

Welcome to our Parish Family! Or perhaps you have been in the parish for a while, but are just now looking into our Faith Formation Program. Either way, we are excited to journey alongside you and your family!

The Goal

When polled, most parents desire the same general things for their children – that they grow into kind, caring, loving, forgiving and faith filled individuals. **We want the very best for our kids** 😊. However, that does not happen automatically. It is only through God's grace that we become Christ like. Our calling as parents is to create the atmosphere and environment where our kids can experience and embrace that grace. How do we do that?

First Things First

The most important element in our faith lives is weekly participation in the celebration of the Mass. Going to Mass every Sunday is absolutely essential and central to our lives as Catholics. The Church declares it as the Source and Summit of our faith. Yes, it is a Precept (Requirement) of the Church and a mortal (serious) sin to deliberately miss Mass on Sunday, but it is so much more than that.

Going to Mass and receiving the Eucharist is our regular spiritual nourishment. Jesus said time and time again in the Gospel that we must eat his flesh and drink his blood to have life within us. It is not only paramount for us, but for our entire family. Going to Mass is THE activity to help form us in the faith. We may not realize it at the time, but being part of the liturgy is establishing that sense of gratitude and worship within us. Everything about it is formative in nature. We cannot talk about faith formation without it because Mass is it!

We all realize that Mass can be a challenge - especially for kids. However, the more we go, the easier it is. We need to establish that habit/rhythm/foundation in our kids as they grow up. Eventually, they will come to an appreciation of the Mass in their lives.

Family Formation

Like most churches in our area, we have shifted our faith formation program to a family model. 😊 **Our mission is to build strong Catholic families!** That is crucial in helping kids to be open to God's work and call in their lives. **All of the major studies show this – if you desire for your child to embrace their faith and Catholic values, the best thing you can do is to strengthen your own faith and to build the domestic church!** We want to do everything we can to honor and support that.

Even though this is a departure from what most people are accustomed to, I cannot tell you how much positive feedback we have received. Not only from our parent sessions, but even more importantly from the at home sessions. **Parents saying how wonderful it has been to be regularly praying and sharing faith as a family – how they have discovered so much about their kids they never knew before – deep, meaningful conversations.** That is what gets us so excited.

Pre-School - 6th Grade

Once a month, both kids and parents will come together at the Faith Formation Center from 1:15-2:30 p.m. on Sunday afternoons. This time was selected so families could attend the Noon Mass if they wanted to and just come on over afterward.

Kids will be dropped off in Room #130 and then parents will meet in the Gym. Children will stay in #130 for a large group VBS type atmosphere – high energy, music, skits etc. Then 15-20 minutes in, they will be split off into their small groups for age-appropriate formation based upon the theme/topics that is covered at home the previous month. This will allow them to connect with other kids their age as well as other adults in the community.

Parents will connect and share with other parents on topics relevant to faith and the practical aspects of growing in the faith as well as how to develop the domestic church at home. Parents will drop off the completed take home packet from the previous month and pick up a new one on the way out.

The remaining three weeks of the month will be spent at home learning, growing and praying as a family. The take home packet is very simple and

user friendly and requires no advance preparation or knowledge. The faith formation year runs from September-May and is built around the obvious holidays like Christmas and Spring Break.

For those kids in 1st and 2nd grade preparing for 1st Reconciliation and 1st Communion, they will receive supplemental material to do at home. In addition, we will have special workshops and days here at the parish as part of that process.

7th-8th Grade (“Upper Room”)

Teens who will be preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation will also come to the parish once a month (same Sunday as the earlier/younger kids). The only difference is that they would come by themselves (get dropped off) and join the CREW (high school teens) for a Sunday evening experience from 6:15-8:00 p.m. This time is designed so teens/families have the option of attending the 5:00 p.m. Mass and coming over afterward.

Their night will include dinner (pizza and drinks) as well as being with the CREW group in the Gym where we not only have dinner together, but music, prayer, skits, etc. At some point, the 7th and 8th graders will then break off into their own small groups led by the CREW Council (trained high school teen leaders). This will provide an opportunity to hear/learn from the older kids about how to live their faith and also to build friendships with other Catholic kids in the parish.

The other three weeks of the month will entail the kids going through the chapters of the Confirmation book at home and then sharing what they learned with their parents.

FAQ's

Do other parishes have something like this?

Most of the parishes in our northern deanery area have some variation of family formation.

Will there be babysitting available during the monthly sessions if I have a young child?

We hope to. It is still in the works. If we do, it would be a Nursery for young siblings if both parents choose to come. It would be limited in space and on a sign-up basis and only for children 1-3 years of age (not infants). If we are able to have this, we will send out a sign-up link when the time comes. Most parents (if they are able) choose to have one parent stay at home with the youngest children while the other one attends with the older kids.

Are Sunday afternoons the only time slot?

Yes. We discovered that Sundays have the least amount of conflicts for families compared with weekday evenings or Saturdays. Also, because of the community building nature and energy of the whole community coming together at once, this type of monthly gathering cannot be easily replicated during the week.

If, for some reason, your family has major conflicts on Sunday afternoons (for that one Sunday a month/during the monthly Sunday gatherings), please contact Bruce Baumann to see about alternatives. It would not be the same experience, but we want to try to make it work for all families.

On which Sundays of the month will this take place?

We tried to pick the Sundays with the least amount of potential conflicts. Here are the list of dates for 2024-2025...

September 8, October 6, November 3, December 8, January 12, February 2, March 2, April 6 and May 4

If only one parent can come, does it matter if it is mom or dad?

No. Either would be good although we get especially excited when the dads are involved. Studies show that when the father is actively involved in faith matters, the likelihood of the children embracing the faith goes way up!

What about my older kids who are in high school?

We have a separate weekly formation process for them called **CREW** – Confirmed **R**adically **E**mpowered **W**itnesses.

How long will the at home sessions be?

They are designed to be approximately one hour in length. Much of it will depend on your own particular family situation. You may get into a really good conversation and your session goes an extra 20 minutes or you may feel like it is done 10 minutes early. That is fine. There are no hard and fast rules. The Holy Spirit will guide you! ☺

Do we do the at home sessions every week of the school year?

You could if you want. However, we have designed the program to factor in the normal breaks/holidays that we would have in other years. In other words, we will not schedule a session during Spring Break week, but that does not prevent you from gathering together for prayer and study anyway ☺. Or you might use a “holiday week” to catch up on one that you missed.

As a parent, I am worried that I do not know enough about the faith to teach my child.

This is a very common concern. We don’t know enough. We are not holy enough. We are not trained educators. We don’t have a degree in theology. We understand the trepidation. However, there are a couple of important things to note.

The “old way” of CCD was no different. The adults teaching the children were not typically teachers by trade either. They were simply other parents who were trying to help out. They were not theologians or priests or university professors.

This program is not set up for you to “teach” your children. It is much more about you simply learning, growing and praying with your child. The take-home sessions are very user friendly and do not require you to know anything ahead of time.

My kids might not want to do this with us as a family back home. Isn't it more effective to drop them off and let the professionals instill faith in them?

Again, the “professionals” were simply other parent volunteers. They do their best and it has some benefit, but nowhere near the impact that the “home church” has. Here is an analogy that may help.

If we wanted to be healthy and strong physically, all the doctors and experts would agree that certain practices or habits are more significant than others. For example, eating well and exercising would probably be the top two things we can do for our health. Maybe behind them would be drinking enough water and getting good sleep. Then after that might be taking a vitamin.

Going to Mass and learning and praying as a family and having regular conversations about faith are the eating well and exercising. Dropping off your child for a grade level class is the vitamin. All of them are beneficial, but the vitamin by itself does not have much impact if you neglect the eating well and exercising. Same with what we are trying to do here. We could offer just the vitamin, but we realize kids and parents need so much more than that to be spiritually healthy and strong.

Even if what you do together as a family at home is imperfect and inconsistent, it still has far more potential than the drop off model. Research has shown this time and time again. If we authentically try to follow God in our lives, our kids are much more likely to do so as well. Praying and learning together as a family are key to that.

Will there be any additional fees or costs associated with the program or for sacramental preparation?

No. Everything is included in the registration fee. While most parishes charge per child or have extra fees, we have always had just one flat family fee to make it affordable and easy.

As always, if your family is experiencing economic hardship, please contact us to work something out. We never want finances to be a barrier to participating.

Can I volunteer to help with the kids during the monthly session at the parish?

We would love that. We do have some parish leaders volunteering that do not have kids in the program, but we also need some of the parents to fill those roles as well. Ideally, one parent would still be in the parent component while the other one is volunteering with the kids. However, if that is not possible, we would still explore the idea of the one parent helping with the kid's section on those days.

How do I sign up?

Simple. You would simply fill out the online form found below the button after reading this.

The family formation program isn't the only way to get engaged in the parish. We have numerous ministries for the entire family to get involved with. Whatever your flavor, we probably have it. Way too much to cover here, but for starters be sure to check out BLAST and SPARK.

BLAST is **B**elieving, **L**iving **A**nd **S**haring **T**ruth. Same kind of concept except it is for our 7th-8th Graders on Wednesday evenings.

Then we have **SPARK**. **S**haring **P**laying **A**nd **R**enewing the **K**ingdom. This is for our 3rd-6th graders and takes place on the 2nd Friday of the month.

We have **V**acation **B**ible **S**chool, **C**hildren's **L**iturgy of the **W**ord, **L**ock-**I**ns, **R**etreats, **S**ervice **D**ays and the list goes on.

We are excited to meet and work with you and your family. If you have any questions whatsoever, please don't hesitate to contact me or my staff. We are here to serve!

In the meantime, ***God Bless and we hope to see you soon!***

Bruce Baumann
Director of Faith Formation