

St. Elizabeth Seton

Family Faith Formation Journey Handbook



Catholic parents are called to form their family as a “domestic church,” a church in the home, where God is honored, His law is respected, prayer is a normal event, virtue is transmitted by word and example, and everyone shares the hopes, problems and sufferings of everyone else. All this is not to advocate a return to some outdated style of living: It is to return to the roots of human development and human happiness!” – Saint Pope John Paul II

Welcome to St. Elizabeth Seton’s Family Faith Formation program. We invite all families to join us on a dynamic journey of faith. The Family Faith Formation Staff is committed to supporting and equipping our families in their Domestic Church, where parents share the Catholic faith with their children by their living example. We offer a family formation program not a classroom religious education program for students. Faith formation takes place within the home. Families come together monthly to prepare for the at-home lessons. ***Children may only participate in our monthly faith formation gatherings with their parents.***

What Is the Domestic Church?

The term “Domestic Church” refers to the family, the smallest body of gathered believers in Christ. The term dates all the way back to the first century AD. Our Early Church Fathers understood that the home was fertile ground for discipleship, sanctification, and holiness. “The Christian home is the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith. For this reason, the family home is called the “Domestic Church”, a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and Christian charity.

Pope Francis, during the World Meeting of Families, highlighted the importance of FAMILY:

- ♥ **FAMILY IS THE FOUNDATION OF THE SOCIETY-** the building block of society
- ♥ **THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING GOD MADE: THE FAMILY.**
- ♥ **GOD SENT HIS SON INTO THE WORLD IN A FAMILY WHICH HAD ITS HEARTS OPEN TO LOVE.**
- ♥ **GOD WANTS FAMILIES WHERE MEMBERS LOVE EACH OTHER AND EDUCATE THEIR CHILDREN IN GOODNESS.**
- ♥ **DIFFICULTIES IN THE FAMILY EXIST BUT THEY ARE OVERCOME WITH LOVE.**
- ♥ **PAY ATTENTION TO CHILDREN AND GRANDPARENTS-** children are the future of the family, grandparents the memory and faith traditions of the family.
- ♥ **HOLINESS AND LOVE ARE MANIFESTED IN THE LITTLE GESTURES OF EACH DAY.**
- ♥ **JESUS ENCOURAGES THESE LITTLE LOVING GESTURES AS SIGNS OF HIS PRESENCE IN THE WORLD.**
- ♥ **THE FAMILY, THE HOME IS WHERE FAITH IS LEARNED AND GROWS**
- ♥ **THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTS BEING GOOD MODELS OF VIRTUE-** “May our children find in us men and women capable of joining others in bringing to full flower all the good seeds which the Father has sown!”

“Faith grows when it is lived and shaped by love. That is why our families, our homes, are true Domestic Churches. They are the right place for faith to become life, and life to grow in faith.” -Pope Francis

Our Mission at St. Elizabeth Seton Parish:

“We are the are Disciples of Jesus, with the Eucharist as our center, living the Gospel in joyful service to God and neighbor.”

Our Mission in Family Faith Formation:

“To share, model and nurture the Catholic faith within our Domestic Churches to be living witnesses of the Good News of Jesus Christ in the world.”

Pastoral Staff

Reverend Scott Huggins, Pastor

St. Elizabeth Seton Parish Office (building at the southwest corner of parking lot)

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Family Faith Formation Covenant

The community of St. Elizabeth Seton is committed to partnering with our families to develop close, personal relationships with Jesus to become a light in the darkness through our living example of faith.

A covenant is a unique and special bond between two parties. The New Covenant in Christ binds God to His people with a future promise of redemption. It also binds God's People to one another.

We will bind together to fulfill the mission accepted at our Confirmation, the mission we committed to when we Baptized our children...to become the people God created us to be and bring the GOOD NEWS to the world.

St. Elizabeth Seton will:

- ✚ Provide TRUTH, love, and joy of the Gospel in all we do.
- ✚ Be the hands, feet, and presence of Jesus to our families.
- ✚ Lead by example, our commitment to Jesus, with Christian virtue.

Our Parents will:

- ✚ Be the first and best teachers of the Catholic faith by their living example.
- ✚ Establish the Domestic Church through an active faith life of prayer, service, Christian virtue, and participation in the Sacraments, especially Sunday Mass.
- ✚ Be active members of the Community of St. Elizabeth Seton.

Our Children will:

- ✚ Invite the Holy Spirit to open their mind, heart, eyes, ears, and soul to the presence of God within.
- ✚ Welcome Jesus, your best friend, into your heart so you can become the Best-Version-of-Yourself.
- ✚ Treat everyone as Jesus would with compassion, kindness, respect, peace, and love.

Family Faith Formation

One of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* (“Light of the Nations”), states the Domestic Church has a particular role and responsibility in leading souls to heaven: *“In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children; they should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care vocation to a sacred state”*. Christ is the Light of the Nations, and we, the church, each have a responsibility to bring the Light of Christ to others. *Within the Domestic Church, parents are to cultivate a family life that is centered on Christ.*



Christ chose to be born and grow up in the home of the holy family of Joseph and Mary. **The Church is nothing other than "the family of God."** From the beginning, the core of the Church consisted of those who had become believers "together with all their household." When they were converted, they desired that "their whole household" should also be saved. These families who became believers were islands of Christian life in an unbelieving world. (Catechism of Catholic Church, CCC 165)

In our own time, in a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believing families are of primary importance as centers of living, radiant faith. (CCC 156) The home is the first school of Christian life and "a school for human enrichment." Here one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous - even repeated - forgiveness, and above

all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one's life. (CCC 1657)

The United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) provides some helpful ways that families can live out their vocation as the domestic Church. Suggestions include praying as a family daily, keeping physical reminders of faith (such as a crucifix) in the house, and celebrating the liturgical feasts of the Church. More recommendations are available at <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/parents/tools-for-building-a-domestic-church.cfm>.

Our Family Faith Formation program is designed to form children in the Catholic faith within their family. The foundation of our formation is our celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, for all faith flows from the Living presence of God.

We come together as a parish family every Sunday to worship God, break open the Living Word of God and receive the Living Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. We encounter Jesus Christ in the Word of God, the Eucharist, the Priest and each other, the community of faith.

All faith flows from the Mass where we encounter Jesus Christ and are filled with grace to be His hands and feet in the world. **“The Christian faith is not a theory, philosophy, or idea, but an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ.” – Pope Francis**

Our Family Faith Formation program uses the Family of Faith resource from Sophia Press. Our Family Formation program is unique in several ways:

- ❖ The program is designed for **At-Home Family Faith Formation**. Families will work from one set of materials for the whole family.
- ❖ **Registered participating St. Elizabeth Seton families come together, once a month in the Great Hall, to grow in faith and friendship.** During each meeting, parents are equipped to share the monthly at home lessons with their children. Children are introduced to the themes for the month. Then families come together at the end of the meeting for a family and social time. **Children may only attend with mom or dad.**
- ❖ **Families receive weekly emails highlighting the Gospel message for the coming Sunday.** Breaking open the Gospel message, at a family meal during the week, leads your family to encounter God’s message more fully at Sunday Mass.
- ❖ Families are placed in small groups called **Family Faith Circles** to grow in faith and friendship together, supporting one another on our journey to heaven.
- ❖ Families participate in **Parish Ministries, service and social events** as we engage and support the members of our parish family and the needs of our community.

Sacraments

Sacraments are the way to receive God’s eternal grace, they are the means through which the faithful can come closer to God’s love and experience His never-ending mercy and blessings throughout their lifetime.

Baptism is a Sacrament of Initiation into the Catholic Church, the beginning of new life in Christ. **All families enrolled in our Family Faith Formation program should be baptized.** Call Family Faith Formation or the Parish Office (630) 416-3325 for more information.

At Baptism, you chose the priceless grace of your child becoming a child of God. The fruit of Baptism, or baptismal grace, is a rich reality that includes forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins, birth into the new life by which a child becomes an adoptive son or daughter of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Catholic Sacraments are a sign of God's love for us. Through the sacraments God shows us that He is always with us, and that He wants to embrace and fill us with His grace in every moment of life.

Through the sacrament of the Eucharist, God shows His love, by giving His only son Jesus to us. Receiving Jesus through Holy communion and knowing that Jesus is within you, is the most beautiful experience. We become one with Jesus. Jesus' body and blood mingles with ours. Imagine God's Divinity combined with our Humanity. This presence strengthens us to be faithful followers of Jesus. It is food for our journey, the Bread of Life. This a gift we want our children to receive every Sunday, if not every day!

Through the sacrament of penance, Jesus expresses His love for all His children today. He demonstrates His power to heal us, to free us from the bondage of sin, and raise us to new life. In turn, this sacrament allows us to come to know, love and serve Jesus. This beautiful sacrament of forgiveness, our soul becoming white as the new snow, should be received often.

Preparation to receive the Sacraments of First Eucharist and Reconciliation begins at birth and continues throughout a child's life. Most children will receive these sacraments in second grade. Our Family Faith Formation program will provide specific materials to prepare for these tremendous gifts beginning in first grade. For older children, special arrangements will be provided for sacramental formation. In addition to our Sophia Press **Family of Faith** resource, our family's journey through the life-changing **Blessed** program, from Dynamic Catholic, to prepare for these Sacraments.

Through the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Holy Spirit strengthens the graces received at Baptism, provides more of them, and seals them all inside our soul – like a carefully wrapped present! This brings us closer to Christ and better prepares us to face the daily challenges of Christian life. At Confirmation, we accept God's mission to bring the Good News to all people and we receive courage and the power of the Holy Spirit, as the early disciples did at Pentecost.

Preparation to Confirm our faith in Jesus Christ begins at Baptism. Within the Family Faith Formation program, preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation takes place over a two-year period. Specific materials will be provided to families beginning in seventh grade to learn about the many gifts, fruits and power of the Holy Spirit. The Sacrament of Confirmation is conferred at the beginning of freshman year.

O. C. I. A.

Order of Christian Initiation for Adults is the process by which older children and adults prepare to receive the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) through a period of formation and study in the faith.

Older children who are not baptized can receive the Sacrament of Baptism as part of the R.C.I.A. process with other family members who are seeking to enter the Catholic Church. Alternatively, they may receive the Sacrament when they enter into our Family Faith Formation Program, in consultation with the pastoral staff.

Anyone who wishes to enter the Catholic Church, desires to complete their reception of the Sacraments of Initiation, or has questions regarding entry into the Church, should call the Faith Formation office 630-416-1992 for more information.

Policies

Registration

Registration forms for the Family Faith Formation program are available on our parish website [St. Elizabeth Seton Parish: Grades PreK – 8th Grade](#). It is necessary that all families participating in our Family Faith Formation program be registered parishioners at St. Elizabeth Seton [St. Elizabeth Seton Parish: Welcome Newcomers!](#) .

Registrations are processed once full payment is received, in the order in which they are received. Payments via WeShare with a CREDIT or DEBIT card will be accessed an 8.5% fee. WeShare payment by Venmo, PayPal, or ACH (Bank Account) will NOT be charged a fee.

Families living in the area need to be a registered parishioner, for one year, before joining our Family Faith Formation program for sacramental preparation to receive Confirmation.

Special Needs

The REACH (Religious Education Apostolate for Christian Handicapped) program meets twice a month on Saturday mornings at St. Raphael parish. One “Helper” is provided to assist each person in the program. For more information call: (630) 355-4545

Safe Environment Education

The Diocese of Joliet requires that “All Catholic schools and parish family faith formation programs in the Diocese of Joliet must offer instruction for children, grades K-12, and their parents, to prevent child sexual abuse.” This education effort is the companion to our requirement for all staff and volunteers who work with minors to go through **Protecting God’s Children** seminar and have a criminal Background Check. Parishes are only exempt from this requirement if local school districts are offering these programs. *Naperville School Districts 203 and 204 cover safe environment topics in grades K-12 so it is not repeated in our program.*

Protecting God’s Children

Protecting God's Children for Adults is an online training program conducted by certified facilitators on the prevention of child sexual abuse. The training educates participants on the signs of child sexual abuse, the methods and means by which offenders commit abuse, and how to prevent it. **This training is required within the Diocese of Joliet for all adults who work with or volunteer in serving children.** All parents are encouraged to attend this training.

Please read the Diocese of Joliet policies for Protecting the safety of our children and youth at <https://protect.diojoliet.org/resources>

Parent Acknowledgement and Consent are required each year for Family Faith Formation Registration. Your signature on the registration form for the current year acknowledges that you have read and understood the following documents.

[Parent Guide Understanding & Preventing Child Sexual Abuse](#)

[Practical Advice for Parents: On Preventing Child Sexual Abuse](#)

[Diocese of Joliet Standards of Behavior for Those Working with Minors \(revised 2023\)](#)

[Diocese of Joliet Policy Regarding Sexual Abuse of Minors \(revised 2023\)](#)