

St. James Catholic Church Faith Formation Program



Parent Handbook

Saint James Catholic Church
510 NW 132nd street
Miami, FL 33168
Office Phone: (305) 681-7428
Office Fax: (305) 685-0631
E-mail: faith.formation@stjamesnorthmiami.org

Welcome!

Dear Parent(s),

Thank you for registering your child in our Parish Faith Formation Program. This handbook is designed to provide an overview of our faith formation program.

The Faith Formation classes are vital to the complete Faith Formation of your child. However, they are not meant to be the sole provider of your child's faith formation. Rather, they are intended to support and supplement the religious formation you are already giving your child at home, and the experience of joining our parish community for the celebration of the Mass and sacraments.

Consistent with this approach, this handbook describes our administrative and curriculum policies. It is our hope that it will give you an understanding of our program and encourage you to actively participate.

Together we will grow as a community of believers.

Together in Christ,

Msgr. Chanel Jeanty
Pastor

Saint James Catholic Church



Faith Formation Mission statement

The Faith Formation at Saint James will reach out to all members of our parish family to encourage them in their pilgrim journey; to educate them in their faith life as followers of Jesus; to increase their participation in the liturgical life of the faith community; to challenge and engage them in their practice of the life of faith according to the values of the Gospel; to help them build a life of prayer; to increase their awareness of their mission and responsibility to the faith community and to the larger community.

Faith Formation promotes: Knowledge of the Faith, Liturgical Education, Moral Formation, Prayer, Education for Community Life, Evangelization.

As a parish, under the guidance and leadership of the Pastor, Saint James continues the message of Jesus Christ that provides the foundation upon which a life of faith, hope, and love is built. We welcome the people of God; we fulfill our baptismal promise to teach about God in the Catholic tradition; we encourage our community to live the Gospel in service to one another; and we celebrate together in prayer and sacrament.

Purpose and Use of this Handbook

This handbook has been prepared for the benefit of all who participate in the Faith Formation Program at St. James Parish. It exists to foster the efficient operation of this program by providing pertinent information. In appropriate circumstances, the Coordinator of Faith Formation have the discretion to take actions other than those specified in the handbook.

This handbook is subject to change at any time when determined to be necessary by Coordinator of Faith Formation. If changes are made to the handbook, parents will be notified promptly.

Philosophy

Our Parish Faith Formation Program is structured to provide catechetical instruction and knowledge of Catholic practices and rituals to all our children.

Parents, by word and example, are the primary teacher of their children and teach them from birth through their entire life. At Baptism, the parent undertakes the responsibility of providing for their child's faith formation.

The Faith Formation staff, catechists and aides are here to assist parents in the spiritual formation and ongoing moral development of their child through a formal program of continuous Faith Formation.

In our program, we seek to provide the catechesis and skills for each child to grow and mature in understanding, positive attitudes, and faithful practice of the Catholic faith.

Through the process of catechetical instruction and participation in Catholic rituals, we hope to deepen the faith and sense of belonging to the Catholic Church in our children, so they will be moved to share their time, talent and treasure in the life of the church now and for the rest of their lives. We strive to assist children in committing themselves to a personal relationship with God, characterized by a vigorous sacramental life, a lifelong pattern of prayer, Christian service, and growth in understanding the catholic faith.

To this end, the Parish Faith Formation program seeks to provide children with opportunities for Church visits, Mass, confession, and other catholic rituals such as the rosary, Stations of the

Cross, and holy hours. This process is achieved with the joint efforts of our parish priests, Faith Formation staff, catechists, aides, parents and students. Committed to this active partnership, we place our efforts with confidence in God's loving hands.

Parental Responsibility

By enrolling their child(ren) in the Faith Formation Program at St. James Parish, parents are expected to participate with their child(ren) in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on Sundays as well as Holy Days of Obligation. Parents are also expected to participate in the sacramental life of the Church (specifically Reconciliation and Eucharist) and to include their children in these sacramental celebrations as the children are eligible to participate in them. Parents are the first catechists in the life of the children.

Weekly Mass and Confession Schedule

All students in our Parish Faith Formation Program are expected to participate in Sunday Mass. Faith Formation classes cannot and do not substitute for the Sunday liturgy. The commitment to attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation is especially important in the years in which a child is preparing to receive a sacrament.

- Mass Schedule

Sunday Obligation: Saturday evening: 5:30 p.m. (English)

Sunday morning: 7:30 a.m. (Creole), 9:30 a.m. (English),
12:00 a.m. (Spanish), 5:00 a.m. (Creole/English)

Holy Days of Obligation: Eve of the Feast – 7:30 p.m.

Day of the Feast: 6:15 a.m. 8:00 a.m. 7:30 p.m.

** Always check the parish bulletin or website for any changes

Holy Days of Obligation: Jan. 1—Mary, Mother of God, Ascension Thursday – 40 days after Easter, Aug. 15—Assumption of Mary, Nov. 1—All Saints Day, Dec. 8—Immaculate Conception and Dec. 25—Christmas.

Confession Schedule

30min before all the masses

Please check the bulletin for additional times during Advent and Lent.

Registration, Tuition and Sacrament Fees

It is recommended and necessary that all forms be returned as soon as possible or no later than the due date so that the correct number of books, materials and class sizes can be adequately determined.

Upon initially registering for the program, you must provide a baptismal certificate for your child(ren). If your child(ren) was baptized at St. James, this is not required as we will check it off from our records.

If you are transferring from another Faith Formation program or catholic school, please provide the necessary documentation from the previous parish such as copy of permanent record card, dates of sacraments, etc.

If you cannot find your registration form, copies of the form can be found at the parish office or on the parish website stjamesnorthmiami.org and look under Faith Formation.

Custody or Legal Agreements

It is the responsibility of both biological parents to provide the parish with the latest, most up to date Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. St. James Parish will request these documents at the beginning of the year. If either the Custody Order or Custody Agreement changes during the

course of the year, it remains the responsibility of both biological parents to provide that document to the parish immediately.

If a court order prohibits our releasing a child into the custody of a non-custodial parent, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program director with an official copy of the court order or custody section of the divorce decree.

Special Needs policy

Children with special learning needs are welcomed and included in our programs. Parents are asked to indicate their child's special needs on the registration form so that the needs of your child may be met, and any additional help or materials needed in the classroom can be obtained. Any information provided by the parents is held in strict confidence by the staff and your child's catechist.

Tuition and Fees

Registration Fees: \$25

The current tuition for the 2023-2024 school year is as follows:

1 child	\$100
2 children	\$200

Sacrament Fees (all 2nd and 7th graders)

Confirmation 7th gr. & up	\$50
Eucharist and Penance 2ndgr.	\$50

If your family is experiencing any financial difficulty, please contact the Faith Formation Office. All information will be held confidential.

Sacramental Preparation

Important sacramental information is given out to all families during the parent sessions. Please transfer all important dates to your home calendar. A separate Sacramental preparation packet will be given.

1. The child must be baptized and have a baptismal certificate on file in the Faith Formation Office (not necessary if baptized at St. James).
2. The child must participate in the Faith Formation Program for two (2) consecutive years.
3. Students must have a basic understanding of the course content and knowledge of the Catholic faith and is deemed ready to take that next step in their relationship with Christ and his Church
4. Families need to attend Mass every Saturday evening / Sunday and Holy day of Obligation.

Class Times

September through May (usually begins the Wednesday after Labor Day)
Wednesday evenings – 6:15 to 8:00 p.m.

Attendance

Regular attendance in Faith Formation classes is mandatory for students to move to the next level.

- No more than 3 absences are permissible.
- After 3 absences, the child will be sent home from the Faith Formation Office notifying the parent of the number of absences. All missed work should be obtained from the child's catechists.

- Excessive absences of 5 or more may result in the child not moving to the next level. If your child is absent, please call the Faith Formation Office (305-681-7428) and then contact the child's teacher for any missed assignments / work.

Consistent attendance during sacrament preparation years is essential for your child to be ready to receive Reconciliation, Eucharist or Confirmation.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

We expect students to be on time for class each week. Teachers are available at 6.15 p.m. and class will start at 6.30 p.m. Parents should refrain from dropping off the students too early since we do not permit students in the classroom without the Catechist being present. Students should also be picked up on time at 8:00 p.m.

Arrival

All parents are to park their car in the parish hall parking lot and walk their child(ren) to the parish hall.

Dismissal

All children must be picked up by a parent or designated adult. If a child must leave early from class, please send a note to the catechist. All these procedures are put into place to insure the safety of your child. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

Student Textbooks and Required Materials

Every student enrolled in our Parish Faith Formation Program will receive a grade level student textbook. If a student loses their book, a new book must be purchased. We encourage parents to review the material from the textbook that is taught each week. Every student is required to bring the following material to class each week: pen and / or pencil, copy book, folder, crayons, glue, and scissors. Please be sure your child's name is in their textbook as well as on all their supplies.

Keeping God's Children Safe

Teaching Touching Safety Lessons are presented to the children in our Faith Formation Program. The Lesson is approved by the Archdiocese of Miami Safe Environment Office. It is presented once a year and tied into the Religion Guidelines. Parents will be notified 1 week before the lesson is to be taught. Lessons are available for parent perusal in the Faith Formation Office.

Conduct, Discipline and Building Usage

The Parish Faith Formation Program offered by Saint James Parish is designed to assist parents with the faith formation of their children, as well as foster values and behaviors that are in accord with the Catholic Church teachings. The program has NO TOLERANCE for behaviors that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals, including but not limited to ongoing acts of obstinacy, improper language, fighting, physical, emotional and psychological intimidation, vandalism, demeaning behaviors such as name calling, obscene language or gestures, and harassment.

These categories do not cover every possible situation. The Pastor/DRE/CRE determines what behavior is an appropriate or inappropriate behavior, both in and out of the classroom, in the school community and generally outside the school community wherever such improper behavior affects the school community. Conduct by children or parents / guardians, or anyone acting on their behalf, incompatible with the educational and religious mission of the parish is grounds for disciplinary action, including but not limited to immediate dismissal of the student, as well as reporting the incident to the appropriate legal authorities where appropriate.

Student Code of Conduct

Students must always act appropriately. They must always show respect to all their brothers and sisters in Christ. The list of our brothers and sisters in Christ includes, but is not limited to:

priests, sisters, catechists, aides, parish staff, Faith Formation office staff, other volunteers, fellow students and parishioners.

Lack of respect toward persons or property or irresponsibility will not be tolerated. Students are expected to maintain this standard of behavior.

1. No student may enter a classroom without the supervision of a Catechist or aide.
2. No running at any time, especially in the hallways and stairs.
3. No shouting or profane language.
4. Chewing gum is not permitted.
5. Students should not travel the building alone.
6. No student will write on any school or student property or destroy or take another student's property.
7. All students will maintain self-control in not touching or hitting another student or adult.

Discipline

Every person is worthy of being treated with care and the respect fitting one made in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, classroom behavior needs to be characterized by genuine Christian care, mutual respect and honesty.

Disruptive behavior prevents learning for the whole class and can be frustrating for the catechists and other students. Because of the limited time students spend in the Faith Formation classrooms every week, catechists understand that students stay in the classroom. Lack of self-discipline during class will be addressed promptly. In the event that a child causes a disturbance that a catechist is unable to resolve, the following steps will be taken.

If the inappropriate behavior does not improve the following procedure will be followed.

1. Verbal correction by the catechist.
2. If the behavior persists, the catechist will contact the parent.
3. If the behavior continues, the student will be sent to the Director of Faith Formation. The PREP staff member will talk with the child, listening to what the child also has to say. The child may be asked to write a formal letter of apology.
4. If all these methods have not improved the student's behavior, a parent will be required to come to class with the student.

A student will be removed from the classroom immediately and parents will be notified promptly for any of the following violations:

1. Drugs, alcohol or substance abuse.
2. Verbal or physical harassment
3. Fighting
4. Stealing or damaging parish property
5. Jeopardizing another person's safety.

The pastor will be notified if any of the above circumstances occur.

Cell Phones

We realize that devices such as cell phones have become a necessary tool in keeping communications open with children, especially for working parents. However, it is the policy of this program that cell phones may not be used during catechetical sessions. Phones may be kept in their school bags only. If this rule is not kept, the phone will be confiscated by the catechist and sent to the Faith Formation Director and can be picked up after dismissal.

Building Usage Rules

It is the responsibility of the catechist along with the support and cooperation of the parents to enforce the following building usage rules.

1. Food is NOT permitted in the classrooms.
2. Students are not to touch items found in the classrooms.
3. Students are NEVER allowed to write on school / parish property, i.e. desks, books, bathroom walls, etc.
These are serious offenses and will not be tolerated.

Communication With Parents

All communication with parents will be done via **notices and reminders**. We will also announce all meetings at church during the announcements. Registration information, Sacrament information, and a yearly calendar will be given to all the parents during our monthly meetings. THIS IS WHY it is MANDATORY to come to the meetings. When you come to our meetings, you will be aware of everything that we are doing and be part of the Faith Formation of your child(ren).

Class Cancellations

It is sometimes necessary to cancel Faith Formation classes due to inclement weather. If the Miami-Dade Schools schools are closed, our classes will also be cancelled. In case of emergency closings or an unforeseen circumstance when classes would need to be cancelled, you will be notified.

Parish Website with Link to Faith Formation Program

We now have a link for our Faith Formation program on the parish website. All pertinent information will also be posted on the site. The parish website is www.stjamesnorthmiami.org Go to the link on the right side for Faith Formation

Faith Formation Calendar

A yearly calendar will be available to all families in September. Please be sure to mark your calendar with these dates. A copy of the calendar will be posted on St. James parish website under Faith Formation.

Faith Formation Program Policy & the Right to Amend

Since situations can arise that were not foreseen at the time of writing this Handbook, the Faith Formation program reserves the right to initiate, change or modify the policies as needed. Parents and students will be notified of any amendments. The Director/Coordinator of Faith Formation and/or the Pastor are the final recourse in all disciplinary situations and may waive any disciplinary rules for just cause at his/her discretion.

Faith Formation CLASS DRESS & BEHAVIOR CODE

Students of St. James Catholic Church (Faith Formation) classes are expected to dress appropriately when attending CCD classes. Shirts must have a sleeve and bottoms are to be of acceptable length. Inappropriate clothing includes: too short, too tight, visible underwear, tears in jeans or other clothing, or similar. Inappropriate footwear include: flip flops, shoes with holes or dirty, etc. Students deemed to be dressed inappropriately will not be allowed in class until proper attire is worn.

Parental Commitment

As Parents, we recognize that we are our child(ren)'s primary catechist, that is, their first educators in the Faith. Therefore, we commit to the following:

- Create a prayerful atmosphere in our homes.
- Make Faith Formation a top priority
- Assist my child in their Faith Formation including helping them learn their prayers.
- Regularly attend Holy Mass with my child
- Attend every parent sessions (mandatory)
- Attend all required sacramental preparation meetings.
- Submit all fees and documentation in a timely manner.
- I understand that the Sacramental preparation will only start when the Pastor interview the child and the child is ready to receive the sacrament. We Evangelize, not sacramentize!

We fully understand and agree to all of the above criteria on this document.

Safe Environment – Teaching Touching Safety Lessons

Teaching children to protect themselves is part of the mandate of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People adopted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in June 2002. The Archdiocese of Miami is committed to the safety and well-being of its children and vulnerable adults and has implemented the Safe Environment Program to minimize risk and barriers. During this CCD school year, we will teach two lessons on “Touching Safety” for all grades. These sessions are merely to reinforce what you teach at home. Parents can have their child “opt out” of these two lessons. For more information on the Touching Safety program, visit www.Virtus.org.

St. James Catholic Church

Faith Formation Program

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____ Yes, My child may attend the Touching Safety program lessons.

____ No, my child will not attend the Touching Safety program lessons.

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Handbook Acknowledgement

In order to ensure that parents have read and accepted the handbook. Please sign and return this form. Parent / Student Handbook acknowledgement form. This is to certify that I have read the Parent/Student Handbook and that I will abide by the rules and regulations.

Student(s) Signature _____

Grade(s): _____

Parent(s) Signature _____

Date _____