

St. Joseph Child & Youth Faith Formation



Handbook 2023-2024



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Welcome

Well, here we are, welcome to a new year of faith formation at St. Joseph's. I am so excited to have you join us. Before I get too far ahead of myself, my name is Colleen Rooney, and I am the Director of Child & Youth Faith Formation here at St. Joe's. Here is a little bit about myself. I am no stranger to ministry. I served as Youth Minister and DRE in Racine County for 11 years, and then took some time off to go back to school to get my MBA and principal license. I am returning to ministry closer to home after 3 years in school leadership. I am a proud Tosa resident and enjoying spending time with my daughter, Avah, and dog, Roscoe. I look forward to bringing my passion for education and my Catholic Faith to St. Joseph.

First and foremost, I want to acknowledge the many transitions St. Joseph's religious education program has had. I understand the frequent transitions of ministers, and thus, philosophies and ministry styles, takes a toll on the program. My goal this year is twofold: bring some continuity to the program and revitalize the youth ministry component. I hope to build a calendar that involves the entire family and accounts for the holistic faith formation: catechesis, service, sacraments, prayer opportunities, and retreat. Oh and did I mention we are going on a mission trip summer 2024! Get excited! It is important to me that our children can meet Jesus in community and deepen their spiritual journey with the Lord with a comprehensive faith formation program. I value parent partnership and look forward to serving alongside you. Thank you, parents, for living the baptismal promise you made and bringing your children to Mass and formation despite changes.

This handbook contains A LOT of information. Please take the time to read it. The majority of questions I am asked have answers in this handbook. I have worked very hard to provide a comprehensive resource for parents, students and catechists on program policies and procedures so that we can ALL be on the same page. I am a firm believer in providing all of the information to everyone up front and then letting them make their own decisions. If you need more clarification on something please reach out and ask.

Lastly, but certainly not least, this program is for ALL members of our St. Joseph community. I have high expectations for our families to participate in the program this year so that we can build a better St. Joe's community. I am excited to have a fabulous year!

Sincerely,
Colleen Rooney
Director of Child & Youth Faith Formation

Contacts

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Mission/Objectives

1. To teach the Message contained in Scripture, Revelation and Catholic Tradition in order to help the children build the foundation of knowledge on which a mature religious decision may one day be made. The content for this program follows the Catechism of the Catholic Church.
2. To try and make children aware of the responsibilities which arise from their relationship with God and others by teaching them the Mission of the Church and providing opportunities for them to be of service to others.
3. To provide opportunities to pray and worship through a variety of prayer forms and liturgies.
4. To provide resources for parents to assist them in their responsibilities for the Christian development of their children.

Class Schedules

Grades K4-11: These classes meet 2-3 times a month Sunday from 9:00-10:15am beginning the first Sunday after Labor Day until the end beginning of May.

Students who attend a Catholic High School are not required to attend classes their Freshman and Sophomore years, although they are more than welcome, but must attend their Junior year.

Event Information

We are excited to have various events throughout the year. All students are expected to attend classes as well as participate in our events.

Classes

Religious Education Classes are the foundation of our program. They take place on select Sundays throughout the year. See below for who is teaching what grades and their locations. Please note that some classes will take place in the parish center this year.

Grade	Teacher(s)	Location
Pre K/Kindergarten	Rachel Kucharski Mike Kucharski	Extended Care Room (School)
1 st Grade	Emma Barbian Jennifer Mendoza	112 (school)
2 nd Grade – First Sacraments	Liz Allbright Janelle Holmes	106 (School) Or 109???
3 rd & 4 th Grades	Gini Barbian Andrea Gerke	108 (school)
5 th & 6 th Grades	Elizabeth Alberg Bob Haas	107 (school)
7 th & 8 th Grades	Larry Barbian Jennifer Grosschadl	Library (school) Or 115/16???
9 th & 10 th Grades	Ann Higgins	St. Joseph Room (UL of Parish Center)
11 th Grade – Confirmation	Tom Silman Laurie LaCoursiere	Youth Den (LL of Parish Center)

Youth Masses—beginning Sunday October 8

We will have youth Masses again this year. They are held once a month at the 10:30am. Mass. Each Mass has been a grade to "lead" Mass. Students from assigned grade(s) will be lectors, ushers, greeters, gift bearers or choir members. I will send a form out to each grade a month prior to Mass for the names of the kiddos who will be leading. We are excited to see all of our youth in attendance at youth Masses.

Catechetical Sunday—9/17

This is the time when we bless the teachers and catechists who are part of our community. It will be celebrated at the 10:30am Mass on Sunday, September 17th.

St. John Bosco Youth Day- 9/30

The event will be held at Holy Hill and is open to any 6th through 11th grade students from 10am-6pm. The retreat is included in your tuition. If a middle or high school students cannot make their grade levels schedule retreat, they are expected to attend St. John Bosco Youth Day. Also, Confirmation students can attend this event to count toward a spiritual activity. Participants must plan on staying for the entire duration of the event. Pick up and drop off is at Basilica and National Shrine of Mary, Help of Christians at Holy Hill 1525 Carmel Rd. Hubertus, WI 53033. Please bring a bagged lunch. Please register by Sunday September 24th by calling the parish office.

Middle School Retreat—10/24

This retreat will be held at St. Joe's and is for **any and all** middle school (6th-8th) students. This retreat is included in your tuition. All middle school students are expected to attend. They are welcome and encouraged to invite their friends to join as well. Friends do not need to be a part of the church. NET ministries will be leading it. They are phenomenal. Registration is needed (by 10/8) to adequately plan for food, and chaperones.

Family Reconciliation- 12/14

One way to prepare our hearts for Jesus during the Advent season is to attend the sacrament of Reconciliation. Families should plan on attending the sacrament of Reconciliation on Thursday December 14th from 6 to 730pm.

High School Retreat—4/20

This retreat will be held at Casa Romero Renewal Center and is for any students currently in high school. All high school students registered for rec classes are expected to participate (unless they attended St. John Bosco Youth Day). They are welcome and encouraged to invite their friends to join as well. This retreat is included in your tuition. It will be held on Saturday April 20th from 8am to 9pm. Drop off site is TBD but will be in the Metro Milwaukee area. Pick up is at 9pm at Casa Romero: 423 W Bruce St, Milwaukee, WI 53204. Lunch and dinner will be provided.

Policy & Procedure

Attendance

We are excited to have students participate in our program. We expect them to attend all classes and events. Our catechists put time and energy into building relationships and making sure that classes are meaningful. Attendance is recorded. We understand that family emergencies and illness will come up. While we want students to attend all classes, we also understand that families and students have other obligations. We ask that you make every effort possible to be present for all classes given that our classes do not meet every weekend. However, students are allowed to miss 2 classes with prior notice to the director and an understanding that make up work will be completed. If students miss more than 2 classes, they will need to attend an in person make up session with the director. Please understand that make up work is not a replacement for the authentic dialogue and prayer experiences that come for class. Please contact Colleen to report absences and receive class make-up information.

Class Placement

If a child is entering the program for the first time and is enrolling in a grade where a sacrament is received (2nd - Reconciliation and 1st Communion, 11th – Confirmation) and he/she was not in a religious education program/Catholic school the previous year, he/she will be placed in Grade 1 or 10 respectively, so that they can receive sufficient religious training before receiving the sacrament.

Dress Code

Because of the importance of certain events, there is a dress code for them. If there are any questions about an outfit, please reach out to Colleen.

Youth Masses

Student leaders of youth Masses should follow the dress code below.

Boys: Khaki or dress pants, collared shirt and dress shoes.

Girls: Dresses or skirts should be knee length or longer. Wide straps and modest necklines.

Confirmation

Candidates for confirmation need to follow the dress code below.

Boys: Dress pants, button down shirts, and dress shoes. Jackets and ties are optional, but encouraged.

Girls: Dresses of knee length or longer, with modest necklines. No tennis shoes. Cardigans, or sweaters are encouraged in order to cover bare shoulders.

First Communion

First communicants need to follow the dress code below. Please remember that students will be holding lit candles and gloves must be removed in order to receive communion.

Boys: Dress pants, button down shirts, and dress shoes. Jackets and ties are optional, but encouraged.

Girls: Dresses of knee length or longer, with modest necklines. Vails, and gloves are acceptable.

Cell Phones

Students who have cell phones, should NOT be using them during class. Cell phones must be turned off and out of sight for class. If it becomes an issue, a conversation will be had with the student and parent. Catechists should never be texting students.

Drop Off

Please do not arrive any earlier than 10 minutes before class begins. Please park, and walk with your child to their classroom.

Early Dismissal

If a parent wishes to have their child(ren) dismissed early for any reason, they must present their request in writing to the Director. If a student is absent for 30 minutes or more of a class, it will count as a full day absence. If a student regularly leaves class early, he or she may be asked to complete make up work and/or meet with the director to review material. No teacher is to dismiss his or her class before the end of class time.

Communication

Electronic weekly newsletters will be shared that highlight upcoming important dates and sign-ups for events. Please read these to stay up-to-date on faith formation happenings. Sign-ups for service projects should be done through email or a phone call to the parish office.

Cancellation

If we cancel due to weather, it will be shared on the parish app, emailed and shared with local news.

Illness

If your child is ill, please have them stay home. We have students from over 10 different schools. We do not want to share illness. If your child must stay home, I will be happy to email you the lesson for you to review with your child.

Disruptive Behavior

No child will be allowed to disrupt a class. If a child is disruptive, they will be removed from class to the office. Parents will be notified of their child's removal from class. If a child is removed from a classroom three times, upon review of the situation with the parents/guardians, he/she may be removed/suspended from the Religious Education Program for the remainder of the year. If the student wishes to reenter the program the following year, he/she must repeat the grade level from which he/she was removed.

Safe Environment

Safeguarding All God's Children (Adult SE)

The information below is directly from the Archdiocese in regards to Safe Environment.

Promise to Protect, Pledge to Heal

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee is committed to maintaining safe environments for children to learn, pray, and grow. Our Safe Environment Office supports our parishes and schools and maintains the compliance of our archdiocese in our Promise to Protect, Pledge to Heal.

Every priest, deacon, parish or school staff member, teacher and lay minister that is employed by a parish or school and any volunteer working with minors in our archdiocese is required to meet three requirements:

1-Attend a Safe Environment Education Session. This is a child abuse and maltreatment prevention program that must be attended in person. The current curriculum taught in this session is Circle of Grace by the Archdiocese of Omaha.

2-Pass a Criminal Background Check. This check is done at the start of employment or beginning volunteering with minors and must be done every five (5) years subsequently. The criminal background check is conducted through the CMG Connect portal. The criminal background check reports are reviewed and certified through the collaboration of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee Safe Environment Office and parish/school Safe Environment coordinators.

3-Sign the Code of Ethical Standards for Church Leaders Link to Code of Ethical Standards. This code of conduct provides volunteers and employees with expectations and guidelines for how they interact with and conduct themselves in ministry. This code must be signed prior to beginning volunteering or working in a parish or school and is reviewed every five (5) years subsequently.

As Catholics, we are all tasked with participating in ensuring that every child is able to feel safe in our parishes and schools. In addition to our safe environment requirements for adults, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee requires all parish religious education programs and Catholic schools to provide instruction on personal safety and abuse prevention in age-appropriate lessons for all children in grades kindergarten through twelfth grade enrolled in their programs. Parishes and schools are required to annually report their compliance with this requirement.

We invite you to explore what we are doing at the archdiocesan level, at the parish level, and what we ask of every adult in our parishes to do to help us maintain a Safe Environment to remember our past, protect our present and hope for our future.

Circle of Grace (Child SE)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ;

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee is committed to creating environments that foster our children and young people to live, learn, and grow in their faith, we recognize the importance of complying with the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. As stated in the Charter, each diocese is required to create a "safe environment program" for all children and young people participating in parishes and schools of that diocese.

Since 2005, the children and youth in our Catholic schools and religious education programs have been receiving lessons regarding how to recognize behaviors or situations that make them uncomfortable and how to react when they feel unsafe, these lessons serve to provide the framework to develop the language and skills to start the conversation between children and adults on safety.

Starting July 1, 2020, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee will be providing the Circle of Grace curriculum created by the Archdiocese of Omaha for use in our parishes and schools. As the Archbishop of Milwaukee, I approve and promulgate the use of the Circle of Grace curriculum in our parish religious education programs and our Catholic schools.

The grade level safe environment lessons from Circle of Grace are conducted, in conjunction with our adult safe environment training program that requires all adults to be trained in how to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect, maintain appropriate boundaries with minors, and how to respond when an adult suspects abuse or misconduct.

I am pleased to report that these lessons are working to help start conversations in our parishes, schools, communities, and homes on how we can work together as Catholics and members of the larger communities we serve to prevent child abuse.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Most Reverend Jerome E. ListECKI
Archbishop of Milwaukee

Curriculum

The topics for our classes come directly from the Grade-Specific Religious Education Curriculum set by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Please take a look at the following pages in regards to what your child/children will be learning about this year. If you have any questions, please reach out to Colleen.

K-4 Curriculum

Our K through 4 grade students will be using Loyola Press Finding Guide. The units of study cover God, Our Creator and Father, Jesus: Our Lord and Savior, The Church, Our Community and Spirit, Sacrament, Our Way of Life, and Morality, Our Lived Faith. Children engage with core catechetical content in greater depth and detail as they grow as missionary Disciples of Christ.

5-8 Curriculum

The middle school students will be using St. Mary's Press: Connect. This program is a three year cycle and each year the depth of study grows. There are four areas of study each year: Creed, Liturgy and Sacraments, Christian Morality and Justice, and Prayer.

Additionally, students in the 7th/8th grade will study Theology of the Body. This 8 part Chasity program reflects the pedagogical approach of St. John Paul II's revolutionary teaching. This is NOT a sex ed course, but rather it is a dynamic program that allows students to reflect on their identity and be in right relationship with self and others.

High School Curriculum

Our 9th/10th grade students will be using Loyola Press Called to Be Catholic and Ascension Press Venture: A Bible Timeline for High School Students. The Called to Be Catholic series allows students to better understand the rituals and teaching of the Catholic Church as initial preparation for Confirmation. Venture allows students to further develop a personal relationship with Jesus as students better understand Jesus's words in Sacred Scripture.

Sacraments

Preparing to receive a sacrament is a big deal. We strive to support all students in their faith journey and knowledge of the sacrament. Sacramental preparation requires time and commitment outside of regular Sunday classes. It is nearly impossible to teach the grade level catechesis and the rituals, symbols, and importance of the sacrament solely during Sunday classes. Please see each sacrament below for additional sacramental preparation. Participants will be handed a sacramental handbook with more specifics.

First Communion & Reconciliation

Students prepare to receive first reconciliation and first Holy Communion beginning in September. They utilize a book duo from Loyola Press called God's Gift Reconciliation and God's Gift the Eucharist. In addition to class attendance, they have the below other requirements.

- Attendance at retreats
- Attendance at all youth Masses
- Attendance at rehearsals
- Receive Reconciliation week prior to First Eucharist
- Complete at home lessons

If there is an issue with adherence to any of these pieces, please contact Colleen.

Confirmation

Students prepare to receive the sacrament of confirmation starting in September. They use a program called Confirmed in the Spirit by Loyola Press coupled with video and discussion from Ascension Press: Chosen. They work through this program with their teachers during class time. In addition to class attendance, they have the below other requirements.

- Attendance at Confirmation retreat
- Attendance at all youth Masses
- Complete 4 service projects in approved categories
- Complete spiritual activity
- Attendance at mass with completion of mass log
- Attendance at Confirmation Candidate/Sponsor Workshop
- Receive Reconciliation a week prior to receiving Confirmation
- Complete a Confirmation Interview

If there is an issue with adherence to any of these pieces, please contact Colleen.

RCIC (Rite of Christian Initiation of Children)

If your child is not baptized, and is over the age of 8, they go thru a program called RCIC. For more information, please contact Dennis Sylva.

First Reconciliation- 12/16

The sacrament of Reconciliation will take place on Saturday December 16th at 10am. Students should arrive by 9:50.

Confirmation—4/22

The sacrament of confirmation will take place on Saturday, April 22nd 2023 at 10:00am. Students are required to arrive by 9:30am. There is no restriction on how many people may attend to witness this sacrament. Further details will be communicated as the year goes on.

First Communion—4/28

The sacrament of First Holy Communion will take place on Sunday, April 28th 2024 within the 10:30am Mass. This is a beautiful, event and should be celebrated within our community. There is no restriction on how many people may attend to witness this sacrament. Further details will be communicated as the year goes on.

Service

Our faith teaches that service to others is of utmost importance. In an effort to encourage service, all students are expected to serve in some way at school, at church and in the community. Please see the comprehensive service calendar for projects. Read newsletter for more information.

Volunteer

We have been blessed with people who have stepped up to teach classes. However, in order to have all types of other events, we need volunteers to help. If you would be interested in helping with one event, or assisting with classes, please contact Colleen. We would love to have you as part of our team who is building the faith community of St. Joe's and supporting our children's faith journeys.

Faith Formation Committee

I eagerly invite any of you to be a part of the faith formation committee. The faith formation committee exists to support the faith development of St. Joe's thru the programming from the adult, youth and child ministries. We meet on the first Wednesday of every month from 6:30pm to around 8:00pm. We do have an option to video call in if needed. So if anyone has an idea of something they would want to see happen at St. Joe's in any way, please come share those with us. If you don't want to commit, but you still want to share your idea, you are welcome to come to one meeting. Otherwise you are welcome to share it with me and I will be happy to bring it to the committee.