

***St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church***  
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# FAITH FORMATION

Student / Family Handbook  
2020 – 2021



Starting September 6, 2021, St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church Faith Formation will be a home-based, blended-learning Catechetical program. If it is possible and safe to do so, we plan to have small monthly Sunday afternoon gathered sessions to give families an opportunity to meet with their child(ren)'s Catechist to review previous lessons and discuss next assignments. To be good stewards of each other's health and safety, wearing a mask will be mandatory and a safe distance of 6' must be maintained between families.

*Dear Parents/Guardians:*

*Welcome to our Faith Formation Program. When you brought your child to Church to be baptized, you were responding to the prompting of the Holy Spirit in your heart and your desire to have your child journey in faith with you and your Parish Community. At that time the Church and your Parish community rejoiced and celebrated with you in the God given gift of your child. You renewed your baptismal promises and promised to center your family in God and promised to share your faith in Jesus Christ with your child.*

*Father Michael and our entire staff are here to assist you in fulfilling these promises and continuing your journey in faith. We realize the challenges and difficulties parenting in this modern era presents.*

*Because of the fluid and unprecedented nature of Coronavirus crisis, and the threat posed by COVID 19, St. Peter the Apostle will implement a homebased Faith Formation program for 2020-2021. In order to ensure faithful, comprehensive, structured, and effective catechesis while promoting safe social distancing, St. Peter the Apostle will provide a liturgy-based at-home Faith Formation program, primarily using “Christ in Us”. This blended-learning Catechetical program integrates print and digital resources into a seamless religious education curriculum delivered through a variety of instructional models, supported by digital portals for all users. Additional materials will be used in Sacramental preparation classes.*

*“Christ In Us” is ideal for distance learning as it partners with families to help them play an active and meaningful part in catechesis! The home-based component of “Christ in Us” is designed to be used flexibly in the context of busy lives. This blended approach to religious education ensures that all users can accompany one another as they connect with “Christ in Us” anytime, anywhere.*

*Often our society does not reflect our Christian values and many of the supports our predecessors enjoyed are no longer available. As a consequence, parents must be even more vigilant with regard to the most important task of nurturing Faith in Jesus Christ and Catholic Christian values in themselves and in their children. We as a Parish realize we must be flexible and supporting in our role and are always open to your needs, ideas, and requests.*

*We thank you for entrusting us with the privilege of assisting you in the spiritual formation of your children. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit we look forward to a fruitful and fun year. Please read and keep this little booklet; it is a work in progress as is our Faith Formation Program, and we will add to it later in the year as COVID 19 circumstances evolve.*

*Sincerely Yours in Christ,*

*Father Michael Suszynski  
& the Staff of*

*St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church*

Our ***Faith Formation Program*** has an important role to play in the mission of the parish and draws strength and encouragement from the community. It provides opportunities for families and children to develop their prayer life, deepen their understanding of the faith and become active participants in our community.

The ***Mission Statement of the Diocese of St. Petersburg*** begins with Matthew's account of the Ascension in Matthew, Chapter 28, 16-20:

“The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, **“All power in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”**

We are challenged to bring the Gospel to the entire world. Children are formed into disciples through the family's faith life and religious education. The family has primary responsibility in faith formation. The gift of faith which begins at Baptism must be nourished throughout one's entire life. The family is rightfully called the “domestic church” and as such, is the foundation of the wider faith community. Faith Formation serves the domestic church by offering guidance, instruction and support in their journey of faith and in turn is supported by the domestic church.

***Faith Formation Office:*** The office is generally open from 9:00am – 1:00pm Monday thru Thursday. Faith Formation can be reached at 727-264-8968 x 303 or by email at [gmd@sptatrinity.org](mailto:gmd@sptatrinity.org).

## CURRICULUM

***Participation:*** Each grade has its own age appropriate curriculum focus designed to help develop and grow your child's faith. Regular participation in all grade levels is essential to the life-long process of Faith Formation.

***Home-based Faith Formation Model:*** The SPTA home-based Faith Formation curriculum and materials were developed with a best-practices approach to formation, education, and innovation, always with Christ at the heart. The Sadlier “Christ in Us” spiral curriculum is built on the four pillars of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (creed, sacraments, morality, and prayer) using a spiral approach. Catechesis goes deeper into faith concepts at each grade level, in developmentally appropriate ways. Clear goals are set. Each unit and lesson pose an Essential Question, which is the same question for all grade levels. The Essential Questions are meaningful, faith focused questions that encourage inquiry and reflection and promote ongoing, lifelong faith formation because they explore the heart of what we believe as Catholics. Children revisit the questions each year with increasing complexity and deepening understanding. They consider how each question applies to their own lives and influences their actions as disciples of Jesus Christ. Families with children at different grade levels explore the same concepts at the same time, making family faith formation more effective, and faith-sharing easier.

***Special Needs:*** St Peter the Apostle Catholic Church will make accommodation for children with special needs in our Faith Formation program. Parents of children with special needs are welcome to check with the Director of Faith Formation for additional information or availability.

***Foundation of our Curriculum:*** Faith Formation parallels our journey and this continuous process runs from the beginning to the end of life. Regular attendance at Faith Formation sessions is an important factor in deepening a child's understanding of God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit which is revealed to us in scripture, prayer, church teaching, and the lived experience of community. Growth in faith and readiness for the reception of sacraments is nourished by weekly attendance and active participation in the liturgy. It is our hope that parents and children attend Mass every Sunday.

***Overview of Curriculum:*** Until it is safe to meet in a gathered setting, SPTA will offer a lectionary based at-home Faith Formation program.

**Grades PreK – 6<sup>th</sup>:** The primary educational materials are “Christ in Us” (Sadlier Religion), with a mix of special seasonal programs. First Eucharist / First Reconciliation preparation will include additional study materials, primarily from Saint Mary Press and Dynamic Catholic, plus a minimum of two workshops.

**Middle School (Grades 7-8)** – includes a two-year Faith Formation component to prepare for Confirmation. The primary educational materials are: “Called to Be Catholic” and “Confirmed in the Spirit” (Loyola Press) and the interactive workbook/YouTube video’s for Matthew Kelly’s “Decision Point” (Dynamic Catholic).

**St. Peter R.O.C.K.S. (Grades 9 thru 12 plus Middle School students who have been Confirmed)** – This program is open to all teens looking for faith and fellowship whether or not they have been Confirmed and includes a Faith Formation component. Teens wishing to receive Confirmation need to be in a Catholic School Religion Program or participate in the SPTA Middle School Confirmation program. No meetings have been scheduled for 2020-2021. When it is safe to do so, St. Peter R.O.C.K.S. will meet on Sunday evenings at 6:00pm – 7:30pm. There is no fee to participate in St. Peter R.O.C.K.S.

## SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

The Sacramental Preparation Programs prepare our youth for reception of the Sacraments. They are parish based and follow the guidelines of the Diocese of St. Petersburg. Readiness for the sacrament, not age or grade, determines when a person is eligible to receive the sacrament. At St. Peter the Apostle, students usually receive First Reconciliation/ First Eucharist in the second grade and Confirmation in grade eight, although there are many variations due to personal circumstances.

***First Reconciliation/First Eucharist Sacramental Preparation Program:*** Saturday workshops provide additional interactive experiences preparing for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist using “Blessed” (Dynamic Catholic) and “Go Seek Find” (St. Mary Press) materials. The goal of the preparation workshops is to nurture a child’s/family’s understanding of God’s love for them and their response of thanksgiving; nurture a child’s/family’s relationship to Jesus Christ in prayer and worship; enhance a child’s/family’s appreciation and active participation in the Mass; develop a child’s/family’s sense of belonging to a community of disciples who love as Jesus loves.

***Confirmation Sacramental Preparation Program:*** The Confirmation Sacramental Preparation Program is parish based and follows the guidelines of the Diocese of St. Petersburg. It is separate and distinct from the Faith Formation Program. Its focus is on conversion, both of the person and of the community. It aims to produce a transformation in the person who is to encounter Christ in the sacrament. Sacramental instruction is limited in time and provides immediate preparation for the celebration of the sacrament. It never replaces Faith Formation which is a life-long journey of faith. Confirmation preparation includes an overnight retreat experience at St. Leo Abbey, in which the retreat sessions are all focused on Confirmation and God’s unconditional love. Throughout the retreat, Confirmandi will have an opportunity to engage in small groups, listen to talks, play and praise God through prayer and song.

## REGISTRATION FOR FAITH FORMATION

Yearly registration is required in the Faith Formation Program. Special efforts are made during the last weeks of the program to provide registration opportunities on site. Parents should be registered members of Peter the Apostle Catholic Church. There is an additional charge for families who have not been registered parishioners of St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church for at least three months.

***Fees:*** For registered St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church families, the Faith Formation registration fee is \$75.00 per child with a maximum of \$150.00 for grades PreK – 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The fee for any child whose family has not been registered as a St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church parishioner for at least three months is \$200.00 per child (with a maximum of \$400.00 per unregistered family). In addition, there is a Sacramental Prep fee of \$75.00 for First Reconciliation/ First Eucharist, and \$100.00 for Confirmation. There is no fee for St. Peter R.O.C.K.S. (9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade or confirmed 8<sup>th</sup> grader). All registration and Sacramental fees can be paid online.

You may register and pay online. Paperwork can be dropped off during office hours, 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM, Monday through Thursday. Kindly register as soon as possible in order for us to plan for classes and book orders. There is not a cut-off date for registration to accommodate the needs of those who have recently

moved into the parish or wish to return to active participation. A copy of your child's Baptismal Certificate is required if we do not have it on file. Fees are used for supplies and books. Fees may be paid in installments. No one is denied faith formation for financial reasons.

When you register, please complete and sign all forms. There are several forms that need to be signed, including a photo release for your child(ren). If you do not want your child(ren) photographed, please so indicate.

***Registration for the Sacramental Program:*** Sacramental preparation is a two-year journey. Students must be enrolled in either a faith formation program, a Catholic school, or approved home schooling. The Sacramental preparation fee for the second year in each program is an additional \$75.00 per child for First Reconciliation/Eucharist, and \$100.00 per child for Confirmation.

***Attendance:*** As the religious education of your child(ren) is very important, regular at-home study (or attendance when it is safe to have gathered classes) regular is desirable. If a student will be absent from class, the parent is asked to make arrangements so their child can complete assignments. Repeated absences will be discussed with the parents.

### **ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL (When gathered sessions resume)**

***Traditional Program/Youth Programs:*** The safety of our children is a serious responsibility. We ask your help in providing this safety. Students in grades Pre K through 12th grade must be accompanied by their parent/guardian to and from their classroom meeting area. Parents must sign-in and sign-out the attendance sheet. Ordinarily, student and parents/guardians enter our meeting area 5-10 minutes prior to start time. Parents/guardians must not leave their child(ren) unsupervised. Students PreK through 12th grade must be picked up in the meeting area when sessions end.

***Family Faith:*** Families arrive and leave together, however in the event a guardian or family member does not attend, the same guidelines as the Traditional program apply. Parents/guardians must let the Director of Faith Formation know who is authorized to accompany their child(ren) to and from the sessions.

***Early Dismissal:*** While early pick-up is discouraged, sometimes it is necessary for parents/guardians to arrange for an early dismissal for their child(ren). If a student needs to leave early, the parent/guardian must give a signed note stating the reason, time, date, grade, and the catechist's name to the Coordinator of Faith Formation. The student will be picked-up at the St Peter the Apostle Catholic Church. A child's religious education is adversely affected by missing all or part of scheduled sessions.

### **COMMUNICATION**

We are here to help with the faith formation of your child(ren). If you have any questions, comments, concerns, or suggestions please feel free to share them with your child's catechist or call the St. Peter the Apostle Faith Formation office at 727-264-8968. By placing your child(ren) in our Faith Formation Program, you are agreeing to adhere to the policies as stated in this handbook. The Director of Faith Formation reserves the right to amend these guidelines at any time for any appropriate reason. Prompt notification of any changes made to this handbook will be made in writing to all that are registered in the Faith Formation Program. Check the parish bulletin and your Email for notices and information.

We frequently communicate important information to you via the parish bulletin, letters, and/or memos which are given to your child(ren). Please read all notices carefully

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

***Emergency Class Cancellation:*** If there is a hurricane alert, classes will be canceled. If the weather causes an emergency situation, please keep your children home

***Fire Safety and Disaster Preparation:*** For fire safety, periodic fire drills will be conducted. Everyone will depart the facility. In case of real emergency, students will be taken to a prearranged area. For Natural Disasters such as tornadoes, hurricanes, flooding, etc. the catechists will be warned, if possible, of the approaching danger. Children and catechists are to move to the halls of the building away from windows.

**Family Meetings** -are held at the beginning and end of each year and as needed throughout the year. Please plan to attend.

## **HEALTH CONCERNS AND MEDICATIONS**

Any special medical needs of you child(ren) should be written on the registration form in the place provided. The personnel in the Faith Formation Program do not dispense medications to students. If a child is diagnosed with a medical condition after registration, please inform the Director of Faith Formation and the catechist as soon as possible.

By placing your child(ren) in our Faith Formation Program, you are agreeing to adhere to the policies as stated in this handbook. The Director of Faith Formation reserves the right to amend these guidelines at any time for any appropriate reason. Prompt notification of any changes made to this handbook will be made in writing to all that are registered in the Faith Formation Program.

Check the parish bulletin and your mail for notices and information. If you have any questions feel free to call the Faith Formation Office at 727-264-8968 x 303.

## **CHILD ABUSE**

Pursuant to state law, we are required to report suspected child abuse and we will also follow Diocesan policy on such matters.

## **DIOCESAN POLICIES**

***Policy on Harassment:*** the harassment policy for non-employment situations in parish religious education and parish youth ministry programs of the Diocese of St. Petersburg requires that each parish, Catholic school, and early childhood center establish and adopt this policy that prohibits any form of harassment by any individual. The Diocese of St. Petersburg strives for the establishment of a Christian, professional and supportive educational environment for all persons engaged in or involved with religious education programs, schools, early childhood centers, and parish youth ministry programs in non-employment situation. No parish, school, or early childhood center will be responsible for off campus harassment, unless it occurs at a parish, school, or early childhood center-sponsored event. This policy intends that each individual is free from physical, psychological, or verbal intimidation and harassment in the schools, early childhood center, religious education, and youth ministry setting. This policy intends that each individual involved in schools, early childhood center, religious education, and youth ministry programs maintain and further develop attitudes and behaviors which express respect for others and are reflective of each person's God-given dignity. This policy intends to encourage a heightened sensitivity toward behaviors that others may find offensive and intimidating, whether these behaviors refer to race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, familial status, veteran status, or disability. This policy is not intended to otherwise limit the expectation of staff, children students, and volunteers to engage fully in the traditions of teaching, celebrating, participating, in and being formed by the Catholic faith, included but not limited to curriculum, catechesis, the Sacraments, other liturgies, worship services, and ministries.

***Explanation of Harassment:*** Harassment can result from a single incident or from a pattern of behavior involving verbal, written or physical conduct or communication. Harassment encompasses a broad range of behaviors, which could include, but are not limited to; physical, mental, or verbal abuse. Insults, jokes, or derogatory slurs based on one or more of an individual's protected status(es). Unwelcome sexual advances or touching, implicit or explicit requests for sexual favors, unwanted sexual comments; serious or humorous, unwanted sexually suggestive telephone calls, letters, e-mail, etc. Comments or jokes based on issues of modesty and developing social awareness. Unwanted forced involvement in activities; physical, religious,

etc. Coercion of religious styles or personal beliefs upon participant. Intimidation in front of a group or forced personal sharing in groups. Inappropriate media or music use which would violate this policy.

**Confidentiality:** The right to confidentiality, both of the complainant and of the accused, will be respected to the extent possible, but will be consistent with legal obligations and with the necessity to investigate allegations of misconduct and to take corrective action when this conduct has occurred. All staff members, catechists and parents/guardians are required to sign an acknowledgment that they have read and understood the ethical and personal conduct implications on the Diocesan Policy on Harassment

**Safe Environments Policy:** The Diocese of St. Petersburg has mandated that all adult staff and volunteers who are entrusted with the care or supervision of children, the elderly, or the infirmed must be trained on the Safe Environments Policy. This parish follows The Diocese of St. Petersburg policy on Safe Environments to provide such training on the subject to catechists and assistants.

The purpose of the training is to:

- \* Teach practical ways to establish safe environments and relationships for all children and adults;
- \* Identify and protect youth and adult rights;
- \* Identify barriers to abuse in church programs, etc.;
- \* Provide information on identification of child abuse warning signs;
- \* Provide information on behavioral cues of sexual abusers;
- \* Provide information on appropriate response to an abuse disclosure or discovery;
- \* Provide information on appropriate reporting procedures for suspected or actual abuse.

In addition to the above, all catechists and assistants are background checked and fingerprinted. Parents who wish to help out or be present in their child's classroom must meet all the requirements for catechists and aides at their own expense.

Effective July 2006, it is mandated that all parents and students be trained in safe environment. An on-line parents' SEP is being developed for the DOSP.

## **COVID 19**

The novel coronavirus, COVID-19, has been declared a worldwide pandemic by the World Health Organization. COVID-19 is extremely contagious and as a result, social distancing is recommended. St. Peter the Apostle Catholic church will follow state and local standards of conduct and has put in place reasonable preventative measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 at all Parish activities (including but not limited to summer camp). However, even though such standards will be followed and reasonable measures put into place, St. Peter the Apostle cannot guarantee that you or your child(ren) will not become infected with COVID-19. Further, attending a Parish activity could increase your risk and your child(ren)'s risk of contracting COVID-19.

## **OTHER FAITH FORMATION PROGRAMS**

**RCIA – for Children:** The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults adapted for Children, emphasizes the intimate relationship of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. During the inquiry period of the RCIA the focus is on nurturing faith in Jesus Christ. This catechetical effort is directed toward unbaptized children of catechetical age, and youth who have been baptized in other Christian churches and seek to complete initiation into the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.

## **VACATION PROGRAMS**

When it is safe to hold gathered events, Faith Based Programs may be offered during school breaks at Christmas and Easter. These will be half-day or day-long programs for all grades and will be in a camp type setting. Vacation Bible School (VBS) program is usually offered each summer. Children PK4 thru grade 5 are invited to join us for a rewarding experience filled with fun activities, entertainment, music, snacks and more!

## ACRE ASSESSMENT

The Diocese of St. Petersburg has established guidelines for administering the Assessment of Catholic Religious Education to grades 5, 8, and 11. The questionnaire is administered during the school year (usually in the spring as directed by the Diocese of St. Petersburg).

### FAMILY RESOURCES

<a href="http://www.stpetertrinityfl.org">www.stpetertrinityfl.org</a>	St. Peter the Apostle
<a href="http://sptatrinity.formed.org">sptatrinity.formed.org</a>	FORMED online programs, books, movies, and audio resources
<a href="http://www.SadlierReligion.com">www.SadlierReligion.com</a>	Sadlier Press (Online “Christ in Us” teaching guides)
<a href="http://www.dynamiccatholic.com">www.dynamiccatholic.com</a>	Dynamic Catholic (“Decision Point” videos)
<a href="http://www.dosp.org">www.dosp.org</a>	Diocese of St. Petersburg
<a href="http://www.findinggod.com">www.findinggod.com</a>	Loyola Press
<a href="http://www.smp.org">www.smp.org</a>	St. Mary Press
<a href="http://www.sermons4kids.com">www.sermons4kids.com</a>	Children’s Bulletin and Gospel related handouts/activities
<a href="http://www.catholicmom.com">www.catholicmom.com</a>	Gospel related information and activities
<a href="http://Liturgy.slu.edu">Liturgy.slu.edu</a>	St. Louis University
<a href="http://www.loyolapress.com/Sunday-connection.com">www.loyolapress.com/Sunday-connection.com</a>	Gospel related activities

### *Parent/Guardian/Student Policies Acknowledgement Form*

I/We have read the Faith Formation Parents Handbook of St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church. I/We understand and agree to cooperate with the Diocesan/Parish policies set forth in this handbook. By signing the enrollment agreement included with the Faith Formation registration form, I/We acknowledge these policies and agree to adhere to them. I/We understand that as a growing Parish necessitates this Handbook maybe amended and written notices will be sent with the children and announced at family meetings.

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Parent/Guardian Signature

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Printed Name

Today’s Date \_\_\_\_\_