

# **SS JOHN & PAUL PARISH PARENT HANDBOOK\***

**2010-2011**

**SS JOHN & PAUL PARISH  
2586 WEXFORD BAYNE ROAD  
SEWICKLEY, PA 15143**

## **FAITH FORMATION STAFF**

**Kate Bianco, Director of Religious Education – 724-935-2104, extension 23**

**Kathy Masters, Faith Formation Associate – 724-935-2104, extension 36**

**Haley Deschamps, Youth Minister – 724-935-2104, extension 28**

# **WELCOME TO THE CATHOLIC FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM AT SAINTS JOHN & PAUL PARISH**

*“Parents have the unique responsibility for the education of their children; they are the first educators or catechists. They teach by their witness of faith, through their values and attitudes, by their Christian example of love for Christ and his church. When children are baptized, parents accept the responsibility to raise their children in the practice of faith...(National Directory for Catechesis 234-235).*

**Dear Parents,**

**We are looking forward to another spiritually enriching Faith Formation year! What a gift it is to give your children the opportunity to grow in the knowledge of the love of Lord through being an active participant in the community at Sts. John and Paul Parish Faith Formation.**

**We are happy to be present to assist you in your responsibility of passing on our Faith to your child(ren). We have many models of Faith Formation to assist you and are happy to answer any questions you may have. We are a small staff of 3, so there are many opportunities for you to share your gifts and talents through prayer and volunteering to help enrich this ministry.**

**Please make sure to view the very important Grade Specific Parent Information Pages on our website at:**

**<http://www.stsjohnandpaul.org/FaithFormation/Forms.jsp>.**

**We pray that God’s blessings be upon you and your family!**

**God Bless,**

**Kate Bianco, Director of Religious Education**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

PHILOSOPHY OF CATHOLIC FAITH FORMATION/EDUCATION	5
CURRICULUM	6
FAITH FORMATION MODELS	6
WEEKLY CHILDREN’S FAITH FORMATION	6
FAMILY PROGRAM	6
CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD	7
PRESCHOOL FAITH FORMATION	7
MIDDLE SCHOOL HOME STUDY	7
MIDDLE SCHOOL SUMMER PROGRAM	7
MIDDLE SCHOOL SUMMER HOME SITE CLASSES	7
MIDDLE SCHOOL FAITH BUILDER EVENTS	8
MEMORIZATION STATION	8
CATHOLIC SCHOOL	8
HOME SCHOOLING FAMILIES	9
YOUTH MINISTRY	9
SUPPLEMENTAL CHILDREN’S MINISTRY PROGRAMS	9
G.A.P. – GOD’S AWESOME PEOPLE	9
VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL	10
FAMILY FAITH EVENTS	10
BABYSITTING SERVICES	10
BABYSITTING CO-OP	10
LITURGY OF THE WORD FOR CHILDREN	11
CHILDREN’S FORMATION IN SACRAMENTS	11
Penance and Eucharist	11
Sacrament of Confirmation	11
SACRAMENTAL FORMATION FOR PARENTS	12
RELEASE TIME RETREATS	12
EUCHARIST RETREAT DAY-GRADE 2	12
CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE RETREATS-GRADES 5 - 8	12
FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM POLICIES	13
COMMUNICATIONS	13
STREAMLINED REGISTRATION	13
FEES	13

FAIRNESS .....	13
ATTENDANCE .....	13
CONDUCT .....	14
DISCIPLINE .....	14
WEAPONS & DRUGS .....	14
DRESS CODE .....	14
ARRIVAL FOR CLASSES AND EVENTS: NO DROP OFFS OR CURBSIDE PICK UPS! .....	14
DISMISSAL .....	15
FOOD, DRINK, GUM AND TOYS .....	15
HOMEWORK .....	15
SNOW DAYS.....	15
EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN .....	16
MATERIALS FOR CLASS .....	16
SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICIES .....	16
CATECHISTS AND HELPERS NEEDED .....	16
ADULT FAITH FORMATION .....	16
FIELD TRIPS .....	17
MEDICAL AND OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS .....	17
THE ROLE OF THE PARENT.....	17-18

## **PHILOSOPHY OF CATHOLIC FAITH FORMATION/EDUCATION**

In response to our Lord's directive to "go and teach all nations," we believe that the Parish of Saints John & Paul should seek to provide a comprehensive program for children, youth, and adults that will give clarity and vigor to faith and foster living in the Spirit of Christ. Catholic Faith Formation is based on the belief that each person is a child of God capable of positive growth in body, mind, and spirit. The catalysts for this development and maturation are the grace-filled movement of the Holy Spirit within each person; a supportive family as the primary religious educators; a dedicated staff who embraces and models sound Christian values; and a creative, dynamic curriculum.

Faith Formation promotes the growth of faith in every person. It is a formation process that contributes to growth in basic religious attitudes or love of God and neighbor; develops habits of prayer and worship; builds community; promotes social justice, and encourages service to others. There are four components essential to a viable Faith Formation program. These include:

- CATECHESIS:** Proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ in his Church with a focus on the teachings of Sacred Scripture and the Living Tradition of the Church
- SPIRITUAL LIFE:** Celebration of the relationship between God and God's people in prayer and in the Sacramental life of the Church
- EVANGELIZATION:** Building up God's people and bringing Christ to those who do not know Him by proclaiming the Gospel and living it
- MORAL DEVELOPMENT:** Helping each other to grow in holiness and in understanding of the meaning of "love in action."
- SOCIAL JUSTICE:** Sharing the gifts of the Spirit with all mankind, especially the poor and others in need, through service and action for social justice

The process of Faith Formation begins at birth and is the primary responsibility of the child's first teachers, the parents. They are to share the gift of faith with their child and model faith practices. This process is a spiritual journey which continues into adulthood, spanning a lifetime. The Church assists the parent in this responsibility by providing religious formation and education at all life stages.

Together, we labor to teach our children and young adults religious beliefs and values; enrich them with the traditions of the Church in the sacramental life; provide meaningful service and prayer experiences; and involve them in proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ, as passed down from the Apostles through the teaching authority of the Church in union with the Pope and the Bishops, through words and actions.

# CURRICULUM

SS John & Paul Parish has chosen *RCL's FAITH FIRST LEGACY EDITION* as the catechetical texts for parish Faith Formation. This text is approved by the Diocese of Pittsburgh and the US Council of Catholic Bishops. The content of this program is also in accord with the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Directory for Catechesis, and the pastoral letter, "To Teach as Jesus Did". This text is supplemented as needed by the Diocese of Pittsburgh Curriculum requirements.

*FAITH FIRST* is based on the four pillars of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Scripture is integrated both in the text and dramatized through videos. There is also a focus on the liturgical year. The question is asked at the end of each lesson, "What difference does faith make?" The *FAITH FIRST* Program contains a holistic scope and sequence built on Scripture, the Liturgical Year, and doctrine. Based on the "spiral method" each year provides a well-rounded, developmentally-appropriate presentation of the core teachings of the Catholic Faith.

Catholic Faith Formation is more than just textbooks. The website, [www.faithfirst.com](http://www.faithfirst.com), extends learning beyond the printed page into classrooms and homes where faith is lived. Parents are encouraged to assist their children in accessing this site.

## FAITH FORMATION MODELS

*SS John & Paul Parish strives to provide a variety of faith formation options in order to accommodate the unique needs and schedules of every family. Regardless of the model chosen, weekly attendance at Mass is essential for effective Faith Formation. Registration for Faith Formation begins in May for the following catechetical year and continues year-round. Registration forms and instructions are available online at [www.stsjohnandpaul.org/FaithFormation/Children.jsp](http://www.stsjohnandpaul.org/FaithFormation/Children.jsp)*

## WEEKLY CHILDREN'S FAITH FORMATION

Weekly Children's Faith Formation classes are available preschool through Eighth grade. Classes are offered Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Sundays throughout the school year. Other alternatives include Summer Program, Middle School Home Study, and Family Program.

## FAMILY PROGRAM

Family Program allows parents to provide Faith Formation for children in grades K through 5 at home using our Faith First textbooks. Children complete an online Chapter Review as each chapter is completed at [www.faithfirst.com](http://www.faithfirst.com), and send results to [holyfamilies@stsjohnandpaul.org](mailto:holyfamilies@stsjohnandpaul.org). Children must also attend one Family Program Meeting per month, together with at least one parent, on Sundays from 10:00 AM - 12:00 Noon. The program is so large that the same meeting must be offered three Sundays each month to three different groups of families. Meetings are fun -- with skits, music, Scripture, crafts, games and more. This program provides convenience along with effectiveness! Most children learn more when parents are teaching!

## ***CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD***

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a shared program with St. John Neumann and Sts. John and Paul Parish. All classes are held at St. John Neumann which is located just minutes away on Rochester Road. The Level I program is offered for children ages 3 through 6 (children must be potty-trained). Level II is for ages 6 through 9 and Level III is for ages 9 through 12. This scripture-based, Christo-centric program applies the Montessori principles of education to Faith Formation, and achieves amazing success in helping children to know their faith and to fall in love with Jesus. If you would like further information about this program and/or if you are interested in becoming a Good Shepherd catechist, please let us know, and training will be provided!

### ***PRESCHOOL FAITH FORMATION***

Our traditional Preschool program for three-, four- and five-year-olds, not yet in Kindergarten is offered on Sunday mornings during the 9 AM Mass, September through April. It includes Scripture, songs, games, crafts, service projects, and lots of fun! Young children must be potty-trained.

### ***MIDDLE SCHOOL HOME STUDY***

The Middle School Home Study model allows children in grades 6 through 8 to study their textbooks at home with the assistance of their parents. They must complete an online chapter review test for each chapter completed and send the results to [holyfamilies@stsjohndpaul.org](mailto:holyfamilies@stsjohndpaul.org). They must also earn five Faith Builder credits during the school year. Other approved events, such as the Family Faith Events, Holy Week Services, Parish Ministries, and Faith-Based Service Projects may be substituted for special middle school events.

### ***MIDDLE SCHOOL SUMMER PROGRAM***

Summer Program, offered 9 AM to Noon for two weeks in July, serves children in grades 6, 7 and 8. Through this program, children complete the bulk of their Faith Formation – then during the year they must attend five Middle School Faith Builder Events (or approved substitute events). Summer Program fills quickly (130 maximum enrollment), so register early. Summer Program achieves high ratings among students! Many of our Summer Program catechists are professional teachers. Also, many high school youth serve as mentors, team leaders, and teaching assistants. Students are divided into teams and compete for awards. In addition to a complete curriculum, the program includes service projects, Mass, Reconciliation, speakers, and more!

### ***MIDDLE SCHOOL SUMMER HOME SITE CLASSES***

In recent years, a few families have pioneered the concept of Summer Home Site Classes. These families get together at private homes every day (6.5 hours per day) for one week in the summer

and cover all the material required in the curriculum. Summer home site classes also include Mass, Confession, service projects, and exciting interactive learning activities. Students are also required to earn five Faith Builder credits during the year. For details on how to start your own Summer Home Site class, call the Faith Formation office!

### ***MIDDLE SCHOOL FAITH BUILDER EVENTS***

Middle School Faith Builder Events are fun and formative events that are open to all students in grades 6 through 8. The goal of these events is to build community among the students while also providing solid Faith Formation and service experiences. These events are required for all students in Summer Program and Middle School Home Study and optional for all others. Friends are welcome. Summer Program and Homes Study students, who are required to earn 5 Faith Builder credits as part of their program, may substitute other approved events such as Family Faith Events, Holy Week Services, Service in Parish Ministries, and more. Parents are responsible to notify the Faith Formation program by e-mail of any events attended. Send Faith Builder updates to [faithbuilders@stsjohnandpaul.org](mailto:faithbuilders@stsjohnandpaul.org). Be sure to include the child's name and the name of the event.

### ***MEMORIZATION STATION***

For students in grades K through 8, the Diocese of Pittsburgh curriculum requires memorization of key prayers and faith facts – with different goals for each grade level. All children will receive memorization goals for their grade level (important prayers, scripture and faith facts). Parents are asked to help them learn these items. Then, students are encouraged to stop by Memorization Station and recite these items. Alternatively, some catechists may ask students to recite prayers during class time, or at Family Program Meetings. Also students may recite prayers by memory for parents at home and parents may notify the Faith Formation office by e-mail to [kbianco@stsjohnandpaul.org](mailto:kbianco@stsjohnandpaul.org). Memorization Station is open daily during Weekly Children's Faith Formation Sessions, on Monday-Wednesday 4:30 – 6:00 PM and 6:30 – 8:00 PM and on Tues. and Wed. 6:30 – 8:00 PM. Each time we lift our hearts and our minds to God we grow closer to Him and are filled with His grace.

### ***CATHOLIC SCHOOL***

SS John & Paul does not have a school, but Catholic education is available through several local parochial and private schools. Catholic school children are encouraged to participate in our parish activities and sacramental programs. Parents of Catholic school students are asked to register them with the Faith Formation office so that they receive mailings about sacramental preparation and events that may be of interest. SS John & Paul Parish supports Catholic Parochial Schools financially through the very substantial Diocesan Parish Share Assessment – and it is hoped that these families will “give back” to the parish through participation in parish ministries. Local Parochial schools include St. Alphonsus, St. Alexis, St. James, St. Theresa, and North Catholic High School. Local private Catholic Schools include the Alpha School, Mt. Gallitzen Academy, Aquinas Academy, Vincentian High School, and Quigley High School.

## ***HOME SCHOOLING FAMILIES***

SS John & Paul Parish seeks to support Catholic families who have elected to provide all or most of their children's education in the home. The North Pittsburgh Association of Home School Families, an independent organization for all Home School families in this area, meets regularly at the Parish. Because interaction with the broader faith community is such an important part of Faith Formation, home-schooling families are encouraged to participate in Family Faith Events, Family Program Meetings, Sunday Liturgy, and all other programs and ministries of the parish.

## ***YOUTH MINISTRY***

The parish encourages every High School Student to be involved in some type of continuing Faith Formation, and to make an active contribution to parish life. We provide a variety of ways for High School youth to serve and grow in faith. The cornerstone of Youth Ministry is our Life Teen Program, offered on Sunday evenings throughout the year. This program offers Mass with contemporary music, dinner, skits, discussions of topics relevant to the real life of teens, dynamic teaching, service opportunities, social events, leadership formation, retreats, service trips, and more.

Our Youth Ministry Core Team, a committed group of faith-filled adults, welcomes new members. Our Youth Minister's door is always open for youth who need a caring listener. Youth are also encouraged to participate in a variety of parish-based service projects such as our Senior Connection projects which provide home maintenance for the elderly, and service trips such as the Catholic Heart Youth program.

High School Youth also enjoy opportunities to serve as mentors to younger children through leadership positions in Vacation Bible School, Summer Program, G.A.P. Middle School, Faith Builder Events, Weekly Children's Faith Formation, and more. And finally our youth can participate in any ministry of the parish, including Altar Server/Master Server, Choir, Senior Connection, Outreach, Hospitality and more.

## **SUPPLEMENTAL CHILDREN'S MINISTRY PROGRAMS**

### ***G.A.P. - GOD'S AWESOME PEOPLE***

G.A.P. is a parent-led ministry. It does not replace Faith Formation, but enhances Faith Formation by providing children with an opportunity to become more excited about their faith -- through making friends and having fun with other children in the faith community. G.A.P. Middle School serves children in grades six through eight. G.A.P. Kids serves children grades K through 5. Children are encouraged to bring friends of any faith to all our G.A.P. events. Parents are encouraged to get involved as chaperones and planners, so that this vibrant ministry can continue to help children feel excited about their faith.

## ***VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL***

Vacation Bible School is a parent-led ministry offered during the summer. There are two programs: June VBS and Maranatha July VBS. The goals of the programs are evangelization, education in Sacred Scripture and helping all to grow closer to our Lord. Programs include skits, Bible stories, crafts, games, snacks, music, and a fabulous closing ceremony on the final day. June VBS serves children ages 4 through Grade 4. Parents and older children, children Grades 5 through 12, are also invited to participate as leaders and mentors. Maranatha July VBS serves ages 4 through Grade 5. Parents and children grade 6 through 12, are also invited to participate as leaders and mentors. Vacation Bible School fills quickly, so watch your bulletin for the registration date and arrive early!

## ***FAMILY FAITH EVENTS***

SS John & Paul Parish offers the following Family Faith Events each year: Opening Day Prayer Service, Thanksgiving Benediction/Children's Food Collection, Family Mass For Life/Teaching Mass, Lent Event Reconciliation Service, and Stations of the Cross for Children. These events include active roles for many children and are normally offered during regular Faith Formation times. Parent participation in these events is strongly encouraged. These 45-minute events are required for all participants in Weekly programs and are open to the entire parish. .

## ***BABYSITTING SERVICES***

Babysitting Services are provided in the parish Nursery free of charge during the Saturday 5 PM, and the Sunday 9 AM and 11 AM Masses. At least one full time paid sitter is on duty at all times, and adult and teen volunteers also assist. Babysitting services can be provided during any Faith Formation Class or Event, provided reservations are made in advance. Call Bonnie, our Babysitting Coordinator, at 724-935-2104 x30 to reserve babysitting during any parish event.

## ***BABYSITTING CO-OP***

Affordable babysitting is hard to find and is so important for parents' well-being! The Babysitting Co-op is a group of parents who exchange babysitting services in their homes. While this group operates independently from the parish, these families must complete all required Safe Environments clearances. They have also developed an efficient system for tracking babysitting credits for all member families. For details call Annie at (412) 366-5342.

## ***LITURGY OF THE WORD FOR CHILDREN***

Liturgy of the Word for Children is offered at one Saturday 5 PM Mass each month. Children, ages 4 through 8, are invited to process downstairs with a catechist, who will present the scriptures, homily and music in an interactive child-friendly format. Children are escorted back to sit with their families after the homily. Our LOTWFC Team would like to expand to additional Saturdays – please let them know if you can assist.

## **CHILDREN’S FORMATION IN SACRAMENTS**

***Penance and Eucharist:*** Our Catholic Faith Tradition teaches that Christ is made present to us in a very real way through all the sacraments. Through our Faith Formation Programs, we provide instruction for First Penance and First Eucharist during the child’s Second Grade year. We also provide a one-day First Eucharist retreat for parents and children. In addition, parents take an active part in this process by completing Sacramental workbooks with their children at home. We ask the parents to follow these guidelines:

- a. Regular attendance at Mass and classes is necessary for the student to have a basic understanding of the sacraments.
- b. Students should have at least two years of religious instruction prior to the celebration of these sacraments, and continue their formal religious instruction after receiving the sacraments.
- c. A baptismal certificate must be submitted before the child may receive the sacraments.
- d. Attend one parent meeting for each sacrament.

***Sacrament of Confirmation:*** Our Preparation programs for Confirmation includes parent-guided Home Study and Confirmation Retreat or our Weekly Program that are offered the summer between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades. Confirmation preparation also includes a service project, an initial parent/child meeting, and a letter to the Pastor. Regular attendance at Mass is, of course, the most essential element necessary for Confirmation Preparation. Pre-requisites for the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Diocese of Pittsburgh are:

- a. There must have been ongoing catechetical formation for at least 2 consecutive years prior to reception of the Sacrament.
- b. A baptismal certificate must be submitted if it has not been submitted at registration.
- c. The candidate for Confirmation must select a sponsor who is able to provide proof that he or she is fully initiated into the Catholic Church, actively practices the Faith, and is canonically capable of being a sponsor for Confirmation.
- d. Satisfactory preparation for the Sacrament is required.

## **SACRAMENTAL FORMATION FOR PARENTS**

Parent Preparation Programs are offered to assist parents in fulfilling their obligation to ensure the Faith Formation of their children. The parish provides parent meetings for the Sacraments of Baptism, Penance, Eucharist, and Confirmation. Parents will be notified as to the dates and times for the meetings. Parents who need Babysitting for any of these meetings should call Bonnie at 724-935-2014 x30 to make reservations.

### **RELEASE TIME RETREATS**

Within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Act 175 states that public schools are required to excuse children up to 30 hours per school year to attend religious instruction. We understand the amount of homework and the effect a day missed can have for the student. However, these Days of Reflection and Retreat are vital to our students' growth in the Catholic Faith and well worth the extra effort. We are very grateful to the parents who cooperate in this extremely important endeavor. Remember that God will not be outdone in generosity to those who love and put Him first (above everything else) in their lives. The First Eucharist Retreat and the Catholic Vision of Love (CVOL) retreats are normally offered as release time retreats on weekdays.

#### ***EUCHARIST RETREAT DAY - GRADE 2***

The children and parents (if possible) meet for an all-day retreat before receiving the sacrament of Holy Eucharist for the first time. The children follow a program set forth by the DRE of the parish and the second grade catechists and committee of parents. The program includes activities in a retreat-like setting which emphasizes the doctrines of the Eucharist, songs, prayer, and rehearsal for first Communion.

#### ***CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE RETREATS - GRADES 5, 6, 7, & 8***

The Diocese of Pittsburgh has developed a unique program, called "Catholic Vision of Love" (CVOL) for teaching about the interrelated topics of human love, sexuality, sacrament, and vocation. This program presents the Good News of Christ's wonderful plan for love, marriage, vocation, and human sexuality. The program includes new, developmentally appropriate material for each grade level, and helps young people to understand the true meaning of love. Children are not just taught a list of rules and commandments, but they are also taught the reasons behind Catholic teaching through a well-reasoned approach. The Catholic Vision of Love is inspiring, life-affirming and radically different from the messages of today's society. The Diocese requires special training for catechists who teach on this topic.

At SS John & Paul Parish, CVOL Retreats, conducted by Staff, offer the only on-site program through which middle school students can study the topics of human love, sexuality, and vocation from a faith perspective. The retreats include teaching, activities, fun, Mass, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and new material for each grade level. These retreats are explained in detail at a

Parent Meeting every year. Parents are welcome and encouraged to attend these retreats with their children – and many are surprised by how much they learn!

If a child cannot attend a CVOL retreat in 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, parents should print the materials from the parish web site, <http://www.stsjohnandpaul.org/FaithFormation/Children.jsp>, and teach their child this material at home. To receive credit for Catholic Vision of Love, home study students should complete and return the Review Page which is also available online.

## **FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM POLICIES**

**COMMUNICATIONS:** The Faith Formation office strives to maintain excellence in all communications with parents while also working within budgetary limits for staffing and postage. As a result, the Faith Formation office communicates with parents by e-mail whenever possible – so please check your e-mail regularly. Parents should also give prompt attention to mailings from the Faith Formation office and read the bulletin regularly and use the parish web site for quick reference.

**STREAMLINED REGISTRATION:** Students who attend Faith Formation classes are expected to be registered each year. Registration begins in June and is ongoing throughout the year. Notices about registration dates and procedures are sent out in May. Forms are available on the parish web site, <http://www.stsjohnandpaul.org/FaithFormation/Forms.jsp>. Classes fill quickly, so register promptly for the best selection of classes. Registration forms must be completed in full. For students who are new to the program please include baptismal certificates and/or records from previous parishes.

**FEES** A program fee of \$60.00 for one child, \$110.00 for two children and no more than \$150.00 for 3 or more children, helps cover the cost of books and supplies. Some programs have an additional \$10 fee for food. Register Early and pay \$55.00 for one child, \$75.00 for 2 children, and \$110.00 for 3 children. Early Registration begins on May 22 at 8 AM. All fee payments should be included with the family's registration form. Checks should be made payable to SS John & Paul Parish. If at any time financial difficulties prohibit payment of the tuition, please contact the Director of Religious Education. No child will be denied Faith Formation due to financial hardship.

**FAIRNESS** It is our policy to encourage and support opportunities for interaction with a diversity of children as to combat racism, prejudices, and stereotypes based on race, sex, culture, and a fear of disabilities. Jokes, slurs, statements, stories, activities, and material that promote racial, cultural, religious, sexual or ethnic insensitivity by catechists, speakers, students or parents will not be tolerated. Reports of any racial or ethnic intimidations, language, actions, and materials are to be reported immediately to the Director of Religious Education.

**ATTENDANCE** For Summer Program and Weekly Program, regular attendance at classes is necessary for the continuity of class experience. In case of illness of the student, please notify the catechist or parish office, preferably beforehand. The lesson being covered in class will be sent home to the parents so that they may complete the lesson at home. The missed lesson should be

completed at home by reading, studying and completing the activities in the lesson. A student may receive attendance credit for the missed session by completing the online Chapter Review for that chapter at [www.faithfirst.com](http://www.faithfirst.com) and sending the results to the Faith Formation Office at [kbianco@stsjohnandpaul.org](mailto:kbianco@stsjohnandpaul.org). Parents of students who do not receive credit for at least 70% of their classes should call the Faith Formation Office to arrange a make-up plan.

**CONDUCT** Children are expected to act as they would in any school/church atmosphere, as an orderly environment is a benefit to the catechist, the student, and the entire class. Class rules will be explained to the children in a clear and understandable manner on the first day. Summer Program students are asked to sign a Code of Conduct which clarifies conduct requirements. In all programs and events, inappropriate or disrespectful language or behavior will not be tolerated.

**DISCIPLINE** At no time will a catechist use corporal punishment as a means of discipline, nor will children be disciplined whereas to injure or cause harm to the child's self-esteem. Discipline will always be directed to the problem, and not to the class as a whole. Children will never be sent home from Faith Formation without parent(s) knowledge. Steps involved in resolving a discipline order may include:

- Respectful verbal correction
- Re-arranging seats, reviewing rules, waiting for everyone to be quiet
- Time-out in the Director's office.
- The Director being notified and recording each discipline problem reported.
- Parent(s) may be required to attend the child's class.
- Parent/Director/Catechist meeting.
- Parent/Director/Pastor meeting.
- Other means of Faith Formation

**WEAPONS & DRUGS** Offensive weapons or weapon-like objects of any kind and illegal drugs will not be tolerated on the property of SS John & Paul parish or at any function sponsored by the parish at any other location. Possession of either will be dealt with in the following manner: confiscation of items, notification of parents, and notification of police.

**DRESS CODE** What one wears reflects much about the person. Different families have different standards for modesty in dress, so a dress code for Faith Formation events has become necessary. Students are expected to dress neatly, modestly and appropriately for class and participation in church services. Clothing should be clean and loose-fitting. Shirts and tops should have sleeves and modest necklines. Shorts should come down to at least mid thigh.

**ARRIVAL FOR CLASSES AND EVENTS: NO DROP OFFS OR CURBSIDE PICK-UPS:**

Classes begin promptly as indicated on the schedule. It is a courtesy to be in the class on time as not to disrupt the class already in progress. All children, for safety reasons, are to be escorted by a parent to and from the door of the home site or classroom in which they will be instructed. At the Church site Students will be escorted into the lower level classrooms by a parent or authorized adult, using the rear entrance of the building. Parent or Authorized adult will “**sign in**” their child at their classroom. Those whose class is on the upper level may be brought in through the main entrance. If the catechist is not yet present, parents should wait with children until the catechist arrives.

**PLEASE NOTE: The traffic pattern is ONE WAY around the far side of the building to the back door. It is very dangerous coming to the back entrance so that the door is on your right. You will be going against all other traffic! Please do not do this!**

**The fire lane along the curb around the building will always be kept clear! No stopping or parking will be allowed in the fire lane. This is for the safety of all concerned and we ask your cooperation in this matter. The reason for this becomes very clear in an emergency.**

**Parents must always escort children to and from classrooms and watch for children in the parking lot!**

**DISMISSAL:** For the safety of our students, no child will be released to anyone except the parent/guardian of that child at any time unless prior written instruction was given to the catechist. Every attempt will be made by the catechist to dismiss the class on time, however, classes sometimes go a few minutes longer than normal-please wait for your child quietly, until the catechist dismiss the children. Parents should arrive promptly at the end of class to pick up their children. Parent or Authorized adult will “**sign out**” their child at their classroom. If a child is carpooling, parents must provide the office with a signed note of permission to release their child to the carpool parent, including the carpool parent’s name. Those whose class is on the upper level may be brought in through the main entrance. Parents seeking early dismissal must check in with the Faith Formation office and request the office to call the child out of the classroom. Early dismissal creates problems for catechists and should be avoided whenever possible. In situations of divorce, the parish requires a copy of a custody agreement showing who may pick up children and no others will be permitted to pick up these children without a note from the custodial parent.

**FOOD, DRINK, GUM, AND TOYS** The well-being of all who gather here, especially our children, is of the utmost concern to the Parish. We recently reviewed all of our practices in light of the growing number of children living with life-threatening allergies in our midst. The church would like to welcome all of its parishioners and the percentage of the youth population with food allergies is growing steadily. In an effort to welcome all children with special health issues and do our best to make the parish environment safe while they are here, we have adopted a food allergy policy. This policy covers all Faith Formation Programs for children in preschool through grade 8, including Vacation Bible School and the Middle School Summer Program. Please view the Food Policy at: [www.stsjohnandpaul.org/Content/forms/SSJP\\_Allergy\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.stsjohnandpaul.org/Content/forms/SSJP_Allergy_Policy.pdf)  
Children are not permitted to bring or use any food, drink, gum or toys into Faith Formation.

**HOMEWORK** On occasion, catechists may assign small projects for the child to do at home that will strengthen the child’s faith and understanding of the Catholic Church.

**SNOW DAYS** When heavy snowfall occurs on a class day, a decision regarding cancellation of classes will be made at least three (3) hours prior to the start of class. Class cancellations will be announced on the parish web site and on the Faith Formation office voice mail (724-935-2104 x 23). Catechists will be e-mailed and called in the event of class cancellations and will call their classes if possible. TV and radio stations will also be notified. Please note that **CLASSES ARE NOT AUTOMATICALLY CANCELLED WHEN NORTH ALLEGHENY SCHOOLS CANCEL**

CLASSES. Regardless of the decision regarding cancellation, parents are encouraged to stay home if road conditions seem to them to be unsafe.

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN** The Director of Religious Education and Building Manager will conduct periodic fire drills so that all will be able to get out of the building quickly and efficiently in case of an emergency. Children will constantly be under the supervision of the catechist. Emergency exits and procedures are outlined in each room of the building. Emergency procedures will be reviewed with students on fire drill days. All classrooms are equipped with emergency lighting in the event of a power outage. Catechists will carry activated cell phones and will be alerted by phone if a building lock-down becomes necessary due to external threat or weather conditions. In the event of a lock-down children will be provided with calming reassurance and only that information which is necessary for their safety. Lock-down plans will be formulated and secure dismissal procedures will be carried out in accordance with directives of the Franklin Park Police. Parents will be contacted regarding lock-downs as soon as possible.

**MATERIALS FOR CLASS** Each student will have a textbook. Each week, the student will bring home the lesson they worked on that week, but the text book will remain with the catechist. Parents are asked to make sure their children bring with them to weekly classes any other materials specified by the catechist (such as notebook, pencil, Bible).

**SAFE ENVIRONMENTS POLICIES** The Diocese of Pittsburgh has issued detailed policies designed to ensure the safest possible environments for children and young people. All volunteers and staff who have contact with children are required to complete the following: Diocesan Database and National Criminal Record Check, PA Criminal Record Check (Completed with step one), PA Child Abuse History, Protecting God's Children Workshop, Pastoral Code of Conduct and Child Protective Services Law Acknowledgement. All parents are encouraged to complete the Safe Environments requirements so they can assist occasionally in Faith Formation programs. Catechists, also, sign the Cardinal Clause clearance. Safe Environments clearance forms and registration web sites can be accessed through the parish web site at: [www.stsjohnandpaul.org/SafeEnvironments.jsp](http://www.stsjohnandpaul.org/SafeEnvironments.jsp). The Diocesan Abuse Prevention efforts are explained in detail at [www.diopitt.org/abuse\\_home.php](http://www.diopitt.org/abuse_home.php).

**CATECHISTS AND HELPERS NEEDED** While the primary catechists of children are parents, most families find that they appreciate and need parish catechetical programs. SS John & Paul Parish currently has over 250 adult and teen catechists and helpers – and more are always needed. We encourage all adults and teens to consider whether God may be calling you to help build children's faith as a Catechist or Helper. If you are a practicing Catholic in good standing who likes children, and feels called by God, you qualify! We will supply all the training and resources you need.

**ADULT FAITH FORMATION** With all relationships, it is essential to keep working on them! SS John & Paul parish strongly encourages all adults to work on their relationship with God by being involved in continuing adult faith formation. Adult classes are advertised in the bulletin, and adult resources for independent study are available through our Parish Resource Center, in Room 1 downstairs. We can recommend free online adult faith formation programs and Adult Faith Formation is also a component of Family Program Meetings and Family Faith Events.

**FIELD TRIPS** Parent Permission Slips/medical Release forms are required for all field trips and special events. If a child is dropped off without the required forms *completed and signed*, they will not be permitted to participate.

**MEDICAL AND OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS** It is our hope that all children can participate in the Faith Formation programs of the parish, regardless of any special medical or learning issues. Parents should notify the Faith Formation office of any special medical or learning issues that may be of concern, and the parish will work with parents to design a plan to accommodate any special needs as well as possible. If your child requires an Epi-Pen please notify the Faith Formation office. Please remember to request a FORM A and FORM JII (these forms can also be accessed at: [www.stsjohnandpaul.org/Content/forms/SSJP\\_Allergy\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.stsjohnandpaul.org/Content/forms/SSJP_Allergy_Policy.pdf)) which need completed. If you would like to leave medication in the Faith Formation Office these forms need to be signed. If you have any questions, please contact the Faith Formation office. Thank you.

## **THE ROLE OF PARENTS**

Many recent Church documents describe the family as the “Domestic Church.” This means that every home should be a place where Christ is adored and worshipped, faith is taught, scripture is read, service to those in need is a priority, prayer is regular, social justice is promoted, Christian morality is practiced, and love reigns supreme. There are many important aspects of Faith Formation that cannot be provided by the parish – and can only be provided by parents:

- Model the daily practice of faith within the family by making faith-related activities a family scheduling priority
- Grow in adult faith knowledge through Mass, classes, Catholic faith-related books, programs, and/or periodicals.
- Bring children to Mass weekly and help them to learn to appreciate it
- Bring the entire family to the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly
- Own and display the Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church
- Seek the Sacrament of the Sick when family members face serious or difficult illness or injury, physical or mental
- Give clear witness of Christian values in the home through considerate and respectful behavior and speech
- Develop a spirit of prayer through a regular prayer routine and heartfelt spontaneous prayer
- Promote family discussions of faith-related topics and review what is learned in parish classes
- Encourage reading of Sacred Scripture in the home
- Display religious symbols and art in the home
- Speak respectfully about the Church and its leaders and support Church leaders with prayer
- Set high standards for courtesy, generosity, honesty, modesty, obedience, and reverence.
- Present authentic Catholic teaching (not just opinions) on morality and model it in family life – if you disagree with the Church, discuss disagreements with your Pastor or other knowledgeable adult catechists, and give the Church a chance to explain the reasons for the teaching
- Talk openly about your own personal relationship with Christ
- Encourage an attitude of thankfulness to God and appreciation of other people

- Strictly monitor TV, movies, cell phones, I-pods, and computers for objectionable content
- Provide simple rules for behavior and consistent, fair consequences for disobedience
- Be a good listener and provide times for personal attention for each child
- Check out the standards of other homes where your child will visit or play
- Participate as a family in parish events and enjoy parish fellowship
- Display positive support for the child's spiritual growth and work to ensure adequate Faith Formation throughout all levels of development from infancy through college
- Cooperate and work with catechists of the Faith Formation program, taking time to express appreciation for their generous gift of time
- Provide a model of Christian service to the poor and sick through periodic gifts of time, talent and treasure to those in need
- Provide a model of Christian stewardship through regular giving of time, talent, and treasure to the parish community.
- Invite non-Catholic friends to join you at Church events and discover the joy of our faith!