

Church of Saint Aidan



Faith Formation Program

Parent / Student Handbook

2023 - 2024

Dear Parents,

The Saint Aidan Faith Formation Program is part of the community of believers who bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ by helping families nurture their children in the love of God, the love of neighbor, and Catholic Christian values. We believe in each child's uniqueness and giftedness. We work to foster in each student a sense of respect for, and responsibility to God, self, and others.

Our program has as its primary mission the Formation of children in the Catholic Faith. The catechists of our parish are committed to teaching the fullness of revelation as taught by the Roman Catholic Church. Our catechists will always teach within the context of fidelity to the doctrine and traditions of our teaching Church. The instruction offered to the children seeks to fulfill the Six Tasks of Catechesis: Promoting Knowledge of the Faith, Liturgical Education, Moral Formation, Forms of Prayer, Education for Community Life; and Missionary Discipleship. The ultimate goal is to help each child develop and grow in intimacy with God and to embrace his/her mission to spread the Good News to others.

Formation in the spiritual life begins at home and is always the primary responsibility of the parents. Parents are assisted in fulfilling this most important responsibility by having their children actively participate in the parish Faith Formation Program. We make every effort to provide a safe environment for both the staff and the children entrusted to us. It is essential that the family prays and worships together at Sunday Mass and Eucharist because the Mass is the center of Catholic life.

The pages that follow provide you with general guidance for participation in the program during the upcoming school year. Please keep this handbook for your reference. This handbook as well as other documents and updates are available on the Faith Formation webpage, <https://staidanparish.org/ff>. The policies and procedures included in this document will be followed by the Faith Formation Office throughout the school year. Should changes need to be made at any point during the school year, you will be alerted via email and the changes will be posted on our webpages.

The whole staff of the Faith Formation Office welcomes you and your family. Together Parents and the Faith Formation Program are Partners in Faith. Please pray every day that we have a healthy and productive school year. Contact us anytime with any questions or concerns you may have. The Faith Formation Office is here for you!

Sincerely,

Elaine Smith
Director of Faith Formation

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Admission

The Saint Aidan Faith Formation Program (hereafter referred to as the "Program") does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, nationality, or disability: Parents are required to register all students annually for admission into the program. A copy of the baptismal certificate must be submitted in order to complete each student's initial registration.

Transfers from another parish religious education programs will require verification. The parent is responsible to provide the Program with a Letter of Transfer from the child's previous religious education program. Children must successfully complete each level of instruction. Children who have not received prior instruction will be evaluated on an individual basis to determine the appropriate level at which they should enter the Program.

Tuition

Tuition charged in the program is used to offset some of the expenses for books, supplies, administrative costs and other needs of the Faith Formation program and is due at the time of registration unless other arrangements have been made. Once classes begin, tuition is not refundable. Financial hardship should never preclude enrolling a child in the program. Financial assistance is available for those in need by contacting the Director of Faith Formation. All information will be considered confidential.

Arrival & Dismissal

Students should be dropped-off and picked-up by their parent/legal guardian at the Rotunda door (Finamore Parish Center 508 entrance) for their classes. If someone other than a parent or legal guardian is authorized to pick-up a student, **the Faith Formation Office needs to be notified in writing. A phone call is not sufficient.**

Attendance & Lateness

Attendance is very important because there is such a limited amount of class time. Children are expected to make-up the work from every class missed. Children with more than 5 absences in grades 1 through 6 or those with more than 4 absences in grades 7 and 8 are in jeopardy of not advancing to the next level. Students arriving more than 5 minutes late must be entered into the Late book. No child is admitted to class more than 15 minutes late unless arrangements are made with the Director.

Assignments

In grades 1 through 6, students must complete all program, textbook, and catechist assignments according to the schedule provided. Students in grades 7 and 8 must also submit chapter/unit test assessments as well as Confirmation preparation materials as per directions provided. Parents of students who fail to complete the necessary assessments will be contacted regarding their children's situations. Parents should keep the Faith Formation Office informed about any events that could negatively impact their children's progress in the program.

Cancellation of Program Events and Church Gatherings

Each family is given a Faith Formation Calendar at the beginning of the school year, however sometimes parents have a question about the calendar. In general, Faith Formation events WILL NOT be held if any of the following conditions occur.

- If Saint Aidan School is closed due to a holy day, a holiday or inclement weather
- If the Mineola School District schools are closed due to a holiday or inclement weather
- If the Herricks School District schools are closed due to a holiday or inclement weather
- If the East Williston School District schools are closed due to a holiday or inclement weather.

In the event of a need to cancel scheduled classes due to inclement weather or other emergency, notification will be made through the following mass-media outlets:

- TV- For Cablevision customers on News 12 (Channel 12) also at www.news12.com
- TV- For FIOS customers on News 12 (Channel 29) also at www.news12.com
- Whenever possible, Mass Email (Constant Contact)

Textbooks:

All Faith Formation textbooks used in our program conform to the guidelines published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and are approved by the Diocese of Rockville Centre. Textbooks provided are the responsibility of the students. If a textbook is lost, a replacement textbook may be purchased in the Faith Formation Office. All students are expected to attend their classes with their books and materials so that they may engage in active participation.

Complaint Procedures

In the event that a parent has a complaint regarding program procedures, the following steps should be followed. First, contact the Director; if not satisfied, then the pastor. Finally, if satisfaction is not reached, contact the Diocese of Rockville Centre Office of Faith Formation at (516) 678-5800, ext. 506.

Conduct / Discipline Policy

We expect courtesy and respect from our students at all times. We are all created in the image of God, and we are called upon to treat others with the dignity that we each have as images of God. Students are expected to treat all others with dignity and respect, fellow students, and staff members alike. Inappropriate conduct during classes and other program events cannot be tolerated. Parents will be contacted regarding their children's misconduct. In severe instances, the Director may decide that a child must be removed from the program. Such a decision can only occur in consultation with the pastor.

Bathroom

Sometimes children need to use the bathroom during class time. Parents should ensure their children use the bathroom before coming to class to limit the interruptions and minimize missing valuable class time. If your child has a medical condition that may require frequent bathroom trips, please notify the Director in writing.

Dress Code

Appropriate clothing must be worn at all times when attending Faith Formation classes and events. Students are expected to dress in properly fitting, neat clothes. Shoes/sneakers must be worn at all times in the school building and church. Since proper footwear is a safety issue, students who arrive in flip flops and slides will not be permitted to attend classes and events until a parent brings the proper footwear for the safety of all.

General guidelines:

- Hoods and hats may NOT be worn inside the school building or the church
- Skirts and shorts should be an appropriate length - Skirts, no shorter than 1 inch above the knee; shorts should be standard walking shorts length - NO short-shorts.

The following clothing items are **NOT permitted**:

- Clothing with suggestive questionable language or drawings
- Bare midriffs or any shirt/top that exposes cleavage
- Basketball jersey or see-through mesh unless a tee-shirt is worn underneath
- Sagging pants that expose undergarments
- Pajamas, bedroom slippers, shower shoes
- Flip flops, slides, and wheelies (shoes/sneakers with built in wheels)
- Chains or any attire that could be used as a weapon

Snacks and Drinks

Unless a student has a documented medical need, food snacks and drinks are not permitted in the Church or school building. (Children needing to carry food for medical reasons should file a doctor's note with the Faith Formation Office.) If it is necessary, a water bottle may be brought to class. Gum is never permitted in the classes.

Electronic Devices

While we appreciate the proliferation of electronic devices in our society, they must not be a distraction to others. Therefore, items such as air pods, earbuds, tablets, etc. should not be brought to class unless directed by the catechists. Students may bring cell phones; however, they must be out of sight and **MUST be turned OFF (not airplane mode or silenced)**. Students who use their cell phones during program-related events will have their phones taken away. The cell phones will be placed in the Faith Formation Office and will be returned only to parents.

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse is defined as the possession of, use of, selling or distributing any unauthorized, illegal drug, chemical, alcohol, tobacco, or tobacco-like substance, which can be introduced into the body through ingestion, inhalation, or injection. Any student found in possession of an illegal or unauthorized substance on parish property or parish sponsored events will be immediately suspended from the Program. A conference with the student, parent, Director of Faith Formation, and the Pastor is mandatory for re-admittance. Any student selling or distributing these type materials will be turned over to the local authorities.

Vandalism

Students responsible for vandalism anywhere on the parish/school property will be responsible for the repair of damage. Depending on the extent/type of damage, the student may be removed from the Program.

Safe Environment

Saint Aidan Parish complies with the Diocesan Child Protection Policy. All Program catechists and staff members complete the VIRTUS "Protecting God's Children" training program and have a Federal Background check performed. Children in grades 1 to 6 participate in the Child Lures Program as mandated by the diocese. Students in grades 7 and 8 participate in the Thoughtful and Safe Video presentations from the diocese.

Medical Conditions

Parents of students with substantial medical conditions that may warrant intervention during class time are expected to be available to assist, if necessary, when their children are in class. **Students who have been prescribed Epi-pens must have an annual FARE form on file in the Faith Formation Office. These forms must be signed annually by the parent and prescribing doctor with updated dosing instructions, an updated photo of the child, and emergency contact information.** Catechists will check to see that the Epi-Pens are present at the beginning of every class. If the child does not have his/her Epi-Pen, the parent will be called to bring it. **Students carrying other medications such as inhalers must have an annual updated doctor's order on file in the office along with updated dosing instructions and any other designated protocols.**

Photographs / Videos

Throughout the year pictures of the children in the Faith Formation Program may be taken during various activities. Occasionally these photos may be submitted to the parish bulletin or displayed in the parish. Parents are asked to complete a "Photograph/Video Release Form" for their children upon program registration.

Communications

While the Program will attempt to maintain communication lines open with parents using various methods, the main method to be used will be by e-mail notifications and the Faith Formation Webpage. To ensure that parents are receiving all communications from the Program, parents should keep the Office informed of their current:

- E-mail address
- Home & Cell Phone numbers
- Emergency Contact person's phone

Contact the Formation Office immediately if any of the above information changes during the school year.

Right to Amend

The Director of the Religious Education Program reserves the right to amend this handbook at any time. Parents will be notified if changes are made.