

Mission Statement

Our Lady Queen of Martyrs

Faith Formation Program

It is the mission of our Faith Formation Program:

- To hand on the faith of the Roman Catholic Church.
- To help children better understand the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.
- To emphasize the daily application of our Catholic faith.
- To provide children with opportunities to grow spiritually.
- To foster Christian values rooted in the Gospel.

In a Christian environment conducive to learning, the goals of our Faith Formation Program are:

- To become aware of God and His love for us.
- To strengthen our response to God's love, especially through worship, holiness of life, and service to others.
- To develop a sense of right and wrong.
- To learn to respect all human life.
- To prepare children to receive the sacraments worthily and faithfully.
- To cultivate spiritual leadership within the Church community.
- To build a strong and personal relationship with God.
- To instill and recognize Christian family values.

Our hope is to foster in each child a deep and lasting commitment of faith, placing God at the center of his or her life.

"Let the children come to Me." Matthew 19:14

Our Lady Queen of Martyrs HANDBOOK FOR FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM

GENERAL

These guidelines are in keeping with the spirit of Vatican II and the *National Directory for Catechesis*.

Parents are the **primary educators and first catechists** of their children. For this reason, parents are expected to take an active role in their child's religious education, faith life, and regular attendance at Sunday Mass. Children learn the faith not only through instruction, but also through the witness and example of their families. The lived example of faith often teaches more powerfully than words alone.

It is the firm belief of the catechetical staff that faithful attendance in Faith Formation classes—from **1st through 9th grade**—along with appropriate sacramental preparation, is of the utmost importance in the spiritual development of each child.

GOALS

Religious education is one of the most important responsibilities of the Church because it involves both **instruction** and **formation**. Our goal is not simply to teach facts about the faith, but to help form young disciples of Jesus Christ.

Our primary function is to provide guidance for ongoing Christian development from childhood through adulthood. The partnership between the parish and the family is essential. Parental participation and example are especially important.

St. Francis of Assisi is quoted saying, "Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words."

COMMUNICATION

All important Faith Formation information will be communicated through:

- the parish bulletin
- email from **dre@qofm.org**
- notes sent home when necessary

Please be sure to check your email regularly so you do not miss important announcements, schedule updates, or upcoming events.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

If it becomes necessary to cancel classes due to inclement weather or other emergency situations, you will be contacted via email.

REGISTRATION, TUITION, AND FEES

Registration is conducted through the Faith Formation Office. Registration and tuition payments are accepted beginning in **April for the following program year**.

Tuition

- **\$45.00 per student** for registered and participating parish families
- Students in sacramental years (**Grades 2, 3, and 8**) will be assessed an **additional \$45.00 sacramental preparation fee**

Required Documents

A **Baptismal Certificate** is required to complete registration.

If your child was baptized at another parish, please contact that parish to obtain a copy of the certificate.

If your child has **not yet received the Sacrament of Baptism**, arrangements may be made through the parish office in conjunction with the Faith Formation Office.

Additional Fees

- **Confirmation Retreat Fee: \$30.00**
(More information will be provided at a later date.)
- **Lost Religion Book Replacement: \$30.00**
- **Lost Bible Replacement: \$20.00**

If your family is experiencing financial hardship, please contact the **Pastor** or the **Director of Faith Formation**. All financial arrangements are kept strictly confidential. No child will be excluded from learning about and experiencing the love of God due to financial difficulty.

PROMOTION / RETENTION

Faith Formation is a year-to-year process of growth in knowledge, prayer, and discipleship.

Assignments and Participation

Students are expected to:

- complete and turn in all assignments by the assigned date
- make up any missed work due to absence
- participate respectfully in classroom discussions and activities
- demonstrate understanding of age-appropriate concepts and vocabulary
- actively engage in prayer and faith-sharing opportunities

If your child is absent, any missed assignment should be completed and turned in upon his or her return. Please check with your child's catechist regarding missed work.

Prayer Memorization

As part of their formation, students are expected to **learn the prayers assigned or given to them throughout the year**. These prayers are an important part of growing in the Catholic faith and preparing for the sacraments. Parents are encouraged to help their children practice these prayers at home.

SPECIAL NEEDS

If your child has any special learning, emotional, behavioral, or medical needs that may affect his or her classroom experience, please notify the **Director of Faith Formation**. This information will be kept confidential and will help us better support your child.

ATTENDANCE

Each class develops its own unique sense of community, and each student is an important part of that community. Because Faith Formation sessions are limited, each class is valuable and should be treated as a priority.

We ask families to witness the importance of faith by making every effort to attend:

- **Catechist-led class sessions**
- **Family Gathered events**
- **Parent meetings**
- **Sacramental events and retreats**

If Your Child Will Be Absent

Please **call or email the Director of Faith Formation before the class session your child will miss**, if at all possible.

Please let us know if your child cannot make class. Communication is very important and helps us support your child in staying on track.

Students are expected to complete any missed assignments or projects in order to remain current.

If a student misses **3 or more class sessions or at-home assignments**, there is a possibility that he or she may **not advance to the next year** or may not be adequately prepared for sacramental formation.

CLASS TIMES

Classes will begin promptly at the scheduled time. Arriving late disrupts the catechist and the rest of the class, so please make every effort to arrive on time.

Drop-Off Reminder

Please **do not drop your child off more than 10 minutes before class.**

Schedule

Faith Formation will meet:

- **Wednesdays from 6:00–7:30 PM** on the **first and second Wednesday of each month** for catechist-led sessions
- **One Sunday each month from 8:30–9:45 AM** for Family Gathered sessions

During the Sunday sessions:

- students will meet with their catechists
- parents will participate in their own formation in **Vamos Hall**
- the morning will conclude with a shared time of reflection and prayer

All class sessions and events are subject to change as needed.

DISMISSAL

We will continue to follow established drop-off and pick-up procedures for the safety of all children.

Children will remain in the building until their parent or guardian arrives. A teacher or aide will call the family name using walkie-talkies, and the student(s) will then be dismissed to the vehicle.

For the safety of all students, please follow dismissal procedures carefully and patiently.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Our Lady Queen of Martyrs reserves the right to implement the following classroom discipline policy.

Students are expected to behave respectfully toward:

- catechists and aides
- fellow students
- parish property
- the sacred nature of our learning environment

Behavioral Expectations

If a student's behavior becomes disruptive, the following steps will be taken:

1. **Verbal Warning**
The catechist or aide will first address the behavior with a verbal warning.
2. **Removal from Class**
If the behavior continues, the student will be escorted to the **Director of Faith Formation's Office**.
3. **Parent Notification**
If the behavior continues after speaking with the Director, parents will be contacted and may be asked to attend the next class with their child.
4. **Formal Meeting**
If the behavior persists, the **parent**, **Director**, and **Pastor** will meet to determine the best course of action.

Students are expected to come ready to learn and to contribute positively to the class environment.

SACRAMENTS

First Reconciliation & First Communion

As children prepare to receive the sacraments, the support, encouragement, and example of their parents are essential.

To be considered ready to celebrate **First Reconciliation** or **First Eucharist**, a child must:

- maintain an adequate class attendance record
- complete any required makeup work
- regularly attend **Sunday Mass** with his or her family
- participate respectfully in sacramental preparation

Attendance Requirement

Missing **3 or more class sessions without appropriate makeup work** may result in a child not being adequately prepared to move forward in sacramental preparation.

Retreat Requirements

2nd Grade students will attend a **Reconciliation Retreat** with a parent.

3rd Grade students will attend a **Communion Retreat** with a parent.

Parent Meetings

Parents of **2nd and 3rd grade students** are expected to attend a meeting designed to help them support their children in preparing for:

- **God's forgiving mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation**
- **the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist**

At least **one parent or guardian** should attend this meeting.

CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

Our Confirmation preparation follows diocesan guidelines and includes **two years of preparation** before receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation in the **Spring of 8th grade year**.

7th Grade Expectations

Service Project

Students must complete:

- **one service project of their choice**
- **one reflection sheet**

What Does NOT Count as Service?

- Babysitting siblings
- Completing regular household chores

What DOES Count as Service?

Examples include:

- helping at a parish event
- serving at a food pantry
- assisting an elderly neighbor without payment
- volunteering in another meaningful way that serves others

Prayer Experiences

By the end of **8th grade**, students should have participated in **3 prayer experiences** and completed a reflection sheet for each one.

Examples of prayer experiences include:

- **Lectio Divina**
- **Praying the Rosary**
- **Praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet**
- **Eucharistic Adoration**
- **Praying the Stations of the Cross**
- **The Ignatian Examen**

If your child needs help learning any of these prayers or prayer forms, please reach out.

8th Grade Expectations

Students preparing for Confirmation are expected to complete the following:

- **Service Project**
- **Confirmation Retreat** (*Spring of 8th Grade*)

- **Saint Report and Mini Poster**
 - poster should include a saint image and key facts
 - suggested size: approximately **8x11**, no larger than **11x17**
- **Sponsor Affidavit**

Prayer Experiences

By the end of **8th grade**, students should have participated in **3 prayer experiences** and completed a reflection sheet for each one.

Examples include:

- **Lectio Divina**
- **Praying the Rosary**
- **Praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet**
- **Eucharistic Adoration**
- **Praying the Stations of the Cross**
- **The Ignatian Examen**

If your child needs help learning any of these prayers or prayer forms, please reach out.

OCIC (Order of Christian Initiation for Children)

Children of catechetical age who are:

- Baptized in a Christian faith tradition or who are seeking **Baptism**
- Are in 6-8th grade and need to celebrate the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion

may be placed in the **OCIC Program (Order of Christian Initiation for Children)**.

The extent and structure of these classes will be determined after consultation with:

- the **Director of Discipleship & Evangelization**
- the **Director of Faith Formation**
- the **parents/guardians**

ADORATION

Local Adoration opportunities will be provided as they become available.

Current Parish Adoration Time

- **South Campus – Thursdays from 6:00–7:00 PM**
 - Friday adoration once per month. Please see the bulletin for dates
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FINAL NOTE TO FAMILIES

Thank you for entrusting us with the privilege of walking alongside your family in faith.

Faith Formation is most fruitful when the **home and parish work together**. As the **first catechists of your children**, your witness, prayer, Mass attendance, and encouragement make a lasting difference.

Please continue to support your child by:

- attending Mass regularly as a family
- helping with prayers and assignments at home
- encouraging respectful participation
- communicating with us if your child will miss class or needs extra support

We look forward to growing in faith together this year.