



St. Gregory the Great Faith Formation Program

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Parents' Responsibilities

“God is the giver of all life, human and divine. May He bless the fathers of these children. With their wives, they will be the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith. May they be also the best of teachers, bearing witness to the faith by what they say and do...”

Rite of Baptism for Children

Dear Parents,

Thank you for enrolling your child in the Faith Formation Programs at St. Gregory the Great Parish. We are grateful that you allow us to help you in forming your child in the Catholic Faith. While we can only hope to spark an interest of the faith in your child, our program will help you, their first teacher of the faith, in developing and nourishing their Catholic Faith. The attitudes that your child develops toward Mass, the sacraments, prayer, service and commitment to Jesus grows out of what they experience as a family and the example that you, the parents, offer.

Because we are limited in what we can teach and experience in a class time, we ask that you:

Foster the development of Prayer: Pray regularly as a family, work with your younger children on knowing the basic prayers (the Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Apostles' Creed, and the Glory Be to the Father). Encourage them to share personal prayers with you.

Attend Mass regularly: Encourage your child to actively participate in the Mass. Special Observances of the Church Seasons (Advent, Christmas, Lent & Easter and Holy Days) help to make Jesus more alive in your family.

Encourage regular and prompt class attendance: Our time in the classroom is precious, so please take note the start time of class on the calendar. Call our office as soon as possible if your child will be absent.

Encourage the development of responsibility: Many times communications do not reach home. Please ask your child for any letters and/or notices. Check their folders weekly and show an interest in what they are learning. Ask them about their class.

Read, and if necessary, respond to all communications sent by the Faith Formation Office in a timely fashion: Letters are one way of letting you know what your child is learning and what you can do to reinforce the lesson. They may also contain important information about the program, schedule changes or offerings.

Finally, volunteer your services: Our program is dependent on the dedicated service of volunteers. Please consider being a catechist (one who shares their faith by teaching children and youth), an office helper or a hall monitor. Children benefit more from caring adults who share their faith and of themselves than what any book or film could offer. Won't you consider committing your talents for one year to visibly profess the Catholic faith?

Please use this handbook as a guide for you to help your child grow in the faith. All of the policies for our program are to help your child continue to grow and mature in their Catholic Faith. If you ever have a concern about anything, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

God's Blessings to you and your family,

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CURRICULUM

- Kindergarten:** Lessons are formatted at a level that makes learning and understanding the Scripture fun. Through the use of this curriculum, children will hear the Word, complete projects and activities that foster readiness.
- Grade 1:** First graders are introduced to personal ways that the Trinity is found in their lives. They explore God's love for us in Jesus and in the gifts of creation, life and the church.
- Grade 2:** Second graders are prepared for Reconciliation and First Eucharist by fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for the liturgy, God's love and mercy, and the life and teachings of Jesus.
- Grade 3:** Third graders learn about the Church as a loving community of believers. They become aware of the beginnings of the Church, the community of followers of Jesus and the mission we have as People of God.
- Grade 4:** Fourth graders are led to a growth in Christian moral life through the study of the Commandments and the understanding of the Beatitudes.
- Grade 5:** Fifth graders develop a deeper understanding of our religious beliefs and traditions. They study the seven sacraments.
- Grade 6:** Sixth graders will see the connections between the Old and New Testament as part of our Salvation History. They will learn that God has called ordinary people to lead extraordinary lives.

SACRAMENTS

First Reconciliation/ First Eucharist

The two Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist are usually celebrated in the second grade. Reconciliation is celebrated in the winter and Eucharist is celebrated in the spring.

A truly Christian preparation for these sacraments begins at home in the early childhood and continues to develop throughout life. Parents are expected to be active in their faith practice. This means attending weekly liturgy and participating in the parent meetings.

This preparation is an important time for the children and youth of our parish, but it is also a time for the parents and the faith community to consider the deeper meaning of these sacraments in our lives. A progressive catechesis of forgiveness is essential to the formation program and curriculum for preparing for Reconciliation. The Sacrament of Eucharist is a parish-based celebration and experience.

Each family has its own unique experience, its own relationship. This preparation provides the opportunity to reflect on these unique experiences and relate them to this sacrament.

Parents are assisted in their part of the preparation process through meetings. These meetings are mandatory for the parents in order to get the information needed to help prepare their child/ren.

Parents are also **required to participate**, with their child/ren, in the sacrament retreats. If you are unable to attend the meeting and/or workshops with your child/ren and do not make arrangements with the director, you will be asked to wait a year to have your child receive the sacrament(s).

POLICIES

REGISTRATION & FEES

1. All students must have a completed registration form turned in before they are allowed into the program. We cannot allow a child into the classroom that has not been registered.
2. Tuition is due at registration time. We ask that a minimum of \$25 be submitted when registering. If there is a problem, an extension of time may be given. If you are in need of financial aid, please request a Financial Assistance Application form.
There is a fee for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist to cover the cost of books and other materials. This fee is due at the parent meetings if not already paid with the regular registration fee.

ATTENDANCE

All children of registered members of St. Gregory the Great Parish in Grades Kindergarten through 12 who are not enrolled in Catholic day school are expected to attend formal religious formation classes and related activities on a consistent basis.

1. **MASS ATTENDANCE:**

Family participation in our parish Mass celebration is fundamental in the overall Christian Formation education of our Catholic faith. Please celebrate weekly as a family.

2. **CLASS ATTENDANCE:**

Attendance is expected at ALL sessions, days of reflection, retreats and parent meetings. If a student cannot attend class, please call the Faith Formation office and notify us of his/her absence. If the student is absent without previous notification, you will be getting a call. Please try to make every effort to notify us of any absences.

Two (2) unexcused absences per semester will require the student to make up the assignments. **It will be the responsibility of the parent to contact the Director to make the necessary arrangement for their child to make up these assignments.** If there is an excessive number of absences during the year, a conference with the parent and Director will be called to determine the cause the absences and to either rectify the situation or decide whether a student should continue in the program.

Our program is about formation and helping build community; there is no way we can duplicate what actually takes place in a session.

During Sacrament preparation (First Reconciliation and First Eucharist) attendance is necessary at all preparation sessions. If, for some serious reason, a parent is unable to attend a session, YOU must contact the Director to make arrangements to get this information. **If a child misses more than 1 sacramental preparation class, that child may be asked** to postpone receiving a sacrament until the next year. Parents are required to attend meetings/workshops relating to sacrament preparation. If you do not attend these meetings and do not contact the director of child ministry within a week of the meetings, you will be asked to postpone receiving sacraments until next year.

3. **MOVING OR WITHDRAWING FROM PROGRAM:** Please inform the Faith Formation Office promptly if you are moving or withdrawing for any reason from the program.

4. **WEATHER CANCELLATIONS:** Families safety on the road is our primary concern in periods of inclement weather. If the Milwaukee Public School System and/or West Allis schools are closed/cancelled for the day due to weather conditions, the evening class will also be cancelled. Should storming weather develop, check out the **TV weather report on either channels 4, 6, 12, or 58** for announcements regarding a session cancellation. During other questionable weather conditions, the decision to attend class rests on the parents.

STUDENT CONDUCT/ RESPONSIBILITY

1. **STUDENT BEHAVIOR/DISCIPLINE:** Students are expected to conduct themselves in a Christian manner at all times. If a student is disruptive, he/she will be sent to the Director. If a student is sent to the Director for a second time, the Director will call the parents/guardians. If a student is sent to the office for a third offense, a meeting with parents and/or guardians will be scheduled. Any very serious concern will be dealt with immediately by calling the parents/guardians.

A student may be dismissed from the Christian Formation program due to serious misconduct at the discretion of the Director in consultation with the Pastor and parents. Students are expected to show respect at all times to the teacher, other students, and the program as a whole.

2. **SCHOOL/PARISH PROPERTY:** Destruction of school property is considered vandalism. Restitution will be required. This includes articles that belong to the Faith Formation Program.

3. **HOMEWORK:** Sometimes homework is necessary as a part of any student's education. Homework will be given according to the catechist. We expect that such assignments will be completed to the best of the student's ability.

4. **INFORMATION ABOUT LEARNING DISABILITIES:** Information about learning disabilities, special needs or any other personal issues should be given to the Director of Faith Formation. This information will only be disclosed to the catechist (teacher) as necessary. This information will be kept in confidence and intended to help with your child's well-being and promote learning

STUDENT SAFETY/SECURITY

1. **ARRIVALS/DEPARTURES:** Parents are responsible for their child/ren's safety and the safety of others during arrival and dismissal times. Please bring your child no sooner than ten minutes before each session and pick up promptly at dismissal time. Earlier arrivals make it difficult to address preparations we need to attend to before each session

2. **VISITORS:** Parents who wish to observe a child's class may do so by calling our office beforehand. Students may bring a friend to class, but it must be pre-arranged one week in advance with the catechists, along with a signed permission slip to attend.

3. **CLASS TREATS**: Class treats will be allowed in designated areas with the approval of the Director and classroom teacher. We have several students with very severe peanut, nuts and latex allergies and a few other food allergies. Please keep this in mind and check with the child's classroom catechist before sending treats or party favors.
4. **EARLY DISMISSAL**: If a student **MUST** leave a class early, the requirements are as follows:
 - A parent/guardian note must be given to the catechist and it will be forwarded to the Director with the attendance sheet so that we will know who is leaving.
 - A parent/guardian needs to sign out his or her child with the Catechist.

COMMUNICATIONS

COMMUNICATION: Parent letters and notices are sent home with your child/ren, email and/or through U.S. mail. Always check your child/children's folders for any newsletters, notices or homework that might be sent home. If you have any questions or concerns about the communication, please feel free to call the Faith Formation Office at 414-543-8292 x 238.

Information is available on the parish website. Go to: www.StGregsMil.org. Go to the Formation link and click on the Lighthouse Program for Grades K-8 or high school for information on those programs.

ST. GREG'S ATHLETICS

1. **Athletic Policy**: Based on the policy set by the Archdiocese, the Faith Formation program will adopt this policy for students in Grades 5-8 wishing to participate in parish sport teams:

Extracurricular activities are ways that the parish children can build community with one another. It is important that students, parents, catechists, coaches, and other leaders agree that education is a high priority. Several considerations will be taken into account in determining a student's eligibility to participate in extracurricular activities and athletics:

 - Report cards and grade point averages
 - Behavior
 - Attitude, effort for student work
 - Attendance
2. **REPORT CARD AND GRADE POINT AVERAGES**: **All athletes registered in the Religious Education Program will be expected to submit a copy of their report card/ progress reports to the Director of Faith Formation in order to**

review a student's eligibility for activities. Students will be expected to achieve grades that reflect their individual ability*. Students will be suspended from the activity if:

- the grade point average for all subjects combined falls below 2.0
- a student achieves below a "D" in any subject

*It is understood that in specific cases a low grade or a low grade point average may represent reasonable progress for a child. In such cases, no action will be considered.

3. **BEHAVIOR**: Students must show respect for the policies and procedures for this parish program. In the following cases, the student may lose eligibility for activities:
 - Any student suspended from school for behavior reasons
 - Students who consistently disrupt Christian Formation sessions/events
 - Any student who misuses or damages any material or property relating to any parish or school program.
 - Any student who establishes a pattern of refusal to relay communication from the Faith Formation program to home, so that it compromises the learning situation.
4. **ATTITUDE AND EFFORT**: - Students must have a good attitude toward parish facilities, volunteers and required student work. The student may lose eligibility for activities if:
 - the student in the Faith Formation program consistently lags in doing the required work.
 - the student attitude toward adults, whether staff, volunteers or parents, is consistently very poor and is witnessed in the parish community.
5. **ATTENDANCE**: Students should be on time for the Faith Formation program and classes. Students should not take absences from the Faith Formation program lightly. Students will lose their eligibility for activities if:
 - The student is tardy for, **or misses more than 3 Faith Formation classes.**

If a student does not comply with these policies, the following procedure will be followed:

- A **probation** will be issued for a **two-week period**.

If the behavior or grades do not improve, a suspension from the activities will be issued for another two-week period.

PROGRAMS

Lighthouse Family Program

When: **Sunday Mornings**

Where: **Tenpenny Hall**

For: **Students in Grades KN-6 and their Parents**

Curriculum: **Alive in Christ—Our Sunday Visitor (OSV)**

The Lighthouse Family Program was started in the past few years in response to the lower number of students in the classroom model of classes. By doing a Family Program, it gives parents the opportunity to be the first teachers of the faith with support from their parish community. It is my hope that families will come together to live out the call that Jesus gives all of us to “Be my Disciple”. Families will come together one Sunday a month for prayer instruction and fellowship. During the Family events, students will go to their class while parents will be engaged in discussion on how they can live the lessons out at home. Parents will be given instruction to complete the next week’s lesson at home with their child/children. We ask that families devote time each week to work on the lessons with their child.

The Format for the Family session will be as Follows:

8:15am: Family prayer

8:30am: Simple breakfast

8:45am: Children go to grade level class with catechist/ Parents session

9:15am: Family lesson & activity (K-6th Grade)

9:45am: Closing prayer/head to Mass

On regular Sunday class days, children will go to their class group for instruction from their grade level catechist. Catechists will check on the progress that has been done with the home based lessons, as well as do classroom work with students.

Middle School Youth Ministry

When: **Sunday Mornings 8:45-9:45am**

Where: **Designated Classroom**

For: **Students in Grades 7 & 8**

Curriculum: **Alive in Christ Faith Guidebooks—OSV**

Middle school is full of transitions. Students in our program will begin to take what they have learned in our Family Program and begin to see how their faith is lived out in their everyday life. Students will be invited to reflect on God’s word, discover the truth of our Catholic faith through activities, and through discussions will live as a disciple of Christ Jesus.

Middle School Students will also have the opportunity to participate in youth rallies. 7th and 8th graders will be asked to participate in one of two day-long youth events: the John Bosco Youth Day at Holy Hill in October, or the Wisconsin Catholic Youth Rally in March.

High School Youth Ministry

When: **Sunday Mornings 8:45-9:45am**

Where: **Designated Classroom**

For: **Students in Grades 9 & 10**

Curriculum: **Catholic Faith Handbook—St. Mary's Press**

As a high school student, teens are ready to take that next step towards adulthood. Teens will take what they have learned in their grade school Faith Formation classes and put it into practice. Teens are encouraged to get involved with the parish through service at the food pantry, serving as altar servers, ushers, and choir members. There will also be opportunities to serve the community in other ways as well such as serving a meal, and going on a mission trip. Service as well as faith sharing groups will be a part of their faith formation this year. Teens in Grades 9 & 10 will attend sessions twice a month and will use the Catholic Faith Handbook curriculum. As part of teens learning to live out their faith, they will be required to volunteer at three parish events during the year (6 events over the two-year program).

Teens will also have the opportunity to participate in youth rallies and be encouraged to participate in other youth conferences and Mission Trips to help them strengthen their relationship with Christ. 9th and 10th graders will be asked to participate in one of two day-long youth events: the John Bosco Youth Day at Holy Hill in October, or the Wisconsin Catholic Youth Rally in March.

For those that wish to prepare for the sacrament of Confirmation, they should be enrolled in the program for both their 9th and 10th grade years. Students that enter the program late, will need at minimum one year of the high school program before preparing for the sacrament.

Confirmation Preparation

When: **Sunday Mornings 8:45-9:45am**

Where: **St. Greg's Teen Room**

For: **Juniors and Seniors who have completed the 9th & 10th Grade Formation Classes or have attended 1 full year of Catholic high school.**

Curriculum: **Chosen: Journey toward Confirmation**

The *Chosen* Confirmation Program draws teens into discipleship. Through these lessons, *Chosen* will take young people on a journey through the entire Catholic faith in all its richness and vitality. Teens will be captivated by the story—from Creation all the way through Salvation History, and they will come to see how the sacraments, prayer, and discipleship are the keys to a happy life. The *Chosen* Program:

- Calls teens to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.
- Uses visually stunning, fast-paced videos, filmed in more than fifty locations throughout the U.S. and internationally.
- Features twelve top youth experts presenting the faith in new and unexpected ways.
- Uses effective methodology based on the RCIA model (i.e., pre-evangelization, evangelization, catechesis, and discipleship) and grounded in the Catechism and Scripture.
- Connects with teens and inspires them on multiple levels—intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually.
- Evangelizes the whole family.

The *Chosen* Confirmation Program comes with a candidate book, a parent booklet and a sponsor booklet. Candidates and parents are given specific requirements in order to prepare for the sacrament at the Parent/Candidate Meeting. These requirements include:

Remote Preparation (Grades 9 & 10)

- ◆ Attend Faith Formation classes for two years
- ◆ Attend the John Bosco Day or Wisconsin Youth Rally in both 9th and 10th grades (1 rally each year)
- ◆ Attend weekend Mass regularly
- ◆ Participate in at least 3 service activities in the parish

Immediate Preparation (Grade 11/12)

- ◆ Register as an adult member of St. Gregory the Great Parish
- ◆ Attend weekend Mass regularly
- ◆ Attend Confirmation Preparation classes
- ◆ Contribute financially to the Church as one is able
- ◆ Attend a weekend Confirmation retreat
- ◆ Participate in three service activities in the parish and two service activities in the community.
- ◆ Complete a reflection paper on the saint chosen for a Confirmation name.

Final Stages of Preparation

- ◆ Letter to the Archbishop/Bishop requesting Confirmation
- ◆ Interview with the Director
- ◆ Recommendation by the Sponsor
- ◆ Rehearsal and Celebration

Requirements should be completed by March 31st of the year they wish to be confirmed.

A Confirmation retreat is required by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee in order to be confirmed. Retreat dates vary from year to year.

Service Opportunities

As part of the High School and Confirmation Programs, service will be an important aspect in learning how to live out our Catholic Faith. High School students in Grades 9 & 10 will be asked to volunteer for three parish-wide events. Those in the immediate Confirmation Preparation Program will be asked to complete three parish wide events and two community events. Here are just a few parish opportunities that are available for youth to complete their service requirements:

- ◆ Parish Festival
- ◆ St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry
- ◆ St. Ben's and/or The Gathering Meal Program
- ◆ Summer Mission Trip
- ◆ Altar Serving
- ◆ Choir
- ◆ First Reconciliation Retreat
- ◆ First Eucharist Retreat

Other Youth Ministry Opportunities

This will be a building year for our youth ministry program, but we will have a few opportunities for youth to gather and learn about fellowship and developing friendships in their parish community:

- Monthly youth outings with Our Lady of Lourdes' Youth
- Weeklong Mission Trip in the summer
- Biweekly "Study Break" Nights in the Teen Room

Keep an eye out in the parish bulletin for upcoming youth events

