

## Archangel Gabriel Faith Formation Family Catechesis FAQ

### **Why did Archangel Gabriel Parish switch from a traditional model of catechesis to a family model of catechesis this year?**

We switched to Family Catechesis (Fam Cat) this year to better accomplish our mission of supporting parents in their role as primary educators of their children in the faith. This is explained in detail in the video located here: [https://youtu.be/uuAbv8upR\\_I](https://youtu.be/uuAbv8upR_I). If you have not yet watched this video, please do so.

### **Is Family Catechesis taking place in-person or virtually this year?**

Fam Cat was all virtual for the fall semester (September 27-December 20), and will also be all virtual for the spring semester (January 10-April 25).

### **Why was it decided to have only virtual sessions?**

The reasoning for moving to all virtual instruction is as follows:

- Virtual instruction best protects catechists, students, and parents by reducing exposure to others and limiting potential spread of the virus.
- Offering only virtual instruction allows us to better ensure quality formation by eliminating the distractions that come with the stringent guidelines associated with in-person instruction. We refuse to sacrifice the quality of formation for any reason, as the faith formation of our families continues to be our top priority.
- As other institutions began to reopen, we saw a spike in COVID-19 cases and a sudden need for these institutions to move to virtual instruction anyway. Starting with all virtual instruction allowed us to be proactive, maintain consistency, and take control of the situation from the start.

### **How do the live virtual sessions work?**

For virtual instruction, sessions will take place via Zoom so that families can participate remotely and in real time. Parents will receive an email through Flocknote with a link to join the session (this link is sent a few days prior to the session). The session will begin with prayer and a parent/child sharing activity, followed by a presentation on the session theme, and then large group discussion. Sessions take place approximately once a month. In between the live virtual sessions, parents will be teaching their children the lessons at home (usually five chapters per theme).

### **Who attends the virtual sessions? Parents? Children? Both?**

Both parents and children should attend the virtual sessions so we can pray together, do the sharing activity, and do the family learning activity. THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THESE SESSIONS IS TO EQUIP THE PARENTS WITH THE TOOLS NECESSARY TO TEACH THEIR CHILDREN THE LESSONS AT HOME. Consequently, it is imperative that the parents attend the entirety of the session.

### **Why isn't each individual grade having their class livestreamed?**

There are two reasons for this. The first is that we do not have the capability to have ten livestreams taking place at the same time (one for the parents, and nine for the students in each grade K-8). The second reason is that it is unreasonable to ask your family to all attend at the same time. This would require multiple devices (not to mention reliable wifi) to which not every family has access.

### **Why are we no longer having small group discussion during the Fam Cat sessions?**

The Zoom feature that we were using, "Breakout Rooms," does not allow us to easily keep the same groups each week. Having the same participants in each group is how a relationship of trust is built over time and what enables the group discussion to be most fruitful. Since this is not possible, we have decided to remove small group discussion from the live sessions. When we return to in-person on-site instruction, small group discussion will resume during the session as it is an integral part of formation.

### **I really liked the small group discussion, so is there another way I can connect with other parents to discuss the faith?**

Yes. For those parents who are interested, you can be connected with another parent and receive the discussion questions. A "parent pairing form" will be available on the parish website at the beginning of the spring semester.

### **I cannot find the link to the virtual session, what should I do?**

The link to the virtual Zoom meeting is sent via Flocknote on the Thursday prior to the session. If you cannot locate the email message with the link, go to [archangelgabrielparish.org/children](http://archangelgabrielparish.org/children) and under the heading "Resources for Parents" click on "Upcoming Fam Cat Sessions." Find your session and click on the date and time to join the Zoom meeting.

Please note: once the session begins, Steve does not have access to email and will not be able to respond to messages.

### **What are the session dates for my section?**

Please go to [archangelgabrielparish.org/children](http://archangelgabrielparish.org/children) and under "Files and Forms" select these documents: Fam Cat Schedule and Fam Cat Schedule by Section. This will give you all the dates for your section.

### **What are the four sections of Family Catechesis?**

- Matthew Section – Sunday morning from **8:30 AM to 9:50 AM**
- Mark Section – Sunday morning from **11:05 AM to 12:25 PM**
- Luke Section – Sunday morning from **8:30 AM to 9:50 AM**
- John Section – Sunday evening from **5:30 PM to 6:50 PM**

### **What are the seven themes and what am I teaching my children at home?**

There are seven themes: 1) Creed, 2) Sacraments, 3) Advent/Christmas, 4) Moral Life, 5) Prayer, 6) Lent/Holy Week/Easter, and 7) New Evangelization. Each of these themes has several lessons. Parents receive large group instruction and have online resources so they are able to teach their children each theme's lessons at home.

### **What materials will I use for Family Catechesis?**

The children will receive a physical textbook. Parents will use the online “At Home Edition” which provides lesson plans to guide their teaching. There are also interactive study guides to help your child review the information they have learned. Links to these materials can be found at [archangelgabrielparish.org/children](http://archangelgabrielparish.org/children) under “Resources for Parents.”

### **How will my child’s catechist know how my child is progressing at home?**

After you and your child learn and review the lesson, your child will complete the online Interactive Chapter Review and you will email the results to their catechist (except Kindergarten students).

### **I sent the Interactive Chapter Review results to my child’s catechist, but they did not receive them. Does my child have to take the ICR over again?**

No, your child does not need to take the ICR again. Just email the catechist with your child’s score and they will record it.

### **I have children in different grades, how do I teach them all?**

The family catechesis curriculum we are using, Loyola’s *Christ Our Life* series, is a spiral curriculum, which means all the children will be learning about the same concepts each week. Also, there is an online Parent Guide to help parents lead children from different grades through their material at the same time (to access the Parent Guide, go to [archangelgabrielparish.org/children](http://archangelgabrielparish.org/children) under “Resources for Parents”). Or if you prefer, you can work with each child separately. Do whichever method works best for your family!

### **Do both parents need to participate in the live virtual sessions?**

Whichever parent is going to be teaching his/her children at home needs to participate so he/she is properly equipped. So, if both are teaching the lessons, then both need to participate. If only one parent is teaching the lessons, then only that parent needs to participate. However, both parents are certainly invited and are most welcome to participate in all the sessions, regardless of who is teaching.

### **Is there an absence policy for Family Catechesis?**

Since there are only seven (7) sessions per section, it is critical that parents participate in each one. If a parent misses a session, they will not receive the tools necessary to properly teach their children the lessons for that unit. Therefore, the expectation is that parents attend all seven (7) of the sessions for their section.

### **So, what do we do if we miss due to illness or some other very serious reason?**

If you miss due to illness, emergency, or some other very serious reason, then email Steven Swank at [sswank@archangelgabrielparish.org](mailto:sswank@archangelgabrielparish.org) for information about “making-up” the session.

### **If we miss the session for which we registered, can we attend a different session as a “make-up.”**

Yes. To attend a different session, go to [archangelgabrielparish.org/children](http://archangelgabrielparish.org/children) and under the heading “Resources for Parents,” click on “Upcoming Fam Cat Sessions.” Find the session you want to attend and click on the date and time to join the Zoom meeting.

**How will Sacrament (First Penance, First Holy Communion, Confirmation) preparation take place this year?**

Sacrament prep will take place outside of faith formation this year and sessions will be held virtually for each sacrament. To receive a sacrament at Archangel Gabriel Parish, a child must participate in sacrament preparation AND regular religious instruction (either Faith Formation Ministry or Archangel Gabriel Regional School). More information is available on the parish website: [archangelgabrielparish.org](http://archangelgabrielparish.org) > GROW > YOUTH AND CHILDREN.

**I am not receiving email messages through Flocknote, what should I do?**

First, add [mail@flocknote.com](mailto:mail@flocknote.com) to your address book. Then email Carol Pfeuffer at [cpfeuffer@archangelgabrielparish.org](mailto:cpfeuffer@archangelgabrielparish.org) and she will make sure your information is correct in the system.

**I have additional questions not listed here, whom should I contact?**

Please reach out to Steven Swank at [sswank@archangelgabrielparish.org](mailto:sswank@archangelgabrielparish.org) and he will do his best to answer your questions. To expediate your request, please include your child's name, grade, and section (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John) in your message.