

*St. Joseph's Church*  
*Bogota, NJ*

**FAITH FORMATION**

**Parent Handbook**  
2010-2011 Edition



**Nourishing Households of Faith**

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Please note: If you have printed this handbook from the web, the page numbers or formatting may have been affected. Please contact our office if you would like a copy of the handbook from us.

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### **Right to Amend**

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*This handbook is primarily a means of communication. It is meant to provide you, the parent/guardian, with helpful information on how we intend to go about our work. St. Joseph's Church Faith Formation Program reserves the right to amend this handbook as necessary. Parents will be notified, in writing, if any changes are made to any procedures or information contained in this handbook.*

*Saint Joseph Church  
Served by the Order of Carmelites  
115 E. Fort Lee Rd.  
Bogota, New Jersey 07603*

*Tel: 201-342-6300*

*Fax: 201-883-9392*

*www..stjosephbogota.org*

**Dear Parents and Guardians,**

**When you first brought your child to Church for baptism the priest reminded you of your awesome privilege as well as responsibility to be the first teachers of the ways of the Christian faith for your child. The Church quite rightly insists on the fact that a child's parents have the primary responsibility for passing on the faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ, the sacraments, and the Church. Primarily, this parental responsibility is fulfilled by the good example of a virtuous and God-fearing life that you model for your child. When your child sees you living a life that take the life, words, and mission of Jesus seriously in your won life then you are in fact being a good teacher and you are passing on the faith.**

**The Church, however, and this parish in particular, are here to assist you (but not to take your place) in shouldering your parental responsibilities of passing on the faith. We are very proud of our parish's formation and religious education program. What you now have in your hands is a copy of the handbook that outlines the course of studies as well as the requirements that are in place for your children to follow in preparation for receiving the additional sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation. By regular participation in the religious education program your child will be provided with a firm foundation for full maturation as an adult disciple of Christ. It is very important that you read these pages very carefully so as to familiarize yourself thoroughly with the various requirements for receiving the sacraments.**

**Thank you so much for the leadership you are exercising in seeing to the religious formation of your child. In the words of the baptismal liturgy, "May you be the best of teachers in all that you say and do". Please do not hesitate to call on the Director for Religious Education and Faith Formation or myself if there is anything that we can do for you. With every best wish, I remain,**

**Sincerely yours, in Christ,**

**Fr. Richard Supple, O.Carm.  
Pastor**



Dear Parents and Guardians,

We want to extend our warmest welcome to you and your family, as you enroll in our parish faith formation program. We are aware of how precious your children are, and we thank you for entrusting us with their care by bringing them to our program.

We are here to share our faith and the love of Jesus with your children. Our catechists will work with them regularly and try to convey to them the message of the Gospels by word and example. However, it is important that you remember that your role as catechist at home is more important than our class time. Children will learn what they see and live everyday, rather than what they hear. Therefore, we must work together to provide a strong faith-based foundation that your children can build their lives upon as they continue their faith journey into adulthood. Developing a strong faith and value system from early childhood is the best way to ensure that they will make sound decisions and have the tools they will need to handle life's challenges as they mature.

We look forward to working with you this coming year in order to help your children develop a better understanding of our Catholic way of life. We hope to provide you with resources that will enhance your parenting skills within the context of our Catholic Christian traditions. If you need any information or help during the year, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Faithfully in Christ,

Patty Rodriguez  
Pastoral Associate for Faith Formation

Michele Palladino  
Program Coordinator

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## **MISSION STATEMENTS AND OBJECTIVES**

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### **ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH MISSION STATEMENT**

We, the people of Saint Joseph's Parish, by the grace of God, born again in the waters of Baptism, seek to create a community where our mutual faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, encourages us to continue growing as disciples. We believe that discipleship is a way of life. We strive to show that we are committed disciples, eager to welcome the stranger, to feed the hungry, to shelter the homeless, and to comfort the bereaved. Inspired by God's word and nourished by the Eucharist, we pledge ourselves to active discipleship all for God's great glory and honor.

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### **OFFICE OF FAITH FORMATION MISSION STATEMENT**

We, the Office of Faith Formation of St. Joseph's Parish, having answered a call to proclaim God's love by word and deed, serve and support parish households in their faith journey and development. We strive to reinforce the faith example set at home and to foster an intimate relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ in the heart of every member of our parish community. We aim to provide an environment where the faithful can explore and better understand the Catholic Christian faith and way of life. We hope to facilitate a process by which they can accept the challenge and call of Christ to daily discipleship.

### **OBJECTIVES**

We work to fulfill this mission in the following ways:

- By providing the practical resources and support that families need in order to foster the faith development of their children.
- By being attentive to the varied needs of the average modern-day family.
- By providing a healthy environment for young people to experience the love of Jesus and the Catholic faith.
- By supporting catechists in their own formation process so they may in turn provide quality Religious Education for our young people and families.
- By setting forth a curriculum that is comprehensive, age appropriate, and firmly grounded in Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.
- By presenting this curriculum in a way that lovingly, relevantly, and effectively facilitates the learning and active participation of all those enrolled in our programs.
- By leading families through a process of sacrament preparation that will prepare the minds and hearts of candidates to experience God's grace.
- By including programming options for members of our community with special learning needs.
- By appreciating the diversity of the Body of Christ and providing information and effective communication with those for whom English is a second language.

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## FAITH FORMATION OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION

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**Pastoral Associate for Faith Formation:** Patty Rodriguez  
**Program Coordinator:** Michele Palladino

### Faith Formation Office Contact Information:

**Mailing Address:** 115 Fort Lee Rd., Bogota, NJ 07603  
Attn: Faith Formation  
**Phone Number:** (201) 343-4316  
**Fax Number:** (201) 883-9392  
**E-mail:** [faithformation@stjosephbogota.org](mailto:faithformation@stjosephbogota.org)

**Office Hours:** Office hours vary daily. Please be sure to call ahead before stopping by.

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## PARISH CONTACT INFORMATION

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### St. Joseph's Church

**Pastor:** Rev. Richard Supple, O. Carm.  
**Parochial Vicar:** Rev. Paul Schweizer, O. Carm.

### Pastoral Associate for Outreach and Service: Mary Sause

**Phone Number:** (201) 342-6300  
**Fax Number:** (201) 883-9392  
**E-mail:** [msause@verizon.net](mailto:msause@verizon.net)

### Rectory Office Contact Information:

**Mailing Address:** 115 Fort Lee Rd., Bogota, NJ 07603  
**Phone Number:** (201) 342-6300  
**Fax Number:** (201) 883-9392  
**E-mail:** [mychurch@stjosephbogota.org](mailto:mychurch@stjosephbogota.org)

### Parish Office Hours:

Monday – Friday: 9:00am to 8:00pm  
*(Office closed 12:00pm to 1:00pm)*  
Saturday: 9:00am to 7:00pm  
Sunday: 9:00am to 3:00pm

### Parish Mass Schedule: (Beginning July 4, 2010)

**Saturday Evening:** 5:30pm  
**Sunday:** 8:00am, 10:00am, and 12:00Noon  
(Also at St. Anastasia's Church in Teaneck, 7:00pm)  
**Sunday Mass in Spanish:** 2:30pm  
**Weekdays:** 8:00am  
**Holy Days of Obligation:** Consult parish bulletin for Mass times

- Motherhood of Mary January 1
- Ascension of our Lord 40 days after Easter
- Assumption of Mary August 15
- All Saints Day November 1
- Immaculate Conception of Mary December 8
- Birth of Our Lord December 25

**Sacrament of Reconciliation:** Saturday, 4:00pm to 5:00pm and by appointment.

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## COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

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**We are here to serve** the faith formation and development needs of our children, youth and adults. In order for us to achieve that goal, **effective communication is necessary**.

**If you have any questions, concerns, comments, or suggestions please feel free to share them with our office.** You may contact us by mail, fax, phone or e-mail as indicated on page 4 of this handbook. We also encourage you to stop by and visit with any concerns or questions. *Please call ahead as our office hours vary.*

Please note that, in order to ensure the safety of our children, **all visitors must first report to the Faith Formation Office.** Our doorbell is located by the first school double doors (next to the priests' double garage.) Please ring the **silver** doorbell.

**We will contact you and send you information using a variety of methods.**

- Information may be **mailed to your home** by first class or bulk mail. Please be sure to read all mail carefully and promptly since most material is time sensitive.
- We will often send home notices with your children. **Children in grades K-5 receive communication folders the first day of classes.** Be sure to check these folders weekly and have your children bring them to class. Ask them every week if they have any information for you.
- We have a **Faith Formation page in the parish bulletin** that is updated weekly. All meetings, calendar reminders, and special announcements are listed in the parish bulletin. Please take one every week before you leave Mass.
- We may also contact you by **phone or e-mail**.

**Important Reminder:** It is important that our records be as accurate as possible. Please remember to contact our office if you should change your phone, address or e-mail information.

**Calendars:** Calendars with session dates September through May are sent home by mail in the fall.

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## MASS ATTENDANCE

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**“The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ.”**

*Catechesi Tradendae, Catechesis in Our Time, 5*

Our curriculum is always presented within the context of the liturgical year. Children and families learn primarily about the faith by worshiping together, fully engaging in the prayer of the Church throughout the year and participating in parish life. Our regular religious education sessions are intended to complement, not substitute for regular Mass attendance.

**All families registered in our program are expected to attend Mass regularly. Since it is such an integral part of our program, children will frequently be asked about Mass attendance and the Sunday Scripture readings are often a part of their lesson. Weekly Mass attendance will help your child to participate fully in and class.**

**PLAN AHEAD:** We find that the most effective strategy in successfully getting your family to Mass every week is to plan your weekend schedule ahead of time. Perhaps on Friday evening, as you look at your weekend activities, be sure to set Mass attendance as a priority, review the Mass times at St. Joseph's (and neighboring parishes if necessary) then determine together what Mass you will attend. If you are having difficulty finding time to attend Mass regularly it may be a good time to take a closer look at your family's activities and to prayerfully discern adjusting that schedule in order to ensure that regular participation at Mass is possible.

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## CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

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Our Curriculum is intended to provide children and their families with knowledge of the teachings of our faith based on Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

**Every year children and families will learn about the seven major themes of faith:**

- **Revelation** – How does God reveal himself to us through Scripture, the Church, and our daily lives?
- **Trinity** – How does the mystery of God; Father, Son and Spirit live in us and challenge us to discipleship?
- **Jesus Christ** – Who is Jesus, why did He come among us, and how can I develop a relationship with Him?
- **The Church** – What is the Body of Christ and how is each person a member of the Body?
- **Morality** – What are God’s laws of love and how can we follow them more faithfully?
- **Sacraments** – How does the church worship and how does God’s grace fill us in the sacraments?
- **The Kingdom of God** – What is the Kingdom of God and how can we work for justice and peace?

These themes are presented every year in a manner that is appropriate to each grade level. Therefore children continue to develop the themes and build upon previous knowledge. For this reason **it is important that children participate in our program every year, particularly the years between First Eucharist and Confirmation.** Since faith formation is a lifelong process, we encourage young people will stay connected to the parish and participate in our youth ministry programs after Confirmation.

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## BOOKS, RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

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### Text Books Used

Text books serve as guides for our catechists in class, as well as for you at home. **Your participation through home study pages is crucial to your child’s faith development.** Review of the class at home will help the lessons come alive and will ensure that they understand how their faith relates to their daily living.

**Below is a list of the textbooks and resources we use for different age levels.**

**Grades K – Grade 6 (weekly): “Call to Faith,”** *Our Sunday Visitor (Formally Harcourt Religion Publishers)*. This book explores the 7 themes outlined above in a way that helps children deepen their faith through compelling stories and Scripture. It also uses appealing visuals, activities, prayers, and seasonal celebrations.

- The **“Review and Apply”** and **“Family Faith”** pages will typically be sent home every week. These pages help families participate in their children’s faith formation.

**Grade 7: “The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers”** – *St. Mary’s Press. (Themes are Creed and Prayer)*. This book helps to build a solid foundation built on Catholic beliefs and a life of prayer. With core Scripture chapters and Scripture in every session, teens will develop a deeper appreciation for the Bible. Liturgical-year sessions help teens connect with the Sunday assembly, and church history chapters trace the roots of the Church from the apostles through John Paul II.

**Grade 8: “The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers”** – *St. Mary’s Press. (Themes are Liturgy and Morality)*. The sacramental life of the Church and the moral demands of the Gospel are the focus as teens learn how they can live their lives following Christ. Church history chapters explore various models of Church, and unique Scripture chapters help teens understand the bible and integrate it into daily living.

**High School Discipleship Team (DT’s):** Discipleship Team is a group of high school teens who share their love of God, and Catholic Faith with others. They laugh, cry, accept and support each other, while growing in their relationship with God and with one another. They are exposed to leadership ideas and methodologies and are challenged to become true disciples and servant leaders with Jesus as their model.

**Adults:** A variety of resources are employed in order to address the faith formation needs of our various households. Sacrament preparation sessions always include a dimension of adult faith formation. Our Sunday family program also includes sessions for parents. Families with children enrolled in our programs have additional resources available to them. As time goes on our vision is to provide more opportunities for adults to build community and share faith.

## **Book Distribution**

**Books are given to children on the first day of classes.**

### **Weekly Program:**

- **Grades K through 6 typically do not take books home. Parents will usually receive summary pages and handouts to review with their children home every week.** Parents can use these pages to review the lesson and to do additional work at home. Although these review and family pages contain sufficient information for parents to follow their child's work, parents are welcome to purchase an additional book for home if they desire. Bilingual books are also available upon request. **Children will receive the books they have used all year on the last day of classes** and then can bring them home for review during the summer.
- **Grades 7 and 8 may or may not bring their books home at the discretion of the catechist.** Those who do bring books home are expected to **bring them every week.**

### **Sunday Program:**

- **All grades will take books home since the lessons are completed in the home. All children are expected to always bring their books to class.**

### **In General:**

- If a young person loses a book he/she must purchase one at an additional cost.
- **Bibles are distributed in the 6th Grade.** Bibles can be brought home and children are encouraged to read them daily. **Children in grades 6 through 8 are expected to bring their Bibles every week.** Lost Bibles can be replaced at an additional cost.
- Bibles are available for purchase. If you do not currently own a family Bible, please contact our office for some recommendations or to purchase one.
- **“Take Out: Family Faith on the Go” is a magazine that is available to families in our Sunday family at no additional cost.** It features practical suggestions, tips for sharing and celebrating faith at home, a section on using your children's books at home, and more. This magazine is available in English and Spanish.
- **The following web-sites are excellent resources to work with your children and for your own faith formation needs.**
  - [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org) The official website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. EXCELLENT resource in order to stay informed regarding what the Catholic Church in the United States is saying about current issues. You can also find the daily Scripture readings for weekday and Sunday Masses in this website.
  - [www.harcourtreligion.com](http://www.harcourtreligion.com) This is our text book publisher. There are great resources here for parents wishing to work with their children at home.
  - <https://www.mycatholicbookstore.com/L1-Browse.aspx> Good website to purchase books, videos, etc.
  - [www.faithfirst.com](http://www.faithfirst.com) Great family/parent resources.

- [www.findinggod.org](http://www.findinggod.org) More resources
- [www.sacredspace.ie](http://www.sacredspace.ie) Daily prayer devotional. Just click and follow for a few minutes of prayer and quiet every day.
- <http://www.biblegateway.com>
  - Easy to search the Bible. Just type in a Bible verse, or words and it will find the places in the Bible where it is located.
- [http://www.catholic.com/library/god\\_christ.asp](http://www.catholic.com/library/god_christ.asp)
  - Great site to get background information on Catholic doctrine, teachings, and beliefs. Intended for adult reading and formation.
- <http://www.loyolapress.com/3-minute-retreats-daily-online-prayer.htm> Wonderful daily retreat... only 3 minutes!
- [www.catholicchild.com](http://www.catholicchild.com) Wonderful catalogue to purchase religious and catholic gifts for children of all ages.
- [www.smp.org](http://www.smp.org) Great site for gifts, books and faith sharing resources for TEENS and middle school age children.
- <http://catholicmom.com/>
  - Faith related activities, prayers, etc.

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## **PROGRAMMING OPTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS**

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### **Weekly REC Sessions**

- During the weekly catechetical sessions the children **meet with their catechist in a classroom setting**. All sessions are held in St. Joseph School.
- The catechists use a **variety of teaching methods** in order to help the children experience and learn about their Catholic faith.
- **Occasionally children are taken to the church** building and have the opportunity to learn about the church and experience various aspects of our faith such as the sacrament of Reconciliation, the Stations of the Cross, etc.
- **The schedule for the weekly Faith Formation program is as follows:**  
**Grades 1 – 2:** Mondays, 3:50pm to 5:00pm  
**Grades 3 – 5:** Tuesdays, 3:50pm to 5:00pm  
**Grades 6 – 8:** Tuesdays, 7:00pm to 8:15pm

### **Family Catechetical Program**

- This program **helps families to participate** in our faith formation program together, encourages the **faith development of adults**, and **provides resources for parents** to work with their children at home.
- **Families come together** and attend monthly Sunday morning sessions. Families begin the gathered sessions working together. Children then go to age appropriate groups. While in their groups the children review lessons in a similar fashion as in the weekly faith formation sessions. Parents have the opportunity for faith development in a casual interactive setting. Their sessions include presentations, prayer, and discussions. They also receive resources that will enable them to continue working on the lessons at home with their children.
- **Requirements for participation are as follows:**
  - A family commitment to attend the sessions together.
  - Attendance at all monthly sessions (September – May) (*See attendance policy for details*)
  - A family commitment to work on the home lessons with their children in a thorough and timely manner.
  - Weekly attendance and participation at Mass

## **Home Schooling**

*“As the primary educators of their children, parents have the right and the duty to choose the kind of educational environment that they determine best suits their children’s educational needs. Therefore, home schooling is a viable option for the general education of children. The home-based catechesis of children is a cooperative effort between the children, their parents, parish leadership, and the diocesan bishop. Parents who choose to be not only the primary educators of their children but also their catechists must adhere to all guidelines for catechesis as outlined by the diocesan bishop.” (National Directory for Catechesis)*

- Home-schooling families **must be registered parishioners and attend Mass regularly.**
- Please let the Faith Formation Director know if you or your child’s health prevents you from coming to Mass. Arrangements can be made for you to be visited at home by a priest or Eucharistic minister.
- **Parents** who choose to home-school their children must **meet with the Director to be properly prepared for this role.** They receive the same resources as those used in the parish setting.
- The Director of Faith Formation is available throughout the year for on-going guidance and instruction. Parents must contact the Director as needed in order to provide a thorough and complete catechesis for their children
- **Parents typically attend three meetings during the year.** These meetings provide opportunities for parents and children to interact with other families and experience another aspect of Christian community; for parents to voice concerns, ask questions, and receive additional resources; and for the Director to assess and evaluate the progress of the students.
- Children in the home-school settings participate in the parish administration of the ACRE assessments at the time of their administration in the parish.
- Children preparing to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation may receive their immediate catechetical instruction in the home-school setting. The other important parts of the preparation process: **parent meetings, retreats, and rehearsals are community experiences.** Therefore families who have chosen to home-school their children must be included in these experiences.

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## **Sacrament Preparation**

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**It is important to remember that sacraments are not ends in themselves, but rather are gifts of God’s grace that we receive in order to strengthen us for our faith journey and continued growth. Families are encouraged to take sacrament preparation seriously and consider the importance of the daily practice of the faith, participation in parish life, and weekly attendance at Mass. Continued faith formation is encouraged after the celebration of the sacraments.**

## **Infant Baptism**

Children are baptized on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of the month. Please call at the main Parish Office to make arrangements for Baptisms. *(See page 4 for contact information.)*

## **Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA)**

Children of catechetical age (i.e. 7 years of age or older) who wish to be baptized, and adults who wish to be baptized or who wish to complete their initiation into the church (Confirmation and Eucharist) may contact the Faith formation Office or Deacon Walter Lynn at the main parish office. Preparation usually begins in the fall and sacraments are administered during the Easter season. At least one full liturgical year of formation and preparation is required for children and, in most cases, for adults as well.

## **Archdiocesan Policy on Sacrament Preparation for Communion and Confirmation**

**FIRST COMMUNION:** The Archdiocese of Newark requires a minimum of *two full consecutive years* of general catechesis/Faith Formation/CCD in order to receive First Communion. In addition to this, children and their families take part in the sacrament preparation program as outlines below.

**CONFIRMATION:** In order to receive Confirmation the child is required to attend Faith Formation sessions every year from the time he/she celebrates First Communion until Confirmation. Failing to attend classes in the years after the celebration of First Communion will result in a significant delay in the preparation for Confirmation. Children returning to faith formation sessions in middle school will not be Confirmation in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Rather they will be admitted to the preparation program, as outlined below, when it is determined that they are mature enough to do so.

Transcripts will be required for children transferring from another parish or Catholic school.

### **Reconciliation / Confession**

**Preparation for the sacrament of Reconciliation typically takes place in the fall of 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade.** Older children are encouraged to come forward and prepare for the sacrament if they have not already done so. They will prepare in an age-appropriate group. The program is a combination of family gathered sessions and home study. **Typically, the First Reconciliation celebration is in December.** Children must have attended faith formation sessions for at least one full catechetical year prior to their preparation for the sacrament.

### **Eucharist**

**Preparation for Eucharist follows the reception of the sacrament of Reconciliation.** This program is also a combination of family gathered sessions and home study. Regular Mass attendance is critical to adequately prepare the children for Eucharist. Participating in Mass every Sunday helps the child understand that they are preparing for a life time of coming to the Lord's table. It creates a deeper desire to receive Jesus in the Eucharist and makes their first Communion Day truly memorable. **The children receive First Eucharist with their families during Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon Liturgies beginning in April and continuing through May.** Children must have attended faith formation sessions for at least one full catechetical year prior to their preparation for the sacrament.

*Although these sacraments are typically celebrated in the 2nd grade, that is not always the case. Readiness for the reception of a sacrament is not determined only by age. The sacraments are received when the parents, Pastor, and Director agree upon the child's readiness and all the program requirements have been satisfied.*

### **Confirmation**

**Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation begins in the fall.** This program calls for the active involvement of candidates, parents, sponsors, catechists/religion teachers, group leaders, and priests. The candidates meet on several Sundays between October and April. This preparation period focuses on understanding the full meaning of this sacrament in the life of the young person now and in the future. **Requirements include** attendance and participation in weekly Mass, completion of stewardship/service hours, participation in the Confirmation retreat, completion of Confirmation family conference, and submission of all required forms in a timely manner. **The date of Confirmation is determined by the Confirming Bishop's availability and the date requested by the Pastor.** Customarily at St. Joseph's, Confirmation has been celebrated during the Easter Season.

*Although Confirmation is typically celebrated in the 8th grade, that is not always the case. Readiness for the reception of a sacrament is not determined only by age. A young person is Confirmed when the parents, Pastor, and Director agree upon his/her readiness. Significant factors in determining readiness include: The extent of the child's prior religious education, the child's desire to be Confirmed independent of their parent's wishes, participation in weekly Mass and the life of the parish community, and the successful completion of all program requirements.*

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## **CATECHIST INFORMATION**

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### **Your Child's Catechist**

- You will be informed of who your child's catechist is on the first day of classes. He/she may send home a welcome letter for you and your child.
- The current year's list of catechists is always published in the parish bulletin during the first weeks of classes.

### **About Our Catechists**

All of our catechists are volunteers. We are extremely fortunate to have so many willing and generous parishioners take on this rewarding challenge and responsibility of bearing witness to our Catholic faith. Their presence in the lives of our children demonstrates how valued these children are to our parish community. We are very grateful for their faithful service and dedication to St. Joseph's Parish.

**We aim to maintain group sizes that are suitable for effective learning and classroom management.** However, class size is determined by the number of volunteer catechists. We depend on your willingness to share your faith, time and talent with our children. Following is a list of catechist positions. Our needs vary from year to year.

### **Catechist's positions are as follows**

#### **Regular Program Catechists:**

- Grades 1 – 2: Monday afternoons 3:50pm to 5:00pm (5-7 Catechists)
- Grades 3 – 5: Tuesday afternoons 3:50pm to 5:00pm (6-7 Catechists)
- Grades 6 – 8: Tuesday evenings 7:00pm to 8:15pm (11 Catechists)
- All grades: Sunday mornings, monthly, 8:15am – 9:45am (10 Catechists)

#### **Sacrament Preparation Team:**

- First Reconciliation/First Eucharist team (8 small group facilitators)
- Older children Reconciliation and Eucharist (2 catechists)
- Confirmation team (10-14 small group facilitators)

#### **Substitutes:**

Substitute catechists are needed for all of the above sessions. If you are typically free during any of the above mentioned times, but can not make a weekly or monthly commitment, consider giving your time occasionally as a substitute.

### **Catechist Formation**

Catechists are encouraged and supported in their own faith development through a variety of opportunities available to them:

- Catechist orientation and training sessions
- In-Service Workshops
- Grade Level Meetings
- Archdiocesan Certification Courses and Catechetical Convocation Day
- Appropriate teaching manuals, a full year's subscription to Religion Teacher's Journal (a professional religious education journal), and "The Catechism of the Catholic Church."

## **Call for Catechists**

If you feel God calling you to this ministry please contact the Faith Formation Office to set up a meeting with the director. At that time you will be provided with an application and a more detailed explanation of responsibilities and expectations. Together we can explore your interests, gifts and skills and how they can line up with the needs of our various programs. Many of our catechists have no teaching experience. But, driven by their desire to witness Christ and to pass on the faith to our young people and with the training provided, they have developed into excellent catechists. Do not hesitate and do not fear. If God calls to this ministry, there will be an opportunity for you to serve and God will provide you with the gifts you need to do so well.

We strive to ensure a safe learning environment for all children. All catechists are required to complete a volunteer application, agree to a criminal background check, sign a Code of Ethics, and attend the “Protecting God’s Children” workshop.

## **About Our Volunteer Support Staff**

Our volunteer support staff is a critical part of our faith formation efforts for the parish. If you do not feel called to the catechetical ministry, there are still a variety of ways in which you can help our program such as Faith Formation session volunteer, parent meetings, hospitality, phone calls, set-up and clean-up for sacrament preparation sessions, etc. For more information see our support staff sign-up form or call the Faith Formation Office.

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## **POLICIES**

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**In order to ensure effectiveness and safety in our Faith Formation Programs, we would appreciate your cooperation in the following.**

### **Admittance**

- **We welcome all children** in Kindergarten through eighth grade to Religious Education.
- **Children who move into our parish community and can verify that they have begun religious education for the current year in another parish are admitted into the program all year, provided there is space in the desired classroom.**
- **Parents who register children for our programs after October 1<sup>st</sup> may have to take the Home Schooling option for the remainder of that school year in fairness to our catechists who already have a designated number of students.** *Fee will be adjusted accordingly.*

*Please note that we follow the Archdiocesan Policies for sacrament preparation requirements. If a child is enrolled in our program after the second week of classes, that may no longer be considered a full year of faith formation. This will be taken into consideration when reviewing the child’s faith formation record in determining their eligibility for sacrament preparation. A full year of formation will be noted for new parishioners who enroll their children after the second week of classes and can verify that they have been attending religious education classes in their former parish. In these cases a transcript will be required.*

## Registration Procedure

- A pre-requisite for enrolling in any Religious Education Program is **registration of the family as active worshipping members of the St. Joseph parish community**. In special situations children may be admitted from other parishes with the consent of their proper pastor as well as with the permission of our pastor.
- Children already in our programs **must re-register each year**.
- In order to ensure that we have space of all of our current students, registration for current students opens in the spring time for the following year. Shortly thereafter registration opens for the entire parish. We encourage all families to register early as it helps us to plan more effectively for the following year.
- **New families** must make an appointment to meet with the Director or Program Coordinator to complete the registration process.
- **Families will receive a Parent Handbook upon registration. No children will be admitted to class without a signed verification that the parents have received the parent handbook.**
- **All families are expected to provide a copy of the child's baptismal certificate. Program fees should be paid at the time of registration.** Fees help us provide adequate materials, supplies, books, resources, catechist training and more. *(Please see the current year's registration form for detailed fee information.)*

*No child or family will be kept from participating in our program because they are unable to afford the fee. However, a family in financial difficulty must meet with the director and complete a brief financial adjustment form. Each family situation will be held in confidence.*

## Attendance & Tardiness

- **All children are required to attend all scheduled classes.** Because each week builds on the previous week's lesson, it is extremely important for your child to maintain a good attendance record. In the event that your child transfers to another parish our office will provide you with a transcript which will reflect their attendance record.
  - **If it is necessary for a student to be absent from class, a parent/guardian must notify the office before class in order for their absence to be recorded as excused.**
  - **Parents will be notified:**
    - **If children in our weekly program exceed more than 2 unexcused absences .**
    - **If families in our monthly program miss any sessions without prior notification.**
    - **In case of excessive excused absences.**
- In such cases a parent conference may be required. Frequent absence will delay the reception of a sacrament during a preparation period.
- **In the event of an occasional or prolonged absence,** the Faith Formation Office must be informed in order to better support the child's continued education. Parents/guardians are responsible to see that their child makes up all missed work and assignments.
  - **Appointments made during religious education times do interfere with your child's religious education.** We therefore request that, whenever possible, you consult the calendar and try to arrange all dental, medical and other appointments on days when your child is not having faith formation sessions.

- Since our classes only meet weekly or monthly, **we ask that you strongly consider making faith formation a priority** over other extra curricular activities (e.g. sports). If there is a scheduling conflict, please be sure to advise us immediately so that we can work together to find a solution that does not compromise the child's religious education.
- **All students are expected to be here on time for the start of their session.** If a child is late more than 2 times during the year this situation will require a parent conference.

### **Arrival and Dismissal: (Weekly program only)**

#### **We appreciate your cooperation in following these guidelines in order to keep your children safe.**

- **Children enter the school building and gather in the cafeteria** at their designated class table. They will be taken by their catechist, up to their classroom, together as a group. No child is permitted to enter a classroom unless the catechist is present.
- **The outside school doors always remain locked.** This is done for the safety of the children in order to prevent strangers from entering the building.
- **Children who arrive late must come to the Faith Formation Office first** and then be accompanied up to class by a staff member.
- **Dismissal for children in – GRADES 1-5:**
  - **Parents/guardians picking up children must wait for them at the church parking lot on Palisade Avenue.** The children will be walked from the school down to the parking lot by their catechist. The town of Bogota provides a crossing guard.
  - **If you permit a sibling under the age of 18 to pick up your child please be sure to indicate permission for this on your registration form.** Otherwise, be sure to complete a permission form available in the Office of Faith Formation. Complete the signed form and return it to the Program Coordinator before the first session.
- **Dismissal for children in – GRADES 6-8:**
  - Children will be dismissed from the School doors. **Please understand that you may not stop your car on the street to pick up children on E. Fort Lee Rd. You will be ticketed by the Bogota Police Department.** It is the parents' responsibility to decide how they wish to pick up their child. Parents may:
    - **Park in the parking lot and walk up to meet their children** and walk with them back to the parking lot.
    - **or let the children walk by themselves and meet them at the parking lot.** Catechists will not accompany the young people to the parking lot. No crossing guard is provided at this time.
  - We ask you to be vigilant and to remind your children to use common sense safety rules while walking by themselves and crossing Palisade Ave.
- **This procedure remains the same even in inclement weather.** Please be sure your children are dressed appropriately.
- **Please be prompt in picking up your children.** This demonstrates your consideration of our catechists, support staff, and crossing guard.
- **Children not picked up promptly at dismissal time will be returned to the Faith Formation office.** Repeated tardiness in picking up a child may result in a parent conference.
- **No student may leave the school before the regular dismissal time unless excused by the Director or Program Coordinator.** This must be accomplished by sending in a note from the parent/guardian stating the reason for the need of an early dismissal. Parents picking children up early must do so in the Faith Formation Office.

### **Emergency Class Cancellations**

- **We follow the same schedule as the Bogota School system** regarding emergency closings due to inclement weather.
- Students in **Bogota schools may be informed at their schools** of class cancellations if time permits.
- **Students who do not live in Bogota will be telephoned.**
- **On Sundays**, we will try to anticipate any hazardous weather conditions. Catechists will be notified and will call the parents of the children in their groups.
- **Class cancellations will also be posted on our Faith Formation webpage if time permits.**

### **Fire Safety and Emergency Preparation**

- **Catechists have instructions** to follow in case of fire.
- **Fire drills** are conducted in the fall and in the spring. .
- **There is an approved plan in place in order to ensure the safety of any children attending programs in the event of a natural disaster or other type of emergency.**
- In such a case, our emergency plan will be executed and the children will first be evacuated or taken to safety. **Once we have determined that they are indeed safe, we will begin to contact the families via our emergency phone numbers on file.**

### **Health Concerns and Medications**

- It is important that you **inform the Director or Program Coordinator of any special health situations** your child may have. There is a place for this on the registration form.
- **We will not dispense medication of any kind.** If your child is taking any type of medication, please inform the Faith Formation Office.
- Please remember to **keep the office informed** of any changes to your child's health or any new diagnoses made during the year.

### **Special Needs / Disabilities**

- It is important that you **inform the Director or Program Coordinator of any special learning needs** your child may have in order to better facilitate learning and incorporate methods that are appropriate for your child. There is a place of this on our registration form.
- In these cases, **with the consent of the parents, the catechist will be informed of any concerns.**
- **Information will be held in confidence.**

### **Food/Refreshment Policy**

- Occasionally food and refreshments will be given to the children for special events and celebrations.
- Please be sure to indicate any allergies at the time of registration and inform the office of any changes during the year.
- No food or refreshments may be distributed in classrooms.

## **Picture Permission**

- Please be aware that we occasionally take pictures of students in classes or assemblies. These pictures are for internal use only (e.g. to decorate bulletin boards, prayer in the classroom, etc.)
- No child will be photographed without parent consent. Parents give consent for their child to be photographed on our registration form.

## **Safe Environment Policy**

- **St. Joseph's Church has a zero tolerance policy regarding abuse of any kind.**
- All catechists and volunteers have:
  - Completed a thorough volunteer application
  - Had an interview with the director or the program coordinator
  - Undergone a criminal background check
  - Read and Signed the "Archdiocese of Newark Policies on Professional & Ministerial Conduct."
  - and attended a special workshop on child abuse prevention entitled "Protecting God's Children."

*All certificates and records of compliance are on file in our office and a record is kept at the chancery.*
- No child is allowed to be in an unsupervised, one-to-one situation with any staff or volunteer in a remote or unobserved area.
- EVERYONE'S cooperation is needed in order to ensure a safe environment for our children. Any parent who suspects any type of abuse should notify the proper authorities directly. Parents should also notify the Director immediately. The Director will notify the pastor and will also the proper authorities, if parents have not done so already. Pursuant to state law, we are required to report suspected child abuse, and we will also follow diocesan policy on such matters.
- The policy of abuse for the Archdiocese of Newark is available for anyone who wishes to review it. Please visit the Archdiocesan website at [www.rcan.org](http://www.rcan.org) to view the policies or contact our office if you do not have access to the internet.

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## **GENERAL EXPECTATIONS**

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### **Parents**

- **Be an active part of their children's learning and the primary example of faith and discipleship for their children.**
- **To provide for my child's regular participation at weekly Mass.**
- **To provide for my child's regular attendance and punctuality at all faith formation and sacrament preparation sessions.**
- **To contact the Faith Formation office if my child is unable to attend a session.**
- **To complete all home assignments with my child.**
- **To talk with my child about what he/she learned at sessions and review homework assignments when applicable.**
- **Communicate any special needs or circumstances that may affect their child within the classroom.**
- **Communicate any concerns, questions, or suggestions.**
- **To pray with my child at home.**
- **To do something to continue my own adult faith development (participating in weekly Mass, reading, attending workshops, small group discussions, sacrament preparation meetings, etc.)**

## **Children and Teens**

- Behave in a Christian manner at all times showing respect and being cooperative with adults and other students.
- Actively and cooperatively participate in classroom activities and discussions.
- Attend sessions regularly and complete any assignments.
- Bring all required materials.
- Dress appropriately and to respect their own bodies by modesty in their dress.
- Respect others' property and school property.
- Do not eat or drink in the classrooms.
- The use of tobacco, alcohol, or illegal drugs is NOT permitted.

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## **Discipline**

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All students are expected to share in the faith learning experience of the parish program. They do so by meeting the expectations above to the best of their ability. We want the children in our program to experience the values of the Gospel at all times. Therefore, if a child's behavior disrupts the learning process for him or herself or for others, the following steps will be taken:

- **At the first incident** a verbal warning will be given by the catechist and the child will be reminded of the expectations.
- **At the second incident** the child/teen will be sent to the office for a discussion with the Director.
- **At the third incident** the child is removed from the class and the parents are contacted.

**All efforts will be made to work with the child and the family** in order to resolve the issue in the most effective way possible.

**However, if the problem persists and cooperation is not evident by the child or parent, we reserve the right to remove the child from our regularly scheduled sessions.** In such a case it may be necessary to continue the child's religious education at home.

This is another reason why consistent communication with our office regarding special needs or special family circumstances is important. Often these situations can impact a child's behavior. In order to best address your child's needs we hope to be well informed and any information you can give us is helpful to our catechists. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

**Persistent problems with discipline may also impact the readiness of a child preparing for a sacrament. In that case, a parent conference may be necessary.**

**The following page is for parent's/guardian's information. Each student in grades 7 – 8 receive a copy to sign during the first class. Signed copies will be filed in the office.**

St. Joseph's Office of Faith Formation  
115 East Fort Lee Road  
Bogota, NJ 07603  
(201) 343-4316

September

Dear Parents of Seventh and Eighth Grade Students,

Welcome to the Religious Education school year. To make this course as beneficial as possible for all students we are asking that **child** and **their Catechist** sign this Contract.

We are trying to live the way that Jesus Christ lived and taught us to live. This will bring us happiness and peace, and create that atmosphere for others too. The attitudes and actions listed below will contribute to making this place one where your children feel enriched and affirmed.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Patricia Rodriguez  
Pastoral Associate for Faith Formation

Michele Palladino  
Program Coordinator

\*\*\*\*\* CODE OF CONDUCT CONTRACT \*\*\*\*\*

*I agree to participate in this course by:*

- Having **RESPECT** for myself, and other students, and all adults present. If a student disrupts the class or misbehaves (3 times) a parent will be called to pick up their child.
- **FOLLOWING ALL RULES**, and **HONORING** all requests, including :
  - **NOT BRINGING** candy, gum, or snacks on the premises.
  - **CELL PHONES not to be used. If seen or heard will be taken and returned after class.**
  - **LISTENING** when others are speaking.
  - **FAITHFULLY ATTENDING CLASSES** (knowing I cannot miss more than **FOUR (4)** in a whole **year** without having to repeat the year – only serious reasons such as illness are acceptable excuses)
  - **COMPLETING ALL ASSIGNMENTS** as well as I can.
  - **BRING REQUIRED MATERIALS** each week, including Workbook, Bible, and any others (Journal, if specified). If student loses his/her book or bible parent will have to purchase another book.
  - **WALKING TO AND FROM CLASSES** in an orderly respectful way.
  - **TAKING CARE of all** Church, school, and personal property.
  - **DRESS CODE** - No one will be allowed to wear any clothing with inappropriate language printed on the clothes.

**Late arrivals:** The opportunity to pray and learn about the Catholic faith is jeopardized when a child is consistently arriving late, as arrivals are very disruptive. After 2 late arrivals, parents will be contacted by phone.

Signature of Catechist: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle your grade level

Signature of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Gr. 7 Room \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Gr. 8 Room \_\_\_\_\_

Please PRINT last name \_\_\_\_\_

## **PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES**

*Upon registering your child at the Faith Formation Office either the Director or Program Coordinator reviewed this page with you. Your signature on the registration form indicates that you will fulfill these obligations to the best of your ability.*

I fully understand my responsibilities regarding my child's religious faith development:

- To provide for my child's regular participation at weekly Mass.
- To provide for my child's regular attendance at all faith formation and sacrament preparation sessions.
- To complete all home preparation assignments with my child.
- To talk with my child about what he/she learned at sessions and review homework assignments when applicable.
- To contact the REC office if my child is unable to attend a session.
- To pray with my child at home.
- To do something to continue my own adult faith development (participating in weekly Mass, reading, attending workshops, small group discussions, sacrament preparation meetings, etc.)

I realize the parish program can only complement and support my efforts as a parent to raise my child according to the Catholic Faith tradition.

I also realize the confusion caused in my child if what they learn in CCD sessions is not consistent with what is taught and practiced at home.

**You are the primary educators of your children and God believes you are up for the task!**

“Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators.”<sup>1</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education, Gravissimum Educationis*

Furthermore, this role is irreplaceable<sup>2</sup> and, as stated by the Second Vatican Council, “so important that only with difficulty can it be supplied where it is lacking.”<sup>3</sup>

“It cannot be forgotten that the most basic element, so basic that it qualifies the educational role of parents, is parental love.”<sup>4</sup> <sup>1</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation: *Familiaris Consortio*

“Parents are the first and most important educators of their own children, and they also possess a *fundamental competence* in this area.”<sup>5</sup> John Paul II demonstrated a great confidence in parents, including parents of this generation. He wrote this in his “Letter to Families” in the Year of the Family, 1994. His letter also demonstrates that he was fully cognizant of the social and cultural pressures modern parents face.

***We pray for God's continued blessing upon your vocation as a parent  
and as your child's primary religious educator.***

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<sup>1</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education, Gravissimum Educationis* [document on line] (1965)

<sup>2</sup> GDC, par. 226.

<sup>3</sup> *Gravissimum Educationis*, par. 3.

<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation: *Familiaris Consortio* [document on line] (1981)

<sup>5</sup> John Paul II, “Letter to Families” [document on line] (1994)