

St. Wenceslaus Faith Formation

Family Handbook



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Dear Parents,

Welcome to the St. Wenceslaus Faith Formation Program! As primary Catechists and role models in the faith for your children, our role is to support you, the parents, in your efforts to live out the commitment you made at your child's Baptism to raise them in the Catholic faith. In doing so, we pray that your own relationship with Jesus Christ is deepened and strengthened.

“But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirty fold.” (Mt 13:23)

To make the Faith Formation successful we rely on parents, Catechists, priest, deacons, students, volunteers, and parish and school staff. It is only by working together within God's plan that the seeds of faith are planted so as to grow and produce fruit abundantly.

Our program consists of approximately 500 students, 45 Catechists, and many more volunteers. In order to be effective in our efforts and to help answer any questions that you may have, we have created this handbook as a guide and resource for you to refer to throughout the year for information regarding the Faith Formation Program. If at any-time, you have questions or concerns that are not addressed in this handbook please contact the office.

You and your family are an important part of St. Wenceslaus and it is a privilege to journey with you in faith.

Peace & Blessings,

Nicholas Emanuel
Director of Faith Formation

*“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,
teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.
And behold, I am with you always,
until the end of the age.
(Mt 28:19-20)*

Mission Statement

The mission of the Faith Formation Office is to provide learning experiences and opportunities that enable the family to journey in faith by coming to a deeper understanding of the message of Christ, by experiencing a Christian Community and by being guided in their worship, prayer, and service to others.

Philosophy

Using the *General Directory of Catechesis* issued by the Congregation of the Clergy, the *National Directory of Catechesis* issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and the objectives set forth by the Archdiocese of Omaha, the Faith Formation Program has been created to help with the faith development of the total person in all stages of life.

The Faith Formation Program exists to walk alongside parents as they strive to fulfill the promises they made at their child’s Baptism and to help them grow in their own relationship with Jesus Christ. We stress the fact that faith formation is the primary responsibility of the parents and we can only assist in their obligation. We encourage modeling by parents as a chief source of educating children. Where the faith is a priority of the adults in the household, so this priority will influence the total family response.

The Church continues the mission of Jesus whose teaching has been handed down to us through the apostles. The ministry of faith formation serves the church in that mission. It enables our faith to become living, conscious, and active.

Circle of Care

Providing a safe environment that allows our children to learn is of utmost importance. In accordance with the Archdiocese of Omaha, all adults who come in regular contact with minors must participate in a Circle of Care workshop. Adults will be informed by Sacred Scripture, the special commitment associated with the vocation to ordained ministry and the professional criteria for those who dedicate themselves to the care, education, out of Archdiocesan guidelines formation, and safety of children and young people.

Faith Formation Class Registration

All families who wish to register in the St. Wenceslaus Faith Formation Program must be registered parishioners before registering with the Faith Formation Office.

Faith Formation Classes are offered weekly at the following times:

Wednesday (Grades K-8):

4:15 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

6:15 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

- † Class assignments are accepted on a first come, first served basis. Assignments are led by the Holy Spirit and made prayerfully. Only under extenuating circumstances will requests for specific Catechists and placement with friends be considered.
- † New students must submit a copy of their Baptism Certificate at the time of registration unless Baptized at St. Wenceslaus.
- † All personal information will be kept confidential and never given out without prior approval.
- † Any change in class time must be requested 2 weeks before the first class and will only be made as space allows.
- † After January 1st, students will not be allowed to switch to another class. If a student is unable to attend class, parents will have the option to home school.
- † All changes must be made through the Faith Formation Office. Catechists are not allowed to make changes.

Friends in Faith Formation (Discipleship Form)

- † St. Wenceslaus supports the role of parents in handing on the faith to their children. Also, the Faith Formation program relies greatly on adults to help in various capacities. At least one parent from each family is asked to help at least once during the school year in some area of Faith Formation. Please refer to the Friends in Faith Formation form and prayerfully consider where you would like to help.
- † Catechists receive free tuition for their family (this is a weekly commitment).
- † Assistant Catechists receive tuition at ½ cost (this is a weekly commitment).

Food & Drink

Food and drink are NOT allowed in the classrooms at any time. If food or drinks are to be used during class time, the class will be moved to the Social Hall or other room where food and drinks are permitted.

If you wish to send treats with your child to celebrate a Birthday or other special occasion, you are asked to communicate your wishes to your child's Catechist in advance. Please be sure that all snacks are nut free and individually wrapped so that the students may take them home.

Communication

Communication from the Faith Formation Office will take place primarily through email. Newsletters or other forms of communication, informing parents/guardians of current events in their child's class, will be emailed or sent home with your child periodically.

Parents are encouraged to maintain regular communication with your child's Catechist and contact the Catechist as soon as a need arises. Please see Discipline Policy for further information.

Care and Use of Parish School

The Parish School is a shared space by all areas of the parish community. Respect of the facility and belongings of others is required at all times. Students who damage or destroy parish facilities or belongings of others will be required to make complete restitution and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.

Tuition Fees

- † Tuition fees are reviewed and established annually by the Parish Council and the Pastor. Parents/Guardians shall be advised of the fee at the time of registration for the following school year.
- † 50% of the tuition fee (***non-refundable***) is due at the time of registration to secure a spot for your child in a class. Full tuition is required by September 14th.
- † Tuition payments received after the initial registration must be paid in the Parish Office.
- † No child is turned away due to inability to pay. Financial aid is available. Contact the faith Formation Office for more information.

Tuition Refund Policy

- † Up to 2 weeks before the first class and after the first class begins = 50% refund of tuition paid after the initial deposit.
- † October 1st through December 31st = 25% refund of tuition paid after the initial deposit.
- † After January 1st = No Refund

Class Size

To provide the best learning environment possible for our students, the Faith Formation Program strives to maintain a maximum of 15 to 1 Student/Catechist ratio for grades K - 8.

Classes reach maximum capacity quickly, therefore those not able to be placed in their first choice of class will be placed in the 2nd as space allows.

Attendance

To assure continued quality of faith formation for your children, your assistance is requested by having your children present for all classes.

ABSENCES: If your child will not be attending class for any reason, please notify the Faith Formation Office at 330-1889 **BEFORE 3:00 p.m.** or you may send an email 24 hours before class to meschedec@stwenc.creighton.edu. To ensure the safety of your children, if you fail to notify the Faith Formation Office of the absence, we are required to contact you regarding the absence.

TARDIES: For safety reasons, the front doors of the school are unlocked for only a short time. Once the doors are locked and classes begin your child will be considered tardy. If your child arrives after the doors are locked, they will have to ring the door bell to be allowed into the building. They are asked to check in at the office to avoid the office staff from calling to check on the absence.

Nuisance and Illegal Items

Items which may cause disruptions or distractions during class are not permitted. Items brought to class that cause disruptions or distractions will be confiscated by the staff and turned into the Faith Formation Office and may be picked up as the student leaves the building.

Items brought to class for the purpose of selling and trading shall also be considered nuisance items.

State laws and St. Wenceslaus policy strictly prohibits the use, evidence of use, or possession and/or transfer of narcotics, depressants, stimulants, hallucinogens, look alike pills of any type, or possession of drug-related paraphernalia, anywhere in the Parish Education Center, St. Wenceslaus Church, or any Faith Formation sponsored activity. If students choose to violate this policy, they may be suspended or referred to the appropriate legal authorities. Repeated violation of the policy may result in expulsion.

It is also prohibited for students to carry and/or smoke tobacco products on parish property or at parish sponsored activities. Students who violate this policy are subject to suspension or expulsion.

Students are prohibited from carrying and/or using weapons, i.e. guns, knives, or any material intended to be used as a weapon. Students who violate this policy are subject to expulsion.

Medication

The St. Wenceslaus Faith Formation personnel will not dispense medication. Exceptions to this policy must be authorized by the Director.

Dress Code

How we dress is a reflection of who we are. Students should dress casual but modest, i.e., jeans or long shorts, shirts/t-shirts without logos bearing messages contrary to our Catholic beliefs. No cutoffs, torn jeans, short-shorts, low riding pants, tank tops, belly-shirts, muscle shirts, sport bras, or bra straps that show. No hats should be worn while inside of the classroom. If a student is deemed inappropriately dressed, the parents will be called to pick up the child.

During winter weather, students must come with a coat, hat and gloves. In the event of a fire or gas leak, the students will vacate the building. They will be affected by the cold temperatures if they do not have a coat, hat and gloves.

If the Catechist feels a need to inform the parents of a particular situation involving your child he/she will contact you immediately to address the situation.

Special Needs Students

“Every Christian community considers those who suffer handicaps, physical or mental, as well as other forms of disability—especially children—as persons particularly beloved of the Lord.” (GDC,189)

All of God’s children are welcome into the Faith Formation Program. In collaboration with the parents/guardians, the Director of Faith Formation, and Catechists, efforts will be made to accommodate those with special needs to the best of our abilities.

A parent, guardian, or other qualified person may be required to be within the locale of the classroom during class time to such a degree that special services would need to be provided for that child in the event of emergencies (including drills), use of the rest room facilities, or other hygiene need.

Special consideration will be given for any adult/child who is wheelchair bound or physically limited (i.e. crutches, leg braces, etc.).

Student Illness During Class Time

In case of illness or injury, the parent/guardian or those designated by the parent/guardian will be called to pick up the child. Under NO circumstances will a sick or injured child be allowed to walk home.

Early Dismissal

A written request from a parent/guardian is required for a student to leave class before dismissal time. A parent, guardian, or other adult specified by the parent must **come into the office** to pick up your child.

Dismissal/Cancelation of Class

Dismissal: No child will be allowed to walk home without prior written consent of the parent/guardian.

Cancellation: If classes are cancelled due to inclement weather or another reason, it will be posted on TV and KFAB. If Millard Public Schools or the Archdiocesan Catholic School Office cancels classes, then St. Wenceslaus Faith Formation Classes will also be canceled. If possible, an email blast will be sent out to Catechists, Catechist Assistants, and parents.

Visitation

All visitors must come to the office to check in and obtain a visitors badge. Due to liability, non-registered students are prohibited from attending classes.

Fire, Tornado, and Disaster Drills

To insure the safety of the students, drills are held in case of fire, tornado, or intruder during the first month of classes. Procedures for each have been defined by the Fire Department and the Civil Defense Department and are posted in each classroom.

All Catechists and other staff are versed in the defined procedures for emergencies.

In case of emergencies, NO personnel staff will remain in the office to answer telephones. All incoming messages will be recorded on voicemail and will be answered when it is safe to do so.

Discipline Policy

In order to ensure the support of the Faith Formation Office, Catechists are asked to follow the Discipline Policy as closely as possible. Establish classroom rules/boundaries and consequences at the beginning of the school year and be consistent from the very beginning.

1. Catechists are asked to address situations immediately. Verbal warning.
2. If the problem continues, the student is sent to the Faith Formation Office with their textbook. After speaking with the Director of Faith Formation or other adult in charge, the student may or may not be sent back to the classroom. Written and/or verbal notification will be given to the student's parent about the visit.
3. If the problem still continues, the student is sent to the Faith Formation Office and the parents will be called to pick up their child and a conference will be scheduled. The student will not be allowed back in class until after the conference takes place.
4. If the problem still continues, the student will be sent to the Faith Formation Office, the parents will be called to pick up their child and they will not be allowed back in class for the remainder of the school year. Parents will be given the option to home school.

Contacting Your Child's Catechist

It is Faith Formation Office policy to never provide personal contact information of the Catechists or other volunteers to others without prior approval. If a parent or other person requests to contact a Catechist, the Catechist will be notified and asked to contact you.

Complaint Procedures

A parent/guardian who has a question regarding a situation involving his/her child is asked to follow this procedure.

1. Contact your child's Catechist to discuss the situation and work with the Catechist to arrive at possible solutions. If a conference with the Catechist is necessary, please arrange the time and place with the Catechist.
2. If the concern cannot be resolved with the Catechist, the parent/guardian should then request a conference with the Director of Faith Formation. After discussing the situation with both parties, the Director will act as a facilitator making every effort to resolve the issue and initiate reconciliation between the two parties.
3. If resolution and reconciliation have not been achieved after discussions with the Director and Catechist, the pastor will be asked to assist in resolving the situation and achieving reconciliation.

Classroom Procedures

As a sign of respect, students should address Catechists and Catechist Assistants as Mrs., Mr., Miss, or Ms. First names are permissible, such as Miss Katie.

As students arrive, those in Grades K - 6 should report to the Community Room. Students in Grades 7 & 8 should go directly to their classrooms and are asked to sit in a line along the wall outside of the classroom until their Catechist gives permission for them to enter the classroom.

Catechists may choose to send home your child's textbook each week to encourage family reinforcement of the lesson. Students must bring their textbook to class each week.

Most Catechists choose to send home information to parents in a folder each week. Parents are asked to check this folder each week and return it with their child the following week.

Catholic Youth Bible

Families with children in grades 6 - 8 are encouraged to purchase a Catholic Youth Bible through the Faith Formation Office for their child. Bibles are used on a regular basis and should be brought to class each week. If a student does not possess a Catholic Youth Bible they are free to bring another Bible from home (must be a Catholic Bible) or borrow a Bible from the Faith Formation Office. Bibles in the Faith Formation Office should be checked out by the Catechist on an as-needed basis.

Faith Formation Office Hours

Due to the nature of the Faith Formation Ministry, our office hours may vary. Generally, we will be open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday(8 am - 5 pm), Wednesdays(8 am - 8 pm), and Friday(8 am - 12 pm).

Sacramental Information

Generally, celebrations of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Eucharist takes place in the 2nd grade.

Confirmation takes place in the 8th grade. According to standards set forth by the Archdiocese of Omaha the preparation process takes 2 years to complete.

If a student enters the program during the 2 year preparation process, he/she will be placed in a regular Faith Formation class or an alternate class based on the amount of catechesis the child has received in the past. Each case is considered on an individual basis between the Director of Faith Formation and the parents/guardians.

Students who have not been baptized and reach the age of reason (7 years old) will automatically be placed in the RCIA for Children Program.

Students in 9th - 12th grades seeking Confirmation will be placed in a special sacrament preparation class offered at specific times of the school year.

