

Introduction

This handbook is designed to serve as a guide for parents/guardians, students, and catechists involved in the Faith Formation Programs in Dyersville and Earlville for the Spires of Faith Cluster. The philosophy, goals, policies, guidelines and schedule serve to communicate the content of our religious education program.

The catechetical formation of each child is a responsibility shared both by the parent and the parish Faith Formation program. The goal of religious education is threefold: to present information in the content of our Catholic Christian faith, to enable formation in the values and attitudes needed to live a Catholic Christian faith, which leads to the end-goal of transformation and conversion in Christ Jesus.

The policies in this handbook have been adopted by the Archdiocese Board of Education and apply to the Faith Formation programs of the Spires of Faith Cluster. These policies give the Coordinator/Director of Faith Formation, parents/guardians, students, and catechists a direction in responding to the religious and spiritual needs of parish families.

Faith Formation Programs

- Children's liturgy for children ages 3,4,5, and 6 during weekend Masses
- Faith Formation classes for grades 1 to 8
- Youth Ministry/ High School Faith Formation **YDisciple** grades 9 to 12
- Adult Faith Formation includes CRHP, *Christ Renews His Parish Retreats*, small group studies, Theology on Tap, Wine and Wisdom

Goals of our Faith Formation Program

1. WE GATHER- we pray and reflect on how God is speaking in our lives
2. WE BELIEVE- we are presented the truths of the Catholic faith found in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, and in accordance with the Magisterium of the Church through age-appropriate content
3. WE RESPOND- we are encouraged to respond to what we have learned in prayer, faith, and life as Disciples of Christ. We are called to live out our discipleship among peers, families, and communities.

We Envision...

This faith and these principles inspired us to envision a Church in which we

...are Disciples of Christ empowered by the Holy Spirit to be a *community* "devoted to the apostles' instruction and the communal life, to the breaking of bread and prayers," zealous in caring for the needs of others. (Acts 1:8; 2:42; 4:34)

...are a people in whom the biblical *Word of God* finds rich soil, flourishes in the truth of Catholic teaching and produces a harvest of holiness and social justice. (Luke 8:8; 6:45)

... are ministered to by faith-filled and qualified *persons in leadership* who imitate the Good Shepherd and are "worthy of their hire." (1 Peter 5:1-4, Matthew 10:10)

...support *families*, in various forms, striving to be domestic churches which instill Catholic faith and morality in the hearts of the next generation.
(Ephesians 5:21-6:4)

Mission Statement of the Educational Apostolate Archdiocese of Dubuque

The mission of the Educational Apostolate of the Archdiocese of Dubuque is to promote lifelong faith formation which challenges individuals to:

- Respond to God's continuous call for conversion to Jesus Christ
- Form and be formed in Christian community life
- Grow in knowledge of faith
- Participate in liturgical celebrations and prayer
- Collaborate in the Church's mission of evangelization

Parish Sacramental Preparation Policy

Families in the Faith Formation Program *must be registered members of their parish*. The religious education and formation of each child is a responsibility shared by the parent/ guardian and the faith formation program.

A person must be a baptized member of the Catholic faith and a member of a parish within the Spires of Faith to be in a preparation phase for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, or Confirmation. Persons not baptized in the Catholic tradition must be involved in a catechumenate process to prepare for the sacrament which includes Children's Initiation or RCIA, *Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults*. The program preparing children for the Sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation involves parents. Parent education is aimed in assisting parents in fulfilling their roles as primary educators. It is required for parent/guardian to attend meetings for sacramental preparation if a child is to participate in the sacramental celebrations. Parish faith formation is meant to enhance and assist the parents.

Baptism

- Parents of infants and children under the age of seven who wish to have their child baptized must attend a Pre-Baptismal class.
- Classes are offered four times a year.
- Baptisms are both during Mass and at other times.

Reconciliation

- A child must have been in a religious education program at least one year prior to preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Formal catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation will take place before catechesis for First Eucharist.
- Preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist is primarily the responsibility of the parents.
- The minimum age for a person preparing for the sacrament is seven years old.
- If the person preparing for the sacrament is of grade school age, a parent is expected to attend the preparation meeting(s).

Eucharist

- A child must have been in a religious education program for at least one year prior to preparing for the Sacrament of Eucharist.
- Catechesis for the Sacrament of Eucharist takes place after the catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Faith Formation Staff

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Director of Faith Formation SFX site/ Coordinator of Youth Ministry/ RCIA Coordinator:

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Guidelines and Procedures

Calendar Changes

If the calendar is changed, you will receive notice via email and any changes can be found in the Cluster Bulletin.

Inclement Weather

In the event of inclement weather, cancellation of classes for that day or night will be announced on radio Station of KDST and KCRG-TV channel 9. If there is no public school for the day or if students are dismissed early, Faith Formation classes are automatically cancelled.

Arrival and Dismissal at Dyersville Site

Classes for 1-12 are from 6:45 – 8:00p.m at Dyersville Site. Children will enter in the Auditorium of Xavier School. Parents/guardians are asked to accompany children 1-2nd grades to the door. Encourage your children to walk as they enter the building. Child will remain in the Auditorium until dismissed to classroom with catechist.

Students will not be allowed in any classroom before the catechist arrives. After the catechist admits the students to the room, the catechist is responsible for supervising the students. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful and courteous manner.

Parents/guardians are to pick up their children at the west entrance doors (west parking lot) after class. Parents/guardians are asked to pick up their children 1-2nd grade at their classroom.

Arrival and Dismissal at Earlville Site

Class times are as follows:

Grades 1-6 5:45-7:00

Grades 7-12 7:15-8:30

We ask that students are in their rooms by the time the bell rings. When students are late it disrupts the class unnecessarily; please make sure your children are on time.

Grades 1-6 enter through the North Door and exit from the West Door of the school. We ask that parents pick up their student at West Entrance. If they need to cross the street, parents or guardians are to come to the school sidewalk to walk with them.

Grades 7-12 enter and exit classes through the North Door. We ask that they not arrive before grade school children are dismissed at 7:00 p.m.

Attendance

Attendance at programs and classes is essential to develop a sense of belonging to the parish community, for growth in your child's relationship to God, and for an ongoing understanding of our Catholic faith.

Notification of absence should be made to the Director of Religious Education prior to the absence, no later than 6:00 p.m. the night of class.

Unexcused absences will be followed up by phone call, particularly with safety of children in mind. If attendance continues to be a problem, a meeting with the parents, student, and Director of Religious Education will be arranged.

In special circumstances, i.e. long term illness, a serious accident, or personal family situation, communication with the Director of Religious Education is required to maintain contact and relationship with the student.

Special Needs

Parents are requested to list any health concerns of a student on the registration form. This information will be communicated to the appropriate catechists.

Parents are requested to list any special needs of a student with learning disabilities on the registration form. This information will be communicated to the appropriate catechists.

Communication/Notifications

Monthly newsletters will be sent to parents/guardians of all Faith Formation students providing important dates, reminders, educational posts, and child safety newsnotes; parents/guardians are asked to read these monthly newsletters to be updated and involved in their child's faith formation process.

Progress reports will be mailed to child's primary parent address after the fall and spring semesters. We ask that parent(s) review progress report with child and return signed by parent the following Wednesday night class. Ongoing communication between catechists and parents is highly recommended. Parents are encouraged to contact the catechists or Director of Faith Formation if a problem develops.

Protection of Children

Under the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, all dioceses in the United States have agreed to do the following:

1. Establish age-appropriate safe environment training for children. Key training components are to include information about quality relationships, proper forms of touch, actions to take in uncomfortable situations, and reporting possible abuse. This program is not the same as sex education.
2. Offer the training to all children/young people.
3. Document that the training has taken place.

While all children are to be offered the Archdiocesan safe environment training, a parent/guardian can refuse to allow their child to participate in the Archdiocesan training. The following conditions must be met if a parent/guardian decides not to have their child(ren) participate:

4. Provide to the parent/guardian the Archdiocesan curriculum if the parent chooses to cover this material with their own child(ren).
5. The parent must specifically state in writing: (1) that safe environment training was offered to their child, (2) that they refused to allow their child to participate in this training, and (3) that they have been offered safe environment training materials to use with their child. This signed

form must be maintained by the archdiocese to ensure full accountability concerning the safe environment training of every child.

The safe environment training program at St. Francis Xavier will be offered on the first Wednesday of October to 1st, 3rd, 6th, and 8th grade classes.

The safe environment training program that will be used can be viewed at: www.spiresofffaith.com website under faith formation.

In the event that you do not wish your student to participate in the safe environment training, please complete, date, sign, and return the *Parent/Guardian Safe Environment Training Refusal Form* found on the Spires of Faith website under faith formation. Please list each child and the level/grade training they would have the opportunity to receive. If we do not receive the form by September 24th, we will assume your approval of your child(ren)'s participation in the program.

Help for Victims of Sexual Abuse

The Archdiocese of Dubuque has established a program of pastoral assistance to people who believe they or those in their care have been sexually abused as minors by clergy or other Church personnel. This assistance will include help in informing civil and Church authorities. Victim Assistance Coordinators are trained to facilitate access to appropriate professional mental health services, social service agencies, support groups and/or individuals who can provide spiritual care. Any individual desiring help from this program is invited to call toll free (563) 556-1225 or 866-319-4636 to report an allegation or receive assistance. This program is part of the "Policy for the Protection of Minors."

Property

Respect for a person's property and for school and parish property is expected in every area of the school. Children are required to walk in school corridors and classrooms for their safety. Food and gum are not allowed in any classroom or building unless it is part of the class program and under the authority of the catechists. Faith Formation books are not to be written in or damaged in any way.

Proper Dress

Appropriate attire in the Religious Education Program is necessary. Dress reflects attitude towards persons and the activity.

Emergency Calls

Only necessary calls will be made, with permission and assistance from the Director of Faith Formation. All cellphones are asked to be put away during class times. Catechist has the option to take cellphones until after class.

Lost Articles

Lost and found articles are kept in the Religious Education Office.

Field Trips

If a field trip is planned, parents are required to give written permission for a child to participate. Permission forms need to be signed by the parents before departure. Parents are encouraged to assist in transportation and/or as chaperons.

Prayers, Beliefs and Practices

Prayer is an integral part of every lesson at all age levels. Parents/guardians are to help their child learn their prayers. Please see the listing of Prayers, Beliefs and Practices and the grade levels at which they are to be taught. Mass will be celebrated on Ash Wednesday. The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available during Advent and Lent. **Parents are strongly encouraged to attend Masses, go to confession, and pray before the Blessed Sacrament with their children.**

Prayer is an integral part of our faith and will be included in each class. Students will experience a variety of ways to pray including both formal, memorized prayers and informal, spontaneous prayer. You can find a listing of Prayers, Beliefs, and Practices and the grade levels at which they are taught on the Spires of Faith website under Faith Formation. **Your help will be necessary** for your children to learn these prayers and make them a part of their daily lives.

Music

Music is an important component of religious education and is scheduled in classrooms at various times.

Sacramental Preparation

Children who will receive the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion and their parents are expected to attend Sacramental preparation meetings or events as scheduled.

Discipline Policy

The respect and dignity of all persons is valued. Discipline helps all students as it contributes to a climate of learning, loving, and living. It helps each student as it provides an environment to guide students to become a self-disciplined person.

Each catechist in the classroom will clarify and set up goals for learning and establish classroom guidelines. These guidelines will be posted and shared with the Director of Religious Education. Goal-setting and positive consequences encourage students to choose appropriate behavior. Normal discipline problems are to be handled by the classroom catechist.

If there are recurrent or serious problems, the catechist discusses the situation with the Director of Faith Formation. The student will be dismissed from class, following this procedure:

1. The student will meet with the Director of Faith Formation.
2. The student will fill out a discipline form. The student and the Director of Religious Education agree on an appropriate behavior.
3. The student and the Director of Faith Formation will sign the discipline form. The student returns to class. After class, the Director of Faith Formation will give the form to the catechist to sign and the student will take it home to obtain the parent/guardian signature.
4. The Director of Faith Formation will notify the parent/guardian of the disciplinary action.
5. Discipline forms will be filed in the Religious Education Office for the year. When a student has two forms on file, a conference will be held with the parent/guardian, the student, the catechist, and the Director of Faith Formation.
6. If, after returning to the classroom, the student is again dismissed from class, the student may not be allowed to attend class for the remainder of the year. An appropriate family religious education plan would be designed at home and monitored by the Director of Faith Formation.

Curriculum grades 1 to 7 “We Believe”

We Believe with Project Disciple is a catechetical program for schools and parishes that focuses on students, catechists, families, and the Church community. This program is highly engaging providing your child with exciting and integral features in every chapter. *We Believe*, published by Sadlier, is rooted in Scripture and Traditions of the Catholic Church and is spirited by the General and National Directories for Catechesis. It is Christocentric, centering on the Person of Jesus Christ, Trinitarian, inviting relationship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and finally, Ecclesial, supporting faith that is lived in the domestic church and the universal Church. This program covers every area of your child's faith and how teaches them how to live it out in their daily lives.

Curriculum for grade 8 “Faith Fusion”

The catechetical series, *Faith Fusion*, published by Our Sunday Visitor presents a dynamic way to engage 8th grade students. Here you will find Scripture, Tradition, liturgy, prayer, Church history, saint's lives, Catholic customs, and ethnic sensitivity presented in an integrated manner. Woven into these elements are recurrent forms of life applications: What does it mean to you? How does this make you a better Catholic? How does this help you to want the best for yourselves and others? Students will have little chance to idly wonder over this or that aspect of a teaching! This step will truly prepare your child for their High School Discipleship program, YDisciple.

High School Curriculum YDisciple

Ydisciple is a web-based presentation of the faith through a dynamic video curriculum, delivered in the context of small group faith sharing, facilitated by well-trained faithful adults and providing support to parents in their role as primary educators in the faith. Ydisciple is the new way to evangelize and teach the next generation! Providing them with a small group atmosphere, high school students are able to engage in conversations about their faith, grow in their relationship with Christ through Christ centered friendships, and learn so much about the Catholic Church through well delivered, engaging, doctrinal content. Parent Handouts will be emailed each week providing parents with the content their high school student reviewed that week. These will also include conversation starters in order to help parents share in their son or daughter's faith journey.

Confirmation

Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on Pentecost, strengthening them to go out and proclaim his works to the world. Like them, we are called to live as active, spirit-filled disciples of Jesus. In the Sacrament of Confirmation our bond with Jesus Christ and the Church is strengthened by the Holy Spirit. We open ourselves to cooperation with the ever-present Spirit in a life of ongoing conversion within the faith-filled community.

Students in their sophomore year of high school will participate in their year of intense preparation for confirmation. This is the second year of a two year process. The first year is completed through regular attendance at Faith Formation sessions on Wednesday nights or enrollment at Beckman Catholic High School. During the second year of preparation, there will be twelve hours of catechesis separate from the Faith Formation or religion classes held throughout the year taking place on Sunday mornings after 8:30 a.m. Mass in the Basilica of St. Francis Xavier. This entails reflective journaling, community service, a time of retreat, and a night of reflection with their sponsors. This will culminate in the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation in late Spring.