

ST. STEPHEN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Faith Formation



Catechist

Faith Formation Information Handbook

St. Stephen Catholic Church
Office of Faith Formation
10428 Saint Stephen Circle
Riverview, FL 33569
Phone: (813) 671-4434
Fax: (813) 671-2994

St. Stephen Catholic Church
10118 Saint Stephen Circle
Riverview, FL 33569
Email: Sue@ststephencatholic.org

Pastor: Fr. Dermot Dunne
Msgr. Michael Curruthers
Parochial Vicar: Fr. Josh Hare
Parochial Vicar: Fr. Primus Weria
Deacon Ed Dodenhoff
Deacon Geoff D'Angelo
Deacon Mike Sweeney
Deacon Shawn Ryan

Director of Faith Formation: Rosie Bridges
Administrator of Faith Formation: Sue Haines
Coordinator of Faith Formation (Gr. K-8): Kim Davis
Asst. Coordinator of Faith Formation: Margaret Hofacker
Baptism, OCIA, Adult Confirmation, Welcome Home – Rosie Bridges
Youth & Young Adult Ministry – Kierra Leopard
Assistant FF Adult Education – Rene Bonetti

Dear Catechist:

Welcome! We want to thank you for your service to our children, youth and to our parish. It is our mission to love and serve God and make Him known, so thank you for being a part of that mission! "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." Lk 10:2

CATECHIST COMMITMENT

Our Catechists and Assistant Catechists attend an initial training/orientation and Safe Environment Training. Catechists are committed to teaching 27 classes, utilizing the Office of Faith Formation to plan for any absences. Catechists are asked to also commit to ongoing formation, through Diocesan trainings, online resources, and opportunities through the parish.

Our Catechists are simultaneously teachers of the faith helping students grow in faith and knowledge. As a Faith Formation teacher, you will recognize ways to enrich yourself and your students, becoming a true catechetical leader.

CATECHIST REQUIREMENTS

Catechists should be Catholics who have been confirmed; are at least 21 years old; and are leading "a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken" (Canon 874). (Those confirmed but not yet 21 years old, may aide catechists.) Catechists should also be practicing Catholic adults, fully initiated, not under canonical penalty, asked and willing to serve, living to serve, living in conformity with Church teachings including laws on marriage.

SUPPORT

The Office of Faith Formation supports your vocation of being a Catechist by providing in-depth teaching guides, workbooks for all students, additional resources, craft materials, and a library of videos and books so you can successfully spread the word of God with a small class. Contact the Office of Faith Formation (813-671-4434) for more information on how to become a Catechist and our current needs or download the Volunteer Form from our parish website.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG WEBSITE

All adults volunteering with programs that involve youth, parents of children attending St. Stephen Catholic School who desire to volunteer at the school, and those who volunteer with the St. Stephen Faith Formation Program must have completed a Diocese-sponsored Safe Environment Training and complete a level II background screening (fingerprints and name search). The Diocesan Safe Environment training session for adults wishing to supervisor children/youth is now available online at no cost.

St. Stephen Catholic Church complies with all aspects of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, adopted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

MISSION

The gift of faith, which begins at Baptism, must be nourished throughout the entire life of each Catholic. Parents have the primary responsibility for training their Children/Youth in the practices of our faith. Parents model Catholic life through their own prayer, Mass attendance, participation in the sacraments, and their gifts of time, talent, and treasure. Our parish Faith Formation Program assists in this sacred duty by providing opportunities for parents and Children/Youth to develop their prayer lives and their formal understanding of our faith. We offer guidance and instruction so that each individual can come to his/her potential as members of the People of God.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Our goal is to support parents in the formation of their Children/Youth in the Catholic faith. To provide a program that develops and nurtures children's desire to develop a personal relationship with Jesus. To enrich their spiritual life through prayer and the Sacraments and to encourage families to actively participate in parish life.

OUR FOCUS

To provide a safe and supportive environment for the growth of each child in their spiritual formation. To give each child the opportunity to be heard, understood, and valued as a precious child of God. To help each child recognize God's love in all aspects of life.

CATECHIST'S PRAYER

A Catechist's Prayer:

Father of all families, you have called me to serve the family in truth and love as a catechist. May I be faithful to this call, rooted in your Word, and open to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. May I use these gifts, especially the gifts of faith, hope, and love, to serve the family as a witness to you, who are love and life and the source and destiny of all families. Let your Spirit enlighten my mind and strengthen my heart so that I can be a path of Christ's love to families, especially those in need, the homebound and aged, the disabled and disheartened. Through the intercession of Mary and Joseph, I pray for the Church, the Bride of Christ, whose mission to build a civilization of love passes through the family. Amen.

ADMISSION & RECORDS POLICIES

Families who wish to enroll Children/Youth in our Faith Formation Programs are asked to be registered members of our parish.

Student information will be released **only to the authorized persons**. Catechists are not allowed to offer any personal student or family information to anyone. When students receive their Sacraments at St. Stephen, the information is recorded in the Parish Office Sacramental Registry. Sacrament notifications are forwarded to the parish of baptism.

RIGHTS OF NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS

Both parents have the right of access to a child's faith formation progress reports and achievement information unless one parent produces a legal (court certified) document to the contrary. Upon receipt of such a document, it will be attached to the child's record and all Catechists to whom the child is assigned will be informed of all special directions. Faith Formation records to the non-custodial parent will be provided upon request, which must **be in writing**. Changes in the child's normal routine must be approved by the custodial parent to the Faith Formation Office and catechists will be notified of these changes. **No child will be dismissed from the program to the non-custodial parent without the written consent of the custodial parent.**

REGISTRATION

All returning students 2023-2024 re-registration forms are available online (parish website). Class size is limited, and students are assigned day and time on a first come, first serve basis. This continues throughout the year to accommodate newly registered parishioners.

PreK-4-Kindergarten students must be 5 years old by September 1st. Students will usually be placed in the same grade that he/she attends in school. Adjustments are made for sacraments when necessary.

When registering a child for Sacraments, parents provide a copy of their Baptismal Certificate. If a child is transferring from another parish, we ask for documentation stating that the child has been attending a Catholic Faith Formation class or was enrolled in a Catholic School in order to be placed in our sacrament class.

REGISTRATION AND RETREAT FEES

FEES	RETREAT FEES
\$ 75.00 one child	\$ 50.00 First Eucharist & First Reconciliation
\$ 100.00 two children	
\$ 125.00 three or more children	\$ 75.00 8 th Grade & High School Confirmation Retreat Fee
\$ 25.00 Adult Confirmation	\$ 20.00 Baptism Preparation Class
	\$ 25.00 OCIA Retreat Fee

It is our hope that every child and youth in our parish attends a Faith Formation class. If a family needs financial assistance, parents can contact the Director of Faith Formation. Catechists receive a discount equivalent to a “one child fee”.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Our Special Needs Program is designed specifically for those with physical and/or learning challenges. We offer one on one catechesis when needed. For more information, please call our office.

SACRAMENT PREPARATION

The family has an essential role in the preparation for and celebration of a sacrament. Parent meetings and Sacramental Preparation Workshops are essential parts of these Programs. Catechists are asked to participate in these workshops and retreat. There is a separate sacrament fee at the time of registration. This fee covers expenses for materials and workshops.

BAPTISM

A Child’s baptism is a time for celebration and joy. We are always so blessed to be part of this beautiful celebration. If interested in being part of the Baptism Ministry, we are always in need of volunteers!

FIRST RECONCILIATION & FIRST EUCHARIST

To register for one of these programs, Children/Youth need to have attended at least one year at a Catholic School or Catholic Faith Formation Program, with good attendance, prior to the year they receive these sacraments.

CONFIRMATION for YOUTH AND ADULTS

Students in the eighth grade and have completed 7th grade of Catholic faith formation are asked to register in our 8th Grade Confirmation Program. Classes take place on Sunday, Monday and Wednesday evenings. (Please refer to calendars). Students must have attended at least one year at a Catholic School or Catholic Faith Formation Program, with good attendance, prior to the year they receive these sacraments. High School, Young Adult & Adult classes are arranged through the Faith Formation Office.

ORDER OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS & YOUTH (OCIA)

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adult (OCIA) is for adults who desire to learn more about the Catholic faith and receive the Sacraments of Initiation. The adult and youth sessions are held on Sunday morning, usually culminating at the Easter Vigil for those who are not baptized and at scheduled times throughout the year for those who are baptized.

Grade 6, 7 & 8 MIDDLE SCHOOL

Catholic Middle School Program for youth in 6th, 7th & 8th grades. Grade 6 Middle School meets Sunday beginning at 8:00 – 9:15 am or Wednesday evening beginning at 6:00 pm – 7:15 pm in our school building. Grade 7th & 8th Middle School meet Monday evenings beginning at 6:00 pm – 7:15 pm in the Family Life Center. Both programs are designed to meet the educational, sacramental, spiritual, emotional, and social needs of young adolescents. The program strives to meet the spiritual needs of our catholic youth as they transition from elementary to their high school years.

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL

Middle School Edge Youth Group meet on Wednesday evening beginning at 7:15 – 8:30 pm at the Family Life Center to enjoy fellowship and fun. High School Life Teen Youth Group meet on Sunday evenings beginning with the Life Teen Mass at 4:30 - 5:30 pm following Mass High School teens join together for dinner, fellowship and fun at the Family Life Center. We ask parents of Middle & High School to complete a Youth Group Registration Form prior to their youth attending youth group. Please refer to the Parish web site to download form. Please also refer to Cornerstone and Facebook for additional events. Parents are encouraged and invited to get involved with these programs.

YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

Young Adult Ministry is for men and women out of high school, through age (39). Bring a friend! They don't have to be a parishioner to accompany you. Home from college for a visit? Young Adults meet throughout the month. Please refer to our parish website and calendar for current events.

Many opportunities exist for adults to be involved in our parish: Welcome Home (for those who have been away from the Church for some time), Bible Study Groups, Book Study Groups, Prayer & Share Group, etc. Please contact the Faith Formation Office for more information.

ADULT FAITH LIFELONG FORMATION ENRICHMENT STUDIES

Please call the Faith Formation Office to register for adult bible and book studies that are offered and their schedules (813-671-4434). Please check out our website.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Vacation Bible School is offered one week during the summer, usually in June/July, for Children/Youth in Kindergarten through Grade 5. We rely on volunteers to make this event happen: crafts, music, storytelling, snacks, games, and more! Please call the Faith Formation Office for more information or to be a part of this fun and rewarding event! We are always in need of “Coordinators” to oversee the event. Please contact the Faith Formation Office.

MARRIAGE

BRINGING YOUR MARRIAGE INTO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH (CONVALIDATION)

Convalidation is the means by which a marriage celebrated outside the Catholic Church (a civil marriage or one in a church of another faith tradition) is recognized as valid and receive the formal blessing of the Catholic Church. Catholics who have married outside the Catholic Church are encouraged to have their civil marriage recognized. We call this a “Convalidation”. Please contact the parish office at 813-689-4900 to set up an appointment with our Priest and/or Deacon.

If you have had prior marriage and would like to discuss the common questions regarding annulments, please contact the Parish Office at 813-689-4900.

PRE-K4 THROUGH 8TH GRADE

Class Schedules for Preschool through Grade 8

PRE-K4

Wednesday 4:15 – 6:00 PM at the school building

KINDERGARTEN – GRADE 5

Sundays 8:00 AM – 9:15 AM or 11:00 AM -12:15 PM at the school building

Wednesdays 4:15 PM - 5:30 PM or 6:00 PM - 7:15 PM at the school building

MIDDLE SCHOOL – GRADE 6

Sundays 8:00 AM – 9:15 AM or Wednesdays 6:00 PM - 7:15 PM at the school building

MIDDLE SCHOOL – GRADE 7

Mondays 6:00 PM – 7:15 PM at the Family Life Center

CONFIRMATION – GRADE 8 AND HIGH SCHOOL

Grade 8: Mondays 6:00 PM – 7:15 PM and High School: Sunday, 8:00 am – 9:15 am and 4:30 pm – 5:30 pm Mass & Life Teen gathering at Family Life Center after Mass.

OCIY (GRADES 8 – HIGH SCHOOL) Sacrament Preparation for the Sacrament of Initiation

Sunday 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm and Wednesday 6:00 pm – 7:15 pm at the Family Life Center.

Calendars will be sent home on the first day of class. Please note the dates classes will not be held. Additional dates for sacrament meetings, Rites, and Retreats will be distributed at Parent Orientation.

SEE YOUTH GROUP CALENDARS FOR MIDDLE & HIGH YOUTH GROUP ACTIVITIES.

FAITH FORMATION CURRICULUM

Copies of all Faith Formation texts are available for parent/participant review in the Faith Formation Office. If you would like to review our material, please call the Faith Formation Office to arrange a time.

A. Elementary Program

Text: Sadlier “We Believe”

Visit: www.webelieveweb.com to review Scope & Sequence

B. Middle School Program

Resource: Sadlier & Pflaum Publishing Group

C. 8th Grade Confirmation – Resource: Pflaum Publishing Group

D. Middle School Youth Group - EDGE

D. High School Youth Group – LifeTeen

DISCIPLINE POLICIES

Every person is worthy of being treated with care and the respect fitting to one made in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, classroom behavior needs to be characterized by genuine Christian care, mutual respect, and honesty. Disruptive behavior prevents learning for the whole class and can be frustrating for the Catechist who are volunteering their time for the good of the students. Under no circumstances will a student or an adult be permitted to strike another or use abusive language for any reason. No bullying policy will be enforced. Lack of self-discipline during class will be addressed promptly. Removal of a student from the classroom may lead to suspension. No cell phones or electronic devices are allowed to be used while class is in session. If your child/youth needs to contact their parents for any reason, please have your child/youth let the Catechist know.

The normal steps for disciplinary action may include one or all of the following:

1. Pastoral Verbal correction by the Catechist
2. Student will be sent to the Coordinator of K-8 or Coordinator of Youth Ministry.
3. Parent will be notified by the Catechist and a conference will be held.
4. Parent and child will meet with the Coordinator of K-8 or Youth Minister and Director
5. Child/Youth may be removed from the program

A student will be **removed** from the classroom immediately and excused for any of the following violations:

- ❖ Drugs/Alcohol/Substance abuse
- ❖ Verbal or Physical Harassment
- ❖ Stealing or damaging parish property
- ❖ Jeopardizing a person’s safety
- ❖ Fighting

- ❖ Carrying any object of a harmful nature (e.g. knives, razors, etc.)

A written notice will be given indicating the reason for the suspension. The Director of Faith Formation and Pastor will be notified when such action is taken.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY

Substance abuse is defined as the possession of, use of, or trafficking in any unauthorized, illegal drug, chemical, alcohol, or tobacco-like substance, which can be introduced into the body through ingestion, inhalation, injection or percutaneous means. Any student found in possession of an illegal or unauthorized substance on parish property will immediately be excused from the program. Any student trafficking in illegal substances will be formally removed from the program and the matter turned over to the local authorities.

DRESS CODE

All Faith Formation staff members, catechist and youth volunteers represent the Catholic Church, we are the face of the institution, and we also serve as role models for those we serve. It is for this reason that it is important to carry ourselves as Children/Youth of God having in mind that we are temples of the Holy Spirit, and we are to respect ourselves and avoid causing harm to others to sin. It is for this reason that we are all expected to comply with the dress code policies outlined below.

Headwear: No hats, bandana, or caps are to be worn inside the building. No headphones are to be used either.

Shirts & Blouses: No skin or undergarments should be shown at any time. No tank tops, halter tops, spaghetti straps or midriff tops, may be worn. No cleavage and no inappropriate word messages on shirts or blouses.

Pants: No underwear should be seen.

Skirts, shorts and Dresses: No short skirts or dresses. No short shorts should be worn.

Footwear: No bedroom slippers.

TV AND DVD USAGE

Only videos/DVDs from the Faith Formation Office or approved by the Faith Formation Office may be shown during classes.

HEALTH CONCERNS/MEDICATION/FIRST AID

Parents will be directed to complete emergency information listed on student registration form. This information is confidential and will assist us in better serving your students in cases of medical emergencies. In case of an emergency, we will use prudent judgement in determining action, and in all cases, make every attempt to contact a parent or designated adult and in serious matters “Emergency Personnel” will be contacted. Any special medical or behavioral needs of your Children/Youth should be addressed on the registration form. The personnel and volunteers in the Faith Formation programs do not dispense medications to Children/Youth and youth. If a child is diagnosed with a medical condition after registration, please inform the Faith Formation Office as soon as possible.

For Middle and High School Youth Group: Parents are asked to complete a Youth Group Registration Form which includes all health concerns and medication/first aid information and emergency contact information requested. Please know youth will be asked to sign in each evening prior to the gathering.

ACCIDENT POLICY

If a child sustains an injury while participating in a Faith Formation class or other activity, parents will be called immediately. If parents cannot be reached, we will call the emergency contact person.

The personnel and volunteers in the Faith Formation programs can only dispense ice packs and bandages to Children/Youth and youth. In the event of a serious accident, a Diocesan Student Injury Accident Report will be completed.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

PLEASE NOTE: Should a tropical storm or hurricane be in the forecast; it may be necessary to **cancel classes**. **If the Hillsborough County public schools close, we will not have classes.** Please use your best judgment if a storm happens prior to any classes. We will make an earnest effort to notify you of cancellations. Check our website and Facebook page for the most current information. Parents who consented to our text message program may receive text information.

FIRE SAFETY AND DISASTER PREPARATION

1. Fire Safety

- a. A fire drill will be conducted at the beginning of each year. All students, staff, and catechists will depart the facility.
- b. In case of a real emergency, Children/Youth will be taken to a designated area on the property away from the school or church buildings.
- c. An evacuation map is located by the door in each classroom and bathroom facilities.

2. Natural Disasters

In the event a natural disaster (tornado, hurricane, etc.) occurs, catechists will be warned (if possible) of the approaching danger. Students and catechists are to move to the center of the building away from windows. Emergency & evacuation instructions can be found on each class attendance folder.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

(For PreK4 - Kindergarten through High School students)

Faithful **class attendance** is expected. For Sacrament Preparation, Retreats and Workshops are included in addition to regular class attendance. Parents are encouraged to have their Children/Youth in class on time. Tardiness is a distraction to both students and catechists and disrupts valuable instruction time. Children/Youth are only allowed in classrooms when the teacher or assistant are present.

Parents must follow our **dismissal** policy. Children/Youth will not be allowed to leave the supervised dismissal area unless accompanied by an adult. Please notify the Faith Formation office if someone other than a parent will be picking up your child.

Our volunteer catechists are expected to handle routine classroom **discipline** and will not be asked to deal with situations beyond their control. Every effort will be made to instill the love of God in your child during class. If a child continually disrupts class, that child will be escorted to the Faith Formation Office. If this behavior continues, it may be necessary for parents to be contacted.

Please make known to us any **special learning or physical needs** of your child so that he/she may be better served in the classroom. All information is confidential.

Families are expected to attend **Mass** regularly. Please know, Faith Formation classes are not a substitute for **Mass**.

Thank you for volunteering your time, talent and treasure with our children and youth. We truly value you and are looking forward to a wonderful year of learning and fun.

God Bless You!

St. Stephen Parish and Faith Formation Staff