooling families. Homeschooled students and families are also required to participate in the scheduled Family Days and Faith Formation Masses, which are each offered two times during the Faith Formation year.

EDGE

EDGE is a program specifically designed for middle school students. It provides a fun, safe place for youth to find solid Catholic community, to get answers to their questions about faith, and, most importantly, to experience Jesus in a profound and personal way. All middle school students are required to attend at least two EDGE nights per Faith Formation year.

FAITH FORMATION DATES & TIMES

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd – Levels I and II

Sunday – 10:30 – 11:45 am

Monday – 4:45 – 6:00 pm & 6:15 – 7:30 pm

Wednesday – 6:15 – 7:30 pm

(CGS is also offered on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings for students enrolled in St. Catherine’s Preschool Program, and on Thursday afternoons for students enrolled in the St. Catherine Montessori preschool program.)

Traditional Faith Formation (Grades 2 – 8)

Sunday – 10:30 – 11:45 am

Monday – 4:45 – 6:00 pm & 6:15 – 7:30 pm

Wednesday – 6:15 – 7:30 pm

EDGE

EDGE takes place on one Saturday each month, following the 4:00 p.m. Saturday evening Mass. The dates of this year's EDGE nights are provided at the end of the Faith Formation Handbook.

FAITH FORMATION CALENDAR YEAR

The Faith Formation calendar year typically runs from mid-September until the end of April. Please refer to the calendar for this year for days off/holidays and for special events throughout the year.

STUDENTS ATTENDING CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Faith Formation is a requirement for all Catholic students in Grades 1 – 8. Students attending Parochial and Private Catholic Schools are exempt from attending Faith Formation classes, but are still required to participate in sacramental preparation programs offered by the Parish (Jesus Journey I and II in 2nd Grade and the 9th Grade Confirmation Retreat). Families whose children attend Catholic schools must notify that Faith Formation Office so that we will have the sacramental records of all students in the Parish on hand.

SACRAMENTAL RECORDS

The Faith Formation Office requires an original copy of each student's baptismal certificate (with raised seal), except for baptismal certificates of students baptized at St. Catherine of Sweden. If desired, we will make a copy of the original certificate and return it to you, but original copies must be seen. Students who are not yet baptized are welcome to participate in Faith

Formation classes, but parents are asked to make an appointment with a member of the clergy to discuss preparation for the sacrament of Baptism.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Parents have a right and duty to be intimately involved in preparing their children for First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation. Religious education in preparation for the reception of the sacraments thus involves required parent informational meetings and family-based retreat days, especially regarding preparation of the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion.

Preparation for the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion is considered a two-year process. Parents are required to enroll their children in Religious Education classes by the beginning of First Grade.

TEXTBOOKS

It is the responsibility of the students to keep their textbooks in good condition throughout the year, and to bring their textbooks to class each session. Students who have misplaced their textbooks will be required to pay a textbook replacement fee of \$20.

FAITH FORMATION ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Diocese of Pittsburgh requires that a minimum of thirty hours of formal religious instruction is provided to all students in Grades 1 – 8. Faith formation for students in preschool and kindergarten, while optional, is highly recommended. Because Faith Formation sessions are only held once a week, absences should be avoided if at all possible. A student may be absent for a maximum of three class sessions before class time must be made up. If a child is absent, it is expected that they will complete their missed chapter at home and to show their work to their catechist upon returning to

class. Students who exceed three absences are expected to make up missed class time by coming to class on a different day than his or her assigned class day. Parents of students who do not fulfill attendance requirements will be asked to arrange a meeting with a member of the clergy to discuss options for fulfilling their child's religious education instruction before the students can be promoted to the next grade level.

FAITH FORMATION FAMILY DAYS/MASSES

Faith Formation Family Days and Masses are a very important part of the Faith Formation program at St. Catherine of Sweden. Family days (or evenings) provide an opportunity for prayer, reflection, learning, fun, and fellowship. Faith Formation Masses provide an opportunity for our students to participate in the liturgical celebration of the Holy Mass along with their peers. Students are given active roles in these Masses as lectors, altar servers, greeters, gift bearers, and members of the student-lead choir. Participation in the Family Days is required for all families with students in Grades 1 – 5, including homeschooling families. Participation in Faith Formation Masses is required by all families in the program, except for those families whose children attend Catholic school.

VOLUNTEERING

Parents and high school students who are interested in volunteering for our Faith Formation program are always welcomed with joy and deep appreciation! Please speak with Julie or Lisa if you or your high school student is interested in helping as a catechist, aide, substitute catechist, office assistant, or assistant in the Atrium (Catechesis of the Good Shepherd).

COMMUNICATION

Communication between the Faith Formation Office, catechists, and parents will take place primarily through email. Please be sure to have an accurate email address in the system and to check your

email weekly for any news/updates. Please feel free to communicate with the Faith Formation Office staff either through phone or email (contact information is provided on the first page).

PHOTOGRAPHY OF STUDENTS

Throughout the year, particularly during special Family events, we may be photographing the students for the purpose of sharing our program with the wider Parish community in the Bulletin and/or on the Parish website. If you do not want your child photographed, please write a note to the Faith Formation Office stating this decision. We fully respect your right to privacy in this matter.

RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

All families in our Parish are blessed with a complementary subscription to FORMED.org. Please visit the FORMED website (use the Parish code 00613f to create your own account) to view dynamic instructional videos and entertaining films for families and children alike. In addition, please see the Parish bulletin for events (retreats, talks, book studies, etc.) offered for adults and families throughout the year.

PROCEDURES FOR ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Students and parents are asked to arrive in Farmer Hall for community prayer and announcements at the beginning of each Faith Formation session. Following prayer and announcements, students will be dismissed to their classrooms with their catechists. For the safety of our students, doors will be locked once students go into their classrooms. Students arriving late must go to the Faith Formation Office to receive an “admit” slip before being escorted to their classroom. Students who are not present for a minimum of one hour of class will be marked absent for the class. Likewise, students requesting an early dismissal must go to the office before class begins to obtain an “early dismissal” slip. Catechists are asked not to dismiss students who do not have such a slip. Parents

are required to pick up students who have an early dismissal in the Faith Formation Office, where they will sign them out. At the end of class time, parents of students in grades Pre K – 3 are asked to go to their child’s classroom to pick them up.

CARPOOL AND PICK-UP ARRANGEMENTS

If your family has special carpool or pick-up arrangements, either throughout the year or on any given day, you must notify the Faith Formation Office in writing prior to the release of a student. Adults other than parents who will be picking up students (except on a long-term basis) must present their ID to the Faith Formation Office at the time of dismissal.

CUSTODY ARRANGEMENTS

In the case of divorce or separation, it will be assumed that both parents have access to their child(ren) unless court records stating otherwise are handed in to the Faith Formation Office. Please note that such records will be kept in strict confidentiality.

MANDATED REPORTING

All catechists and staff are required to obtain FBI-approved background checks as well as to attend mandatory courses for the protection of children. They are likewise required by law to report to proper authorities suspicion of abuse or neglect of any kind.

CELL PHONES/ SNACKS

Any unauthorized use of cell phones during class time (calling, texting, picture taking, etc.) is prohibited, and will result in the seizure of the cell phone during class time. Catechists reserve the right to collect cell phones at the beginning of every class and to return them to students when class is over.

Due to students having a variety of allergies, parents are asked to refrain from sending snacks in with your child. Catechists are given

a list of student allergies at the beginning of the year and are permitted to treat their students (keeping allergies in mind) according to their discretion.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Students with head lice, pink eye, strep throat, influenza, or other communicable diseases are to remain home until symptoms are no longer apparent. Students who feel ill during class are asked to come to the Faith Formation Office, and a call will be made home to parents. The Faith Formation Office will not dispense any medication (including cough drops) to students. Bandages may be given for minor cuts and scrapes.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR POLICY

In order to ensure student learning, disruptive behavior in class will not be tolerated. Catechists have been instructed to send disruptive students to the Faith Formation Office. If a student is sent to the office, a phone call may be made, or an email sent home, depending on the nature of the offense. If a student is sent to the office for three or more times during the school year, the parents will be asked to schedule a meeting with the Director of Faith Formation and/or a member of the clergy. A behavior plan will then be implemented, which may include asking a parent to come to class with the student. Our catechists freely volunteer their time to instruct our students in the Faith, and it is expected that our students respect the commitment made by their catechists through courteous and respectful behavior.

WEATHER CLOSING POLICY

If it is necessary to cancel Faith Formation classes, cancellation notices will be posted on the Parish website: (www.stcatherineofsweden.org), as well as on KDKA, WTAE, and WPXI. In addition, parents will receive a phone message through our automated calling system. Decisions regarding cancellation of

evening classes are not finalized until 1:00 p.m. Please do not call the office beforehand. Parental judgement concerning road conditions in your neighborhood should be a deciding factor in all cases.

IMPORTANT DATES:

Sept. 8, 9 & 11 – First Day of Faith Formation/Parent Meetings

Oct. 20, 21 & 23 – First Communion Parent Meetings

Nov. 10, 11 & 13 – Gr. 1-5 Family Days

Nov. 24 & 26 – Jesus Journey I (Grade 2)

Dec. 15, 16 & 18 – Advent Faith Formation Masses

Saturday, January 11 – First Reconciliation

Jan. 12 – Grade 8 Retreat

Feb. 9, 10 & 12 – Gr. 1-5 Family Days

Mar. 1 & 3 – Jesus Journey II (Grade 2)

Saturday, March 28 – Seder Meal (Grade 6)

April 19, 20 & 22 – Spring Faith Formation Masses (End of Faith Formation Year)

April 29 & May 6 – First Holy Communion Rehearsal

May 3, & 9 – First Holy Communion

EDGE DATES:

EDGE meets from 5:15 PM-7:00 PM

September 28, October 12, November 16, December 7, January 18, February 15, March 7, April 4

THANK YOU to our 2019 -2020 Catechists and Classroom Assistants:

Sunday

CGS I – Mrs. Gretchen Homer, Mrs. Alexandria Gavin & Miss Trisha Holmes

CGS II –Mrs. Margaret Conley, Mrs. Lauren Sprankle & Mrs. Beth Ryan

2A – Mrs. Anita Malara & Miss Sophia Malara

2B – Ms. Shelly Lannis & Mr. Nicholas Cuzzo

3A – Mrs. Mary Murray & Mr. DJ Ubinger

3B – Mrs. Carrie-Lyn Huckle & Miss Ava France
4 – Mrs. Julie Legal & Mrs. Wendy Bagaley
5A – Mrs. Bernadette Jaketic
5B – Ms. Virginia Sorce
6 – Mr. Eddie Howe & Miss Cassidy Kramer
7A – Mr. Paul Medwick & Mrs. Beth Howe
7B – Mr. & Mrs. Chris & Kim Byers
8A – Mr. & Mrs. Frank & Cari Hartle

Monday – 4:45 – 6:00 p.m.

CGS I – Ms. Julie Thimons & Mrs. Lorraine Norris
CGS II – Mrs. Gretchen Homer & Mrs. Lynn Kovacic
2A – Mrs. Lora Andrews
3A – Mrs. Tina Fedko
4A – Mrs. Laura Sherwin
5A – Mrs. Martina Allison
6A – Mrs. Margie Bailon
6A (2) – Mr. Will Reaves
7A – Mrs. Kari Hilton & Mr. Mike Palbus
8A – Mr. John Gust

Monday – 6:15 – 7:30 p.m.

CGS II – Mrs. Gretchen Homer & Ms. Eileen Turiak
3B – Mrs. Christina Thimons
5B – Mrs. Shannon Mesko & Mrs. Jennifer Taormina-Gross
6B – Mrs. Lori Clinton
8B – Mr. Jim Kozej & Miss Grace Kozej

Wednesday

CGS I – Mrs. Kris Biancaniello & Miss Maddie Fitzgerald
CGS II – Ms. Julie Thimons, Mrs. Kathryn Sitterle & Mrs. Lisa Cuzzo
3 – Mrs. Colleen Turcsanyi
6 – Mrs. Joanne Zoelle
7 – Mr. & Mrs. Ben & Patty Giovanelli
8 – Mr. Jonathan Gruber

Acknowledgement of Receipt of
St. Catherine of Sweden
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Handbook
2019-2020

I have carefully read, understand, and hereby commit to following the requirements of the St. Catherine's Faith Formation Handbook.

Name (Please Print)

Signature

Date

Please return this signed original to the Faith Formation Office.