

St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Community

Religious Education Formation **Children, Youth and Families**



Family Handbook **2017-2018**

St. Mark the Evangelist
Faith Formation Office
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Introduction

St. Mark the Evangelist Religious Education/Formation strongly supports the primary and essential role of parents in bringing their children into a life of faith. It is by the parents' Christian example, their participation in the celebration of weekly Liturgy and their interest in the formal religious education/formation of their children that true knowledge and faith is developed.

Formation offerings (Ages, Days, Times) All sessions take place in our Parish Center

- ***Children's Liturgy of the Word***
 - Ages 3 and older: Every Sunday, 9:30 a.m. Liturgy
- ***Religious Education Formation (REF)***
 - Grades K-5: Sundays, 11a.m.- 12:30 p.m. (September 24th- May 6th)
 - Grades 6-12 REF/YOUTH GROUP: Sundays, 6-7:30pm (September 24th- May 6th)
- ***Sacramental Preparation*** (Reconciliation, Eucharist, Confirmation)
 - Reconciliation and Eucharist: 2 year preparation (2nd grade reception)
 - Confirmation: 2 year preparation (Spring of 9th grade year reception)

Registration and Fees

The registration fee for REF covers the cost of textbooks, materials and building costs. All fees should be paid at the time of registration. All families can participate in REF regardless of their ability to pay the fee. Stewardship is an important aspect of belonging to a parish and participating in parish programs. All Parishioners are encouraged to share time, talent and treasure to help sustain the life and mission of the parish. Opportunities for stewardship are available to help offset the REF Fees if there is a need. Please contact the Faith Formation Office to make alternative arrangements.

At the time of registration, please notify the Religious Education/Formation Office of any special needs, i.e. any dietary needs, allergies, special learning adaptations or concerns regarding your child.

General Fees for 2017-18 Year

Registered St. Mark Parish members:

- \$80.00 per child/youth
- \$220.00 maximum per family

Non-Parish members:

- \$100 per child/youth

Fees for Sacramental preparation:

- \$50. 00 (Reconciliation/Eucharist, Confirmation)
- (These fees are to cover the cost of extra books, materials, and events)

Communication

E-mail is now our most direct form of communication. All parents are asked to please submit their e-mail address so that we can communicate to you important information, updates and reminders. Catechists will also be compiling e-mail lists and are asked to be in touch with families on a regular basis. If you do not have an e-mail please contact the DFF for other arrangements.

Curriculum

Kindergarten:	Stories of God's Love – RCL Benziger
Grades 1-5:	Blest are we: Faith and Word Edition – RCL Benziger
Grades 6-7-8:	Spirit Lectionary Based – Good Ground Press
High School:	Diocese of Lansing High School Religion Curriculum themes
Rec/Eucharist:	Blest are we and Reconciliation and Eucharist Home Resource – RCL
Confirmation:	Decision Point Confirmation Program – Dynamic Catholic

All curriculums are available to be reviewed by parents upon request. Please contact the DFF.

In addition to the session curriculum, your assistance in helping your child/ren memorize the prayers they are to know, as recommended by the Diocese of Lansing, would be greatly appreciated.

Prayers and Doctrine to know

General Concepts for ages 3-5

- Sign of the Cross
- Our Father
- Hail Mary
- Meal Prayers
- Morning and night prayers.

General Concepts for ages 6-8

- All of the above
- Act of Contrition
- Apostles Creed

Introduce

- The 10 Commandments
- Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, Reconciliation
- Holy Days
- Rosary

Supplies

Many of the supplies needed for all sessions are provided. All children should be prepared for each session by bringing their take home folder with them to REF.

Sacramental Preparation

Preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation requires that your child be baptized in the Catholic Church or if baptized in another Christian denomination, have made a Catholic Profession of Faith. A copy of your child's Baptismal certificate is needed as soon as possible. Please contact the Parish of Baptism and either have a copy sent to you or to St. Mark C/O Director of Faith Formation.

The Religious Education/Formation calendar lists the dates for the Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation parent meetings. It is required that at least one parent attends all meetings and gatherings. At these, you will receive all the information on a variety of topics such as the history and theology of each of these sacraments, the faith development needs of your Child/ren and how to help prepare them (along with the church) for the sacraments.

First Reconciliation and First Eucharist

The focus of the Sacrament is in celebrating God's love and forgiveness. Because we experience God's love in this visible way, it enables us to also become more loving and forgiving. Your child can better understand and appreciate this, if he/she also experiences forgiveness in the family.

The parish celebration of First Reconciliation for the child preparing and their parents will be held on Saturday, December 9, 2017 at 10:00a.m. in the church. This will be a communal service that will be celebrated together.

It is extremely important for your child to come to Liturgy (Mass) every week so that he/she knows that celebrating Eucharist is something we do as a community on a regular basis. The word "Eucharist" means thanksgiving. We gather and are thankful for all we have in Jesus, and we are strengthened to be able to continue to live as the Body of Christ. If this has not been your pattern of worship, please make a commitment now to attend Mass every Sunday. Your example of faith is essential to your child's life of faith. The Sacrament of First Communion/Eucharist will be celebrated on Saturday, May 5, 2018 at a 10:00am Liturgy.

Parents will be expected to attend preparation meetings, please refer to the yearly calendar for these dates. At these meetings adults will be more deeply catechized in the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist, as well as a sharing of practical ideas of how smaller children come to or catch faith. The Catholic Church has been publically stating for over 25 years that all forms of catechesis are orientated toward adults. It is adults who have the greatest capacity to understand and incorporate faith into their daily lives. In the past people thought that faith formation was for children and not adults. Today, however, we try to follow Jesus' example of teaching primarily the adults who then will quite naturally turn around and share that teaching with their children. At the parent meetings, you and your child will receive a book on Reconciliation and Eucharist to help you talk to your Child/ren at home on these important sacraments. Since parents are the primary educators of faith formation for their children, the workbooks will provide you the opportunity to discuss these sacraments as a family at home.

Confirmation

Confirmation completes the Sacraments of Initiation and is usually celebrated in the spring of 9th grade. A candidate must be a practicing Catholic attending weekly Liturgy, and have completed 8th and 9th grade religious formation and Confirmation preparation. Attendance at weekly formation sessions for 8th graders and attendance at the Bi-weekly and once a month Mini sessions for 9th graders is required. Absences will require make up work. It is expected that all candidates for Confirmation and their parents and/or sponsor attend all required meetings, as well as Confirmation rehearsal.

Parents and Confirmation Candidates are also asked to attend 8th and 9th grade parent/youth Confirmation meetings. The purpose of these meetings is to provide you with an adult perspective on Confirmation and its relevance to our daily faith lives. **Confirmation will be held at St. John Davison in April 18, 2018 7:00pm (Practice Sunday, April 15, 2018 1:30pm (St. J – Davison)**

Please note*

Grade levels given for Sacraments are the minimum guidelines. If your child is not ready, he/she may certainly wait an additional year or so. If you are concerned about their readiness, please speak with the Director of Faith Formation or the Pastor.

Attendance

Absences

It is expected that parents will use the same guidelines as you would for your Child/ren's school attendance. If your child must be absent, please inform the Catechist or Religious Education/Formation office. Excessive absences may necessitate a conference between the Director of Faith Formation and the child's parents.

Tardiness

Scheduled session time is short and moves quickly, therefore, it is important that parents make every effort to see that their Child/ren arrive on time and stay for the entire session.

Liturgy Attendance

K-12 Religious/Formation is **NOT** a substitute for our Sunday obligation to attend Liturgy and to participate in other Sacraments, such as Reconciliation. To properly form the youth in the Catholic faith, Religious Education/Formation relies on the child's ongoing experience of the larger faith community which includes active participation in the Sunday Liturgy, other Sacraments and Church Traditions.

Inclement Weather Session Cancellation

As soon as weather conditions are deemed too adverse for safe driving you will be notified by email and will also be posted on the parish website: *stmarkgoodrich.org* and the *Parish Facebook Page: Goodrich St. Mark*. If a warning for severe weather has been issued during session time, the children will not be allowed to leave the building until their parent or guardian can accompany them.

Disciplinary Procedures and Policies

It is important to note that our Catechists are volunteers. Although they do receive training and formation to prepare them for teaching in our REF program, they are here because of their desire to share the Catholic Faith with the children of our parish community. We ask parents to encourage proper behavior of their Child/ren to allow the Catechists to conduct their sessions effectively. We hope that by establishing guidelines for behavior, we will be able to maintain a thoughtful and orderly learning environment. Our intent is to provide our children/youth with a truly spiritual and religious education/formation opportunity.

Code of Conduct for Children and Youth

Parents are asked to review these with their Child/ren.

- Children/youth should be polite and respectful toward the Catechists, Aides and other children/youth at all times. Inappropriate, abusive or insulting language is not allowed.
- No cell phones, iPods or other electronic devices during sessions.
- Children/youth should not be disruptive towards the Catechists or peers.
- Learning materials are to be used properly, not damaged, destroyed or wasted.

- Children/youth are to remain in the classroom unless given permission to do otherwise.
- For the safety of all, no roller blades, skateboards or roller shoes are allowed in the building.
- Children/youth are expected to come to each session prepared.

Actions Taken To Correct Inappropriate Behavior

1st offense: Verbal warning from Catechist after taking the child/youth aside.

2nd offense: Verbal warning from Catechist, and child/youth's removal from his/her session. They will be taken to the religious education/formation office for a conversation with the Director of Faith Formation. Parents will be called and made aware of the situation.

3rd offense: After 3 accumulated removals; the parents will be called for a conference with the Catechist, Director and their child. If the child/youth is not responsive to these actions, the parents will be asked to attend the sessions with their child/youth or the child/youth will be excluded from the program. (We will do all we can to assure this does not happen)

Drop off and Pickup

Please be extremely careful when driving through the parking lot before and after sessions. Children/youth should arrive no more than 10 minutes before session time and be picked up promptly at the end of the session. For Grades K-5, a parent must walk their Child/ren to their REF Room and check them in with the Catechist directly. Children will be dismissed after closing prayers and announcements. Children will be released by the Catechist to their parent/guardian only. Youth in grades 6-12 may leave on their own to find their parent or designated driver. Parents are expected to join for the opening and closing prayer session. This provides an opportunity for parental presence as well as Parish communication.

Safe Environment

St. Mark the Evangelist is a parish of the Diocese of Lansing. Our Diocese participates with the United States Catholic Conference Safe Environment guidelines. All volunteers and staff must attend Protecting God's Children training and be registered. All children and youth will attend during session times a Child Safety First (Age appropriate) session during the REF calendar year. Any concerns about Child Safety can be brought to the Pastor, DFF or the Diocese of Lansing. First and foremost St. Mark the Evangelist REF is about providing a safe faith formation learning environment for youth.

St. Mark the Evangelist REF
Contact Information

Dcn. Ron Kenney, Director of Faith Formation
stmarkdff@hotmail.com

810-636-216 (Office)

810-845-8379 (Cell: Call or Text)

Fr. Michael Kuchar, Pastor

stmarkpastor@hotmail.com

810-636-2216

Caitlin Essenmacher, Administrative Assistant

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810-636-2216

Facebook: Goodrich Saint Mark

Website: www.stmarkgoodrich.org

10 TIPS FOR GOING TO CHURCH WITH YOUR FAMILY

1. Go every Sunday. Create an expectation that you and the family will be there. Make it simply a very good habit.
2. Go with joy and expectation. Church-going should not be a drudgery and mere duty. If you treat it as such, so will your children.
3. Arrive on time. As far as church is concerned, that means at least a few minutes early. There are always things to do, so the family can serve others. I know how hard it is to get a family with babies and children ready on time but sometimes we give up and do not even attempt to set out in time. It might simply mean getting the nappy bag and morning tea ready the night before. I know when I didn't there was often some drama which set us back.
4. Pray as a family before you arrive. As you drive to church, commit the day into the Lord's hands, expecting that he will bless.
5. Treat church as an extended family gathering. We are meeting with brothers and sisters in the Lord. This is one of the few places in the community where such relationships are possible. Church should not be a burden or mere duty it is the weekly outing to see the family.
6. Stay until the end. Don't be in rush to leave. Here is where the family is. This is what really matters. Also there are things to do and people to meet.
7. Speak well of church. Have you noticed what big ears children have? If you are all the time carping and criticizing, children will draw their own conclusions. Why should they want to go to a place that makes you so unhappy? You're just as likely to hear yourself being embarrassingly quoted, if you're not careful.
8. Receive the word with thankfulness. God is unknown to so many people and so many others run from him. We have the immense privilege of hearing from him in his word and hearing the word explained and applied each Sunday. One spiritual danger is complacency. The antidote is thankfulness. Another spiritual danger is sleepiness. The antidote is gladness
9. Look for new people and people with needs. There is no harm in seeing the same brothers and sisters, even sitting in the same seats that is what a family is like. But we need to see the congregation with the eyes of love, looking out for people in need and new people. It is so sad that there are many people in our community who have no one to pray for them. Let us at least make sure that we are praying with and for one another. If you have small children, having a conversation without being distracted is practically impossible but try not to let that be an excuse not to meet new people.
10. Thank your Pastor. Remember those big ears again! How can you expect your children to respect the teaching of the word if you continually criticize? We sometimes forget that the ministry of the word is very demanding and that like us, ministers are human beings. He needs encouragement too. Make it a habit of thanking him . As we thank him, our own family will be blessed, because we are being generous and caring.

PARENTAL COVENENT



St Mark the Evangelist 2017-18

Parents are always considered the primary catechists for their children in matters of faith. Religious education formation sessions build on and enrich what you are already doing in the family.

Therefore, by signing this covenant, you commit to sharing this responsibility with our faith community here at St. Mark and will be an integral part of the religious education and formation of your children.

As parents, you also commit to bring your children to religious education formation sessions, and to participate with your children in the celebration of Liturgy (Mass) every Sunday.

Family name: _____

Children/youth: _____

Parent/Guardian signature: _____