

# St. Mary of Nazareth Catholic Church



*Faith Formation, Sacramental Prep,  
and Youth Ministry Programming*

Parent and Family Handbook

*Updated 3-30-2023*

## Table of Contents

Please take some time to read the portions of this booklet relevant to you – For example, if you have a student in the 4<sup>th</sup> Grade, you would read the pages entitled “K-6 Family Formation Program” AND the “ALL Programs” pages.

ALL Programs –Prioritizing Sunday Mass.....	2
Our K-6 Family Formation Program (Why is family faith formation important?).....	3
K-6 Family Formation (cont.) (The nuts and bolts -- How our family formation program works).....	4
K-6 Family Faith Formation Childcare.....	5
1 <sup>st</sup> Reconciliation and 1 <sup>st</sup> Communion Prep.....	6
Junior High Youth Group.....	7
Confirmation Prep.....	7
High School Youth Group.....	8
High School Youth Group Small Groups.....	9
Attendance Policy – Affects ALL Programs EXCEPT High School Youth Group.....	10-11
ALL Programs – Community Events.....	12
ALL Programs – Weather Cancellations and Safety Considerations .....	13
ALL Programs -- Special Considerations, Photography Policy, and Poor Student Behavior Policies.....	14
ALL Programs – Registration and Fees.....	15
ALL Programs – VOLUNTEER NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES .....	16
Questions? Contact Us.....	17

Fr John Frost

Pastor

515-276-4042

[frjfrost@stmarydsm.org](mailto:frjfrost@stmarydsm.org)

Melinda Headlee

Director of Faith Formation

515-276-7589

[melindah@stmarysdsdm.org](mailto:melindah@stmarysdsdm.org)

Chris Smith

Director of Youth Ministry

515-251-7568

[chriss@stmarysdsdm.org](mailto:chriss@stmarysdsdm.org)

Junior High Youth Group  Core Team	3 Times-A-Month Group Teaching Opportunity 7 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Wednesday Nights 5:30-7:45pm	VIRTUS Completed Background Check
Confirmation Prep  Small Group Mentor Teams of 2	Small Group Leading Opportunity 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Wednesday 7:30-8:45	VIRTUS Completed Background Check Retreat Day Assistance
High School Youth Group  Core Team	Group Teaching Opportunity 9 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> Grades	Wednesday Nights 6:30pm to 9:00pm	VIRTUS Completed Background Check

## ALL PROGRAMS – Prioritizing Sunday Mass

We are pleased to offer quality faith formation and youth ministry programming to our St. Mary's families, but attendance of faith formation programming is only going to be fruitful if your family is regularly attending Mass. Mass is where we hear God's word, are fed God's own body, and are able to connect with our greater Church community – those present here on earth and in heaven! Our programming builds from the stories and sacraments your family receives each Sunday. Please make it a priority to get your family to Mass whenever you are able. If there is anything St. Mary's can do to make Mass more accessible to your family, do not hesitate to reach out!

## Our K-6 Family Formation Program

*Why is family faith formation important to St. Mary of Nazareth Parish?*

We at St. Mary of Nazareth Catholic Church are committed to helping families grow a faith that they can carry with them for a lifetime. Church leadership across the US and within our own Diocese have come to recognize how critical is it to include both the students and their parents in the faith formation process.

From the beginning of Christianity, forming hearts to come to know God in the context of the family is how “families became islands of Christian life in an unbelieving world.” (CCC 1655). Our faith is a lifelong journey. Our goal is to break faith out of the confines of the classroom and instead change faith into a lived experience. Forming adults alongside their children is critical for children to bring their faith with them when they move onto college and beyond.

Families are considered to be “domestic churches,” or churches in miniature in the home. Our family formation program seeks to equip families on how to live out their role as a “domestic church”, so we can come together as a “Church of churches” on Sunday to worship and carry Christ’s light to the world.

These are what our “on-campus” Wednesdays are oriented towards. We seek to equip families, including parents along with their children, to grow and foster a faith they may bring into their own homes. Our home lessons and prayer segments on the “off-campus” weeks will help you continue to build your faith within the home.

## ALL PROGRAMS – Volunteer Needs and Opportunities

VOLUNTEER POSITION	DESCRIPTION	NEEDED	ADDITIONAL INFO
Family Faith Formation  Lead Catechist  Assistant Catechist	Teaching Opportunity Grades K-6 (Needed <b>twice a month</b> – once for teaching, once for planning night)	Wednesday Nights 5:55-7:15	VIRTUS completed Background Check
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Sacramental Prep Team  Lead Catechist  Assistant Catechist	3 Times-A-Month Teaching Opportunity Sacramental Prep	Wednesday Nights 5:55-7:15  + Retreat assistance	VIRTUS Completed Background Check  Retreat Assistance (1 <sup>st</sup> Rec Workshop in Late Fall and 1 <sup>st</sup> Com Retreat in Early Spring)
Childcare team	Provide childcare for younger siblings of K-12 students during family formation programming	2 Wednesday nights a month	VIRTUS Completed Background Check
Meal Ministers	Serve meals to the faith formation families on first Wednesday nights	First Wednesdays from 5:15-pm-6:16pm	
Hall Monitor	1 to 3 Times-A-Month (depending on assigned location) Monitoring halls	Wednesday Nights 5:55-7:15	VIRTUS Completed Background Check

## ALL PROGRAMS – Registration and Fees

A registration packet will be sent in the mail to your family. Please fill out the registration form and return it by June 19, 2022.

As referenced on the Attendance Policy page of this booklet, please make sure to sign the participation policy found on the back of the registration form as well if you have a student in grades K-9.

### FEES –

- K to 9<sup>th</sup> Grade - **ONE** Student - \$75.00 \*\* **TWO** Students - \$100.00\*\***THREE OR MORE** - \$125.00
- High School Youth Group has NO FEE
- **Reduced Tuition for Volunteers** – Volunteers only pay student book fee of \$15.00 per book for K-8 Students. No book fees for older students.
- **Late fee** – Please add \$25 after June 15

## K-6 Family Formation Program (cont.)

### *The Nuts and Bolts – How Our Family Formation Program Works*

We ask students, along with their parents, to attend on-campus events twice per month.

At the start of each month we will have our “On-Campus Parent and Student Formation Night”. On these nights, we ask a parent/guardian (or both parents!) to report to the Parish Hall along with their student(s). We will begin with a gathered, family session. After this gathered session, students will break off for their classes and parents will remain in the hall for a formation session. Having both parent and student attendance on these nights is critical to make this family formation program work.

Families will be given one lesson a month to complete at home. The lesson will build on what students and parents learned in the classroom/adult session.

Our other on-campus Wednesday Night is our “Community Night”. On these nights, families will remain together as we engage in social activities that have a service or spiritual component. All of our programs, grades K-12, will participate in our Community Nights. Students in Grades K-6, including 2<sup>nd</sup> grade sacramental prep, must come with a parent on these nights.

We will also have a night off each month for families to engage in rest and prayer, which are both sacred to God. A prayer aid will be provided for you to use in the home on these weeks.

## K-6 Family Formation Childcare

If you have a child who is too young to participate in faith formation programming, childcare is available to allow you to participate in our “On-Campus Parent and Student Faith Formation Nights” with your family. Please fill out a Childcare Interest Form to register!

## ALL PROGRAMS – Special Considerations

Please let the Faith Formation office know if there are any special considerations with your child/children that would make them feel more comfortable in the classroom. There is room to denote any special considerations on the registration form.

### ALL PROGRAMS – Photography and Promotions

Unless you notify the parish in writing, St. Mary of Nazareth assumes permission to use your child’s photograph (without name identification) for print and electronic communications and publicity.

### ALL PROGRAMS – Poor Behavior in the Classroom

Poor behavior in the classroom interferes with the educational experience of all students. Disruption to class or inappropriate treatment of our volunteers will not be tolerated. Examples of poor behavior: verbal outbursts, defiance/refusal to follow rules and instructions, profane or obscene language or gestures, racial bigotry or other forms of intolerance, physical attacks on another individual, the possession of drugs or weapons, or any verbal threat.

Our volunteers reserve the right to remove a disruptive student from the classroom and send them to the parent session to sit with you rather than being in class with their classmates. An assistant catechist or hall monitor will walk your student to you with a note of what behavior resulted in their dismissal from the classroom.

## ALL PROGRAMS – Weather Cancellations

If the Johnston Community School District has a school cancellation, early out, or cancellation of evening activities, Faith Formation, Youth Group, and Sacramental Preparation activities will always be cancelled. The Faith Formation department may use further discretion to cancel, even if JCSD activities are not cancelled, if we deem evening activities to be unsafe. We will always communicate cancellations via email and our Remind service.

## ALL PROGRAMS – Safety Considerations

Families and junior high students will enter using the southeast doors to the Parish Hall. **If you are in our K-6 family formation program, there is NO student drop off. Families attend these events together.**

**There are weeks where 2<sup>nd</sup> graders have class while no adult session is going on. On these weeks, 2<sup>nd</sup> graders are expected to be accompanied by an adult as they are dropped off in their classroom. Do NOT let your child off at the door.** Junior high and high school students are allowed to report to their sessions without a parent escort.

**All children in the K-6 program, along with 2<sup>nd</sup> grade sacramental prep, must be signed out by an adult before leaving for the evening.**

The front door to the Parish Hall door will be unlocked at 6:45pm to allow for high school teen entry.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Reconciliation and 1<sup>st</sup> Communion Prep

Any student who has been previously baptized and enters the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade becomes eligible to enter the 1<sup>st</sup> Reconciliation and 1<sup>st</sup> Communion Prep program. If your student has not been baptized when he or she reaches this age, please reach out to the Faith Formation office for further guidance. If your student has passed 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and has not yet received 1<sup>st</sup> Reconciliation and 1<sup>st</sup> Communion, reach out to the Faith Formation office regarding this as well!

Sacramental preparation requires background knowledge in who Jesus Christ is and the basic tenants of the faith. Your child will not be eligible to enter into 1<sup>st</sup> Reconciliation and 1<sup>st</sup> Communion prep until he or she has completed a year of our family formation program, along with their parents (which is typically the student's first grade year).

Sacramental preparation meets weekly in a traditional classroom. In the fall we have a 1<sup>st</sup> Reconciliation Workshop preceding the reception of 1<sup>st</sup> Reconciliation that we ask our parents to join. In the spring we have our 1<sup>st</sup> Communion Retreat preceding the reception of 1<sup>st</sup> Communion that we also ask our parents to join. Please mark the dates of our workshop, retreat, practice, and 1<sup>st</sup> sacraments in your calendars.

Preparing to receive the sacraments means learning how to be part of the larger Church community. Once per month, sacramental prep class will be replaced with our Community Night. Please plan to attend our Community Night events with your student(s).

*Keep your eye out for an email in the fall regarding 1 on 1 meet and greets with Melinda Headlee. This is an informal chance for her to get to know you and your 2<sup>nd</sup> grader in advance of sacramental prep!*

## Junior High Youth Group

7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade students are eligible to join our Junior High Youth Group. Junior High Youth Group meets weekly from 6:00-7:30pm and is on a two year rotation of learning about the Bible and the Mass.

Every student who enters the Junior High Youth Group will be provided a Youth Bible to keep as their own. Please make sure your student brings this Bible to Youth Group each week.

Junior High Youth Group features games, Bible study, small group time and more! It's an interactive and invigorating way for teens to learn the faith.

Junior High Youth Group will also participate in our Community Events, which are special collaborative events for all students in K-12. Community Events happen once monthly during the regularly scheduled Junior High Youth Group time.

Students in Junior High Youth Group are also eligible to join our teen choir. Please reach out to Chris Smith for more info.

## ALL PROGRAMS – Community Events

To be a Church in communion with one another means to be in community with one another! Once per month, a collaborative event will be held that involves all levels of Faith Formation and Youth Ministry (this includes K-6 Family Faith Formation, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade Sacramental Preparation, and our Junior High and High School youth groups). These events will take place once a month from 6:00-7:15pm, and are a part of our required programming for K-9<sup>th</sup> students. For students in K-8, these events are family oriented and a parent or parents are expected to attend with their children. High school students are invited to attend independently, as no High School Youth Group meetings will happen on the night of our Community Events.

These events will build up our community through socialization, service, and spiritual growth. Every month's event is a new and different way to grow together as a community!

As we celebrate our growing in community together, we also look towards the greater community outside of St. Mary's and how we may help those in need. Keep an eye out for what our "outreach" is for the month as we seek to help local charities on the nights of these events.

## Attendance –Programs EXCEPT High School Youth Group

Participation in Faith Formation programming is key to the religious growth of the child. By our baptismal call, parents are gifted the meaningful role of primary catechists of their children. The Church in turn commits itself to equip parents to answer this call and aid children to prepare their minds and hearts for the very real spiritual gifts you receive through the Sacraments and Spirit.

We ask that parents and children attend our on-campus parent and student formation nights, community nights, and that students in sacramental prep will attend their sacramental prep sessions. Note that missed sacramental prep sessions will need to be made up.

We understand life happens! We are more than happy to work with your unique circumstances to ensure your child can be a part of our faith formation programming on all levels. If you have special circumstances, please reach out and we will develop an action plan that works with your family's needs! We also respect your role as primary catechists of your children. You know what's best for your family in regards to their faith formation, and we will support you however we can.

**Please notify us of any parent or student absence BEFORE 3:45pm on Wednesday so we can make arrangements with the teachers.** If a concern arises that will result in an absence after 3:45pm on a Wednesday night, simply let us know as soon as you are able. Please reach out to Melinda Headlee (K-6 Family Formation and Reconciliation/Eucharist Prep) and/or Chris Smith (7-12 Youth Ministry and Confirmation Prep) if you have concerns.

## Confirmation Preparation

Beginning in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, students become eligible for our Confirmation Prep program.

Confirmation Prep meets on the first two Wednesdays of the month from 7:00-8:45pm. Please have your student report to the Youth Room where they will join in communal activities with other teens and then break into Confirmation specific small groups.

An important part of the Confirmation prep process is the pre-program interviews with the Confirmation candidates and parents. In these interviews we will go over important dates for Confirmation, including the Confirmation Retreat, how to find a sponsor, and what will be required for service hours. Please be on the lookout for an email from Chris at the beginning of August to sign up for an interview.

## High School Youth Group

Beginning in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, students become eligible to join our High School Youth Group. Your student can be enrolled in High School Youth Group and Confirmation Prep concurrently.

High School Youth Group is a dynamic chance for students to engage in what their faith means to them. We will have games, testimonies from our core team, small group time, and time for reflection.

Encourage your students to bring their friends from school to youth group!

High School Youth Group will also participate in our Community Events, which are special collaborative events for all students in K-12. Please be mindful of when the Community Events are on the calendar, because these events begin at 6:00pm and replace High School Youth Group for the night.

Students in High School Youth Group are also eligible to join our teen choir. Please reach out to Chris Smith for more info.

There is no fee for the High School Youth Group, but please note those enrolled in Confirmation Prep do still have classes that require a fee following our normal fee structure.

## High School Youth Group – Small Groups

Small Groups will generally happen on the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the month when there is no High School Youth Group (The same weeks our Community Nights are happening). They will consist of meeting with two small group leaders and 5 to 7 of your peers. You will have the ability to sign up for small groups on any day throughout the week that is best for you which is one of the great things about small groups! More information on how to sign up will come soon!