



# **St. Mary of Lourdes**

---

## **Children's Faith Formation Handbook**

### **Faith Formation Mission Statement & Goals**

St. Mary of Lourdes' Faith Formation Program is committed to assisting families in fostering their knowledge and understanding of who God is in their lives and in the lives of their children. We seek experiences, which will encourage us to continue to grow, to share, and to witness our faith in God.

The primary goal of St. Mary of Lourdes' Faith Formation is, with the assistance of their parents, to increase the children's and youth's realizations of God's infinite love for us and to enhance their response to His love by greater sharing and caring for each other. We strive to reach this goal by:

- Teaching the fundamentals and fostering the understanding of our Catholic faith (study of the Scriptures, Church doctrine, values, and history);
- Emphasizing Jesus' life and mission and the blessings we receive when we imitate Him in our own lives;
- Advocating the use of individual prayer and communal worship;
- Promoting an on-going, life-long faith development process for all parishioners;
- Participating in the Sacraments, especially Holy Eucharist.

### **Contact Information**

Director of Faith Formation: Ileen Grebner

Email: [igrebner@stmarylourdes.org](mailto:igrebner@stmarylourdes.org)

Office Phone: 383-4460

Office Hours are typically 8am – 4pm, Sunday – Thursday but vary depending on the Adult Faith Formation programming schedule. The Faith Formation office is closed on Friday's.

### **Children's Faith Formation Session Times and Locations:**

Pre-K/Kindergarten: 9am – 10:15am, Parish Hall (begins the Sunday after Labor Day)

1<sup>st</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade: 9am – 10:15am, Upstairs classrooms (begins the Sunday after Labor Day)

Classes begin promptly at 9am. We ask that all children/youth arrive 5 minutes before 9am so that the catechists are able to begin at 9am.

**Please note: For security reasons, all doors will be locked at 9:05am and the main entrance will be unlocked at 10:10am.**

### **Attendance Policy Grades 1 and Grades 3 - 6**

Knowing that parents are the primary educators of their children, we (St. Mary of Lourdes' CCD Program) are assisting in their spiritual formation. We are here to work with your child for one hour and fifteen minutes a week. Since our time is limited we do need structure to our program. Each child is allowed up to 4 absences per year. Each absence will need to be made up with an assignment that will be emailed/mailed to you. After four absences, we will request a conference with the family and the Director of Faith Formation to discuss our options to continue faith formation for your child for the next level of instruction with your help. Illness and family emergencies will certainly be excused. Extracurricular activities (i.e. practice, sports, games) are not valid reasons to skip Mass *or* Class.

### **Sacramental Prep Attendance Policy Grades 2, 7 & 8**

#### **(1<sup>st</sup> Reconciliation, 1<sup>st</sup> Holy Communion & Confirmation Preparation)**

It is our intent to prepare every youth in the program for the Sacraments of 1<sup>st</sup> Reconciliation, 1<sup>st</sup> Holy Communion and Confirmation. We do realize that parents are the primary educators and we assist in the preparation. Children who are in grades 2, 7 & 8 and are preparing to receive a Sacrament must be enrolled within CCD. We are here to work with your child for one hour and fifteen minutes a week. Due to our limited time and Diocesan Curriculum Guidelines, we do need structure to our program. If your child is absent 2 times in a year's time, we will request a conference to discuss how we can manage instruction in the best possible way for the student. *This is in accordance with the policy of the Diocese of Peoria.* We understand that families experience illness and emergencies where the first place for the child is with the family. Make-up assignments will be planned with the student, family, catechist and Director of Faith Formation. Again, illness and family emergencies will certainly be excused. Extracurricular activities (i.e. practice, sports, games) are not valid reasons to skip Mass *or* Class.

### **Security**

We now have entrance doors with crash bars which allow us to lock all entrance doors once CCD has started. This allows us to better monitor who is seeking entrance to the hall when CCD is in session. **IMPORTANT:** At 10:05am the upstairs entrance will be locked. All students should be in their classroom by that time. Parents, this is why you must walk your children in to ensure they are able to get in the building.

### **Arrival Procedure**

*For bringing your children to class, the following applies:*

- All families are to use the upstairs parish hall entrance. The lower entrance will remain locked.
- Please do not pull up and stop at the upper parking lot sidewalk to drop off your children. This becomes a safety issue as well as a traffic flow problem.
- **If your child is in the Pre-K/Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade**, we ask that you sign-in **and** sign-out your child/children. Please provide a note to indicate who will be picking up your child/children if it is NOT a parent.
- **If your child is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**, we ask you to park in a parking space and walk your child into the building. Please do not drop them off assuming they will find their way to their classroom.

## **Dismissal Procedures**

We ask that all parents park and come into the building to pick up their children. **If you will not be picking up your child/children from their class**, please send a note as to who will be picking your child/children up that day. **Do not** send by email the morning of class, as the email is usually not checked until after CCD on Sunday.

## **Late Arrivals & Early Departures**

Past experiences have shown that late arrivals and early departures not only affect the child who is arriving late or leaving early. It affects everyone in the classroom. ***Please keep in mind that your child may not be the only one coming and going at various times.*** A good day in the classroom requires attention to the learning activities with minimal distractions. We have one hour and fifteen minutes to make it a good day each week. Every minute is important because we have such limited time. This is the reason we have instituted a policy regarding late arrivals and early dismissals.

**If you know that your child will be arriving ten minutes late or leaving early**, we are asking that you keep your child home to minimize distractions and interruptions in the classroom for the good of the whole group, as well as, your child. Even the very end of the class is important as it's the review of the day's lesson, time for announcements and closing prayer.

Although this will be counted as an absence, this will also give you and your child a chance to avoid the stress of hurrying to get to class or sitting through class anticipating when you will be coming to get them early, neither of which is conducive to learning. We will give you an assignment to make up for the absence and conference when we need to. This way you and your child can experience a calmer Sunday morning and continue learning with you, their primary teacher.

Simply put, our intention is to work in cooperation with you to enhance the faith formation of your child in a classroom environment with the least amount of distraction and we are looking forward to working with you.

## **Sunday Eucharist**

Recall our Lord's words:

***Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."* (Mt 19:14)**

Because a parent is the most important teacher of the Catholic Faith to one's children, it is essential that your good example, consistent practice and living of the Lord's teachings be a priority. Therefore extracurricular activities (i.e. practice, sports, games) are not valid reasons to skip Mass or class.

Hence, a data base system has been created, based on your Sunday collection envelope, to assist us in how we can better help parents and children fulfill this solemn and holy obligation. Active parish membership is defined as a family that attends Mass regularly (60% of the time) and **uses their envelopes**. In-Active/Out-of-Parish families are those who attend St. Mary of Lourdes less than 60% of the time or are registered members of a parish other than St. Mary of Lourdes. **It is not a matter of whether you give but if you're at Mass and place your envelope – empty or not empty – in the collection basket.** After all, we're sure our goal is the same, that is, to reach the kingdom of Heaven. Our particular judgment will certainly include if there is a help or hindrance to the Faith of the children the Lord entrusted to our care.

## **Fees**

Effective Spring 2015, registration fees for *active parish membership* will be \$50/child. For in-active/non-registered parish membership, the registration fee will be \$75/child.

An active parish membership is defined as a family that attends mass regularly each Sunday at St. Mary of Lourdes and uses the weekly offertory envelopes. Mass attendance is based on attending 60% of the Sunday masses year round.

In-Active/Out-of-Parish families are those who attend St. Mary of Lourdes less than 60% of the time or are registered members of a parish other than St. Mary of Lourdes.

If there is severe financial hardship, please come talk with us. We value your family's presence in our program and always look forward to being a partner in your family's religious formation.

## **Reporting an Absence**

If your son/daughter is sick or a family emergency has occurred and will not be in class, please call 383-4460 and leave a message on Ileen's voice mail in order that the catechist can be told. You can also email Ileen at [drestmlo@mtco.com](mailto:drestmlo@mtco.com). Absences need to be communicated with the Dir. of Faith Formation. Make-up material will either be mailed home that week or sent home the following Sunday.

## **Parish Facebook Page**

"Like" us on Facebook and stay in the loop of what's happening at St. Mary of Lourdes. Our Facebook address is: [www.facebook.com/St.MaryLourdes](http://www.facebook.com/St.MaryLourdes)

## **Communicating Updates**

All CCD meetings and reminders will appear in the Sunday bulletin and/or the St. Mary of Lourdes Facebook page. For the most up-to-date information, please refer to the weekly church bulletin and/or our Facebook page.

## **Inclement Weather**

In the event that CCD would need to be cancelled because of Winter Weather, the decision to cancel will be made by 6:30am/7:00am on Sunday morning. We will use the St. Mary of Lourdes Facebook page to make the cancellation announcement as well as the local TV stations' websites. As always, please you use your own judgment when the weather is bad as to whether or not you want to venture out. Your safety comes first.

## **Discipline**

We are a Catholic Christian community teaching morals and values. Any use of profane, inappropriate language will not be tolerated. Bullying, disrespect to any participant (catechist or child) or property are also inappropriate behaviors that may result in a conference with the Dir. of Faith Formation and Father. If any properties are broken or vandalized, the parents and students will reimburse the parish the replacement/repair expenses.

In the event that a child is disruptive within the classroom where the behavior interferes with the learning of the other students, the child will be referred to the Dir. of Faith Formation and removed from class for that day. Parents will be notified. If the behavior continues to disrupt class, a conference will be

held between the parents, catechist, Dir. of Faith Formation and Father Neri. If the parent feels there is a problem within the program, please contact the Dir. of Faith Formation (383-4460).

### **Baptismal Certificates**

If your child was not baptized here at St. Mary of Lourdes, we ask that you submit a copy of the baptismal certificate from their church of Baptism. This record is needed prior to your child receiving First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation. Baptismal Certificates should be given to the Dir. of Faith Formation prior to October 15.

To request a certificate from another parish, contact their parish office and provide them with the following information: child's full name, father's name, mother's name (including maiden name), date of birth, and date of Baptism or approximation.

### **Sacramental Preparation Parent Component**

The Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist are celebrated during second grade. The Sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated during eighth grade with preparation beginning in their 7<sup>th</sup> grade year.

During the year in which the student is to receive a Sacrament, one or both parents are required to attend the scheduled parent meeting(s). For the First Communion Retreat, one or both parents are expected to attend with their child which is held with St. Mary's in Metamora. Please refer to the calendar for dates, times and locations.

It is extremely vital to the preparation process that children not only attend faith formation during these sacrament years but before and after the reception of these Sacraments. Each year, the information that is taught builds on what has been taught in the previous years and introduces new information as well. We must remember that faith formation is an ongoing process that we never 'graduate' from but continue to learn as we meld our life experiences with our faith. We never stop learning and growing in our faith.

### **Special Needs**

Notification of a child's special or medical needs is a must to meeting the needs of all of the children. Special needs notification includes but is not limited to sight and hearing needs and learning needs or information that would assist the catechist in the classroom (i.e. ADD, ADHD, BD, etc.). Medical needs notification includes but is not limited to allergies (food, medicines, or otherwise) and health conditions that could require emergency medical attention. This information should be given to the Dir. of Faith Formation who will share it only with those who need to know.

### **Vacation Bible School**

Planning for the following summer's Vacation Bible School will begin in late February, early March. Parents are invited to help plan all areas of this faith building event. Opportunities for involvement include music, crafts, snacks, teaching, preparing materials ahead of time, decorations and the list goes on and on. Watch for more information in the bulletin or in updates that will be sent home with your child.

### **Formation in Human Dignity**

In the fall 2007, the diocese implemented a new children's component for the Formation in Human Dignity program. This program now includes Formation in Christian Chastity for all grade levels and a

Safe Environment Program for grades 1, 3, 5, and 8. There is a parent component also for each grade level and is available through the Faith Formation Office. All grade level lessons and parent materials can also be found on the Diocesan website: [www.cdop.org](http://www.cdop.org).

### **Volunteers**

Any and all volunteers who work with children, supervised or unsupervised, must complete the Diocesan background screening process. This process includes: a DCFS and National Background Screening and completion of the *Protecting God's Children* volunteer training. Any volunteer who does not pass the screening process will immediately be removed from their position.