



Holy Spirit Parish Family Faith Formation Handbook

2026-2027 Academic Year

Parish Clergy and Staff

Father Luke P. Suarez, *Pastor*

Christina Pride: Director of Evangelization and Faith Formation

Stephanie LaPointe: *Business Manager*

Sally Sluga: Parish Secretary

Ginny Mullen: Safe Environments Coordinator

Joseph Vitti: Music Director

Parish Schedule

Sacrament of Reconciliation: Confession

TUESDAYS: 7:00pm - 8:30pm

SATURDAYS: 4:15pm - 5:00pm or anytime upon request

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament: TUESDAYS: 7:00pm - 8:30pm

Daily Mass:

MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY: 7:30am SATURDAY: 8:30 AM

Sunday Mass:

SATURDAY VIGIL 5:15 PM,

SUNDAY 7:30 AM, 9:30 AM, 11:30 AM

Parish Website: www.HolySpiritStamford.org

Faith Formation Contact:

Christina Pride, Director of Evangelization and Faith Formation

Email: DFF@Holyspiritstamford.org

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1. Mission Statement

Our mission is to support parents in passing down the Catholic faith to their children. We aim to foster a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, lifelong discipleship, sacramental participation, fidelity to the Church, and active involvement in the Christian community.

2. Purpose of Catechesis

Catechesis, rooted in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, transforms individuals into faithful disciples. Parents, as primary educators, foster faith through love, prayer, Reconciliation, and Eucharistic participation within the family, the first Christian community. Holy Spirit Parish supports this role by strengthening parents' faith and providing faith formation and sacramental preparation, guiding families toward deeper conversion to Christ and active participation in the Church.

3. Eligibility to Participate

- Only families or grandparents registered as active Holy Spirit Parish members may enroll children in the Family Faith Formation Program.
- Students must complete all prerequisite levels (Levels I-VII) to advance (e.g., Level I before Level II).
- Families registered at other parishes or those not registered are ineligible.

4. Enrollment Process

Registration for Family Faith Formation opens July 2026, and closes September 4, 2026, in order to ensure adequate resources. Forms are available at www.holyspiritstamford.org, via email, or in the parish newsletter. Late registrations incur a fee for additional costs.

- **Existing Parishioners:** Submit forms by September 4, 2026, to secure class space and materials.
- **Transfer Students:** Submit prior faith formation and sacramental records with the online form during registration. Mid-term transfers require consultation with the Director of Faith Formation, who may interview students for placement and assign additional requirements in consultation with the Pastor.
- **Homeschooling:** Families homeschooling must demonstrate active parish involvement in sacramental and community life. The Pastor and Director evaluate readiness for sacramental preparation or level advancement through personal discussions.
- **Children with Special Needs:** Contact the Director to create a tailored catechetical plan.
- **Volunteer Opportunities:** Holy Spirit Parish encourages parents to serve as catechists, aides, or event helpers. Contact DFE@HolySpiritStamford.org for opportunities and VIRTUS training requirements.

5. Tuition and Fees

Tuition and sacramental preparation fees, set annually, are posted at registration. Full payment is due at registration, or a payment plan must be arranged, with all payments completed by December 31, 2026. Hardship assistance is available; contact the Director before registering.

6. Class Location, Schedules, and Attendance

Classes run from September to May on the Holy Spirit Parish campus (Parish Center/School building, Holy Family Hall, or Church). **The full calendar is available at www.holyspiritstamford.org**

Schedules

- Preschool - Grade 1: Mondays, 4-5:30 PM, or Tuesdays, from 3:30-5PM
- Grades 2-4: Sunday mornings, 10:45-11:25 AM, after 9:30 AM Mass.
- Grades 5-7: Tuesdays, 6:30-7:30 PM.

- Breaks align with the liturgical and school calendars.
- Sacramental-year students are required to attend additional workshops, retreats, rehearsals, parent meetings as indicated in the schedule.

Attendance

- Regular attendance is essential for faith growth and sacramental preparation.
- Up to three excused absences are allowed per year; notify the Director in advance and complete take-home assignments.
- Excessive or unexcused absences may require additional make-up classes, or if necessary, repeating a year, delaying reception of the Sacraments.
- Late arrivals (more than 10 minutes) or early dismissals are considered unexcused unless assignments are completed. Contact the Director to resolve scheduling conflicts.

Mass Attendance

- Weekly Mass attendance on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation is required.
- Confirmation-year students complete weekly Mass reflection, submitted to the catechist.

Closings/Cancellations

- Inclement weather cancellations are posted on www.holyspiritstamford.org and communicated via email/text. As a general rule, if Stamford Public Schools cancel due to weather, we will also cancel classes.
- Absences due to weather are excused.
- Canceled classes are typically not rescheduled, but sacramental events will be rescheduled.

7. Safety, Conduct, and Discipline Policies

Safe Environments

Holy Spirit Parish ensures a safe environment through VIRTUS training and background checks for volunteers (18+), per Diocesan guidelines. The **VIRTUS Protecting God's Children** program trains adults on preventing child sexual abuse, including recognizing signs, reporting procedures, and screening volunteers. Resources for children are provided through the **VIRTUS Empowering God's Children Program**. Visit www.virtus.org for details.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Families must adhere to the following procedures for all Family Faith Formation classes at the school building to ensure safety.

General Safety Guidelines

- Parents must accompany children of all ages in the parking lot at all times, no student may cross the parking lot unaccompanied.
- Pick-ups must occur at the school building, on church property; students will not be released to locations off church property.
- Late pick-ups (more than 10 minutes after dismissal) may incur a \$1/minute fee per child after two occurrences per semester. Notify the Director if you anticipate a late pick-up by emailing DFF@HolySpiritStamford.org
- Use only the main entrance of the school building for arrival and dismissal, unless directed otherwise in an emergency.
- Children will not be released without a parent present; older siblings or other minors cannot pick up students.
- **Only parents or pre-authorized adults may pick up students.** Notify the Director in advance if an authorized adult other than a parent will pick up.

Preschool - Grade 1 (Monday or Tuesday Afternoons)

Atrium sessions for Catechesis of the Good Shepherd meet either Mondays from 4-5:30PM or Tuesdays from 3:30-5PM.

Arrival

- Parents escort children to the seating area outside the “Atrium” classroom in the Parish Center/School by their class start time, no earlier than 5 minutes prior to class time. Parents are invited to wait in the Lounge, the first door on the Left.

Dismissal

- Parents return to waiting area outside of Atrium door at the end of class where students will be individually notified to join their parents at the appropriate time.

Grades 2-4 (Sunday Mornings)

Classes meet Sundays from 10:45-11:25 AM, following the 9:30 AM Mass.

Arrival

- **Attending 9:30 AM Mass:** After Mass, parents and children may proceed to Holy Family Hall for donuts. A parent should escort their child(ren) to their classroom starting at 10:40, where catechists will be waiting. Parents may wait in Holy Family Hall.
- **Attending 11:30 AM Mass:** Drop off children at the school building starting at 10:40 AM. Parents must escort children to their classroom, where catechists will be waiting. Parents may wait in Holy Family Hall.

Dismissal

- Parents must enter the school building to pick up their child at 11:30 AM.

Grades 5-7 (Tuesday Evenings)

Classes meet Tuesdays from 6:30-7:30 PM.

Arrival

- Drop off children at the school building starting at 6:20 PM. Parents may escort children to their classroom or drop them off at the entrance, where catechists will be present. Curbside drop-off is permitted.

Dismissal

- Parents may pick up children at 7:30 PM by entering the school building or using the curbside pick-up line:
 - **Curbside Pick-Up:** Drive up to the curb by the school building in a single-file line. Students will only be released to a parent's car when it is at the curb, ensuring a catechist or staff member can see the student enter the vehicle. Students are not permitted to walk into the parking lot to find a car.
 - **In-Building Pick-Up:** Parents may enter the school building to pick up their child from the classroom.

Conduct and Discipline

- Students, parents, and volunteers must demonstrate Christian values of respect, honesty, and responsibility.
- Disruptive behavior may require parental involvement, program removal, or restitution.
 - Prohibited items (e.g., weapons, drugs, alcohol) result in immediate action, including possible law enforcement involvement.
- For grievances, contact the Director for a collaborative resolution.
- Parents are expected to communicate respectfully, respond promptly to notifications, support program policies, including attendance and safety guidelines, and participate actively in family faith activities.

Classroom Policies

- **Restrooms:** Use before class to avoid disruptions. Frequent requests may require parental follow-up.

- **Food/Drink:** Only water is permitted in the school building, which is nut-free. Medical dietary needs must be noted on the Medical Release Form.
- **Cell Phones**
 - Upon entering the classroom, catechists may require students to place cell phones on a designated table or in a storage area.
 - All cell phones must be turned off or set to silent mode and stored during class. No texting, browsing, or other personal use is permitted.
 - If a catechist determines a student is using a cell phone during class, the device may be confiscated and returned to the student or parent at the end of the session. Repeated violations may require a parent meeting with the Director of Faith Formation.
 - Other electronic devices (e.g., smartwatches, tablets) are not permitted unless approved by the Director for educational purposes.
 - For questions or special circumstances (e.g., emergency contact needs), contact the Director.

8. Medical Policies

- Parents must submit a Diocesan Medical Release Form and emergency contact information (non-parent, available during class) before classes begin, available at www.holyspiritstamford.org.
- Notify the Director and catechist of serious medical conditions.
- In emergencies, staff will call 911 and contact parents or the emergency contact.
- Students with contagious illnesses should stay home; notify the Director for an excused absence.
- Only authorized EpiPen/Auvi-Q administration is permitted, per signed forms.

9. Curriculum and Sacramental Preparation

Curriculum

The Christ-centered curriculum follows Diocesan guidelines, covering Scripture, Creed, Sacraments, Morality, Prayer, and Community Service in an age-appropriate manner.

Sacramental Preparation

Preparation for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation requires prior Faith Formation participation, regular attendance, Mass worksheets, and completed assignments. Baptismal certificates and documentation are required. A sacramental preparation timeline is available in the Sacrament Handout.

- **First Reconciliation and First Eucharist:** Formal preparation in Grade 2 (Grade 1 prerequisite). Reconciliation occurs in February; Eucharist in May.
- **Confirmation:** Formal preparation in Grade 7, after three years of post-Eucharist instruction. Covers saints, salvation history, service, and spirituality. The ceremony, set with the Bishop's office, will be on May 13th.
- **Christian Initiation of Children:** Unbaptized or non-Catholic children receive tailored plans; contact the Director.
- **Homeschooling:** Follows Diocesan guidelines; contact the Faith Formation Office.
- **Sponsors/Godparents:** Must meet Canon Law and Diocesan requirements, with a sponsor form signed by their parish clergy.
- Specific sacramental preparation packets will be provided.

10. Acknowledgement and Consent

Parents/guardians must sign the Acknowledgement and Consent Form, confirming they have read and discussed the Handbook with their child(ren) and agree to its policies. Submit the online form when registering before the first class. For feedback or suggestions, contact the Director.

Parent/Guardian Acknowledgement and Consent

Paper Form for 2026-2027

Child's Name: _____

Grade: _____

I/We acknowledge that I/we have received, read, and understand the Holy Spirit Parish Family Faith Formation Handbook and will discuss its expectations with my/our child(ren). I/We consent to its policies for the 2026-2027 year.

Acknowledged (Parents/Guardians):

_____ (Signature)

_____ (Name)

_____ (Relationship)

_____ (Signature)

_____ (Name)

_____ (Relationship)

Contact Information: For questions, contact the Director of Faith Formation at DFF@HolySpiritStamford.org or the Parish Office at (203) 322-3722.