

2023-2024
Christian Formation
Family Handbook

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St. Agnes Christian Formation 2023-2024

Dear Parents,

Welcome to another exciting year of Christian Formation!

I hope you and your family had an enjoyable summer and this letter finds you all doing well. Enclosed you will find the Christian Formation Handbook for the 2023-2024 formation year.

We start our Christian Formation year with our tradition Kick-off Potluck on September 10. All families, K3-12th grade, are invited to join us for food and fellowship. As in the past there will also be an opportunity for you and your child(ren) to meet their catechists.

The in-person class sessions for ALL students will begin on Sunday September 17 from 9:00 – 10:15 AM *except Confirmation*. The Confirmation program will begin with the student/sponsor/parent orientation meeting in Kemp Hall on Sunday September 24.

We thank you all for your continued support and involvement in our Christian Formation program. I look forward to another year of working together to provide our children and youth with opportunities to learn and grow as more committed followers of Jesus Christ and more engaged members of the Church.

In Christ,

Shelly Fellin
Christian Formation Coordinator

Foundations for Child and Youth Ministry

GRADES 3K THROUGH CONFIRMATION

Jesus entrusted his mission, his Good News, to the Church. Through formation and education, the Church prepares its members to proclaim the Good News and put it into action in their lives. The efforts of the Church form persons in community. Our educational ministry includes these dimensions:



- ❖ **Word** the message revealed by God
- ❖ **Worship** prayer and sacramental life
- ❖ **Community** fellowship in the Holy Spirit
- ❖ **Service** within the community and to the whole human family

Sunday Mass is the most important gathering of the Christian community. At Mass, Christian Formation happens for all ages, especially during the homily and during the Liturgy of the Word for children. More worship experiences are provided through prayer in classrooms, prayer services, reconciliation services, retreats and family programs.

“Community is at the heart of Christian education not simply as a concept to be taught, but as a reality to be lived.” Children and youth will learn the meaning of community through education and by experiencing it. Ways to experience community could include the following examples: participation in parish activities, the Sam Beres Memorial Walk/Run, Drama Club, youth outings, athletics and Mission trips. Formed by their experiences, children will be able to build community in their families, their places of work, their neighborhoods, their nation and the world.

The experience of Christian community leads naturally to service. *At the Last Supper Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. He said, “You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘master,’ and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.” (Jn13:13-15).* Parents are encouraged to include younger children in service opportunities. Youth (grades 6-11) are expected to complete service hours (see page 8, no. 4).

Sacramental Preparation

From the moment of Baptism, a child becomes a member of a new and larger family, the Christian community. This community follows Jesus who is *“the way, the truth, and the life.”* Joined to others in common faith, hope and love, the child grows within the Body of Christ. Families preparing for the Baptism of an infant should contact the parish office to register for a parent session. Once baptized, the child’s faith is fostered by the domestic church, which is the family. **By participating in the Eucharist with the family the child will grow in faith with the greater community of the Church.** The child completes the Sacraments of Initiation with the reception of Confirmation in high school.

PREPARATION FOR RECONCILIATION AND EUCHARIST

When children reach second grade the Church invites them to approach the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. A child's formation for these sacraments takes place within their family and the parish community. Children are prepared not only for their "first" experience of these sacraments, but for a lifetime of being forgiven in the sacrament of Reconciliation and being fed with the Eucharist. See the St. Agnes website under "Sacraments-Eucharist" for more information.

PREPARATION AND ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH CONFIRMATION (GRADES 11 OR 12)

Within the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Confirmation is normally celebrated during the junior year of high school. The candidates are challenged and called to make a commitment to life as a disciple of Christ. This process provides a framework for the candidate to explore their beliefs and questions regarding faith and the church. Specific requirements and guidelines are gone over at an annual orientation meeting, which is usually held in the spring of their 10th grade year. See the St. Agnes website under "Sacraments-Confirmation" for more information.

Christian Formation Policies and Procedures

ENROLLMENT

Enrollment in the programs listed are primarily for the active registered, members of St. Agnes Parish. The parish reserves the right to cancel any program if we cannot recruit sufficient staff. Any non-parishioner families who are practicing Catholics are welcome to register for any program on a first-come, first-serve basis with letter of consent from your pastor.

STEWARDSHIP REQUIREMENTS

All families enrolled in Christian Formation are expected to be listed as "Active" members in the parish database. This means that they are officially registered as parish members and are current with submitting the annual parish pledge card fulfilling their Stewardship commitment of "treasure" to the parish. Families that do not fulfill this status are charged a higher, non-parishioner registration fee for Christian Formation enrollment.

In addition to fulfilling the "treasure" commitment of Stewardship, the parents of each family enrolled in Christian Formation are expected to fulfill a **minimum of 10 hours of service** within the parish per year as a way of fulfilling their "time and talent" commitment. All parents of youth who are participating in sports are expected to help in concessions or collect money at the door.

The hours can be fulfilled by helping in any parish activity, function, ministry or organization that occurs within normal parish life. It is the family's responsibility to report their service hours in writing to the Christian Formation office either with their own written

description or via email. **Please report all hours served, not just the minimum, so the parish gets an idea of how many volunteer hours sustain our programs.**

CLASS COMPLETION & DISCIPLINE

Participants in the Christian Formation programs are expected to attend all sessions. Participants are expected to be prepared to begin on time and stay for the entire session. **Parents should contact the Christian Formation Office to inform us of any absences – anticipated or unexpected.** *Missing class limits what the individuals can gain from the program and greatly affects the other participants in that class.* Any missing classwork needs to be completed to fulfill session obligation. Students who fail to actively and positively participate in the scheduled classes will receive a grade of “Incomplete” for that class. Positive participation includes completion of homework assignments, being a contributing part of any class discussion, and showing Christian respect for both the teacher and the other students in the class.

The parents of any student showing inappropriate behavior will be contacted by the teacher by phone or email. If a student is dismissed from the class due to inappropriate behavior, he/she will be restricted from returning until the parents have contacted the teacher or Christian Formation Coordinator to discuss the reasons for dismissal. Students who are dismissed from their room a second time will be suspended until the parents have shown that the student can become a positive addition to the class during a conference with the Christian Formation Coordinator and teacher. *Christian respect for others includes basic good manners! Teachers will expect good manners in all activities.* **Disruption of class, abusive language to anyone or destruction of property will not be tolerated.**

SPECIAL POLICIES FOR PRESCHOOL STUDENTS

We have a very special concern for students in these grades. Because of their age, they are very vulnerable and easily confused. We need to limit the distractions during class and ensure the safety of the child at all times. These procedures will help serve these needs:

1. Parents need to introduce themselves to the teachers! The volunteer catechist needs to be able to put a face with a name. That way they will be able to keep you up to date on your child's progress and know which child belongs to which parent!
2. Parents are to bring their child to the door of the classroom and pick the child up at the classroom. If an older child is going to regularly help with this task, the parents should introduce that child to the teacher. If anyone else is going to be picking up the child, the parent is responsible for informing the teacher ahead of time. This is simply to ensure that no child is left behind or leaves with a person without the parent knowing.
3. Parents or others should not linger in the hallway before or after classes. Preschool children can be easily distracted by a parent waiting for them. In order for the catechist to maintain good order in the room, please wait at the end of the hall until the classroom door is opened.

SPECIAL POLICIES FOR YOUTH MINISTRY

1. Retreat activities offer a special opportunity for formation that is diverse, unique and creative. All Christian Formation students are required to attend their grade level retreat. **If a student does not participate in their scheduled retreat experience, they will be expected to attend another retreat experience or complete a make-up assignment.** It will be their responsibility to coordinate the scheduling of a make-up retreat.
2. Active participation in all class sessions is expected of all students. If a student is unable to attend class, they are to check with their teacher to find out what they missed and complete the make-up work. An excessive amount of absences and unfinished work will lead to "Incomplete" status for the class. Students are not credited with "Complete" status unless they have satisfactorily completed the required work.
3. Students may be prohibited from participation in the St. Agnes Drama Club and any St. Agnes athletic programs (including CYM) if they do not maintain the academic, behavioral and attendance standards outlined in those organizations' guidelines or if they do not achieve "Complete" status on their Christian Formation progress report for a prior semester of the program, including from one program year to the next. **If requested, parents must verify that the student is maintaining the minimum grade point average required according to the guidelines of the organization.**
4. Students are expected to complete a certain number of service hours: Grades 6-8 – 10 hours per year; Grades 9 & 10 – 20 hours per year; Confirmation – 35 hours. Students should report their hours to their catechist or the Christian Formation Office once per semester. The service hour requirement is considered a component of the required work for each grade level. Therefore, students must fulfill the required number of hours to merit "Complete" status for that year.

CANCELLATION OF CLASSES

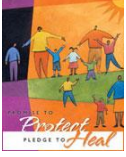
If severe weather or another emergency causes classes to be canceled, the announcement will be made over television Channel 4 (TMJ4) and radio stations WTMJ - 620 AM & 94.5 LAKE FM. These stations require a code word to include the cancellation on their lists – so if you hear it there, it's a fact!

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

St. Agnes Parish, on its own, has very limited resources available to assist students with special needs. With close cooperation with parents, we have been able to serve those families who would not be appropriately served by our regular programs. Please contact the Christian Formation Coordinator to begin a discussion that will help your family.

For More information about our specific Christian Formation Ministries please see our Parish website under "Formation"

Safe Environment Education Session



Parents and parishioners who plan to volunteer in the future to work with children and youth are required to receive this training BEFORE beginning. All volunteers must complete the *Safe Environment Education session, sign off on a related document and undergo a background check* in order to be involved. Interested persons can register in advance on the archdiocesan website:

<http://www.archmil.org/offices/safeguarding.htm>

Christian Formation Committee

It is the mission of the Christian Formation committee to provide Catholic Christian Formation processes that invite all members of our parish community to grow in their Baptismal Commitment. The Christian Formation committee supports a lifelong commitment to spiritual growth through community interaction, study, prayer, sacramental celebrations and service. We strive for productive relationships between students, families, catechists and staff.

The Christian Formation Committee is responsible to:

- Assist in the development of the long-range plans for Christian education/formation of the parish, providing for a comprehensive approach for all ages and stages in life.
- Identify parish needs regarding Christian education/formation programs.
- Develop and recommend to the Pastoral council educational/formational policies that are consistent with Archdiocesan policies and guidelines.
- Determine budget priorities in the areas of the committee's responsibilities and make recommendations to the Finance council.
- Develop sources of revenue for the operations of the educational/formational programs in conformity with parish policies and in collaboration with program administrators.
- Advise the pastor/administrator in defining the roles, responsibilities and relationships (job descriptions) of the educational administrators and regarding educational/formational programs. Committee members may serve on search, grievance or conciliation committees.
- Facilitate communication and coordination among all educational/formational programs for the parish by reporting to the Pastoral council, the parish community, the district and the Archdiocese.



2023-2024 RCIA/Adult Faith Formation

Adult Faith Formation sessions are available throughout the formation year. We schedule sessions according to the needs of the individual (in regards to RCIA formation) or the schedule of the facilitator with special attention to other activities sheduled at the parish. Watch for specific dates and times on the parish website or in the parish bulletin. Please contact the Christian Formation to begin the process of RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation) or for any other inquiry for adult faith formation.