

FAMILY CATECHESIS PROGRAM



***2024-2025
PARENT HANDBOOK***

PHILOSOPHY

I. PARISH MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Springfield, PA is to be disciples. Centered in the Eucharist, we are called to encounter, follow and imitate Jesus' way of life through the humble example of our patron, St. Francis of Assisi.

II. PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

Canon Law states that “Parents above others are obliged to form their children in the faith and practice of the Christian life by word and example; godparents and those who take the place of parents are bound by an equivalent obligation.” (Can. 774§2). The General Directory for Catechesis and the National Directory for Catechesis resound the same sentiment. St. Francis of Assisi Religious Education Program recognizes and embraces parents in their role as the primary catechists of their children as they strive to fulfill this special role.

Our mission is to assist parents in providing sound catechesis on the catechism and teachings of the Catholic Church so their children will be formed in the faith of the Catholic tradition. We strive to partner with parents in leading their children to a relationship with Jesus and to experience and appreciate their Catholic identity. This is accomplished by providing the parents and their children with ample opportunities to live and experience their faith through catechesis, community and worship.



As stated in the *General Directory for Catechesis*, “The definitive aim of *catechesis* is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ.” All evangelizing activity is understood as promoting communion with Jesus Christ. Starting with the “initial” conversion of a person to the Lord, moved by the Holy Spirit through the primary proclamation of the Gospel, catechesis seeks to solidify and mature this first adherence...”

As stated in the National Directory for Catechesis published in 2005, “...Catechesis comprises six fundamental tasks, each of which is related to an aspect of faith in Christ...Catechesis promotes *knowledge of the faith*...Catechesis promotes a knowledge of the meaning of the *Liturgy* and the *Sacraments*...Catechesis promotes *moral formation* in Jesus Christ...Catechesis teaches the Christian *how to pray* with Christ...Catechesis prepares the Christian to *live in community* and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church...Catechesis promotes a *missionary spirit* that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society.”

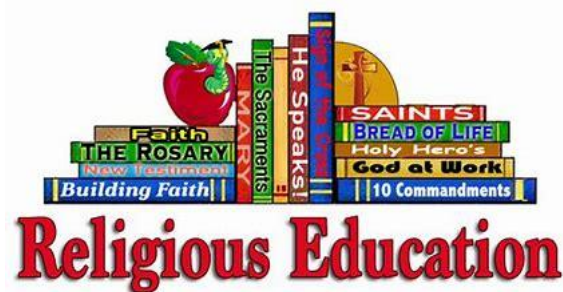
By following the guidelines provided to us by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and through the use of the **Finding God** textbook, our Family Catechesis Program strives to incorporate these tasks in all of its catechetical efforts.

PARENT’S/GUARDIANS ROLE

Parents are the primary religious educators of their children. Our work with your children is to support and strengthen your efforts at home in passing on the Catholic faith and teaching Catholic moral values. Children should be able to see their parents as living models of our Catholic faith. Parents who have a personal relationship with Christ, placing Him first in their lives, teach their children the most valuable lesson they will learn. Our

partnership as Church at home and school will be successful only when there is consistency between what happens in the home and what is taught in our religious education program.

As stated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #22, “Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child’s earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God. The Parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents.”



Family Catechesis

Loyola

Helping Build Faithful Families

For a variety of reasons, parishes across the country are inviting parents to become the primary catechists of their children. The *Finding God* Family Catechesis program makes this possible by working in conjunction with the core *Finding God* program. Our Family Catechesis program is unique in that it helps parents grow in their own faith while they guide their children in core faith formation. This flexible and engaging program nurtures faith and helps build community.

How It Works

Finding God Family Catechesis combines parish-based group meetings and grade-specific instruction by trained catechists with at-home sessions guided by parents.

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IN THE PARISH

Families gather all together for a group meeting with the leader and experience a **slide show presentation on the unit theme**. Parents stay with the leader for the continuation of the presentation and for **catechetical preparation**. While this takes place, **children go with catechists** to complete the first session.



AT HOME

Parents catechize their children at home using **parent-friendly materials**. They return for **another group meeting in approximately one month** to prepare for the next unit.

Each group meeting has three parts:

1. Welcome for children and parents

- Leader introduces the theme to families through prayer, sharing activity, Scripture, and discussion.
- Children are then dismissed to their grade-level faith formation sessions.

2. Connect for parents only

- Leader covers the theme through multimedia and discussion in a more in-depth manner.

3. Close for parents only

- The group meeting concludes with a wrap-up, closing prayer, and invitation to catechize their children at home with easy-to-use At-Home lessons and Children's Books.

The [Children's Book](#), **At-Home Edition**, and **Interactive Session Reviews** – Parents carry forward the unit content at home during individually paced lessons that suit the needs of their families' schedules, using the Children's Book together with the At-Home Edition. Interactive Session Reviews are an easy way to gauge children's understanding and monitor progress.



St. Francis of Assisi Family Catechesis Program

An Alternative Faith Formation Program for Families Who Wish to Make Religious Education a Priority in Their Homes

- **Students and their parents** (1 parent needed) come together for faith formation once per month for 7 months from 6:15 to 7:45PM. We do not meet in December. We have a mandatory closing Mass in May.

- Each month *students* are introduced to a new unit by catechists in age-appropriate classrooms and are taught the first chapter of the unit for each month’s theme.
- At the same time, *parents* participate in exploring these same themes through adult presentations and discussions.
- *Parents*, with resources provided, work *with their children* throughout the remainder of the month in completing the last 4 chapters of the unit.

Other Requirements:

- Families are also required to “**Explore Four**” or more parish events of their choice during the 7 months . These events should support the faith formation that is happening at home. Examples: Family Advent Day, Lenten Reconciliation Service, Friday Night Family Rosary, Souper Bowl of Caring, viewing a selection from the parish subscription of FORMED. Parents hand in a reflection form following attendance. *Service Projects are not to be included in Four or More.*
- Families complete the **Interactive Review Sessions** online and send them to the child’s/children’s classroom catechist.
- Families attend **weekly Masses**.
- Families must agree to all requirements before being admitted to Family Catechesis.
- **Parents sign the Family Catechesis Contract**

Family Catechesis Dates 23-24

- Thursday, September 19, 2024
- Thursday, September 26, 2024
- Thursday, October 24, 2024
- Thursday, November 21, 2024
- December
- Thursday, January 23, 2025
- Thursday, January 30, 2025
- Thursday, February 20, 2025
- Thursday, February 27, 2025
- Thursday, March 27, 2025
- Thursday, April 24, 2025
- Thursday, May 1, 2025

Meet in Church

- Parent Meeting for all families 7:00-8:00PM
- First Session for parents/students
- Second Session for parents/students
- Third Session for parents/students
- We do not meet.
- Fourth Session for parents/students
- Snow date for 1/23/25
- Fifth Session for parents/students
- Snow date for 2/20/25
- Sixth Session for parents/students
- Seventh Session for parents/students
- Closing Prayer Service/May Procession

Dismiss from classrooms

Sacraments

Two years of study are required to prepare to celebrate a Sacrament.

Children in grade two prepare to celebrate Penance and Holy Eucharist. Students in grade seven prepare to celebrate Confirmation.

Because Church law dictates that a person must be baptized before any other Sacraments are celebrated, *proof of Baptism is required for all children unless the child was baptized at St. Francis of Assisi Parish.*

Parents should apply for a certificate from the church in which their child was baptized and attach it to their child's application for the Sacrament.

Participants exhibiting chronic absences, lateness, or who are a persistent discipline problem may have their reception of Baptism, Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and/or Confirmation deferred until the following year or later.

Preparation for the reception of a sacrament is a time of prayerful reflection and discernment. A student's desire to celebrate the sacrament is reflected in his or her positive attitude toward the preparation process. Thus, proper attendance and behavior are expected.

Archdiocesan policy requires that a child receive the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation) in the parish where their family is registered.

A mandatory parents' meeting is held for all parents preparing their child(ren) for the celebration of the Sacraments. Practices are planned for all children preparing for the Sacraments. All children, but especially those who are candidates for the celebration of a Sacrament, *must* attend Sunday/Saturday Mass on a weekly basis. At Baptism, a commitment is made to follow the teachings of Jesus and the Church. The Sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation call for a deeper commitment. Participation in Mass each week is necessary to nourish and strengthen the call to live a Catholic life.

First Reconciliation (Penance)

First Reconciliation Parent Meeting: November 11, 2024

First Reconciliation: March 6, 2025

Dress Code: Sunday best

First Eucharist

Date of First Eucharist Parent Meeting: March 31, 2025, 7:00PM Church

Wednesday, April 23, 2025: 9:00-11AM Practice for the 11:45 Mass

Wednesday, April 23, 2025 – 1:00-2:30PM Practice for the 9:30AM Mass

Monday, April 28, 2025 – Parent/Child Practice for First Eucharist: 6:00-6:45PM (9:30 Mass) and 6:45- 7:30 (11:45AM Mass)

Thursday, May 1, 2025: 9:00-10:30 Practice for 9:30AM Mass and 1:00-2:30PM for the 11:45AM Mass

First Eucharist: Saturday, May 3, 2025 / 9:45AM Mass for Family Catechesis

Dress Code: *Boys* – Navy jacket, white pants, white tie, white shirt, dress shoes; *Girls* – White dress, veil optional, white shoes, white knee socks, white anklets or white stockings. (No gloves)

Confirmation

Parent Confirmation Meeting: Monday Nov. 7, 2024 7:00PM Church

Confirmation Commitment Mass: Sun. Dec. 8, 2024 9:30AM

Retreat Day: March TBD 9:00AM – 12:00PM Gym/ Church

Confirmation:

Practices: Fri. March 28, 2025 /8:30-10:30AM and Thurs. April 3, 2025/ 3:15:-5:15 PM Students only

Confirmation: Saturday, April 5, 2025

Safe Environment Lesson (KIDTALK)

Education and awareness are keys to preventing sexual abuse of children. The Archdiocese of Philadelphia provides all religious education programs with Safe Environment lesson Plans called “KIDTALK.” To assist the parish in its compliance to address the Charter for the protection of Children and Young People, it is mandatory for all parents to teach the lesson provided. Parents may preview these lessons sent by the Director of Religious Education or by viewing them online on the Archdiocesan website.

Parents must sign and return the form provided stating the date the lesson was taught at home.

Shelter in Place Plan

According to the directives from the Office of Catholic Education, we have established a Shelter in Place Plan here at St. Francis of Assisi. Shelter in Place is a **lock down protocol** that would be used in the event of a chemical release in the atmosphere. When a Lock Down occurs, NO ONE is permitted IN or OUT of the building, until the local authorities have given the “all clear” for the building to be evacuated.

Our plan in place is to have all children and parents placed in the hallways.

If your child is on medication which must be taken in the evening or daily, parents should bring an extra dose in a zip-lock bag to the child’s catechist. Instructions and your child’s name, grade, and room number should be placed in the bag.

Snow and Emergency Closing

If classes need to be cancelled due to inclement weather or any other emergency, please listen to KYW radio for a “Community Closing” announcement (not a school closing announcement). Every effort will be made by all catechists to call and inform their students of cancellations. An email will also be sent. If the weather changes for the better, even if the parish school is closed, we may still schedule the session.

Special Needs

Parents should make the Director of Religious Education aware of any special needs, both academic and health, of their child. All information is held in confidence. We are a “peanut free” school.

Supplies

Students in all grades are issued a textbook. Copybooks will serve as prayer journals. Parents are asked to place their child’s name, grade level and room number on the inside of the front cover. If a textbook is lost, payment (\$25.00) is expected for a replacement book. To guard against misplaced folders and texts, it is strongly recommended that parents set aside a special book bag for Religious Education materials.

Students in grade four receive a Bible which they are expected to bring to every class and keep for use during their remaining years of religious education. All bibles will be replaced in grades five and six for a fee.

Outreach/Stewardship

- **Rice Bowl** – During the Church season of Lent, families are asked to choose a day during the week to eat a light meal for dinner and place the money they would have spent on that meal in the Rice Bowl Box. Families are asked to return this box the Tuesday after Easter.



Religious Education Advent Prayer Service

All children attending Family Catechesis are invited to participate in the Religious Education Advent Prayer Service. Parents are asked to email the Director of Religious Education with the name and grade of their child wishing to participate.

