

# St. Joseph, Husband of Mary Children's Faith Formation



## Parent Handbook 2023-2024

## **Contact Information**

Parish Website – [www.stjosephhom.org](http://www.stjosephhom.org) Parish Office Phone– (702) 363-1902

Rev. Camillus Ogaraku, MSP, Pastor

Rev. M. Eugene Kinney, Parochial Vicar

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## **A Word from our Pope:**

*Dear Families,*

*You know very well that the true joy which we experience in the family is not superficial; it does not come from material objects, from the fact that everything seems to be going well... True joy comes from a profound harmony between persons, something which we all feel in our hearts and which makes us experience the beauty of togetherness, of mutual support along life's journey. But the basis of this feeling of deep joy is the presence of God in the family and his love, which is welcoming, merciful, and respectful towards all. God alone knows how to create harmony from differences. But if God's love is lacking, the family loses its harmony, self-centeredness prevails and joy fades. But the family which experiences the joy of faith communicates it naturally. That family is the salt of the earth and the light of the world, it is the leaven of society.*

*Dear families, always live in faith and simplicity, like the Holy Family of Nazareth! The joy and peace of the Lord be always with you!*

*Pope Francis*

*Franciscus*

## **Introduction**

***"Let the little children come to me." MT. 19:14***

In Christ's own words we are beckoned to draw closer to Him. It is in this spirit that the St. Joseph, HOM Children's Faith Formation Program strives to find each "little one" where he/she is and encourage them to take steps closer to God.

Welcome Families!

Congratulations on your generous and loving decision to provide your children with Faith Formation in the Roman Catholic tradition at St. Joseph, Husband of Mary Parish!

It is a great honor for our team to be entrusted with assisting in the Faith Formation of your child(ren). The primary goal of all our programs is to help children know and love Jesus Christ, present in the Eucharist, the Sacraments, the Scriptures, the Church and in all the people of the world.

While parents are the most influential and important catechists for their children, most parents recognize that they can't do it alone. Parish Faith Formation programs supplement the loving examples and lessons that parents provide, with the testimony and resources of the Parish and the Church.

St. Joseph, Husband of Mary Parish seeks to provide approaches that are effective and relevant to the needs of the children and the needs of their families. What's more, it is our goal to develop programs that are constantly improving. So please let us know if we can better assist you in any way.

May God bless you and your family with many graces this year and always!

*"Who are catechists? They are people who keep the memory of God alive; they keep it alive in themselves and they are able to revive it in others."*

*Pope Francis, International Day for Catechists, 9/29/13*

## **Role of the Parents**

Parents are the primary catechists in their child's faith. Together with them... all members of the family play an active part in the education of the younger members...

The family is defined as the "Domestic Church" General Directory for Catechesis, #255

We believe that formation in Catholic Christianity employs a partnership between parents and the parish and it is expected that children be enrolled in formal catechesis throughout their elementary age years. While the parish can provide formal formation in faith, we encourage, and provide support for parents to take an active role in their children's ongoing faith development. Our Catholic Tradition sees weekly participation in the Mass to be an essential practice for this to take place as well as family prayer, sacred spaces, access to Bibles and prayer books, and visible signs of the Faith within the home.

## **Role of the Catechist**

Catechesis is a sacred ministry which is essential for the life and future of our Church. Our catechists are people of faith called to echo the living tradition and teachings of the Catholic Church. The work of our catechists is to facilitate an encounter with Jesus Christ, to form in Christ the hearts and souls of the children in their classes and pass on knowledge about the Faith.

## **CHILDREN'S FAITH FORMATION OPTIONS**

To better meet the needs of every individual child in our program we offer two options from which our families can choose: our Traditional classroom setting or our Catechesis of the Good Shepherd atrium setting.

**Traditional Faith Formation Classes** are designed for children in grades 1 – 5 and taught by volunteer catechists who receive training to enable them to share our Catholic faith and tradition in an age-appropriate, effective, and meaningful way.

Our traditional classes utilize St. Mary's Press' Discover: Finding Faith in Life. With the Catholic Children's Bible as the core text, children are immersed in Scripture from day one. This program is filled with exciting, energetic learning that will get your child out of their seat as they excitedly dive into the Bible, connect Church teaching, and explore how best to answer Jesus' call of discipleship. Family pages reinforce the chapter themes in fun, family-friendly ways and featured persons of faith provide inspiring Catholic heroes for focus. This program engages children on spiritual, emotional, and physical levels to help them transform a learned faith into a vibrantly lived faith. Imagine...every child learning, loving, and living their Bible!

**Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS)** Is a program developed 60+ years ago by Sophia Cavaletti, a Scriptural Scholar with the Vatican & Gianna Gobbi a Montessori Educator. It is a Montessori based contemplative program we offer to children from 3-12 yrs. of age. The program is shared in an "atrium", our sacred space, with hands on materials to entice the senses and encourage their ability to wonder. Here the child and the catechist come to listen to the Word of God and open their hearts to the one true Teacher. The program is multi-aged and appropriate to their development and religious characteristics. We celebrate the essential mysteries of the Catholic faith as revealed by Sacred Scripture, Divine Liturgy and Sacred History while following the life of the Church. The Catechist has received extensive training to present faith in an age-appropriate manner while addressing the needs of each child. We work closely with the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, USA Association. On the website, parents have access to books, documents, materials and even podcasts to use within their domestic church.

## **GENERAL REGISTRATION INFORMATION**

Information regarding the Faith Formation Program announcements will appear in the Sunday bulletin.

### **REGISTRATION**

New Registrations for Faith Formation will be accepted by completing the 2023-2024 Registration Form, providing proof of Baptism\*, Birth Certificate\*, Custody agreement if applicable, signing the handbook agreement, signing photo release, and making a payment by cash, check, credit or through the Vanco payment site.

*\*requirement for new registrations only\**

### **PROOF OF BAPTISM**

Proof of Baptism is required and must be turned in at registration for a sacrament preparation process. Proof of Baptism of the candidate is required and consists of original Baptismal Certificate or photocopy. All original documents will be returned. Copies from other parishes may be sent directly to the SJHOM Children's Faith Formation Office at 7260 W. Sahara Ave. Las Vegas, NV 89117 *Children baptized in an accepted non-Catholic Christian ecclesial community, will make a profession of faith prior to immediate preparation for the sacraments.*

### **REGISTRATION FEES**

Registration fees cover only a fraction of the total cost of the Faith Formation Program. The remainder of the program fees are covered by the parish through our stewardship of treasure provided via parish envelopes.

Children's Faith Formation Registration Fees: The Tuition Fee is \$100.00/child with a family cap of \$300.00 and is expected to be paid in full or payment arrangements made through Vanco at the time of registration.

Additional Sacramental Prep Fees for 1st Reconciliation, 1st Eucharist and RCIA(C) is \$30.00/year/child (this is in addition to the tuition fees)

### **FINANCIAL HARDSHIP**

Financial hardships should never prevent a family from registering their children in our program. Partial financial assistance is considered for parish members who demonstrate need. All information shared will be kept in strict confidence. To discuss financial assistance, please contact Kris Mulligan.

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES AND POLICIES**

### **DROP OFF AND PICK UP SAFETY INFORMATION:**

To ensure the safety of our children, we ask all parents to follow our established drop off and pick up procedure as follows: - please park your car and bring your child to and from their assigned classroom and sign them in and out on the class attendance sheet. If someone other than the child's parent or guardian is either dropping them off or picking them up from class, please inform the catechist and/or the faith formation office.

### **ABSENCE FROM CLASS**

We are responsible for students during the time they are registered for our program. Therefore, we must keep accurate attendance and tardiness records on file in the Faith Formation Office. When your child is absent, please send an email or call and leave a message in the Faith Formation Office. You may also make a request at that time to be included in their class's prayer for the day.

### **EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION**

Parent contact information and alternate contact information must be provided on the registration form. In the event a child becomes ill or is injured during class, every effort will be made to contact the parents or guardians first. If parents cannot be reached in a timely manner, the alternate emergency contact(s) will be notified. If any of this information changes throughout the year, please inform the Faith Formation Office.

### **MEDICAL NEEDS/ ALLERGIES AND HEALTH CONCERNS**

Parents must indicate on the registration form student's allergies and any other health problems which may help us better meet his/her safety needs during class time. Allergy information will be shared with catechists/volunteers. If a student is required to keep his/her person, personal inhalers or other medicines or medical equipment, the parent must indicate this information on the registration form.

## **INCLUSIVE AND SPECIAL NEEDS FAITH FORMATION**

By right of baptism, all Catholics should receive the benefit of spiritual enrichment and the appropriate sacraments. In the St. Joseph, Husband of Mary Children's Faith Formation program, no child will be denied sacramental preparation and the opportunity for spiritual enrichment. We are committed to serve children with special needs and their families with programming and formational opportunities deemed appropriate for the individual. We believe that each child should have the opportunity to build a relationship with God at his/her level. The opportunity is provided on the registration form to specify any special needs a child may have including special learning needs or abilities. If your child has an IEP, please provide us the classroom modifications if they would help us to serve your child better. These will be shared with catechists when deemed necessary and appropriate. Every effort will be made to accommodate your child.

## **FAITH FORMATION HOMESCHOOLING/REMOTE LEARNING\***

Generally, the catechesis of children takes place in parish religious education/faith formation programs. Faith is to be shared in a community context. However, there may be unique circumstances that prevent full participation, and in those special cases families may ask for remote catechesis for their children in the home. The St. Joseph, HOM Children's Faith Formation program will work to support and assist any family in their decision. If you home school your child(ren) and would like more information on how we can work together to provide continuing formation opportunities for your child, please contact Kris Mulligan.

*\*The Diocese of Las Vegas does not allow this option for immediate sacramental preparation except in extraordinary instances.*

## **SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY**

**For Students:** As mandated, the diocese requires that all students be given the opportunity to attend a presentation on ways to keep themselves safe. This will be offered during class time within the catechetical year. Parents will be given the opportunity to preview the information presented. These presentations will reinforce our belief in the respect and dignity of each human person and help children be more aware of what constitutes a safe boundary among family, friends, and strangers. Pursuant to state law and the diocesan Safe Environment Policy, we are required to report suspected child abuse and we will follow the state laws and diocesan policy on such matters.

**For Parents:** Parents will be provided with Protecting God's Children presentation dates, materials if requested and the choice to present the materials themselves or opt-out completely. The information presented is useful in keeping family members safe from child predators, as well as pertinent information regarding bullying, internet safety and other topics.

**For Catechists and all Volunteers:** All volunteers must have a criminal and personal background checks and safe environment training is completed before any volunteer can participate in our Faith Formation Program.

## **EMERGENCY PLANS / LOCKDOWN PLAN**

In the unlikely event of an intruder, the catechists will lock their doors and all students and catechists will remain in the classroom until they are informed by the parish staff and/or other official authority that it is safe to unlock the classroom doors. When the authorities deem it safe to do so, the classroom catechists will ensure the safe dismissal of each student to their parents on the sign out sheet.

## **FIRE EVACUATION PLAN**

In the unlikely event of a fire, catechists will pick up the communication folder and walk the children out to the assigned area for their classroom as indicated on the map in their folder and posted by the classroom door. The catechists will take roll upon arriving at their designated location and will indicate the safe dismissal of each student to their parents on the sign out sheet.

## **BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS**

Following Jesus' command, "Love one another as I have loved you", our Faith Formation staff, volunteers, parents and students treat each other with mutual respect. To create an environment that promotes Christian values and behaviors, and which creates a positive learning space, all students, catechists, and guests must abide by the Faith Formation behavior guidelines.

### **GENERAL RULES FOR ALL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS:**

- Respect All People and the Property of Others. • Behave in a Courteous Manner.
- Take Good Care of Church Property. • Settle Disagreements in a Peaceful Manner

### **SPECIFIC BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES:**

1. Respect and courtesy toward coordinators, catechists, guests, and other students is always expected.
2. Students are not to deface tables or chairs, or tamper with the property of SJHOM
3. Students are expected to bring all books/material, participate and complete assigned work each week.

### **DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

In order to maintain an atmosphere of learning and growth in faith, the following process for disciplinary action will be observed:

First Occasion - The catechist will speak to the student privately concerning his/her behavior. Child may be sent to see the program coordinator.

Second Occasion - The catechist will call the parents and notify the coordinator that the parents have been contacted.

Third Occasion - The student shall not be allowed to return to class until the catechist, program coordinator and parents have met with the student. Any student who has been sent to meet with the coordinator two times for disruptive behavior may not return to the class until such a meeting has taken place. A student who continues negative behavior after this, will be dismissed from the program for the current year at the discretion of the program coordinator. Options for home study will be offered to parents and a meeting will occur before reentry into the program.

## **GENERAL SACRAMENT PREPARATION GUIDELINES**

Sacraments are expressions of faith and essential to what it means to live as a Catholic Christian. Our sacrament preparation processes are created to be opportunities for children and parents to grow in faith and learn or deepen their understanding of the sacrament and the graces received in the sacramental ritual and how they can help one to live as disciples of Jesus. Families must be registered members of St. Joseph, Husband of Mary Parish.

**PARENTAL ROLE** - At your child's Baptism, you agreed to keep the light of Christ burning and be the primary educators of their child in the faith by word and example. Therefore, parents are expected to work in partnership with the Church to help their children prepare to celebrate the sacraments.

✓ To participate in a sacrament preparation process complete involvement of the child and his/her parent(s) is required.

✓ All parent meetings incorporated into sacrament preparation processes are mandatory. If a parent cannot attend, a delegate such as a grandparent, uncle, aunt, etc. may be sent to receive the necessary information.

✓ The Faith Formation Program will advertise the sacrament schedule in their calendars and updated process information through handouts, email, in the bulletin, and on the web site. It is the parent's responsibility to read these communications and keep informed as to when a process begins and all the requirements within the process.

### **MASS ATTENDANCE**

The Eucharistic celebration is the 'source and summit' of our faith. At Mass "we participate in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, that is, in his dying and rising which is made present for us in the Eucharistic sacrifice." (USCCA Ch 17) Through our participation in this paschal process, we are transformed with the bread and wine into the Body of Christ to bring Christ's message of peace and love into the world. To be adequately prepared to celebrate the sacraments, children MUST attend Mass weekly.

## **SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION FOR FIRST RECONCILIATION & FIRST EUCHARIST**

Receiving the Sacraments of First Reconciliation (Confession) and First Eucharist (Communion) is part of a two-year journey, typically beginning when a child enters the first grade however families may choose to wait until their child is older. The Sacrament of Reconciliation must be completed before the Sacrament of First Eucharist. It is required by the Diocese of Las Vegas that one full year of faith formation has been completed prior to beginning the immediate preparation for these sacraments. In the second year, parents and children attend retreats /special rituals and complete at-home workbooks before the sacraments are received.

The goal of the preparation period for Reconciliation (Confession) is to nurture the child's relationship to Jesus Christ as the one who loves us and showers God's mercy upon us, to nurture an appreciation of the sacrament of reconciliation to experience God's mercy and forgiveness and to nurture the practice of forgiveness and reconciliation as a way of living.

The goal of the preparation for first Eucharist (Communion) is for children and their families to deepen their understanding of this sacred mystery, to teach the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist, Body, Blood, Soul & Divinity, to nurture the child's/families understanding of God's love for them and their response of thanksgiving, to enhance the child's/families appreciation and active participation in the Mass, to develop the child's/families sense of belonging to a community of disciples who love as Jesus loves.

## **Order of Christian Initiation for Adults adapted for Children OCIA(C)**

OCIA(C) is for children between the ages of 7-16 who are unbaptized and seeking full initiation into the Catholic Church. Children in the OCIA(C) will attend Faith Formation classes on a regular basis for two years. In the child's second year, they will attend Mass and immediate prep. classes on Sunday mornings as a group. This process enables children to enter a relationship with God and share in the life of their identity as Children of God. Families will meet with the Children's Faith Formation Minister before registration. Every child will need a Sponsor or Godparent. The Sponsor/Godparent will be someone other than a parent, who will support the child in his or her Catholic Journey. The sponsor must be a Baptized and Confirmed Catholic, who is over the age of 16, and is in good standing with the Catholic Church. The sponsor will fill out a sponsor registration form and have that form signed and sealed in their home parish.

## **Ten Good Reasons to Stay Involved in your Parish.**

1. You will make friends with people who share your values.
2. You are putting yourself in the pathway of grace.
3. You will have a community to help you counter a powerful temptation of our society: extreme individualism.
4. It is a way to welcome God into your daily living.
5. At Mass you receive the Body and Blood of Christ.
6. Your parish is a place where forgiveness happens.
7. You wouldn't starve your body, why would you starve your soul?
8. You desire a grown - up faith.
9. You can do a world of good with your fellow parishioners.
10. Our Church needs your family!

## **A Family Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, Lord of Love, With the help of your grace, we commit ourselves to a life of holiness: to living out our baptismal promises by following your will every day, practicing forgiveness, and loving you, ourselves, and one another. Help us to trust in your gift of the Holy Spirit, to rely on his help, to follow him even when we feel sick, tired, or overwhelmed. We entrust ourselves to you and to one another: Our lives, our dignity, our fears, our dreams, and our hopes. In all that we are and do, may we be more like your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God. We commit ourselves to make the Word of God a living part of our home by reading the Scriptures together as a family, treating each other with dignity and respect, and keeping the name of Jesus on our lips and in our hearts. Amen.



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Acknowledgment

I/We acknowledge receipt of the St. Joseph, HOM Children's Faith Formation Parent Handbook. I/We promise to read this handbook and discuss the contents with our child/ren. My children and I pledge to follow the guidelines, responsibilities and expectations of St. Joseph, Husband of Mary Children's Faith Formation program to the best of our abilities. If at any time I have questions or concerns, I am to contact a member of the Children's Faith Formation team.

Name (s) of child (ren) enrolled in the Children's Faith Formation Program:

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Parent or Legal Guardian Signature

Date

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*Please return this page with signature and date to the faith formation office. Thank you.*