Our Lady of the Presentation
Catholic Church

Children’s Faith Formation

Pray: Give HIM Three

Parent Handbook
Grades 1-8
2016-2017
Dear families, you know very well that the true joy which we experience in the family is not superficial; it does not come from material objects, from the fact that everything seems to be going well... True joy comes from a profound harmony between persons, something which we all feel in our hearts and which makes us experience the beauty of togetherness, of mutual support along life’s journey. But the basis of this feeling of deep joy is the presence of God in the family and his love, which is welcoming, merciful, and respectful towards all. God alone knows how to create harmony from differences. But if God’s love is lacking, the family loses its harmony, self-centeredness prevails and joy fades. But the family which experiences the joy of faith communicates it naturally. That family is the salt of the earth and the light of the world, it is the leaven of society.

Dear families, always live in faith and simplicity, like the Holy Family of Nazareth! The joy and peace of the Lord be always with you!

Pope Francis
Dear God our Father,
you have called all Christian families to be a sign
of your love to the world.

Help us to be generous with the gifts of life and love
that you have showered on our family.
May we share them so that our homes become true signs
of unitive and fruitful love.

Let us never forget to thank you each day
for all that sustains us and to look to Christ,
who comes to us in the events of family life,
in the sacraments of the Church,
and in service to the poor.

In all of this, our family becomes a living expression of your Church,
a hallowed home of life and love.
By the power of the Holy Spirit, may all of us – spouses, parents, and children –
share, as members of his Body, in Jesus’ mission
to build a civilization of love.
Father, we ask this in Jesus’ name in union with the Holy Spirit.
Amen.
Purpose of Children’s Faith Formation

It is our purpose to assist parents in the faith formation of their children, to help nurture the faith of the children, and to show them the love of the Lord. Our mission is the same as that of Christ and his Church: to bring about the Kingdom of God—a kingdom of peace, justice, and communion, and a kingdom where all will know they are loved by God and supported by the members of this faith community.

Method

We aim to further the mission of Christ, the Church, and our parish by proclaiming the Word of God, by sharing our Catholic and Christian tradition, by praying and worshiping in a variety of ways, by serving others as a way of serving the Lord, and by recognizing the presence of God in each other, in creation, and in ourselves.

The Goal

The primary goal of our Children’s Faith Formation Program is to invite our youth to take part in liturgical experiences where, through shared ritual action, the individual is immersed in Catholic worship, tradition, and the teachings of the Church. We are witnesses of Jesus’ law of love to one another. We must love God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind. We must also love others as much as we love ourselves. (Mark 12:30-31)

Scheduling

Classes for Grades 1 through 8 are held on Wednesday evenings. The early session classes begin at 5:00 and end at 6:15. The late session classes are from 6:45 to 8:00.

Classes for Sunday School are held on Sunday mornings during the 10:00 Mass. Diana Hennessey is the coordinator for this program. She can be reached at sundayschool@olpls.org.

Fees

Book and supply fees are to be paid at the time of registration. There is an Early Bird Discount if you register in April for the coming year. These fees, along with a sizable subsidy from the parish, allow us to purchase textbooks, audio-visual materials, and classroom supplies. Our teachers/catechists receive a minimal stipend twice a year in return for their labors.

No parish child will be denied entrance into Our Lady of the Presentation Children’s Faith Formation Program because of family financial difficulties.

2016-2016 fees are as follows for Wednesday night:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registered Parish Families</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>One child</strong> $75</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Two children</strong> $120</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Three or more</strong> $150</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Families Registered at Other Parishes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>One child</strong> $90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Two children</strong> $140</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Three or more</strong> $170</td>
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“As parents, you are the first and foremost educators of your children. You must never forget that it is also the task of the whole family to serve the life of each its members. Through your ministry of education and your personal witness, you are for your children the first heralds of the Gospel message of love.”

(from *Familiaris Consortia*, Apostolic Exhortation on the Family, Pope John Paul II)

Sacramental Preparation

**Reconciliation:** In the fall, students prepare to experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The typical age for reception of this sacrament for the first time is about 7 years and in the second grade. Families determine if their children are ready to experience God’s love and forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Parents prepare their children for sacraments with the support of the parish pastoral staff and Children Faith Formation volunteers. Children take part in the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to First Eucharist.

A communal celebration of Reconciliation will be held on Thursday, November 17th for children and their families.

**Eucharist:** In January, parish children begin preparation for celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist. As with Reconciliation, parents will attend meetings with their children to prepare to receive this sacrament. Meeting dates and times are posted on our website at www.olpls.org

**Confirmation:** In the diocese of Kansas City/St. Joseph, the Sacrament of Confirmation is normally conferred at the age of 16. For more information, please contact Christy Gruenbaum in our Youth Office. The Youth Office phone number is 251-1107 or 251-1103.

Highlights from the 2016-2017 Children’s Faith Formation Calendar:

- **September 14** Opening Night and Parent Meeting
- **October 19** No Class – Teacher In-Service
- **November 9** Class/Reconciliation (Grades 5-8)
- **November 23** No Class – Thanksgiving Break
- **December 21** No Class - Christmas Break
- **December 28** No Class – Christmas Break
- **January 4** No Class – Teacher In-Service
- **January 18** Class/Walk Through the Mass (Grades 1-4)
- **January 25** Class/Walk Through the Mass (Grades 5-8)
- **March 1** No Class - Ash Wednesday
- **March 8** Class/Stations of the Cross (Grades 1 and 2)
- **March 15** Class/Stations of the Cross (Grades 3-5)
- **March 22** No Class – Spring Break
- **April 5** Class/Stations of the Cross (Grades 6-8)
- **May 3** May Crowning and Awards Ceremony

* Events in which Parents are REQUIRED to attend with their children.
+ Events in which Parents are encouraged to attend with their children.
Arrival and Dismissal Policies

We strive to provide a safe environment for your child. We ask for your assistance by following our arrival and dismissal policies. Please park in the North Parking Lot and use the Auditorium/School Entrance. We ask that the small lot, on the south side, NOT be used as the doors into the school will remain locked. Please refrain from walking in the church entrance to avoid disrupting any worship events that maybe occurring. Please leave the handicap parking spaces open for our families with physical limitations.

**Arrival:** Children should arrive **no earlier** than 10 minutes prior to the start of the class session. Children should not enter any classroom until an adult is present.

**Dismissal:** Our parking lots have become increasingly hazardous. Therefore, **ALL students departing the building must be accompanied by an adult** or teenager at least 16 years of age. No child will be permitted to exit any door unaccompanied. In addition, some teachers may ask that children be picked up at the classroom door.

If you have specific instructions regarding your child’s dismissal, please contact the Children’s Faith Formation office in writing.

Inclement Weather and Cancellation Policy

A determination for cancelling will be made by 4:00 PM and posted on the Children’s Faith Formation Office voice mail (251-1135) and our website (www.olpls.org). We will also send a text message. To join the Children’s Faith Formation text group go to remind.com/join/mrsengert

Cancellation of classes at the R-7 public schools does not necessarily mean that Children’s Faith Formation classes are canceled. However, if **Our Lady of the Presentation Catholic School (Southeast Jackson County Pod)** cancels because of inclement weather, we will follow suit and cancel Children’s Faith Formation classes in the evening. We encourage you to monitor the weather conditions and always use your best judgment with your personal safety in mind before venturing out to attend Faith Formation classes.

Accident Reporting and Medication Policy

Any accident or injury that occurs while a child is on church property will be reported, in writing, by the teacher or adult volunteer, to the Children’s Faith Formation office. Parents will be immediately notified of the incident. In the event of serious injury and the parent or emergency contact cannot be reached, the child will be taken to the Emergency Room at Lee’s Summit Hospital.

**No medicines will be given to any student while at Faith Formation classes.**

Fire and Tornado Procedures

No fire/tornado drills will be held during Faith Formation classes. However, all teachers will be given specific instructions on building evacuation and tornado safety procedures. The tornado siren for this area is on parish property and evacuation diagrams are posted in each room.

Field Trip Policies

On occasion, teachers will plan a field trip for a group of students. All field trips are for education or service purposes only.

No student will be allowed to participate in a field trip activity unless a written permission slip is signed and dated by at least one, and preferably both, parents. A sample permission form follows:

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I request Our Lady of the Presentation Parish to allow my son/daughter to participate in an off-site activity. I give my permission for _______________ to go to _______________. In consideration for making the arrangements for this activity, I hereby release and save harmless Our Lady of the Presentation Parish and any and all employees and volunteers from any and all liability and for any and all injury resulting from this trip

Guardian_________________________ Date
Guardian_________________________ Date
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Transportation for field trips will usually be provided by parent volunteers using their personal vehicles and at their risk. All volunteer drivers must be over the age of 21. Students traveling by car will be required to wear seat belts at all times. Bus transportation will be provided for all large groups and transportation liability will be the responsibility of a commercial bus service.

Discipline Statement

We firmly believe that all children are good. We believe they deserve well-prepared lessons and effective classroom experiences. Positive reinforcement of good behavior is more effective than punishment of misbehavior.

At the same time, we believe that students who disrupt class by their behavior lessen the opportunity for their classmates to learn. Consequences for classroom misbehavior include (1) separation from their classmates, (2) report of behavior to the parents, (3) conference between the student and the teacher, and/or (4) conference between the student and the Director of Children’s Faith Formation.

We expect students to:
1. Be in their assigned seats with all materials when class begins.
2. Raise their hands and wait to be called upon before they speak.
3. Keep hands, feet, and objects to themselves.
4. Use appropriate language.
5. Follow the teacher’s instructions.

It may be necessary for a student to be removed from the classroom in order to ensure the benefit of the rest of the students. If it is deemed in the best interest of the student and the class, a student may be suspended or expelled from the Children’s Faith Formation program. Before a student is suspended or expelled, parents and the pastor will be consulted and arrangements will be made for the continuation of the child’s faith formation, such as home study, tutoring, etc.

Reporting Requirements for Child Abuse or Neglect

Parish officials, including Directors, teachers, volunteers and non-professional personnel, are required by Missouri law to report or cause to be reported, any actual and/or suspected instances of child abuse or neglect. The Diocesan policy for reporting child abuse or neglect is as follows:

- For suspected current or past abuse:
  - Call Missouri Child Abuse Hotline at 800-392-3738
  - Call local law enforcement or 911
- Call Jenifer Valenti at 816-812-2500 if the hotline call involves clergy, a diocesan employee or volunteer.
- Call Jenifer Valenti with concerns about signs of grooming or boundary violations.

Recruitment, Training, and Supervision of Volunteer Teachers

All volunteer teachers are recruited by the Director of Children’s Faith Formation. Training of teachers is handled by the Director. In addition, teachers are urged to attend Catechist Certification sessions as well as other training provided by the diocese. Each teacher meets with the Director to learn policies, instructional techniques, and background information.

Teachers are expected to prepare lessons, follow the curriculum, adhere to program policies, keep records of attendance, communicate with parents, attend teacher in-service meetings, and consult with the Director on a regular basis.

In keeping with Diocesan policy, all volunteers working with minors complete the Protecting God’s Children training program, complete a screening form which includes personal data; youth work references, and a request for criminal records check and authorization. Criminal background checks are not routinely run for volunteer teachers. All candidates for teaching positions are interviewed by the Director before being given classroom assignments. In most cases, our teachers work in teams with one or more other adult volunteers.
Our Textbooks and Curriculum:

Our textbook series is called Be My Disciples, published by RCL Benziger. The Subcommittee on the Catechism, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, has found the doctrinal content of our Catechist Manuals, copyright 2013, to be in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The textbook series is on Diocesan approved list of textbooks for Children’s Faith Formation.

Each textbook is comprised of twenty four basic lessons and several seasonal lessons. The Be My Disciples textbook series offers a spiral approach to learning our Catholic faith. The four pillars of the Catechism of the Catholic Church – Creed, Sacraments, Morality, and Prayer are taught every year at each grade level. This ensures that the beliefs of our faith are introduced to and reinforced for the young people as they grow, develop, and mature as Catholics. This method means that each year your child’s catechist (teacher) will build upon and reinforce what your child has learned previously in other grades.

Children’s Faith Formation is much more than simply “teaching religion”. While each lesson provides the children with a comprehensive understanding of our Catholic faith, we believe it just as important to learn how to live our faith and put our beliefs into action as it is to have a solid understanding of what we believe as Catholic. Each week children will be challenged to a deeper integration of faith and life by leading them to higher levels of thinking about their faith and encouraging a weekly faith choice. This important step will help the children to recognize that faith is not meant to be isolated or compartmentalized. Faith is meant to be lived. In addition, there are With My Family pages in each student book that will be sent home which offer faith summaries, activities, and suggestions for family prayer. BeMyDisciples.com offers additional support for parents’ and children’s faith formation.

For a complete list of topics covered in each grade visit www.bemydisciples.com. Look under the tab “Catechists/Teachers”. In the “Content Charts & Correlation” you will find charts that provide a quick overview of the saints covered in each grade level as well as the scope and sequence for each grade and chapter.

Our faith formation series for our seventh and eighth grade students is Visions published by Pflaum Gospel Weekly. Each weekly lesson brings the Gospel to life and life to the Gospel as it teaches both scripture and doctrine. It has been found to be in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church. For a complete list of topics covered visit the publishers website at www.pflaumweeklies.com.

Community Service

Our baptism calls us all to share in Christ’s mission as priest, prophet and king. As king we are called to serve others. All Children’s Faith Formation students are encouraged to do community service inside or outside of our parish. Children who complete 50 or more hours of service during the year will be eligible for the Presidential Volunteer Service Award to be given at the end of the year (Bronze award: 50-74 hours, Silver Award: 75-99 hours, Gold Award: 100+ hours). We do recognize all service of 1 hour or more with a certificate.

Children will have an opportunity during class to perform some of their service. Service hours may include but not limited to, making cards for the elderly or service men and women, being a greeter or altar server at Mass. Service is doing something for someone else and NOT receiving payment (cash or gift) for the job.
Protecting God’s Children

In September, 2002, the diocese began community education to teach the warning signs of abuse and to offer strategies for intervention. These workshops are open to the public and interested persons are encouraged to attend.

All priests, deacons, principals, teachers, coaches, youth ministers and volunteers who interact with children are required to attend the Protecting God’s Children workshop. This is the first step in protecting our children. The goal of Protecting God’s Children is to make adults more aware of the ways that children and adults interact, to learn the warning signs of abuse, to learn ways to prevent abuse, to learn strategies for handling suspicions of abuse, and to learn ways to respond to abuse.

For more information regarding Protecting God’s Children go to the diocesan website at www.diocese-kesj.org and click on Safe Environment.

Circle of Grace

All Catholic schools and churches are mandated to give ‘safe touch’ classes to our students. We use the Circle of Grace curriculum. Circle of Grace is the love and goodness of God that surrounds us and all others. It is the recognition that God is with us always and is here to help us in difficult situations. Through the Circle of Grace Program, adults assist children to recognize God’s love by understanding that each of us lives and moves within a Circle of Grace. Your Circle of Grace holds your very essence in body, mind, heart, soul, and sexuality. This is taught in a visual and real way by the following meditative prayer. One can demonstrate this prayer and ponder its profound simplicity.

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<tr>
<th>Imagine:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raising your hands above your head and then bringing your arms slowly down keeping them outstretched.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extending your arms in front of you and then behind you embracing all of the space around you knowing that God is in this space with you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then slowly reach down to your feet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is your Circle of Grace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are in it.</td>
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Because this concept includes all senses it allows children to identify uncomfortable situations long before inappropriate touch may occur. The Circle of Grace program teaches children to seek help from a trusted adult, reinforcing God’s presence in their real life struggles. It will educate and empower children to actively participate in a safe environment for themselves and others.

Objectives of the Circle of Grace Program

- Children will understand they are created by God and live in the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Children will be able to describe the Circle of Grace which God gives each of us.
- Children will be able to identify and maintain appropriate physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual boundaries.
- Children can identify all types of boundary violations.
- Children will demonstrate how to take action if any boundary is threatened or violated.
Parental Responsibilities in Children’s Faith Formation

Parents have the primary responsibility for their children’s faith formation. This is a duty that parents must take seriously. Faith Formation classes are provided by the parish to help parents in this task and to supplement the children’s basic faith formation which occurs within the home environment. It is important for parents to:

- Help your child arrive on time and attend class regularly each week.
- Help your child remember to take her/his folder to class each week.
- Follow arrival and dismissal procedures as outlined in this handbook.
- Read all materials and notices sent home with your child. Look in his/her folder each week for important updates.
- Engage your child in discussions of the topics covered in class.
- Read the Parish Bulletin for activities, question of the week and discussion topics the lesson at home.
- Check on your child’s progress toward the faith concepts listed at www.bemydisciples.com
- Keep in contact with your child’s teacher by telephone, email or by occasionally stopping by your child’s classroom.
- Support the teacher by reinforcing positive classroom reports by cooperating with any discipline procedures outlined in this handbook.
- Practice our traditional Catholic prayers and means of worship as a family. Pray together daily. Attend Mass weekly.
- Make use of supplemental material, such as the weekly Children’s Bulletin which is available after Mass each week.
- Attend parent meetings and sacramental preparation sessions.
- Notify the Children’s Faith Formation office of any special needs your child has regarding learning, behavior, emotional stress, etc.
- Be available to help with special classroom events or program projects: room parent, field trips, host hospitality room, hall monitors, etc.

A Note from the Children’s Faith Formation Office:

This booklet was prepared to inform you of current policies in our Children’s Faith Formation Program. Policies are reviewed on an annual basis but may be amended as needed. Please keep this booklet for future reference. Address comments or concerns to the Director of Children’s Faith Formation, Jo Engert.

Our Lady of the Presentation Catholic Church
Children’s Faith Formation Office
Jo Engert, Director - 251-1135
Diana Hennessey, Assistant – 251-1146