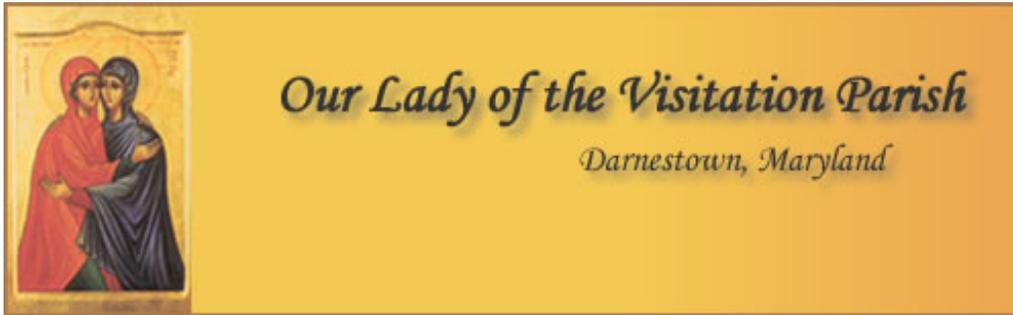


# Youth Faith Formation Program

2020-2021

## Parent Handbook



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## **Welcome to Our Lady of the Visitation Faith Formation Program**

We are pleased to offer weekly classes in the Faith Formation Program to our students, in a variety of programs from Pre-K through our high school program. Our programs and materials are presented by our volunteer catechists, who so generously share their time, talents, faith, gifts and their love of Church, with the youth.

Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God. The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents.

– #2226, *Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition*

The church supports the catechists with ongoing training, materials and suggestions of how to best present the materials and meet the learning styles of all our students. Therefore, it is important that parents share with us any special learning, medical and/ behavioral concerns or disability issues that their child may have so that we can do our best to accommodate their child's needs. All student and family records are held in strictest confidence at all times.

### **Covid19 Safety Guidelines**

We have chosen to use a virtual approach using Zoom for Faith Formation through January 2021. We will continue to monitor the feasibility of returning to the classroom and will update the parish. We require and appreciate parental/guardian support during this time so we can provide the best virtual faith formation experience possible. The church and/or outdoor areas may be used to facilitate meetings in accordance with safe distancing guidelines.

### **Parental commitment is essential**

It is our expectation that all enrolled children attend the scheduled classes, including special programs and grade level retreats, if applicable. Participating regularly in the Liturgy of the Eucharist (Mass) and the parish Faith Formation Program instills the Catholic faith in a child. It is important for the child to make connections between what they learn at home, in class and at Mass. Parents are expected to attend program level meetings, especially for Sacramental Preparation Programs.

### **Our Mission Statement and Objectives**

Our Lady of the Visitation Church offers a welcoming environment for all children who participate in the Faith Formation Program. We strive to complement the family shared experience of love and caring for one another, by bringing God alive in their daily lives. Each child will learn about Catholic teachings, prayers, practices, morals, values, responsibilities and mission helping them grow in their faith and deepen their personal relationship with Jesus.

## **A Journey of Faith**

Our church school program starts in PreK through Kindergarten and will be using a curriculum guide known as “Allelu” by Our Sunday Visitor. Using a more traditional classroom model, our students in Grade One through Grade 6, will be using curriculum guides that are grade level specific called “Alive in Christ” by Our Sunday Visitor. Grades 7 & 8 students will use Chosen by Ascension Press as their curriculum guide. Copies of all texts are available in the pastoral office for your review.

Students learn about the Catholic Church and its teachings while developing their faith and personal relationship with God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the workings and guidance of the Holy Spirit within them. As a journey of faith, this is accomplished over time with active participation in the faith community as an integral part. Topics are introduced in developmentally appropriate stages. Key topics include: the learning of traditional prayers; how to use and read the Bible; the Ten Commandments; the Trinity; the Rosary; Prayer- types and styles; Catholic Social-Justice Teachings; Church History; and the Marks of the Church- one, holy, catholic, and apostolic and what it means to be a Catholic Christian in our world today. Intertwined within this program is the Parish Sacramental Preparation Programs for First Reconciliation & First Eucharist (grade 2 or later), and Confirmation (grade 8 or later).

All our programs are in conformity with the guidelines and policies of the Archdiocese of Washington. Further, Our Lady of the Visitation staff and volunteers, who come into regular contact with children, have completed and are current with the Child Protection & Safe Environment requirements of the Archdiocese of Washington. As a part of the Archdiocese’s periodic review and update of policies, a revised child protection policy was released in July 2019.

## **Administrative Policies**

Our Lady of the Visitation Parish follows the Montgomery County Public School calendar. When the county schools have a scheduled early release, OLVP will have class. However, when Montgomery County Schools close due to inclement weather or an emergency, our classes will be cancelled as well. Check our website for weather related closings.

Attendance is taken for each class. It is important that students attend class each week. If a student misses a class, make up work may be necessary. Parents are requested to call the office or contact their student’s catechist if their child will be absent. It is important for students to arrive for class on time.

## **Special Circumstances**

As a Faith Formation Team, we do our best to plan for and accommodate each situation with the given resources and volunteers available to us during any academic year. Every situation is regarded as unique. On occasion we may not be able to give you an immediate solution or placement. When this occurs, the situation will be reviewed and discussed as a team and then again with you before placement is made. An explanation will be given if placement isn't possible at the time. The following programs have been designed to accommodate some of the special circumstances and the situations we've encountered.

## **Placement & Sacraments for Transferring Catechized Students**

All transferring students into our program from another parish must give proof of having been enrolled by providing a letter from the parish along with certificates of Sacraments received. The Confirmation Program is a three-year preparation period, offered to Middle School students beginning in Grade 6 with Confirmation being received in Grade 8. The Archdiocese of Washington guidelines states that a student must attend a full year of Roman Catholic Faith Formation prior to enrolling in an Immediate Sacramental Preparation Program. It remains at the discretion of the Coordinator of Family Faith Formation, in

collaboration with the Pastor, to determine the readiness of a student to receive a sacrament at Our Lady of the Visitation Parish.

**Help is Always Wanted and Needed!**

Our programs depend upon our volunteers! There are many ways to become involved and we need your help! Please contact us if you are interested in hearing about being a: Catechist, Substitute Catechist, or Classroom Aide. Help is also needed for numerous special events throughout the year.