

**ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH
OFFICE OF FAITH FORMATION**

**1200 E. 10TH Street
STUART, FL 34996**



PARENT AND STUDENT HANDBOOK

Updated August 2026

PRIESTS AND DEACONS

**Reverend Noel McGrath, Pastor
Reverend Paul Vincent
Deacon Lawrence Crary
Deacon Laurence Condon
Deacon Dr. Michael Burke**

Anthuanette Hidalgo, Director of Faith Formation
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MISSION STATEMENT

Christ is at the heart of the curriculum of our St. Joseph Family Faith Formation Program. The program is designed to bring together families to grow in understanding and love of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We partner with parents or guardians, our priests, deacons, and catechists in support of the spiritual and moral development of each child entrusted to our ministry.

The Family Faith Formation Program is designed to inspire, educate, and teach the doctrines and heritage of the Catholic Church. Through this journey, the program provides an age-appropriate learning experience founded on the Word of God in Scripture and Tradition of the Catholic Church.

Parents are the primary educators of their children's faith journey. As a Catholic parent, you are called to be a witness of your faith, resulting in the spiritual growth and development of their children.

FAMILY FAITH FORMATION POLICIES and GUIDELINES

In order to provide a rich and nurturing learning experience for all participating in the St. Joseph Parish Faith Formation programs, policies and guidelines have been established to help meet this goal. Fr. Noel McGrath, our Pastor, has reviewed and approved all such policies as outlined. Our Family Faith Formation programs are held in accordance and compliance to the directives of the Diocese of Palm Beach. We ask that all catechists, parents/guardians and students abide by these guidelines and policies.

REGISTRATION and PLACEMENT

Our Family Faith Formation Program is open to all registered and active parishioners of St. Joseph Catholic Church. Family Faith Formation is offered to students PreK - High School for both continued formation and sacramental preparation.

New student registrations require:

- Active Parishioner Status
- A copy of the child's Birth Certificate
- A copy of the child's Baptismal Certificate (if applicable)
- First Holy Communion Certificate (if applicable)
- Registration Form and Fees

Students are placed in a class which corresponds to their age and sacramental status. Any special circumstances will be reviewed on a case to case basis.

Registration for Family Faith Formation is required **each year** a student attends regardless of sacramental status or preparation.

EUCCHARIST

Saturday or Sunday Mass attendance is required. We invite all parents and children to fulfill their Mass obligation by attending one of our services: Saturday at 4:00 P.M. in English and 7:30 P.M. in Spanish, Sunday at 7:30 A.M. in English, 9:00 A.M. in English, 11:00 A.M. in English or 5:30 P.M. in English.

FAMILY FAITH FORMATION

At St. Joseph Parish we are blessed to accompany the parents, as the primary educators of their children in the ways of faith, in their child's faith journey through our programs. Faith Formation is an ongoing program for children before sacramental preparation and after as well. Parents will participate in Adult Catechesis, particularly parents who have a child in a sacramental year. We truly believe that parents' participation in Faith Formation classes will enhance the student's individual and spiritual growth.

PARENT COMMUNICATION

All parents are required to provide an email or phone number with texting capability to receive messages from the Parish. The Parish database will be the primary source of communication. It is important to update your address, telephone number and email address on an ongoing basis to facilitate this communication. All group email and texts will come from the eCatholic software application.

The Parish of St. Joseph views the education of a student as a partnership between the parents and the parish. Parents and students are expected to comply with the parish rules and policies, and to accept and support the authority of parish officials. The parish has the right to disenroll a student if it determines at its discretion that the parent or student partnership with the parish is irretrievably broken.

FIRST RECONCILIATION AND FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

This program is designed to teach and introduce the language of these Sacraments and practices to ensure preparedness for the Sacraments. Preparation for Sacrament of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion is a consecutive 2-year program. These Sacraments will be celebrated and received no sooner than the Second Grade. Our program also offers classes for older students seeking these Sacraments from grade 3 and above. Once received, we ask that parents/guardians encourage their children to continue to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis (once a month).

Requirements for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion:

- Families are expected to attend Mass every weekend (Saturday evening or Sunday). Students will receive a Mass Card, which must be stamped each week as verification of attendance. A minimum attendance rate of 75% of attendance is required.
- Regular class attendance is expected. Students may have no more than **two (2) absences**, and all missed classes must be made up. More than two (2) absences may require a meeting with the Director. Please notify the catechist or parish office if a student will be absent due to illness or emergency.
- Two evaluations will be conducted during the formation process to assess the student's growth, understanding, and readiness to receive the sacrament.
- Attendance at **one retreat during the second year of formation** is mandatory.
- A copy of the student's Birth Certificate and Baptism Certificate must be submitted at the time of registration.
- **Please Note:** If your child does not meet the program requirements, he or she may be required to repeat the year. This will provide another opportunity to successfully complete the program. Your child is welcome to return but must register again and comply with all program policies and procedures.

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

In accordance with the diocese of Palm Beach the preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation is a consecutive 2-year program. Formation starts at Eighth Grade or age 13. The sacrament is received during Ninth Grade. Through this Faith Formation experience, our teens are then fully initiated into the Catholic Church. They become a witness of Christ and proclaim and live the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Faith Formation is an ongoing and lifelong process. After Confirmation we encourage each student to pursue and explore volunteer opportunities, with the hope that they can find what God is calling them to do.

Students who graduated from St. Joseph Catholic school 8th grade will have completed the first year of the Confirmation program.

Requirements for Confirmation Year 1

- **Saint:** Student must choose Saint and begin Saint Report.
- **Sponsor:** A confirmed, practicing Catholic sponsor (not a parent) must be chosen. Sponsor form completed and turned into the office.
- **Mass Attendance:** Families are expected to attend Mass every weekend (Saturday evening or Sunday). Students will receive a Mass Card, which must be stamped each week as verification of attendance. A minimum attendance rate of 75% of attendance is required.
- **Class Attendance:** Regular class attendance is expected. Students may have no more than **two (2) absences**, and all missed classes must be made up. More than two (2) absences may require a meeting with the Director. Please notify the catechist or parish office if a student will be absent due to illness or emergency.
- **Evaluations:** Two evaluations will be conducted during the formation process to assess the student's growth, understanding, and readiness to receive the sacrament.
- **Volunteer Hours:** 40 hours are required by **April 25, 2027**.
 - **Sports/Extracurriculars:** If your child participates in a sports team or similar activity, up to 20 hours may be waived with a signed letter from the coach.
 - **Service at Mass:** Roles like altar server, greeter, usher, lector, or choir count toward service hours- just remember to have your hours signed by Head Usher.
 - **Holy Hour:** Held the first Monday of each month at 7:00 P.M. in the church. Attending earns double service hours- don't forget to sign in!
 - **Faith Formation for Parents:** Parents who attend Adult Catechesis during class time earn 1.5 service hours for their child per session.
 - **Parish Events:** Participating in special events like Parish Breakfast, Coffee and Donuts, International Food Festival, Santa's Breakfast, Christmas Angel Tree Gift, Parish Picnic, and other activities in St. Joseph Church will also count toward service hours. Please contact Volunteer and Events Coordinator at Church.

- **Please Note:**
 - Only service hours completed at St. Joseph Catholic Church will be accepted. Service hours completed through other organizations, churches, schools, or locations will not be counted.
 - A Community Service Project Log Sheet will be provided by the parish office and must be used to document all service hours.
 - Service hours must be verified and signed by the appropriate coach, ministry leader, supervisor, or authorized representative. Parents may not sign or verify service hours on behalf of coaches, activity leaders, or other supervisors.
- **Retreat:** One retreat is required; students earn 5 hours by attending.

Requirements for Confirmation Year 2

- **Saint:** Student must have completed a written report on chosen Confirmation saint and presentation.
- **Sponsor:** A confirmed, practicing Catholic sponsor (not a parent) must be chosen. Sponsor form completed and turned into the office (if not completed in Year 1).
- **Mass Attendance:** Families are expected to attend Mass every weekend (Saturday evening or Sunday). The student will receive a Mass Card to be stamped as a record of attendance.
- **Class Attendance:** Only 2 absences are allowed, and all missed sessions must be made up. More than 2 absences may require a meeting with the Director. Please notify in case of illness or emergency.
- **Evaluations:** One evaluation will be conducted during the formation process to assess the student's growth, understanding, and readiness to receive the sacrament.
- **Volunteer Hours:** 40 hours are required by **December 31, 2026.**
 - **Sports/Extracurriculars:** If your child participates in a sports team or similar activity, up to 20 hours may be waived with a signed letter from the coach.
 - **Service at Mass:** Roles like altar server, greeter, usher, lector, or choir count toward service hours- just remember to have your hours signed by Head Usher.
 - **Holy Hour:** Held the first Monday of each month at 7:00 P.M. in the church. Attending earns double service hours- don't forget to sign in!
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- **Retreat:** One retreat is required; students earn 5 hours by attending.

THE ST. JOSEPH COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

We strongly encourage all families and students (age appropriate) to participate in the ministry life of our Parish. Please consider being a Catechist, an Usher, Greeter, Lector, Altar Server, Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion or a member of the Choir, just to name a few ministry opportunities. Please call our office telephone at 772-287-2727, visit our website at <http://www.sjcflorida.org> or refer to the bulletin for further information.

FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM

Our Faith Formation program presents and teaches the six tasks of catechesis in accordance with the *Directory for Catechesis* #85-86. It is accomplished through the Diocesan approved curriculum set forth in Our Sunday Visitor, Sophia Institute, YDisciple (NET Ministries), Ignatius Press, Ascension Press, and Ruah Woods Institute publications.

STUDENT DROP-OFF and PICK-UP PROCEDURES

Pre-Kindergarten through 5th Grade

All students, PreK through Grade 5 cannot be dropped off. They must come with an adult who will escort them to their classroom.

Sixth Grade and older, including Confirmation

Classroom Pick up is not necessary for Middle and High School students.

FAITH FORMATION FOR PARENTS

Parents are invited to attend our Faith Formation classes in English or Spanish during their child's session after drop-off. Please arrive by 10:15 A.M., as classes begin promptly at 10:30 A.M. We kindly ask that you respect this schedule. The parent session concludes at 12:00 P.M., at which time children will be picked up by their parents from their individual classrooms.

BEHAVIOR

Our Catechists are faith filled volunteers who generously give their time and talent to the children and families of St. Joseph Parish. We expect them to be treated respectfully at all times and ask for full cooperation as they provide a nurturing classroom environment. Any behavior deemed to be disruptive or disrespectful will not be tolerated. Inappropriate behavior on the part of the child or guardian will result in the following actions:

- First, a private conversation will take place with the student by the catechist.
- Second, a conference with the Director of Formation and the parents/guardians if not resolved at the classroom level.
- Third, removal from the program.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

In the event of an extreme medical emergency which is deemed to be life-threatening to a child, the Office of Faith Formation will dial 911 to obtain immediate medical assistance and contact the parent or guardian.

Please be sure to inform us of any medical conditions your child may have to prevent such circumstances.

EMERGENCY CANCELLATION OF CLASSES

In the event of inclement weather or a local emergency, the Office of Faith Formation will abide by the decisions of the Martin County School District and local authorities. Please be sure to update your most current communication information including; e-mail, home phone, cell phone and work phone numbers.

TIME COMMITMENT

Class sessions are held in the Parish Life Center Buildings for 90 minutes on Sunday mornings from 10:30 A.M. – 12:00 P.M., September through April for most students. Students preparing for Confirmation Year 2 will meet September through January until the date of Confirmation. Dates, times and locations for special events will be announced for the appropriate students.

ATTENDANCE

Regular student attendance and continuity of instruction are essential to the spiritual development of each child and good preparation for the Sacraments.

- **Students preparing for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Communion (Year 1 and Year2) and Confirmation (Year 1 and Year 2)** can miss a maximum two (2) classes per year. All missed classes have to be made-up after consultation with the class catechists and meet with the Director to see if you need to repeat.
- **Other students.** A maximum of three (3) absences for the entire scheduled year will be allowed. All missed classes have to be made-up after consultation with the class catechist.

If there are special circumstances with regard to meeting this requirement, please contact the Director of Faith Formation to discuss it privately. Class sessions are scheduled with consideration of the public school calendar.

DRESS CODE

Appropriate dress is a sign of reverence and respect for Jesus living in each of us as well as for the Faith Formation teachers. The manner in which a child dresses should reflect the virtues of modesty and self-respect. Please no midriff or under garments visible. Violations of the Dress Code will result in the parent being asked to pick up their child and will be counted as an absence.

CELL PHONE USAGE

Cell phones are not permitted during class EXCEPT when used as a learning aid as directed by the catechist. If a student will have trouble following this requirement, he/she will be asked to turn in the phone for the entire class and it will be given it back at the end.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

- All group emails and texts will come from eCatholic software. Please inform us of any changes of address, phone or enrollment status.
- Please let the catechist know if there are problems in your child's classroom.
- Please ask for lesson ahead of time if your child must miss a session.

Thank you for your faithfulness to the promise you made at your child's Baptism to raise him or her in the Catholic faith. It is a privilege to partner with you in nurturing your child's relationship with Christ and supporting your family on this journey of faith. Together, through prayer, worship, and lifelong formation, we help lay a strong foundation for a life rooted in God's love.

"Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength. Take to heart these words which I command you today. Keep repeating them to your children. Recite them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up."

Deuteronomy 6: 5-7