

**St. Michael the Archangel
Families Growing in Faith
2026-2027**



Parent Handbook

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St. Michael Parish is a Catholic Christian Community called together by God to share in the mission of Jesus Christ.

Included in the parish mission is the responsibility to foster spiritual growth and development of the individual gifts of *all* parishioners in order to serve the parish and the local and global communities. Our faith formation programs are designed to foster this growth and development throughout the lifespan.

Families Growing in Faith is a specific initiative intended to meet families where they are spiritually and help them on their faith journeys. Through supported home learning, grade level classes, or a weeklong summer intensive program, supplemented by family chosen service and prayer activities, and large group events for learning and building community, we strive to help families see the holiness in their daily lives. The goal is to equip and empower parents, along with grandparents and other family members, to help their children grow into joyful, compassionate, missionary disciples of Christ.

Three options are available to maximize flexibility for busy families.

Three Families Growing in Faith Options:

1. Family Faith with Classes:

- Students will attend grade level classes scheduled for 24 weeks from September-April from 9:45-10:45 on Sunday mornings.

Why we do this:

- Families will be required to attend at least two large group family events during the year. These will be 2-hour sessions with an emphasis on community building, learning, and FUN.
- Families will select and complete 30 minutes of service and 30 minutes of prayer together for at least 6 months from September-April. Service and prayer activities will be reported and recorded.

2. Families Together:

- Families will complete age level lessons at home with materials provided and support as needed from parish staff and knowledgeable volunteers.
- Families will be required to attend at least three large group family events during the year. These will be 2-hour sessions with an emphasis on community building, experiential learning, and fun.
- Families will select and complete 30 minutes of service and 30 minutes of prayer together for at least 6 months from September-April. Service and prayer activities will be reported and recorded.

3. Summer Intensive with year-round engagement:

- Students will attend a weeklong program in the summer in lieu of lessons through the school year.
- Families will be required to attend at least two large group family events during the year. These will be 2-hour sessions with an emphasis on community building, learning, and fun. FAMILIES WILL ALSO

BE EXPECTED TO ATTEND 2 PARISH ACTIVITIES THROUGH THE YEAR TO DEMONSTRATE ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY.

- Families will select and complete 30 minutes of service and 30 minutes of prayer together for at least 6 months from September-April. Service and prayer activities will be reported and recorded.

Family Faith Masses:

- There will be two Family Faith Masses scheduled at the 11:00 Sunday Mass, one in the spring and one in the fall. All families and students are invited to attend to celebrate the families and hardworking volunteers in our parish and to demonstrate the centrality of liturgy to our faith. Students in classes will sit together with their classes and catechists and family members may join them if they wish.

Registration:

Registration will be available online through the link on the parish website homepage or the Families Growing in Faith page. Paper registration forms can be made available on request.

Fees:

Fees are \$60 per child, \$100 for two children, or a total of \$120 for those with three or more children in the program. These fees help defray the cost of learning materials, supplies, and other expenses incurred in offering the programs.

If the fee is a hardship please contact Julie Sutton.

Attendance:

The Diocese of Youngstown requires that we provide at least 36 hours of religious instruction for children each year. It is important that a child's attendance be consistent throughout all his/her years of religious instruction.

It is the responsibility of the parents to see that their children attend the entire course of religious education. Children/families that are not present for a class or event will be required to make up missed work.

Children who are absent from a class should, upon their return, ask the catechist for missed assignments. This work is to be completed and returned to the catechist as quickly as possible.

Make-up work for family events will be managed by the director.

- Attendance will be taken at all classes and events.

- If a child is late for class, he or she must go to the school office for entry as other *doors will lock automatically*.
- Parents are expected to help children with any work that has been missed and to be sure that this work is turned in to the catechist for credit.
- **If your child will be missing several weeks of programming for some reason...PLEASE be proactive and contact the director or your student's catechist for materials to keep your child caught up with the class.**

Accountability for Family Chosen Activities:

Families completing home-based activities will report their activities, preferably electronically via email or through a quick Google form, to the director or designated volunteer. Reminders will be sent as needed. In person or written reporting can be accommodated on request as needed.

Curriculum:

“Where are we to look for the teaching of Jesus, hear his voice, and discern his will? In Scripture. . . in prayer. . . in the events of human life and history in the Church, where all these things converge.” — National Catechetical Directory, 104.

We will teach The Curriculum for Catechesis mandated by the diocese. To structure our coverage of required material,

we use the *Pflaum Gospel Weeklies* series for grades 1,3,4,5, 6, and 7. Woven into the fabric of the program are the wisdom and richness of Scripture, the power and solace of prayer, the beauty and comfort of creation, and the enlightening doctrines of the Church. The weekly materials are tied into the readings from the weekend Mass and make connections to contemporary events in the world. A challenging presence throughout is the initiative of the worldwide Church toward the major goals of justice and peace. Contemporary problems and opportunities are taught in the light of faith.

2nd and 8th grades will use materials more focused on Sacramental preparation for First Reconciliation (2nd grade), First Eucharist (2nd grade), and Confirmation (8th grade).

Summer Intensive sessions will use the Finding God series from Loyola Press.

General Behavior Expectations:

- All students will conduct themselves as Christians.
- Regular Sunday Mass attendance is a part of religious education. It is presumed that children are in regular attendance at Sunday liturgy.
- Students should arrive for class on time and remain for the entire class period. Students are not to disrupt classes or other events with random talking or unruly behavior.
- Inappropriate language is not to be used.
- Students are to treat the personal and parish property of others with respect. Any damage done by a student will be the responsibility of the parent or guardian.

- At family events parents are expected to supervise their children and help them to behave appropriately.

Discipline Policy:

It is expected that students conduct themselves in a Christian manner towards other students, staff, and volunteers. In the event there is a discipline problem, it will be handled in the following manner:

- The catechist will speak to any student engaged in disruptive behavior, either on the premises, or in the classroom.
- If the student does not respond to the catechist's correction, he/she may be sent to the office and/or the director will be informed and asked to speak to the student. The parent will be notified. The director may request that parent(s) of a disruptive student sit in class with the child to monitor his/her behavior.
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- In the event of a serious problem, the parent will be asked to schedule a conference with the catechist, director and/or priest, so we can problem solve how best to support the student's needs and keep them in classes.
- In the very rare instance that a student must be dismissed from the program they can be reinstated only after a student/parent/catechist/priest conference.

Sacramental Policy:

St. Michael Parish follows the diocesan policies for Sacraments. It is expected that any child celebrating the Sacraments for the first time is regularly attending Mass and is an active member of the PSR program.

In addition, parents are required by diocesan policy to attend those meetings planned for their assistance in the formal preparation of their child.

Parents will be notified of parent meetings via email or letters, the parish website, and notices sent home.

Special arrangements will be made for those children who need to complete sacramental preparation outside of the typical schedule. Please contact the director if you need special sacramental arrangements.

Field Trips, Special Activities and Retreats:

In the event of a field trip, special activity or retreat, a letter of explanation and, if needed, a permission slip will be sent home.

Progress Reports:

If you are interested in your child's participation and how things are going in class, please ask the catechist. We encourage communication.

Diocese of Youngstown Safe Environment Policy for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults:

Every parish and institution in the Diocese of Youngstown is expected to comply with the Diocese of Youngstown Policy for Child Protection. Mandated in March 1994 and updated in 2020, this policy was created to ensure a safe environment for all children participating in the programs available to them by the local parishes and other Catholic institutions.

At St. Michael's Parish, the recommendations for implementation of this policy are followed. Adult volunteers working are required to be fingerprinted for a background check through the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation, to sign a form acknowledging the policy, and complete a VIRTUS training session on prevention of abuse.

The intention of the staff of your family faith formation programs is to provide a safe environment for all children. Please be assured that we are committed to the proper care of your child (ren).

Reporting and Victim Assistance

If you or someone you know has been abused or victimized by someone representing the Catholic Church, the diocese encourages you to contact civil authorities and Mr. Dominic Colucy, Victim Assistance Coordinator.

Confidential Report Line: 330-718-1388

Email: dcolucy@youngstowndiocese.org

Contact info for civil authorities: doy.org/safe-environment

Snow Days:

In the event of severe winter weather or other unexpected events, classes or other events may be canceled. Should this occur, **you will be informed of the cancellation through an all-call, email, and text message, and the cancellation will also be posted on the homepage of the parish website www.stmichaelcanton.org**

Please make sure to indicate which phone number(s) you want called for cancellations.

Emergency Procedures:

If there is an emergency during the time when students are in classes and we need to evacuate the building, students will stay with their teachers until family members can come and sign them out. An all-call notification will also be sent via phone/text.