

Holy Ghost Parish Family Faith Formation Handbook



"I am the way, the truth, and the life"

John 14:6

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Living in the present age is a daunting task even for those well equipped with faith and faith understanding.

We do not know all the challenges our children will have to face as they reach adulthood.

The greatest favor we can do for them is to help them form a strong personal relationship with God and teach them what Jesus taught us.

If we are to succeed in handing on our faith and our way of living to our children, each child must see Christianity being lived in both the home and the parish.

While parents are the first and foremost teachers of their children in faith and morals, our Faith Formation program provides a supportive and enriching environment for their spiritual development. Our model is to teach as Jesus taught-

- By facilitating an understanding of the **Gospel Message**
- By participating in prayer & liturgical worship within a Christian Faith **Community**
- By encouraging loving commitments of **Service** to God's people

Children come to know God's love in a real way through the interactions in the family, it is the domestic church.

The parish is where we become a people of God, a community joined together in faith, hope and love. Together we are the Church. Growing in Grace and Wisdom is a life-long journey for each one of us.

Our Vision

Faith Formation at Holy Ghost is a Christ-centered approach to lifelong faith development that informs and transforms children, families, individuals, and the entire community of Holy Ghost by providing a deeper understanding of Scripture and the Traditions of our Catholic faith. Through formation opportunities at every age level, we will work together in Christ's name to bring the reign of God to earth by:

Evangelizing and transforming the world into a more caring, peaceful, and just society!

Our Mission:

- ✠ To support our parents as the primary educators of the faith
- ✠ To provide a curriculum based on Scripture and the Traditions of our Church
- ✠ To provide preparation for the sacramental life of our children
- ✠ To nurture the faith development of our parents
- ✠ To connect our faith to daily living so that all can be the hands and feet of Jesus

A frequently asked is: **Why do my children need to attend Religious Education every year? Why can't they attend just when they need to receive their sacraments?**

In math, your children learn new subject matter and skills each year. You cannot have them take second grade math and then pull them out of math until seventh grade and still expect them to know the new material. It works the same way in religious education. If they skip years, they skip a lot of material.

Just as in other curricular areas like math and social studies, our program covers different subjects and builds upon the knowledge acquired the previous years.

Faith Formation, and developing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, is a life-long process!

What happens on Faith Formation Sundays?

Sessions are normally on Sunday mornings from 9:00 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. Families can attend Mass at 8 a.m. or at 10:30 a.m. which is before or after the Faith Formation session.

What must I do to register for Faith Formation?

- ✚ Families are asked to register with the parish.
- ✚ A Faith Formation registration form must be completed.
- ✚ Along with the registration form parents must provide a copy of their child's baptismal certificate.
- ✚ If you are a returning family you must reconcile all outstanding balances.
- ✚ If you are a transferring family please provide proof of past attendance in other programs.

When can I register?

Registration for the fall classes begins in March. Forms are available via email, in the Faith Formation office, at the Welcome Center, and online at www.holyghostparish.org , under the Faith Formation tab.

Attendance

Weekly attendance is crucial to your child's success in the program. Understandably, young children sometimes will miss because of illness. When this happens we ask that you as a parent do two things:

- Call the Faith Formation office at **630-766-4509** before the session begins to report the absence. Any student who is not phoned in will receive a phone call verifying his or her absence.
- When your child returns, touch base with the catechist to see if there is work that can be made up at home. Three or more absences could jeopardize your child's advancement to the next grade level, unless special arrangements are made.

Family Involvement

One of the best ways to feel at home in our parish is to become involved. A wide variety of opportunities are offered here for all members. Your participation in the following parish ministries are encouraged and welcomed:

- Catechist, classroom aide, volunteer in Faith Formation program
- CCW-Council of Catholic Women
- P.A.D.S. Faith Hope & Love, C.O.R.E
- Sunday Choir/Funeral Choir
- Readers/Lectors
- Altar Servers
- Hospitality Ministers
- Kitchen help with special events
- Church Cleaners
- Holiday Food Baskets

Additionally, the Sunday bulletin and parish website- www.holyghostparish.org- are excellent resources to stay in touch with parish happenings.

Service Activities

All students enrolled in Faith Formation are required to complete yearly service activities. Each student will receive a Service Activity Record to be completed by the end of the year.

We recommend that service activities become family projects that model how we as Christians, serve others as Jesus did.

Start serving now! Waiting until the end of our school year causes last minute frenzies and defeats the concept that service to others is ongoing throughout the year, and hopefully a lifetime.

Communication

Good communication is key to a successful relationship. **Email will be our primary method of communication. Each family is asked to provide an email address that will be checked regularly.**

The Faith Formation office is also open Tuesday-Thursday, 9-2 p.m., to address any concerns regarding our program.

Expectations

Parents/Guardians

- ✠ Make sure your family is attending Mass weekly and are active members of the parish.
- ✠ Model your faith at home, in your workplace, and neighborhood.
- ✠ Make Faith Formation a priority over other activities.
- ✠ Arrive on time, remain on the premises, and accompany your child to all sessions.
- ✠ Communicate any learning or behavioral needs that may affect your child in the group setting.
- ✠ Participate actively in the children's faith development and support the catechist when needed.
- ✠ Encourage and assist your child in selecting and completing required service activities.
- ✠ Volunteer to help as needed in the Faith Formation program.

Students

- ✠ Attend Mass weekly
- ✠ Behave in a Christian manner at all times and show respect for adults, each other and property.
- ✠ Actively participate and complete required service activities.
- ✠ Observe the rules of your group.
- ✠ Actively participate in discussions and activities.

Behavior Expectations

Modeling Christ for one another is the expected behavior. Specifically we ask that all our students

- ✠ Respect one another, catechists, staff and adults.
- ✠ Respect the property of others including the property of the parish.
- ✠ Come to sessions ready and willing to engage actively in the time that is prepared for them.

Recognizing that families come in all different shapes and sizes, the more we are aware of any situations that your family or children may be dealing with allows us to serve you in a more personal and compassionate manner. All matters are kept confidential.

Single parent households; families going through a divorce, illness or death; blended families...no matter where you live or what your situation, all are welcome!

Nothing “will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:39

Sacrament Preparation- *Baptism, First Eucharist, Confirmation*

In accordance with diocesan requirements, our parish has a two year preparation period for children receiving their First Communion or Confirmation.

Children 6-7 years of age who have not attended Faith Formation in our parish, or in another parish, will need to enroll in Part One of First Eucharist Prep. Similarly, 8th & 9th grade students, who wish to prepare for Confirmation, without having attended Faith Formation here, or in another parish, will enroll in Part One of Confirmation Prep. Part Two takes place the following year for both of these sacraments.

We have a specialized program for 10th-12th grade students, who would like to be baptized, receive the Eucharist, or be confirmed.

- For students who do not fall under either of these categories, but in need of Sacramental preparation, please contact the Faith Formation office at 630-766-4509
- Parent meetings are mandatory for all parents/guardians of children being prepared for sacraments. If parent/guardian is unable to attend, a family representative may attend, and relay all necessary information. Total absence, with no communication as to such, will indicate that you do not wish for your child to receive the sacrament.

. What is a Sacrament anyway?!!

Sacraments are visible signs of God's invisible grace. The sacraments are instituted by Christ, and entrusted to the Church. Through the sacraments, divine life is given through the action of the Holy Spirit. The seven sacraments are: *Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, Matrimony.*

EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER SCREENING

All employees and volunteers at Holy Ghost Parish must take the workshop "Protecting God's Children", and fill out the Volunteer Release Form for a background check. Backgrounds of employees and volunteers are evaluated in accordance with all state and federal laws through an agency provided by the Diocese of Joliet.

The Faith Formation office is located on the north side of the church.

Office hours are Tuesday-Thursday 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

630-766-4509

630-766-1045