

Children's Ministry Parent Handbook

2011-2012

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Community

8000 Eldorado Parkway

Frisco, TX 75033

Phone: 972-712-2645

Fax: 972-712-1087

“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 2011

Dear St. Francis Families:

Welcome to the St. Francis of Assisi Children's Ministry Faith Formation program for the 2011-2012 school year. This is my first year at St. Francis and I am looking forward to working with you as your family grows in 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 throughout the year in Faith Formation, Outreach, and Community Events, to name a few.

The family is often called the "domestic church" as it is the most basic unit of church life. 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. At St. Francis we are dedicated to supporting you in this role and we thank you for allowing us to share in the faith formation of your children.

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 Sunday Mass weekly.

If you have not already done so, please sign up for Flocknote and subscribe to our Children's Ministry Family Feed. We will be using Flocknote as a primary means of communication this year and it is vital that we are able to reach you with announcements that pertain to your child's faith formation. Instructions on how to sign up for Flocknote can be found on St. Francis of Assisi's website, www.stfoafrisco.org.

Please keep this handbook as a 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 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,

Niki MacDougall
Children's Ministry Director
(972) 712-2645, ext. 229
nmacdougall@stfoafrisco.org

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.

Curriculum

This year we will be using *Call to Faith* published by Our Sunday Visitor. The *Call to Faith* curriculum incorporates the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Scripture, and Tradition into the weekly lesson plans. Because *Call to Faith* is a spiraling curriculum, each chapter builds upon the previous chapter and each year builds upon the previous year.

In addition to offering complete classroom materials, *Call to Faith* also offers an interactive website designed to help you, the parents, put the lessons your child learned in class into action as a family. This website offers a lectionary link, family prayers, home lessons, interactive chapter reviews and adult formation resources. You can access this from the OSV website: <http://www.osvcurriculum.com/ctf/nsmedia/parish/parents/parents.html>

For further information regarding Call to Faith, please refer to Our Sunday Visitor's website, <http://www.osvcurriculum.com/home/index.html>

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.

The best way for children to learn formal prayers is to recite them frequently such as nighttime or morning prayers. 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, and may ask students to memorize certain 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

Actively share the faith with your children by asking them to summarize the lesson they learned in class, and help them find ways to put the lessons they learned into action. OSV's curriculum site offers interactive chapter reviews that you can go over with your child to help them

remember what they have learned in class. You can access this by going to <http://www.osvcurriculum.com/ctf/nsmedia/parish/parents/parents.html>

- Ensure 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.
- **Children must be signed in and out of their respective classrooms.** For their own safety, they **cannot** be dropped off in the parking lot or outside the Education Wing. **Students who are not signed in or out 3 times will forfeit their spot in the class and be placed in our home study program where the parents become the catechists to their child at home.**
- 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 signing them out of the classroom.
- Ensure that your children know the prayers listed in the back of the handbook.
- Keep informed of the events, important dates and changes to the program by signing up for Flocknote and reading the notices sent out through Flocknote.

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 24 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, please contact your child's catechist directly in writing (email will suffice as well). 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 the 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. Attendance at the workshops and learning centers for sacrament preparation is mandatory.

Inclement Weather

Faith Formation classes will not be held on days that FISSD cancels school due to inclement weather. Classes will be canceled when snow or ice make driving conditions hazardous. A message will be sent out on Flocknote informing Children Ministry families of cancellations. If classes are cancelled, there will also be a message on the phone at the following number: (972) 712-4616. If time permits, The Children's Ministry staff will ask catechists to contact parents to inform them of cancellations.

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.

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. If the registration fees pose a financial hardship, please contact the Children's Ministry office. ***No child will be denied catechesis or sacraments due to financial circumstances.*** There is no cost to catechists and team leaders who volunteer for the full year.

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 provides ideas for fun activities that will enrich your Catholic faith at home.

- 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 or click on their link on the Children's Ministry web page to sign up to get information through Flocknote.

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 mem-

bers 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.

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

If you have any additional questions regarding Children's Ministry at St. Francis please contact Niki MacDougall, Director of Children's Ministry at 972-712-2645 ext. 229 or via e-mail nmacdougall@stfoafrisco.org

Prayers to Know

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

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

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

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
and in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell; On the third day he rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father
almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
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

Parent Handbook Acknowledgement Form

Please sign this page, remove from handbook and return to the Children's Ministry office.

I acknowledge receipt of the 2011-2012 St. Francis of Assisi Children's Ministry Parent Handbook, distributed during Parent Orientation.

I understand that all parents are accountable for reading and understanding the information contained in this handbook. This handbook contains important information about parent responsibilities, student responsibilities and conduct, attendance, safe environment policies, inclement weather cancellations, stewardship, fees and the Faith Formation calendar.

Parent Name:

Student Names: _____

Parent Signature

Date
