



**FAITH  
FORMATION  
FAMILY HANDBOOK**

*Supporting parents in passing  
on the faith to their children*

# FAITH FORMATION OFFICE

## Our Mission

The Divine Grace Parish Faith Formation Office supports parents in passing along the faith to their children. We do this by providing engaging and age-appropriate formation opportunities that respect the way students learn and that are designed to deepen a relationship with Jesus and provide a meaningful understanding of the Catholic faith. Everything we do is in support of parents as their own kids' primary educators.

## Faith Formation Staff Contact Info

Jason Gawaldo, Director of Evangelization & Catechetical Ministries  
724-776-9177 X1317 | [jgawaldo@diviengrangepgh.org](mailto:jgawaldo@diviengrangepgh.org)

Kay Bellissimo, Coordinator for Catechetical Ministries  
724-758-7587 X3006 | [kbellissimo@diviengrangepgh.org](mailto:kbellissimo@diviengrangepgh.org)  
724-752-1271 X3004 During Faith Formation

Emma Sabados, Coordinator for Faith Formation  
724-776-9177 X1406 | [esabados@diviengrangepgh.org](mailto:esabados@diviengrangepgh.org)

Michael Assaf, Coordinator for Youth & Young Adult Ministry  
724-776-9177 X1316 | [massaf@diviengrangepgh.org](mailto:massaf@diviengrangepgh.org)

Hannah Repasky, Assistant Coordinator for Youth Ministry  
[hrepasky@divinegrangepgh.org](mailto:hrepasky@divinegrangepgh.org)

# COMMUNICATIONS

## Parent/Faith Formation Correspondence

The Faith Formation Office will send regular emails and text messages through **Flocknote** using the email address(es) and phone numbers(s) provided in your registration information. If you are not receiving correspondence be sure to add mail@flocknote.com to your email contacts. If this still does not work, contact our office.

## Parent/Catechist Correspondence

Your child's catechist may periodically reach out to you via email, phone, or a letter through the USPS. We encourage the parent/guardian to have a clear line of communication with your student(s)' catechist(s).

## Cancellations/Inclement Weather

If we need to cancel an on-site session for any reason (severe weather, power outage, etc.), we will email and/or text that announcement as early as possible.

# POLICIES & PROCEDURES

## Arrival

Please do not drop your child off more than **10 minutes** before their class starts. If the catechist has not arrived yet, please stay with your child until the catechist arrives.

**Holy Redeemer** – Please enter the parking lot via the Cherry Way Alley and exit onto 3rd Street. Students in Grades K–2 should be escorted to their classroom. Students in Grades 3–8 may walk up to the classrooms themselves.

## Arrival (continued)

**St. Ferdinand** – Students in Grades K–5 must be signed in at their classroom. Students in Grades 6–8 may sign themselves in and out and may also do this for younger siblings at the discretion of their parents/guardians.

## Dismissal

**Holy Redeemer** – Please enter the parking lot via the Cherry Way Alley and exit onto 3rd Street. Students in Grades K–2 should be picked up from their classrooms. Students in Grades 3–8 will be dismissed from their classrooms into the parking lot.

**St. Ferdinand** – Students must be signed out from their classrooms. Parents/Guardians will be allowed into the building five minutes before pickup time and will not be allowed into the classroom hallway until the end of the session. If you will be late in picking up your student(s), please contact the Faith Formation Office at (724) 776-9177 ext 1406.

## Early Dismissal/Late Arrival

If a student arrives late, the parent/guardian will sign in at the Faith Formation Office and a Staff member or volunteer Office Aide will escort the student to his/her classroom.

If a student must leave early, the parent/guardian should indicate the pickup time on the sign in sheet in their child's classroom. When they arrive for the early dismissal, they should check in at the Faith Formation Office to sign out their child, and a Staff member or volunteer Office Aide will bring their child to the office.

## Safe Environment & Visitor Policy

All Divine Grace Parish personnel, including staff, catechists, aids, and substitutes who have contact with children are required to be Safe Environment compliant. All visitors (including parents and volunteers) must come through the East entrance of the Faith Formation Office. For safety and security reasons all visitors are required to sign in at the reception area. Please follow these procedures even if only dropping off an item for a student. No adult is permitted to enter a classroom without permission of a staff member.

## Attendance Policy

Continuing Faith Formation is fundamentally important to the spiritual well-being of every Catholic. This is especially true during a child's formative years. We strongly encourage all families to attend class regularly. For drop-off programs, we will email a session summary shortly before pickup. This email allows parents to know what was taught and how to reinforce it at home, and it also provides an easy resource to cover the material from a missed session.

A child should not attend class when it may be detrimental to his/her health or the health of others. Students who have a fever, diarrhea, or have vomited should be free from these symptoms for 24 hours before attending class.

## Discipline Procedures

In order to maintain safe and appropriate learning environments for our students, all students are expected to abide by the following Student Code of Conduct:

- Honor and cooperate with those in positions of authority (catechists, aides, activity leaders, clergy, etc.). Treat other students with respect
- and dignity. Respect the physical space in which we meet. Behave
- appropriately and promote a safe, fun, and healthy environment through
- productive participation.

## Discipline Procedures (continued)

The staff will use a positive approach to all behavioral issues and will seek parental support when needed. Students who remain disruptive and/or disrespectful after consultation with parents may be dismissed from the program in fairness to the other students.

# SACRAMENTS

## “Normal” Times

Regular preparation for sacraments occurs at the following times:

- **Baptism** can normally be received at any age. If a child is older than eight when s/he is presented for Baptism, then s/he will also be prepared for and receive Confirmation and First Communion.
- **First Reconciliation (Confession) and First Communion** are normally received in the spring of Second Grade.
- **Confirmation** is regularly received in the spring of Eighth Grade.

## Individualized Sacramental Preparation

Any student who has missed a sacrament at the “normal” time will also receive individualized sacramental preparation in addition to Faith Formation sessions. This will usually involve some material to review at home along with a few in-person meetings with Staff to review it and to go over the logistics of the ceremony.