

**Divine Redeemer Parish**

**Faith Formation**

**Handbook**

2021-2022

***Note to Parents:***

As we begin this new year of Faith Formation, please be assured that the catechists and staff of the Divine Redeemer Faith Formation program are deeply committed to helping your children to grow in their faith and become life-long, intentional disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We are grateful for the opportunity to participate with you, the primary educators of your children and their best teachers in the faith. Your children learn to become followers of Christ primarily through the example you set when you pray together as a family, seek to serve one another and the wider community, and actively participate in the Mass and the sacraments. Please take some time to familiarize yourself with this handbook. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to a wonderful Faith Formation Year, and we sincerely thank you for the immense privilege of allowing us to walk beside your children on their journey of faith!

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**OUR PROGRAMS**:

Divine Redeemer Parish is committed to helping to develop the faith life of all its members, from young children to adults. Following are the programs offered for the children and youth of our Parish:

Traditional Faith Formation

Our traditional Faith Formation combines the talent and knowledge of our faithful and dedicated volunteer catechists with the Diocesan-approved textbook *Spirit of Truth* by Sophia Institute for Teachers(Grades K-5). The curriculum covers a wide variety of topics such as Scripture, the Creed, Morality, the Sacraments, and the Liturgical Year. In addition, special retreat days are offered for 2nd Grade, in preparation for the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. “Family Days” are offered twice a year to give students an opportunity to grow in their faith not only personally and within their classrooms, but in the dynamic of a joyful and faith-filled community.

Family Program

Divine Redeemer offers families the option to participate in the highly-acclaimed Faith Formation Family Program, *A Family of Faith*, also by Sophia Institute for Teachers. Families in the Family Program meet on the 2nd Sunday of every month for adult and student learning sessions, community, and fellowship, while homeschooling together the other three weeks of the month. *A Family of Faith* follows afour-year cycle, wherein families who participate will have the opportunity to study each of the four pillars of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (The Creed, Morality and the Christian Life, The Sacraments, and Prayer) within the context of four years.

EDGE

EDGE is a program specifically designed for middle school students. It provides a fun, safe place for youth to find solid Catholic community, to get answers to their questions about faith, and, most importantly, to experience Jesus in a profound and personal way.

All students in Grades 6-8 participate in EDGE, which takes place on the first and third Sundays of the month at the St. Mary Campus.

**FAITH FORMATION DATES & TIMES**

Traditional Faith Formation (Grades K – 5)

Sunday – 9:30 – 10:45 am (St. James School)

Monday – 6:15 – 7:30 pm (St. James - Gathering Space)

(Parents choose either the Sunday or Monday session for their child(ren) to attend.)

Family Program (Grades K-5)

2nd Sunday of the month – 12:00 – 1:30 p.m. (St. James – Gathering Space)

EDGE

1st and 3rd Sunday of the month – 6-8 p.m. (St. Mary – Meenan Center & Church)

**FAITH FORMATION CALENDAR YEAR**

The Faith Formation calendar year typically runs from mid-September until the end of April. Please refer to your calendar for this year for days off/ holidays and for special events throughout the year.

**STUDENTS ATTENDING CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

Faith Formation is a requirement for all Catholic students in Grades 1 – 8. Students attending Parochial and Private Catholic Schools are exempt from attending Faith Formation classes, but are still required to participate in sacramental preparation programs offered by the Parish (2nd Grade First Reconciliation & First Communion retreats and the 9th Grade Confirmation retreat). Families whose children attend Catholic schools must notify the Faith Formation office if they would like for their child(ren) to receive their sacraments at Divine Redeemer Parish.

**SACRAMENTAL RECORDS**

The Faith Formation Office requires a copy of the Baptismal certificate of all students preparing to receive the sacraments. Students who are not yet baptized are welcome to participate in Faith Formation classes, but parents are asked to make an appointment with a member of the clergy to discuss preparation for the sacrament of Baptism.

**SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**

Parents have a right and duty to be intimately involved in preparing their children for First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation. Religious education in preparation for the reception of the sacraments thus involves required parent informational meetings and family-based retreat days, especially regarding preparation of the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion.

Preparation for the sacraments is considered a two-year process. Parents are expected to enroll their children in Religious Education classes by the beginning of First Grade to make sure they are adequately prepared to receive the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion in the Spring of their 2nd Grade year. Students preparing for Confirmation must attend religious formation classes (EDGE) for at least two years prior to receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Fall of 9th Grade.

**TEXTBOOKS/ BIBLES**

It is the responsibility of the students to keep their textbooks and Bibles in good condition throughout the year, and to bring their textbooks and Bibles to class each session. Students who have misplaced their textbooks or Bible will be required to pay a replacement fee of $20.

**FAITH FORMATION ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Because Faith Formation sessions are only held once a week, absences should be avoided if at all possible. That being said, during this time of pandemic, we require that any student with a fever, sore throat, or other cold symptoms (or anyone who has been exposed to a person diagnosed with Covid-19) to remain home until they are cleared to return to in-person learning. Students who must miss class are asked to complete their chapter/ lesson at home and to E-mail their assignments to the Faith Formation office at their earliest convenience.

**FAITH FORMATION FAMILY DAYS**

Faith Formation Family Days are a very important part of the Faith Formation program at Divine Redeemer Parish. Family days provide an opportunity for prayer, reflection, learning, fun, and fellowship. Participation in the Family Days are required for all families with students in Grades K – 5, including students attending the Traditional Program.

**VOLUNTEERING**

Parents and high school/college students who are interested in volunteering for our Faith Formation program are always welcomed with joy and deep appreciation! Please speak with Julie or Nicole if you or your high school/college student is interested in helping as a catechist, aide, substitute catechist, office assistant, traffic assistant, Middle School mentor, or hospitality aide. There are also plenty of opportunities for middle school students to earn service hours by volunteering to help in various capacities throughout the Faith Formation year.

**COMMUNICATION**

Communication between the Faith Formation office, catechists, and parents will take place primarily through email. Please be sure to have an accurate email address in the system and to check your email weekly for any news/ updates. Please feel free to communicate with the Faith Formation office staff either through phone or email (provided on the first page).

**PHOTOGRAPHY OF STUDENTS**

Throughout the year, particularly during special Family events, we may be photographing the students for the purpose of sharing our program with the wider Parish community in the bulletin and/ or on the Parish website. If you do not want your child photographed, please write a note to the Faith Formation office stating this decision and/or check the box “do not photograph” on the online registration form. We fully respect your right to privacy in this matter.

**RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES**

All families in our Parish are blessed with a complementary subscription to FORMED.org. Please visit the FORMED website (Enter your email and find “Divine Redeemer Parish” to create your own account) to view dynamic instructional videos and entertaining films for families and children alike. In addition, please see the Parish bulletin for events (retreats, talks, Bible studies, etc.) offered for adults and families throughout the year.

**PROCEDURES FOR ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL**

Sunday students in the traditional program may arrive/ be dismissed at both the St. James School parking lot as well as the door leading to Bank Street. Please indicate whether you will be picking up your child at the St. James Parking Lot or in the Bank Street car line prior to the beginning of the school year. Parents are required to pick up students who have an early dismissal in the Faith Formation Office, where they will sign them out. At the end of class time, parents of students in Grades K – 3 who are not using the car line are asked to go to the Gathering Space to pick them up. Due to the fact that students in grades 4-5 may be dismissed on their own, parents are asked to exercise extreme caution when driving in and out of the parking lot.

**CUSTODY ARRANGEMENTS**

In the case of divorce or separation, it will be assumed that both parents have access to their child(ren) unless court records stating otherwise are handed in to the Faith Formation Office. Please note that such records will be kept in strict confidentiality.

**MANDATED REPORTING**

All catechists and staff are required to obtain FBI-approved background checks as well as to attend mandatory courses for the protection of children. They are likewise required by law to report to proper authorities any suspicion of abuse or neglect of any kind.

**CELL PHONES/ SNACKS**

Cell phones and snack foods are prohibited at the St. James site. Parents are welcome to call the Faith Formation Office at 412-741-6650, Ext. 503 to relay a message to their child.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Students with Covid symptoms, head lice, pink eye, strep throat, influenza, or other communicable diseases are to remain home until symptoms are no longer apparent (or in the case of Covid-19, until their required quarantine period has ended). Students who feel ill during class are asked to come to the Faith Formation Office, and a call will be made home to parents. The Faith Formation Office will not dispense any medication (including cough drops) to students. Bandages may be given for minor cuts and scrapes.

During the 2021-22 school year, Bishop Zubik has mandated that all students and catechists wear masks/face coverings while indoors during Faith Formation to help prevent the possible spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**STUDENT BEHAVIOR POLICY**

In order to ensure student learning, disruptive behavior in class will not be tolerated. Catechists have been instructed to send disruptive students to the Faith Formation Office. If a student is sent to the office three or more times during the school year, the parents will be asked to schedule a meeting with the Director of Faith Formation and/ or a member of the clergy. Our catechists freely volunteer their time to instruct our students in the Faith, and it is expected that our students respect the commitment made by their catechists through courteous and respectful behavior.

**WEATHER CLOSING POLICY**

If it is necessary to cancel Faith Formation classes, cancellation notices will be posted on the Parish website: ([www.divine-redeemer.com](http://www.divine-redeemer.com)) and emails will be sent to all families. Parental judgement concerning road conditions in your neighborhood should be a deciding factor in all cases.

**IMPORTANT DATES**:

Sept. 12 – Family Program Parent Meeting

Sept. 19 & 20 – First Day of Classes/ EDGE & Traditional Program Parent Meeting

Oct. 2 – Confirmation (Grade 9)

Nov. 7 & 9 – Gr. 2 (First Communion) Parent Meetings

Nov. 15 – Gr. 8 (Confirmation) Parent Meeting

Dec. 12 - Advent Faith Formation Family Day

Feb. 12 – First Reconciliation Retreat (Gr. 2)

Mar. 5 & 12 – First Reconciliation

April 9- First Communion Retreat

May 1 – Spring Family Day/ last day of Faith Formation

May 14 & 15 – First Holy Communion

**THANK YOU to our 2021 -2022 Catechists and Classroom Assistants:**

Sunday – Traditional Program

K – Mrs. Gina Hutton & Mrs. Lisvet Yancheski

1A – Mrs. Sheri Persuit

1B – Mrs. Kara O’Neill

2A – Mrs. Sylvia McGaughey & Mrs. Gail Brooks

2B – Mrs. Maria Donahue

3 – Mrs. Barb Kotarba & Ms. Ann Dickson

4 – Mrs. Kelly Lovato & Mrs. Amy Dwyer

5 – Mr. Jason Corsetti

Monday – Traditional Program

Gr. 2 & 3 – Mr. & Mrs. Jeffrey & Carolina Moran

Gr. 4 & 5 – Ms. Julie Thimons

Family Program

Gr. K & 1 – Mr. & Mrs. Jeffrey & Carolina Moran

Gr. 2 & 3 – Mrs. Christian Stampfel

Gr. 4 & 5 – Mrs. Kathleen Green

EDGE

Nicole Accordino

Julie Thimons

Molly Studebaker

Cara Flati

Jim Haupt

Michelle Saad

Elie Saad

Victoria Graham

Steven Guyton

Jason Corsetti

Teen Mentors