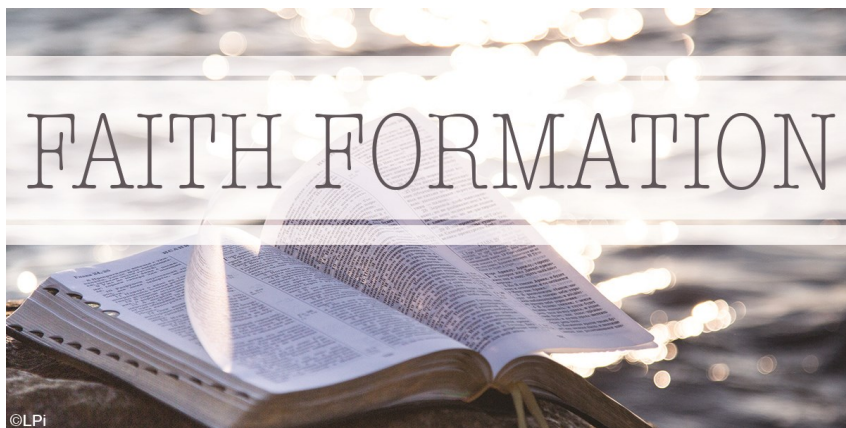
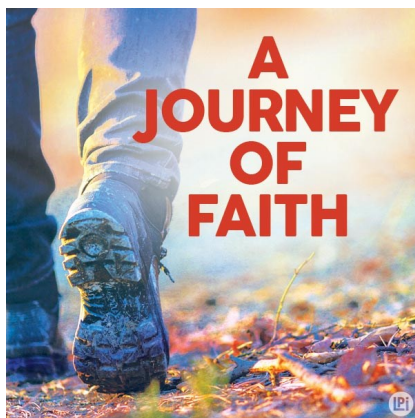


*Saint Mary's*



*2025-2026*

*Welcome Book & Information*



Welcome to another year of Faith Formation at St. Mary's!

Jesus calls us his friends. We hope this year will be a time when we can grow in friendship with God and with one another. This handbook provides you with a road map for the year and additional information about opportunities for your children and families in the Parish.

Last year, we closed out our year with over 250 students in the program! We continue in striving to help our St. Mary's youth know, practice, and live our ***Faith***. In the spring, 40 students received the Sacrament of Confirmation, and 30 second graders received their First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. We are forever grateful to our dedicated teachers who continue to enthusiastically participate in this ever-important ministry to the future of our Parish and Faith. They are the heart and soul of our program, and we could not do it without them!

***We invite parents to be a part of our Faith Formation program along with your children by volunteering to teach or participating when you are able.*** Since Baptism, you have been and will continue to be your child's primary teacher and role model. Studies show that when parents are involved in their faith, their children develop a greater appreciation of their faith as well. When parents are in the classroom, children are more engaged and witness the depth of their parents' faith. When parents are participating in Mass on a regular basis, children are eager to participate as well. When parents give of themselves in the parish and community, so will their children.

We have a 9:30AM Sunday Family Mass where younger children can participate in the youth choir and are invited to the sanctuary to learn about the Gospel reading. We also have a Sunday 5:30PM Mass on Faith Formation nights, that allows teens to minister to the Mass and participate in current music. Parishioners of all ages are welcome to attend any of our weekend Masses!

If you are struggling with your faith, or how to make your home more faith-filled, please do not hesitate to contact us. Our office is always open, and we are dedicated to the children *and* families in this parish.

Have a great year of Faith Formation and please familiarize yourself with the policies at the end of this handbook.

Kathy Bladen, Director of Religious Education  
Fr. C.J. Waitekus, Pastor

## **Weekend Mass Obligation**

All Catholics are expected to attend Mass each weekend. We go to Mass weekly for these 3 reasons;

- ✦ To hear the Word of God
- ✦ To participate in the Holy Eucharist
- ✦ To come together as our Faith Community—The Church

We hope to see all our students and parents every weekend. Our Mass schedule is:

**Saturday Vigil—4:00PM & 5:30 PM**

**Sunday—8:00 AM, 9:30AM Family Mass, 11:00 AM & 5:30 PM as noted below (\*Subject to change).**

<b>FAITH FORMATION MASSES*</b>
<b><i>Confirmation prep 1+2 Required Sunday 5:30 Mass Schedule **All are Welcome**</i></b>
Sunday, September 28, 2025
Sunday, October 5, 2025
Sunday, October 19, 2025
Sunday, October 26, 2025
Sunday, November 2, 2025
Sunday, November 9, 2025
Sunday, November 16, 2025
Sunday, November 23, 2025
Sunday, November 30, 2025
Sunday, December 7, 2025
Sunday, December 14, 2025
Sunday, December 21, 2025
Sunday, January 4, 2026
Sunday, January 25, 2026
Sunday, February 1, 2026
Sunday, February 22, 2026
Sunday, March 1, 2026
Sunday, March 8, 2026
Sunday, March 22, 2026
Sunday, March 29, 2026
Sunday, April 26, 2026

## **Monday 3:45—5:00pm**

### **Grades Kindergarten, 1&3**

Grades K and 1 will be using the ***Finding God*** series and grade 3 will be using the ***Gospel Weeklies*** series, both series will be used along with other forms of media and two service projects. The weeklies not only teach the catechism appropriate for that age group, but also the gospel message given at Mass each weekend. While at weekly Mass, families can begin the scripture exposure by listening to the Gospel and readings. The Sunday 9:30AM Family Mass is a great option! Parents can also be active in religious education at home by reviewing the ***Weeklies*** with their children after each class. We are also learning the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary, so practice at home is very helpful as well as Grace before meals.

### **First Communion Prep 2 (Grade 2)**

First Communion remains a 2-year preparation period. Prep 2 students will receive First Communion in the Spring of 2026. To receive **First Communion** your child must attend scheduled Prep 2 Faith Formation classes at St. Mary's. All children must complete Prep 1 (1st grade) Faith Formation before entering Prep 2- (2nd grade) First Communion classes.

They will be using the ***Together in Jesus*** series, along with other forms of media and will do two service projects to prepare for their First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. Families should plan to attend Mass weekly, where they can begin the preparation for First Holy Communion by listening to the scripture and watching the Eucharistic Rite part of the Mass carefully. The Sunday 9:30AM Children's Mass is a great option! Parents are encouraged to participate in religious education at home by reviewing the lessons their children take with them each week. Children should know the Hail Mary and the Lord's Prayer before classes begin.





## **Mandatory Parent Meetings:**

**(Choose one date)**

Thursday, 10/9 at 7PM

Tuesday, 10/21 at 7PM

## **Mandatory First Communion Rehearsals in the Church**

**(Groups assigned at a later date)**

Grp 1: 4/28 & 4/30 4:15-5:30PM

Grp 2: 5/6 & 5/8 4:15-5:30PM

## **First Reconciliation**

Sunday, December 7th at 1:30pm

## **First Communion Celebrations**

Group 1: Saturday, May 2nd, 2026, 10AM

Group 2: Saturday, May 9th, 2026, 10AM

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆  
**Monday 5:15—6:30pm**  
**Grades 4, 5, 6 & 7**

Grades 4, 5, 6, and 7 will be using the *Gospel Weeklies* series, along with other forms of media and two service projects. The weeklies not only teach the catechism appropriate for that age group, but also the gospel message given at Mass each weekend. While at weekly Mass, families can begin the scripture exposure by listening to the Gospel and readings. The Sunday 9:30AM Family or the Sunday 5:30PM Faith Formation Mass are great options! Parents can also be active in the religious education at home by reviewing the *Weeklies* with their children after each class and continue to pray the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary & Grace before meals with their children.



## **Confirmation Preparation**

Confirmation remains a 2-year preparation period. Prep 2 students will be Confirmed in the Spring of 2026. Prep 1 students are in the 1st phase of the program and will receive their Sacrament in the Spring of 2027. To receive the **Sacrament of Confirmation**, students must have knowledge and understanding of our Faith. This is achieved through ongoing study both at home and in Faith Formation classes beginning in Grade 1. Our hope is that students will have completed all grades before beginning Confirmation preparation, so they have that depth of understanding. Each class hosts Mass as ministers throughout the year. Every student must fill a role at least once during the year. Support our program by encouraging your student to participate in the Mass with their class. To further support and emphasize the importance of family involvement in the spiritual growth of their children, we will be implementing a way for the families to minister alongside their children during Mass as well as at or before class. We would love to have all families participate, more details to follow! Attendance is required at Mass and all events. Absences during the year require additional make-up and there should be no more than 3. Please be prepared to meet this requirement during this 2 year prep period. Students who cannot attend Mass or are absent from class need to speak with Mrs. Bladen. There is no homeschooling or remote option. Confirmation Prep 2 students must have completed Prep 1 to enroll in Prep 2. If your child has missed a grade, especially Prep 1, please call Mrs. B to discuss options.

**Sunday 5:30—8:00 -Mass 5:30 PM (required)**  
**Families are highly encouraged to attend**  
**Followed by class**



## **Confirmation Prep Year 1 (grade 8 and up)**

Confirmation prep 1 will use *Chosen*, along with other forms of media and community service projects as they begin their Confirmation Preparation. Our teachers will prepare the students both intellectually and spiritually. We seek to open their hearts and minds to God. We want to share that their Faith is a rock they can always turn to and lean on during challenging or joyful times and keep them firmly planted within our Faith Community. Mass is a time to worship as a family and community and therefore students should not attend Mass alone. Please show your student that Confirmation Prep is a priority in your family by accompanying them to our Sunday 5:30PM FF Mass and talking with them about their classes. Prep 1 students will be required complete 10 hours of community service in addition to attending classes and events.

## **Confirmation Prep Year 2 (grade 9 and up)**

Confirmation prep 2 will use *Chosen* along with other forms of media and community service projects to complete their preparation, receive their Confirmation, and become lifelong disciples of Christ. All too often teens drift away from the Church after Confirmation. We seek to reverse this trend by opening their hearts and minds to God. We want to share that their Faith is a rock they can always turn to and lean on during challenging or joyful times and keep them firmly planted within our Faith Community. Mass is a time to worship as a family and community and therefore students should not attend Mass alone. Please show your student that Confirmation Prep is a priority in your family by accompanying them to our Sunday 5:30PM FF Mass and talking with them about their classes.

## **Confirmation Prep Year 2 Important Dates**

**Mandatory Parent &  
Student Meeting in the  
Church**

Sunday, October 19th  
following 5:30PM Mass

**Young Life Retreat**

January 9-11th, 2026  
Lake Champion Glen Spey, NY

**Confirmation Breakfast**

April 12th 9:30AM-12PM

**Mandatory rehearsal –April 30th at 7PM**  
**Confirmation Celebrations –May 3rd at 4PM**

## Youth and Family Opportunities

Parish activities enhance the formation and community of our parish youth and their families. We hope you and your family can participate in all that our Parish has to offer, including:

### ♦ **Children's / Family Mass** -Sundays at 9:30AM

We invite children to join Father C.J. in the Sanctuary for the homily. Our Youth Choir provides the music for the Liturgy. On the first and third Sunday of the month, coffee and donuts are served in the Parish Center after the Mass. Please join us!

### ♦ **Altar Serving**

Everyone who has celebrated their First Communion can become an Altar Server. Two to three servers assist Father C.J. or visiting priests during Mass. You choose the Mass that fits your family's schedule. Contact the Parish Office at 567-3124 for information.

### ♦ **Youth Choir**

The choir sings at 9:30AM Mass on Sundays. Anyone interested in singing or playing an instrument please see the website to sign up or call the Parish Office at 567-3124.

### ♦ **Youth Ministry Group**

Our Youth Ministry Group is open to all 7th-12th graders. Join for the opportunity to grow in Faith while attending fun trips and monthly activities, performing service projects, and supporting our Parish community.

### ♦ **Halloween Party**

On October 24th come dressed up to play games, walk through the Haunted Hallway, win prizes and compete in the costume contest!

### ♦ **Snacks with Santa**

On December 7th come tell Santa what's on your list this year and play games, make a snack for Rudolf and do some crafts.

### ♦ **Christmas Pageant**

Our children in grades 1-6 will present the story of Jesus' birth at the 9:30AM Mass December 14th.

### ♦ **Saint Patrick's Celebration**

On March 15th come socialize, participate in fun activities, get your face painted, listen to the best Irish Music, and more.

### ♦ **Living Way of the Cross**

On Good Friday (4/3) our youth re-enact the Stations of the Cross beginning at noon. We conclude with veneration of the cross.

## Youth and Family Opportunities Continued

### ♦ Easter Egg Hunt

Children attending the 9:30AM Easter Mass are invited to bring their Easter basket to the side lawn after Mass for some Easter joy!

### ♦ YoungLife & WyldLife Summer Camp at the lake

Join our youth ministry leaders for THE BEST WEEK OF SUMMER at Saranac Lake for high schoolers and Lake Champion for middle schoolers. Reserved spots fill up fast; email [kbladen@stmarylong.org](mailto:kbladen@stmarylong.org)

### ♦ VBS Summer Camp

VBS is open to children entering grade K-6, 7th and up volunteer. The best way to kick off summer! Dates and signup released in late spring.

### ♦ Steubenville East

High school students can join us for music, speakers and worship.



# **Saint Mary's Faith Formation Policies**

## **Attendance**

Attendance is essential for a worthwhile experience. Your attitude plays an important part in how open your children are to Faith Formation. If you are positive and encouraging about classes, your student's attitude will also likely be more positive, leading to a more constructive and rewarding class and a desire to attend.

Students who are habitually absent will miss not only the information and knowledge, but the spirit of the class community as well. Sacraments cannot be offered to students who have not been adequately prepared in the classroom.

If your child is going to be absent, please email or call 567-3124, **ext. 225** and leave a message including your child's name and grade.

## **Arrival & Departure**

Students should arrive to the Academy gym a few minutes before class time. Please enter and exit the building through the foyer doors of the gym. **Parents of students in kindergarten through 3rd grade must accompany and pick up their children in the building.** All classes meet for prayer in the gym before going to the classroom, except for the Sunday morning classes. A separate email will be sent out to families in this category with specific details.

If your child will walk or bike home, please be sure that you have indicated permission when signing up.

**\*\*Please be prompt at pick up time.** Our volunteers are not available to wait with students after class.

## **Bullying**

**Bullying & cyber-bullying** is not tolerated within our Faith Formation Program, or any FF related activity. Please report any possible instances of bullying/cyberbullying to Kathy Bladen or Fr. C.J. immediately.

**Retaliation** against a person who reports bullying/cyber-bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying shall be prohibited.



## **Cancellation of Class**

Cancellations will be posted on 22News, St. Mary's Parish Facebook page, and the website. When possible, a cancellation announcement will be emailed as well.

## **Cell Phone Policy**

Cell phones will be placed in a bin upon entering class and collected on the way out of class. Any phones being used during FF will be taken and returned to the parent only. Please be supportive of this policy. Please do not disrupt class by calling or texting your child during Faith Formation. If you need to reach your child during Faith Formation, please call the office number @ 567-3124 ext. 225.

## **Code of Conduct**

Disruptive students will be sent to the Director. Continuously disruptive students will be dismissed from the FF program.

Students who attempt to/leave the campus of Saint Mary's Parish during class time without prior notification will be sent home with a parent or guardian. The student and parent must meet with the Director before returning to classes.



# SAINT MARY'S PARISH

519 Longmeadow Street  
Longmeadow, MA 01106

## **Pastoral Staff**

Rev. C.J. Waitekus, *Pastor*

Deacon Donald J. Higby, M.D.

## **Parish Office**

Tel: (413) 567-3124

Fax: (413) 567-4640

Monday–Friday 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Margaret Iancu,

*Financial Administrator*

Karen Casella, *Parish Secretary*

Myra Hyes, *Financial Assistant*

## **Office of Faith Formation**

Kathy Bladen,

*Religious Education Director*

Tel: (413) 567-3124 ext. 101

kbladen@stmarylong.org

## **Youth Choir and Music**

Michael Carney

*Director of Music*

## **Youth Ministry**

## **WyldLife & YoungLife**

Kathy Bladen

Tel: (413) 567-3124 ext. 101

kbladen@stmarylong.org

**Leader Positions Open**

## **Mass Schedule**

### *Weekend Masses:*

Saturday 4:00 p.m. 5:30 p.m.

Sunday 8:00, 9:30 (Family  
Mass), and 11:00a.m.

5:30 pm FF Class nights

### *Weekday Masses:*

Monday-Thursday 7:00 a.m.

Monday 6:30 p.m.

Friday 7 a.m. Communion  
Service

### *First Saturday Mass:*

For Pro-Life 8:00 a.m.

### *Holy Day Masses:*

7:00, 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

## **Devotions**

### **Miraculous Medal Novena**

**and Mass** Monday Evening  
at 6:30 p.m.

## **Eucharistic Adoration**

Tuesdays, 7:30 a.m.-noon

First Friday of the month,  
12n—5:00 p.m.