



St. Mary's
Of The
Lake

Family Handbook

2025-2026

Faith Formation Program Year



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Welcome Letter

Dear Parents,

I am truly excited to embark on this wonderful journey of faith with you and your family this year. As we begin, I want to emphasize that our mission goes beyond teaching facts, history, and knowledge of our Catholic faith—though these are certainly important. Our larger goal is to help your child fall in love with Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! It is our hope that your child will come to know Him personally and make the heartfelt choice to follow Him as a lifelong disciple.

Jesus desires that each of us experiences true happiness here on earth and one day, eternal joy with Him in Heaven. By following His way of love, we not only grow as disciples ourselves but also make the world a better place, sharing His joy and love with everyone we encounter.

Our program is designed to be creative, relevant, and fun! We are committed to providing an experience that is both engaging and age-appropriate, where your child can learn and grow in their relationship with Christ. Faith, at its core, is all about relationships, and we believe that every child's journey with Jesus began at Baptism and will continue throughout their lives. We are thrilled to be a part of this ongoing journey with you and your child this year.

In this packet, you will find all the details you need for the upcoming year. If at any time you have questions, concerns, or simply want to connect, please don't hesitate to reach out! You are always welcome to visit or call our office during office hours, and you can email me as well. I am here to support you and walk this journey of faith alongside you.

Thank you for the faith foundation you have already given your child. May God continue to bless you and your family as we grow together in Christ's love.

With peace and love,

Victoria Wejko
Director of Faith Formation



Mission Statement:

Our mission is to inspire children and teens to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ through creative, relevant, and engaging programs. Recognizing that faith is rooted in relationships and begins at Baptism, we are committed to supporting each child on their lifelong journey of faith. We strive to provide age-appropriate, fun, and meaningful experiences, walking alongside families as they continue to deepen their connection to Christ.

Faith Formation Covenant

01 Parish

St. Mary's Of The Lake recognizes the importance of the ongoing journey of faith formation. We promise to support and guide you through this process. In order to accomplish this, we commit to:

- Support you with the materials and information necessary for the preparation program.
- Communicate with you and be available to listen, answer questions and reflect on where the process is taking you.
- The program coordinators, catechists, parish staff, and the parish community will pray for you and your fellow companions so that you may continue to grow in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- The program coordinators, catechists, and program team are here to help you grow in your awareness of how the Holy Spirit is active in your life.

02 Student

I recognize the importance my ongoing journey of faith formation is to help me know God and my Catholic faith. I understand that this is a process of ongoing faith formation, at this point in my journey I will:

- Seek a closer relationship with God and with my peers in the group.
- Develop a better understanding of the Catholic Faith.
- Grow in faith, ponder difficult life questions, and be open to God.

In order to accomplish this, to the best of my ability and with God's help, I commit to:

- Respect, honor and grow with those in my community of faith /small group/class.
- Attend my sessions, be open to what I am learning and actively participate in the program.
- I will follow the rules and guidelines that the program coordinators, catechists, and program team inform me of.
- Faithfully attend the celebration of Sunday Mass and to pray for openness to the Holy Spirit in my life.

03 Parent

I recognize the importance of standing with my child throughout this graced time in their life. To help them through this process, I commit to:

- Supporting my child through their faith journey through encouragement in word and deed.
- Faithfully attend the celebration of Sunday Mass.
- Help them to attend and participate in all required sessions.
- Continue to pray for openness to the Holy Spirit in my own life and in the life of my child seeking confirmation.
- Continue to be a positive role model in my own Christian Walk.



Each class will begin and end with prayer. Depending on grade level, students will learn the different forms of prayer: praise, petition, thanksgiving and contrition. These prayers can be found in the Catholic Prayers section of your children's textbook. We encourage parents to say these prayers with their children every day.

Program Routines

Class Times

In Person Pre-K through 8th Grade: 1st and 3rd Sunday morning of each month from 9:00-10:00am. (Note: No School on Monday = No Formation the Sunday before).

Family Based: Families gather once a month, on the last Sunday of the Month from 5:30-7:00pm (including a potluck meal).

Confirmation 2 (9th grade): Immediate preparation will take place on the 1st Sunday evening of the month from 6:00-7:30 pm (including a potluck meal).

Drop off and Pick up Parking

When you arrive, please use the Austin Street parking lot only, unless you are attending the 10:15am Mass. Please do not block or park your car at the covered entrance.

Dismissal

All Grades will be dismissed to the Parish Center escorted by their teacher. Please meet your child in this area, even if you are attending Mass at 10:15 am. Please let the office know if you would prefer for your older child to pick up younger child for dismissal.

Arrival & Sign In

When you arrive, please bring your child into the building at the covered entrance and sign-in. There are sign-in sheets for each grade. After signing in you may accompany your child to their classroom if you wish.

Walkers / Carpooling

If your child will walk or carpool to faith formation with non-family members, a parent/guardian must complete and sign the Walk and Carpool Permission form. This form must be signed annually and is available on our website. Please use the Carpooling form for any changes in who may pick up your child and note on sign in sheet when dropping child off.

2025–2026 Faith Formation Schedule

Pre K to 8th Grade Classes 9–10 AM 1st & 3rd Sunday of the Month

September 21
October 5, 19
November 2, 16
December 7 (No Class 12/21)
January 4 (No Class 1/18)
February 1 (No Class 2/15)
March 1, 15
April 19 (No Class 4/5)
May 3, 17
June 7 (Last Class)

Parent Meetings

September 14 & June 7
@ 9 am In Parish Center

Special Events Open to All

September 21– Chicken BBQ
October 5–Blessing of the Pets
following 10:15 am Mass
October 26–Trunk or Treat
November 30– Advent Wreath
Making
December 6 & 7– St. Nicholas visits all
Masses (Bring a Shoe to fill)
December 17– Christmas Pageant
April 4– Easter Egg Hunt
May 3 @ 8 pm Mass– May Crowning
May 16 & 17– First Communion @
Weekend Masses
June 6 & 7– Baccalaureate Masses
@ Weekend Masses

Confirmation 2 (9th Grade) 6:00–7:30 pm

September 14 (With Parent)
October 5
November 2
December 7
January 4
February 1
March 1
April & May TBA–based on
Confirmation Day

Confirmation 1 & 2 Retreat

November 22

Family Based 5:30–7:00pm

September 28 (Parent Kick Off Meeting)
October 26 (Trunk or Treat)
November 30 (Advent Wreath Making)
December (No Session)
January 25
February (No Session)
March (Join us for Holy Week)
April 26
May 31 (Final Session)



Health and Safety



Illness & Absences

Please do not bring your child to class if they are not feeling well. If your child will miss a faith formation class, please email us at stmarysff@syrdio.org

Special Needs

If your child has any special needs including physical, sensory, cognitive, or social / emotional disabilities please let us know so we can better serve your child. We will make every effort to accommodate a child with special needs.

Volunteers

Volunteers are always welcome! Parents may volunteer in a number of ways including as a teacher or teacher's aide, hall monitors, substitute teacher or aid, administrative help, and/or setting up for special occasions. All volunteers must attend a VIRTUS training session held by the Diocese of Syracuse. It is a requirement of the Diocese of Syracuse that no adult can be in the classroom without being VIRTUS trained. The VIRTUS training schedule is published on the Diocese of Syracuse's website or you can email us for info.

Classroom Doors

All classroom doors will be locked during class time.

Bad Weather Closing/Cancellation of Classes

Please watch WSYR channel 9 or Spectrum 1 for any weather closings. An email and text message will be sent to parents ASAP from our Remind groups. It is important that we have your cell phone number and best email address for this purpose.



5 Ways to Nurture Your Child's Faith

Here are five gifts you can give to nurture the spiritual life of your child.

Explain to your child why you gave him or her the name you did: In the Bible, names carry a lot of meaning. Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter (Greek for "rock"), which indicated Peter's vocation as the leader of Christian community. By telling your child how you chose his or her name, you can highlight the spiritual hopes you have for your child and emphasize his or her connection to the larger community.

Tell stories about your ancestors: Explain, for example, how their grandparents or great-great grandparents came to this country if they are of immigrant heritage. Such stories—of the strength, perseverance, and faith of their forebears—will help them know that they are part of a larger, grander story than just their own.

Share with your child who your favorite saint is and why: Describe how you receive inspiration from the example or teaching of this saint (or saintly person, whether canonized or not). Explain to your child the reason you are devoted to this saint and talk about other people whom you admire.

Offer a story about how your faith helped you in a difficult time in your life: Think back to a time when you made an important decision and, if you are comfortable, share how your faith shaped the decision. Set aside time to also talk about how your faith helps you on a daily basis.

Give your child your time and attention; listen to their hopes and dreams: The care and concern you express for your child provides a foundation upon which your child can accept God's love and the love of others. Every day you help to shape the attitude your child brings to prayer and worship. The loving attention you share with your child prepares him or her to encounter Jesus in the heart, in the Eucharist, and in other people.