



"Eternally We Build"

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church

Children's Ministry Parent Handbook 2010-2011

"Jesus said, 'Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.'"

Matthew 19:14



St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church Children's Ministry

September 2010

Dear St. Francis Families:

Welcome to the St. Francis of Assisi Children's Ministry Faith Formation program for the 2010-2011 school year. Thank you for allowing us to support you, your children's first teachers, as we work together to build your children's foundation for growth and development in their Catholic faith. It is our hope that the families who participate in our program will see the Church as a joyful and inviting place and that we are all called, through our baptism, to be disciples of Christ.

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Community provides many opportunities for families to participate in our parish Children's Ministry program. Many of these opportunities can be found in the following areas:

Faith Formation - Weekly classes for our K-5 students

Outreach - Putting our Catholic faith into action to benefit the broader community

Community-Building Events - Children's Stations of the Cross, Annual Mexican Dinner and Cultural Day and Outdoor Children's Rosary are just a few of the many events planned this year to bring the children of our faith community together.

The celebration of the Eucharist at Mass is the source and summit of our Catholic faith. The Eucharist is the spiritual food needed for us to continue to grow in our faith. For these reasons, it is very important that your family attend Mass on a regular basis.

Please bookmark this handbook on your computer for ready reference throughout the school year. The handbook, as well as the Faith Formation calendar, can be found on our web site at www.stfoafrisco.org. If you have any questions, please write, e-mail or call the Faith Formation staff at (972) 712-2645.

May God bless you and your family as we journey together learning and practicing the truths of our faith.

Yours in Christ,

Diana Elwell
Director of Children's Ministry
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About Our Children's Ministry Program

Our Mission

The mission of our Faith Formation program is to create a living faith, conscious and active in the lives of the children of our parish. The Church teaches that parents are the primary educators of their children. (Declaration on Christian Education, no. 3). In recognition of this vital role, St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, in partnership with parents, offers programs designed to support parents and to help children build a relationship with God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. These programs help families live the Gospel through worship, sacraments, prayer, evangelization and service.

About Faith Formation

We recognize that the parents are the **primary educators** of their children and the Church takes seriously its obligation to support parents in that role.

The **Faith First Legacy edition parish program** from RCL, Resources for Christian Living, is the basic text for our Children's Ministry Faith Formation Program for kindergarten through 5th grade.

Faith First is based on a firm foundation made up of three essential elements:

1. The **beliefs** of a people as explained by the Catholic Church—the doctrines that have been passed down to us through the generations and are at this time gathered into the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The *Catechism* is not a book for children, but the contents of it can be made accessible to children.
2. The **story** of a people that has been passed down from generation to generation. This story is first and foremost contained in the Bible. The stories of saints and people of faith who have come before us are also told.
3. The **celebration** of a people as lived out in our liturgical year. Each year, we as Catholic Christians relive the story of our salvation as we pass through the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Ordinary Time. We celebrate the saints and the holy times that we share as a people.

The **Faith First** program provides a balance between doctrine, Scripture, and the liturgical year. Each is given individual emphasis and is integrated into the whole program. These three themes are well developed on their own in the Faith First program. One is not seen as less or more important than the others. It is the balance that gives each the emphasis that it deserves in the faith education of children. These three themes are woven throughout the program into the everyday life and experience of the children."

Faith First also offers a wonderful internet resource, www.faithfirst.com, which has activities for families, lectionary materials for families and catechists and enrichment activities for children. Please feel free to explore this resource with your children.

Parents' Role in the Development of Their Children's Prayer Life

Prayer with children at home, in church and in the classroom is an important aspect of religious formation. During Children's Ministry Faith Formation classes, the children will experience prayer as a part of each week's activities.

According to Joseph Cardinal Bernardin in Growing in Wisdom, Age and Grace, the best way for children to learn formal prayers is for the parents to explain the prayers and join the children frequently in praying them. Children enjoy reciting prayers like the "Our Father" and "Hail Mary" with their parents. As young children memorize traditional prayers, they become integrated with the formal prayer life of the community.

At times, catechists may choose to use formal prayers in the classroom prayer experience, however, because of limited class time, the focus will not be to memorize formal prayers. This handbook contains a list of prayers that children should be familiar with. These prayers should be integrated into the family's shared prayer experience.

Parent Responsibilities

1. Actively share the faith with your children by reviewing the weekly lesson handouts that your children bring home. These handouts are simple ways to reinforce what is taught in the short time that the children are in the classroom and strengthen the home faith connections for you and your family.
2. Insure that students arrive on time for class, no earlier than five minutes before class time begins, and are picked up within five minutes after class time ends.
3. Children **must** be dropped off at their respective classrooms. For their own safety, they **cannot** be dropped off in the parking lot or the circle drive. Parking in the fire lanes is prohibited.
3. If your child must be picked up before the end of class, please notify the Team Leader and your child's classroom teachers. Only the parent or an authorized person 16 years of age or older may pick the student up at the classroom door. Students will not be allowed to leave the classroom without a parent or designated authorized person coming to the classroom.
4. Ensure that your children know the prayers listed in the back of the handbook.
5. Keep informed of the events, important dates and changes to the program by accessing the various forms of media used in our program.

Classes will be dismissed on time. If parents have not picked up their children by five minutes after dismissal, the catechist will take the child to the front desk. The child will remain at the front desk until the parents are contacted and the child is picked up. If there is an emergency and/or you will be late, please call and inform the office, at 972-712-4616.

Student Responsibility and Conduct

Student responsibilities for having a positive experience in religious education will include:

- Attending class regularly and arriving on time
- Bringing folders and class materials weekly
- Actively participating in activities, listening and sharing ideas in appropriate ways
- Be attentive and cooperative with classroom teachers and other adult volunteers
- Follow classroom rules established by catechists and conduct themselves in a manner that is caring, responsible and respectful.

Attendance

The Dallas Diocese endorses an 80% attendance rule with respect to Faith Formation classes. All children must attend 80% or more of the Faith Formation classes for the year. That is a minimum of 20 out of 25 classes. If your child exceeds this number of unexcused absences without making up the work for the days that were missed, they will be dropped from the current year's roles. There are no exceptions. If your child must miss a class, contact your child's catechist directly. The make-up work will be ready for your child's return. The missed work must be completed and turned in the following class or the absence will be considered unexcused.

Sacraments

Formal preparation and reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Communion takes place in second grade, after having completed first grade Faith Formation classes and participating in the second grade Faith Formation program. This prerequisite of two years of Faith Formation is in keeping with Diocesan requirements. Children in the second grade Faith Formation program cannot be absent for more than two classes of First Reconciliation preparation or two classes of First Communion preparation. More frequent absences can result in a child not being able to receive these Sacraments this year.

Children older than second grade who have not yet received the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Communion must attend regular Faith Formation classes in addition to parent-led home preparation for these Sacraments. Participation in both the classroom setting and the home preparation will fulfill the requirement for two years of preparation.

At the beginning of the school year, families will receive a list of the important dates for these Sacraments, including the dates of the Masses that are scheduled for each class session to receive First Communion. Families cannot switch Mass times for First Communion. However, a make-up date will be available in the summer for families who cannot attend the scheduled Mass. Attendance at the two scheduled workshops for sacrament preparation is mandatory.

A photocopy of your child's Certificate of Baptism must be provided to the Faith Formation

office. Baptism is the first sacrament of initiation. Without documentation of the reception of this sacrament, no other sacraments can be conferred. If your child was baptized at this parish, and you do not have the Certificate of Baptism, please notify the Faith Formation office of the date so that we may obtain the record for you. If your child was baptized elsewhere and you are having trouble obtaining a copy of the certificate, please let the office know and we will help you. The information contained in this certificate will be needed for future sacraments as well, including confirmation and marriage. Please keep your child's Certificate of Baptism in a safe yet accessible place.

Snack Time

There are many children enrolled in our Faith Formation program who have severe reactions to particular foods and drinks. Also, class time is short and does not allow for additional snack time, with the exception of an occasional celebration. It may be advisable to provide your child with a small snack before coming to class.

Inclement Weather

Classes will be canceled when snow or ice make driving conditions hazardous. Our first mode of communication for such cancellations is through Flocknote (see section on Information Resources). If able to do so, the staff will post notice of canceled classes on the doors of Faith Formation wing and in the circular drive in front of the church, as well as on the parish web site. If classes are cancelled, there will also be a message on the phone at the following number: (972) 712-4616. Faith Formation classes will not be held on days that FISD cancels school due to inclement weather. Please refer to local radio and television stations for this information.

If time permits, The Children's Ministry staff will ask catechists to contact parents to inform them of cancellations as well.

Pets

Pets are *not* permitted in the Education Wing.

Building Access

Due to Diocesan Safe Environment directives, the only doors that should be accessible from outside the Education Wing are the main front doors. All other doors leading to the Education Wing will be locked and are for fire exit purposes only. Please use these main front doors only when dropping off and picking up your children. This is for the security of your children. It may take some effort on everyone's part, but in the long run, it is just a few more steps to keep our children safe.

Parking in Fire Lanes is prohibited, according to Texas Transportation Code § 684.011. For

the safety and well-being of all who use the building, please park in designated parking spaces only.

Faith Formation Fees

St. Francis of Assisi is a Stewardship Parish. As such, the generous sharing of our gifts of time, talent and treasure support the many ministries of our parish. While all of our parishioners support the children in Faith Formation through their tithing, the families who benefit directly from this ministry are expected to share in the cost of educating their children in the faith by paying a nominal fee. This fee covers only the cost of books and supplies.

Call to Serve

The involvement of parents and other parishioners over the years has been instrumental in the strength of the St. Francis of Assisi Faith Formation program. Active parental involvement is required. Parents are viewed as the primary educators of their children and numerous opportunities exist to become involved and take part in your child's religious instruction. Please consider in what manner you can share your time and talent with the children of our Faith Community.

Information Resources

Children's Ministry utilizes several means of communication to keep parents informed of the latest news in Children's Ministry.

- Children's Ministry Monthly Newsletter - This newsletter is distributed monthly in the classroom, and is available on our web-site and in the information cart in the Narthex. The newsletter provides information about Children's Ministry, as well as reminders of upcoming events and ideas for fun activities that will enrich your Catholic faith at home.

- Catechist Notes - Catechists may send home notes, sharing what is happening in your child's particular classroom.

- Weekly Bulletin - The weekly parish bulletin is an excellent resource to receive timely notices, not just on what is happening in Children's Ministry, but in the parish community as a whole.

- Web Site - Visit the Children's Ministry page on our parish web-site at www.stfoafrisco.org to view the parent handbook, the Faith Formation calendar and other important documents. There is also a section for families with fun and informative links that will nourish your faith.

- Flocknote - This new and innovative communication tool will allow you to receive reminders and notifications either through e-mail, text message, Facebook notification or by visiting www.flocknote.com. Visit Flocknote on-line and sign up for the Dallas Diocese, then St. Francis of Assisi in Frisco, then select the information feeds you would like to receive.

Notice of Nondiscriminatory Policy

St. Francis of Assisi programs (including, but not limited to, Faith Formation and Kids Day Out) admit students of any race, color, handicapping conditions, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to participants in the programs. St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Community does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin or handicapping conditions in the administration of its' educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, athletic or other parish-administered programs.

Safe Environment Program

St. Francis of Assisi established this program to provide a safe environment for the protection and well being of our children. All priests, staff, and lay ministry volunteers go through a criminal background check and Safe Environment training before serving the children. As part of the program we must have two cleared adults with children at all times. This means that each religious education class must have two cleared adults for the class to begin each week. We depend on the dedication and responsibility of the catechists and other support team members such as team leaders, nursery and substitutes to administer to this policy. If you are interested in serving as a Faith Formation volunteer, you may pick up a Screening Form from our office during office hours.

In addition to providing Safe Environment training for adults, each Fall we also offer a class that provides children with the tools to keep themselves safe. Bishop Farrell has asked every parish in our diocese to educate our parents and children through a program titled *Protecting God's Children*. This year the class will be offered on November 2,3 and 4. Please look for more information on this very important program.

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church
8000 El Dorado Parkway
Frisco, TX 75034
Phone: 972-712-2645
Fax: 972-712-1087

During class times *only* you may call the Faith Formation desk at 972-712-4616.

Important Prayers to Learn

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

Glory Be

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee;
blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.
Amen.

Guardian Angel Prayer

Angel of God, my guardian dear,
To whom God's love commits me here;
Ever this day be at my side,
To light and guard, to rule and guide.
Amen

Grace before Meals

Bless us O Lord, and these thy gifts,
which we are about to receive from thy bounty,
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Act of Contrition

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,
I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things.
I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more,
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.
Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.
In his name, my God, have mercy.
Amen.

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.
Amen.

Act of Faith

O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in three Divine persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; I believe that your divine Son became man, and died for our sins, and that He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches, because You have revealed them, Who can neither deceive or be deceived.
Amen.

Act of Hope

O my God, relying on Your almighty power and infinite mercy and promises, I hope to obtain pardon of my sins, the help of Your grace, and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer.
Amen.

Act of Love

O my God, I love You above all things, with my whole heart and soul, because You are all-good and worthy of all love. I love my neighbor as myself for the love of You. I forgive all who have injured me, and ask pardon of all whom I have injured.
Amen.

Hail, Holy Queen

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, hail, our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve! To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us; and after this, our exile, show us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O love, O sweet Virgin Mary!
Amen.