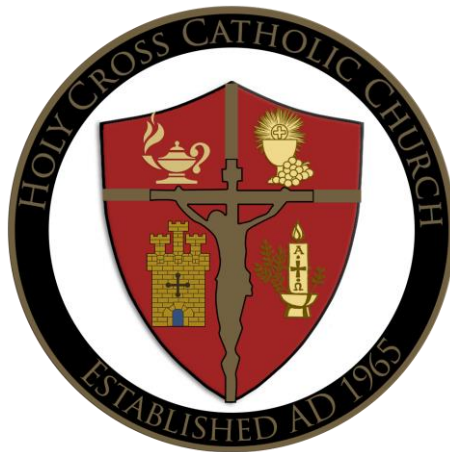


Holy Cross Catholic Church

Saint Petersburg, Florida



OFFICE OF FAITH FORMATION HANDBOOK

2021-2022

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MISSION STATEMENT

Holy Cross Office of Faith Formation is committed to the parish community's spiritual growth by uniting one another in Christ' love and preparing disciples for a faithful pilgrimage on earth.

Christ calls all the faithful to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world and to hand his message on to successive generations by professing, living, and celebrating the faith in Liturgy and prayer. (National Directory for Catechesis, p. 41)

OFFICE OF FAITH FORMATION CONTACT LIST

Pastor	Rev. Emery Longanga, Ph.D	pastor@holycrossrcc.com
Parochial Vicar	Rev. Jesus Martinez	
Deacon/Adult Education	Rev. Mr. Rick Zeitler	
Parish Manager	Michele Williams	mwilliams@holycrossrcc.com
Director of Faith Formation		faithformation@holycrossrcc.com
Administrative Assistant		faithformation@holycrossrcc.com
Baptism Coordinator	Milagros Haylock	727-492-1408
Communion Coordinator	Milagros Haylock	727-492-1408
Confirmation Coordinator		faithformation@holycrossrcc.com
R.C.I.A. Coordinator	Tony Chaoui	tonychaoui6429@gmail.com

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

ADMISSIONS POLICY

A family must be registered at Holy Cross parish in order to attend the Faith Formation program.

REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

Scheduled registration periods are announced at Mass and in the Parish bulletin. Registration typically takes place starting in April & May, as well as August for the upcoming faith formation year. Registration for the current year closes at the end of September.

To register for the program, you must:

1. Complete a registration form or registration conference.
2. Provide a Baptismal certificate for your baptized child at the time of registration.
3. Pay or arrange for payment of the registration and sacramental preparation fees. Please note that a letter of transfer must be provided if the child has completed the previous year in another parish.

REGISTRATION FEES

To complete the registration process, non-refundable fees must be paid. These fees go towards student textbooks, workbooks, and other necessary resources. No family will be asked to pay more than \$100.00. *No family will be excluded from participating in faith formation programs due to financial situations, therefore you may also opt to make the payments in installments.* Please contact the Director of Faith Formation for details.

- Faith Formation Class Fee - \$50 per child
- Communion & Reconciliation Preparation Fee - \$40 per child
- Confirmation Preparation Fee - \$40 per child

CLASS SESSIONS

Holy Cross offers three separate class sessions for various reason.

- **Faith Formation Classes** (Sundays from 11:15 – 12:15pm) are for all families in our parish. We encourage anyone with children in the parish to register their child(ren) they do not have to be preparing for a sacrament to learn more about their faith.
- **RCIA Classes** (Sundays from 11:15am – 12:15pm) are for children and adults who are not baptized (or fully initiated into the church through confirmation) and want to become members of the Catholic faith.
- **Sacramental Classes** (2nd Saturday of the Month from 9:00am – 11:00am) are for students to prepare for their sacraments after having previously attended a full year of catechism classes.

AVAILABLE PROGRAMS

- Faith Formation classes from 4 years old until eighth grade.
- Sacramental preparation for Baptism, Communion, & Confirmation
- Rite of Christian Initiation for Children (R.C.I.C.)
- Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (R.C.I.A.)

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS

BAPTISM

Parents/guardians seeking baptism for their infant/child should contact the Office of Faith Formation to schedule sacramental preparation classes with the coordinator of baptism.

FIRST RECONCILIATION & FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

The liturgical life of the church revolves around the sacraments, with the Eucharist at the center. Catechesis for the Eucharist recognizes it as the heart of Christian life for the whole Church, for the dioceses, and parishes, and for each individual Christian. (National Directory for Catechesis, pgs. 113 and 124.)

The two-year preparation program to celebrate First Eucharist teaches children about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

1. First Eucharist preparation is a two-year process.
2. The child is at least eight years of age at the time the sacrament of First Eucharist is celebrated.
3. The child has completed one full year of Catholic faith formation in a parish program or Catholic school the year before beginning the second year of preparation at Holy Cross Parish.
4. If the parish program or Catholic school is other than Holy Cross Parish, a letter from the parish or school stating that the child has been in the program or school the previous year must be presented at the time of registration.
5. Parents/guardians are registered members of Holy Cross Parish.
6. The child is registered in and regularly attends weekly Faith Formation classes and monthly sacramental classes at Holy Cross Parish.
7. Parents attend special meetings, retreats and parent sessions with/for their child celebrating First Reconciliation and First Eucharist.

The first year is foundational study of the catechism. The second year of preparation takes place both in the catechism class and an additional sacramental preparation class. From September – December, students will prepare for their First Reconciliation and then from January – May students will prepare for their First Holy Communion.

CONFIRMATION

The two-year preparation program to celebrate Confirmation teaches children about the importance of the Holy Spirit and the completion of the sacraments of initiation.

1. Confirmation preparation is a two-year process.
2. The child is in the eighth grade at the time the sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated.
3. The child has completed one full year of Catholic faith formation in a parish program or Catholic school the year before beginning the second year of preparation at Holy Cross Parish.
4. If the parish program or Catholic school is other than Holy Cross Parish, a letter from the parish or school stating that the child has been in the program or school the previous year must be presented at the time of registration.
5. Parents or guardians are registered members of Holy Cross Parish.
6. The child is registered in and regularly attends weekly Faith Formation classes and monthly sacramental classes at Holy Cross Parish.
7. Parents attend special meetings, retreats and parent sessions with/for their child celebrating Confirmation.

The first year is foundational study of the catechism. The second year of preparation takes place both in the catechism class and an additional sacramental preparation class. The Confirmation Sacramental Class begins in September and meets monthly until May. In addition to the sacramental class, students are required to attend the weekend confirmation retreat. Students entering the eighth grade who have already had a previous year of study are eligible for the sacramental class. Students who have been previously enrolled in another program need to have the leader of religious education send a letter of verification.

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION

Catechumens: These are unbaptized individuals who have been admitted into the Order of Catechumens and seek to be baptized, confirmed and receive first Eucharist at the Easter Vigil.

- Their process of formation into the Catholic faith normally follows what is indicated in Part I of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA nos. 36-251) and in the National Statutes on the Catechumenate for the Dioceses of the USA (NS nos. 1-24).
- Beginning in 2018, only a RITE OF ELECTION OF CATECHUMENS will be celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent at the Cathedral of St. Jude. We will no longer celebrate multiple “combined” celebrations of THE RITE OF ELECTION OF CATECHUMENS AND OF THE CALL TO CONTINUING CONVERSION OF CANDIDATES WHO ARE PREPARING FOR RECEPTION INTO THE FULL COMMUNION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

Previously Baptized Christians: Previously baptized in another Christian tradition, these candidates seek to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church by a profession of faith and through the reception of Confirmation and Eucharist. Some may have received relatively little Christian upbringing (i.e., uncatechized) and some may have lived as active and engaged Christians (i.e., catechized), therefore, care is to be taken with the approach to their formation (NS no. 31).

- Care must be taken to ensure that each candidate has been validly baptized.
- Their process of formation to full communion follows the instructions found in RCIA nos. 400-410; 473-486 and the National Statutes (NS nos. 30-36).
- Previously baptized Christians are to be received into full communion of the Catholic Church after a period of formation that includes both doctrinal and spiritual preparation adapted to their individual needs (RCIA no. 477; NS no. 30).
- The celebration of the RECEPTION OF BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS INTO THE FULL COMMUNION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH (RCIA nos. 473-498) is to take place at Mass throughout the liturgical year as needed (NS no. 32).
- The priest entrusted with the celebration of this rite is given by law both the faculty and the obligation to confirm the previously baptized Christian for full communion within this rite of reception (cf. Code of Canon Law nos. 883.2 & 885:2; RCIA no. 481).

Children of Catechetical Age: Children of catechetical age (age 7 and up) should follow the general pattern of the ordinary catechumenate with the appropriate adaptations permitted by the ritual (NS no. 18).

- Rituals for unbaptized children of catechetical age are found in Part II, No. 1 in the RCIA ritual (cf. nos. 252- 330).
- Special attention is to be given to the length of the catechumenal process and the variety of catechesis used so that an age appropriate amount of time is given to the individual child to be formed in the Catholic Christian life. The catechumenal process as described in NS no. 6 recommends a process that extends for a minimum of one full year of formation and instruction, beginning prior to the Lent-Easter season of one year and extending to the Easter of the following year.
- Canon Law and the National Statutes state that children of catechetical age should receive the three sacraments of initiation in a single celebration (cf. Canon no. 842:2; NS

nos. 14 & 18); therefore, Confirmation and/or First Holy Communion should not be separated/delayed to another time unless for some appropriate pastoral reason.

Baptized Catholic Adults Needing Confirmation: The blanket faculty to confirm at the Easter Vigil those baptized Catholics who are in need of Confirmation will no longer be given. Adult Catholics may be included with the youth when the Bishop comes to the parish for Confirmation or check with a neighboring parish.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ATTENDANCE

Children enrolled in the age-appropriate continuing Faith Formation and Sacramental Preparation programs at Holy Cross Parish are expected to attend all classes. Parents/guardians should communicate with the Faith Formation Office concerning absences. Excused absence are limited to 4, excessive absences will be reviewed.

All Sacramental Preparation students are required to attend all preparation events (e.g. Sacramental preparation sessions, retreats, etc.)

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Students may arrive no earlier than 15 minutes prior to the start of class. They are to be dropped off in their classrooms by their parent/guardian(s). At the designated start time (see “Class Sessions” for class times), all students will be brought to the courtyard between the Small & Large Hall for announcements and prayer. Immediately following prayer, students will be brought to their classrooms.

Dismissal begins at the time class ends (see “Class Sessions” for class times). All students must be signed out by their parent from their catechist. Students may not exit the classroom until a parent/guardian has met them at their classroom door. Only adults on the child’s contact list may sign out a child.

PARENT EXPECTATIONS

Parents are the primary catechists in their child(ren)’s life. It is important that parents provide a strong faith-filled environment at home. Below are several suggestions to help ensure that your faith is at the center of your family:

- Be a registered member of Holy Cross Parish
- Attend Sunday Mass (4pm Sat, 8am, 10am, & 12:30pm Sun) & Mass on Holy Days of Obligation (Jan. 1, Aug. 15, Nov. 1, Dec. 8, & Dec. 25)
- Make Church a priority; be supportive of your child/children's religious education.
- Keep your "calendar" handy; be aware of the weekly events.
- Participate fully in the faith life of the Church/Parish; set a good example.
- Attendance at Parent Meetings is most important; make arrangements to get information when a meeting is missed. Note: Participation in Safe Environment Training for Parents and children/youth is required.

- Inform the Director of Religious Education of any important facts regarding family situation, health, learning concerns, behavioral conditions, changes, etc.
- (Discretion will be honored). Necessary paperwork must be on file regarding custodial parent situations.
- When applicable, participate in all sacramental preparations required.
- Attend the various ceremonies/events that are scheduled as much as possible.
- Actively participate in any family exercises that might be sent home.
- Volunteer to help with any session/event that may need parental involvement.

TARDINESS

Participation in class is very important. Each child needs to be in class on time. Late arrival disrupts the class in progress. Please do all you can to insure your child’s prompt arrival for class. In the event the child is late, bring him/her to the Faith Formation Office where the attendance will be marked. A child arriving 5 minutes after session begins will be marked tardy.

CURRICULUM

CURRICULUM – CATECHISM CLASSES

The Office of Faith Formation uses Ignatius Press *Faith and Life Series* religion textbooks for students in catechism classes in kindergarten through eighth grade. The *Faith and Life Series* empowers students to uphold their faith and go out into the world as Catholics—proud of who they are. The Catholic Identity Edition will: (1) Build Catholic Identity around core Catholic beliefs, practices, and principles so all students, including, needs of diverse learners, can truly embody their faith. (2) Include flexible models of implementation that serve the changing needs of schools, parishes, and busy families. (3) Involve families with tools to enrich their identity as a Catholic family in today’s world.

The registration fee covers the cost of each student to be presented with a textbook for use in our program and an activity book they will keep and take home at the end of the school year.

CURRICULUM – SACRAMENTAL CLASSES

The Office of Faith Formation uses the Sadlier Sacramental Preparation program to prepare children, youth, and their families to participate fully in the sacramental life of the Church.

The sacramental fee covers the cost of each student to be presented with text(s) they will keep and take home at the end of the school year.

A.C.R.E. TESTING

Ongoing assessment of our current religion programs is critical as we strive to provide quality religion curriculum for our students in the Faith Formation Program. The Assessment of Catholic Religious Education (ACRE) is administered annually to students in 5th, 8th and 11th grades and is the primary tool used throughout the United States to assist religious educators in Catholic schools, in parish religion programs and at the diocesan level in assessing the effectiveness of religious education initiatives.

Designed by the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) in 1989, the ACRE Survey is used as a true assessment tool rather than an achievement test. ACRE helps to track the student's progress in religious knowledge and compare our results with diocesan and national trends. In addition, ACRE allows us to assess curricular needs, evaluate instructional objectives and strategies, and apply data about students' religious practices, relationships with their families and service opportunities to curricular emphasis.

With this information in hand, we can easily see the areas of strength in our programs as well as areas where additional attention may need to be placed while at the same time offering a picture of where students are in terms of their basic religious awareness.

A very strong aspect of the ACRE Survey instrument is its stress on confidentiality. We do not score the survey here. The answer sheets are sent to the NCEA Office for scoring. The results are returned to us in the form of graphs. While the survey results are designed for use in reviewing and improving our programs, we will discuss the results in class. We would also be very pleased to discuss the results with any interested parent upon request. We believe this information coupled with the passion and talent of our faith formation catechists will help us all meet the challenges and move to excellence in religious education.

DIOCESE POLICIES

DIOCESAN HARASSMENT POLICY

Harassment Policy for Non-Employment Situations in
Schools/Centers, Parish Religious Education and Parish Youth Ministry
Programs of the Diocese of St. Petersburg

POLICY:

The Diocese of St. Petersburg requires that each parish, Catholic school or early childhood center establish and adopt this policy that prohibits any form of harassment by any individual. The Diocese of St. Petersburg strives for the establishment of a Christian, professional and supportive educational environment for all persons engaged in or involved with religious education programs, schools and early childhood centers, and parish youth ministry programs in non-employment situations. No parish, school, or early childhood center will be responsible for off campus harassment, unless it occurs at a parish-, school-, or early childhood center-sponsored event.

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY:

The policy intends:

- that each individual is free from physical, psychological or verbal intimidation and harassment in the schools, early childhood centers, religious education and youth ministry settings;
- that each individual involved in schools, early childhood centers, religious education and youth ministry programs maintain and further develop attitudes and behaviors which express respect for others and are reflective of each persons' God-given dignity;
- to encourage a heightened sensitivity toward behaviors that others may find offensive and intimidating, whether these behaviors refer to race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, familial status, veteran status or disability.

This policy is not intended to otherwise limit the expectation of staff, children, students and volunteers to engage fully in the traditions of teaching, celebrating, participating in and being formed by the Catholic faith, including but not limited to curriculum, catechesis, the Sacraments, other liturgies, worship services and ministries.

EXPLANATION OF HARASSMENT:

Harassment can result from a single incident or from a pattern of behavior involving verbal, written or physical conduct or communication.

Harassment encompasses a broad range of behaviors, which could include, but are not limited to:

1. Physical, mental or verbal abuse
2. Insults, jokes, or derogatory slurs based on one or more of an individual's protected status(es)
3. Unwelcome sexual advances or touching
4. Implicit or explicit requests for sexual favors
5. Unwanted sexual comments (serious or humorous)
6. Unwanted sexually suggestive telephone calls, letters, e-mail, etc.
7. Comments or jokes based on issues of modesty and developing social awareness
8. Unwanted forced involvement in activities (e.g., physical, religious, etc.)
9. Coercion of religious styles or personal beliefs upon a participant
10. Intimidation in front of a group of forced personal sharing in groups
11. Inappropriate media or music use which would violate this policy

CONFIDENTIALITY:

The right to confidentiality, both of the complainant and of the accused, will be respected to the extent possible, but will be consistent with legal obligations and with the necessity to investigate allegations of misconduct and to take corrective action when this conduct has occurred.

CODE OF CONDUCT

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITHIN THE DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG, FL

The first premise of this code is that children and youth function best when behaviors and expectations are clearly defined. It is accepted that parents are the first and foremost educators of their children in all aspects of their development. This experience aims at developing upright citizens and good Christians, following the new commandment Jesus gave His disciples, "A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another." (John 13:34-35)

In Timothy 4:12, we read, "Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity." Timothy is urged to rely on the gifts he has received from God. This code urges our children and youth to rely on God's gifts to them, especially charity, chastity and purity. This calls the young person to acknowledge and promote one's personal dignity and the rights that go with it.

It becomes important for children and youth to know the difference between "right" and "not right" relationships. "Right" relationships foster personal, spiritual, and emotional growth, e.g., the ability to communicate, to forgive, to show affection, to be honest, vulnerable, dependable, etc. "Not right" relationships become harmful and hurtful, and even abusive. Abuse occurs when someone does not respect another's boundaries, uses power, tricks, threats, or violence to cross or change another's boundaries, or inflicts hurtful or unwanted behavior (physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual) on another person.

This code is used in conjunction with existing local or diocesan policies, protocols or other codes and is not intended to supersede them. When engaging in formal and informal activities, functions, and programs, children and youth are expected to behave appropriately at all times, respecting the rights of others.

1. Christian behavior is expected at all times.
2. Respect for individuals, the community and facilities being used is required.
3. Cooperation and self-control are necessary when participating in programs and activities.
4. Dress must be in accord with the activity and appropriate for a Christian environment.
5. Unacceptable behavior and lack of cooperation will not be tolerated, but will be addressed appropriately. Examples of unacceptable behavior are as follows, though not limited to:
 - a. disrespect for adults and peers
 - b. use of vulgar language or gesture, use of racial slurs
 - c. damaging of property
 - d. fighting or intent to injure others
 - e. constant disturbance of others at work or in an activity
 - f. cheating
6. Possession of weapons, possession, sale or use of alcohol or drugs are forbidden.
7. No child or youth has the right to treat another in any manner that will cause physical or emotional pain. Therefore, harassment of any kind is unchristian and unacceptable.

8. Coercion or threats to do something physically hurtful or for the purpose of exposing someone or something about another is unacceptable behavior.
9. Chastity is a virtue to be held in high esteem and promoted in practice. Sexual abuse of any sort, coercing a person to engage in sexual acts against her or his will, physically touching the sexual parts of another's body, treating a person like a sexual object are unacceptable and abusive behavior. Consensual sex between students or initiated by minors to adults must never occur.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

A safe environment program begins with a Code of Conduct for all adults who work with children. The Adult Code of Conduct is included in the Parish Catechist’s Handbook and is on file in the CFF’s office along with the Diocesan Harassment Policy. A Code of Conduct for Children and Youth within the Diocese is also included in this handbook. A “Safe Environment” offers children and adults the opportunity to receive a Catholic education and experience relationships that promote the health development of:

- Spirituality
- Sexuality
- Emotional Growth
- Intellectual Growth
- Physical Growth

We, at the Holy Cross Parish, establish a “Safe Environment” for all by:

- Cultivating role and age appropriate relationships
- Maintaining healthy personal boundaries
- Creating structure to assure adults and youth rights

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT

Please read and sign the bottom portion of this page. Return this page to your child’s catechist as soon as possible.

I have read the 2021-2022 Handbook of the Office of Faith Formation at Holy Cross Catholic Church. I understand that my child and I will be expected to abide by these policies and procedures.

Student Name & Grade _____

Parent Name _____ Date _____

Parent Signature _____

~Please return this page to your child’s catechist~