



# Saint Joseph Catholic Church

St. Joseph Catholic Church Faith Formation Handbook

2026-2027

1695 Raoul Wallenberg Blvd.

Charleston, SC 29407

Telephone: [\(843\) 556-4611](tel:8435564611)

Office Hours: Monday-Thursday, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Friday, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Summer Office Hours: Wednesdays & Fridays close at Noon

Class Time Grades 2-8: Sunday Morning 9:15 a.m.-10:15 a.m.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Class Pre-K-1<sup>st</sup> Grade:

Session One: Sunday Mornings, 9:00 a.m.-10:15 a.m.

Session Two: Sunday Afternoon, 11:45 a.m.-1:15 p.m.

Contact: Director of Religious Education and Youth Minister

Molly Pereda

Phone: 806-341-7127

Email: [molly@saintjosephchas.com](mailto:molly@saintjosephchas.com)

Please read the parish bulletin and check your emails for information and schedule changes as needed throughout the year.

# Philosophy of Education

## Religious Education Catechists:

Our catechists are generous volunteers who devote their time to spreading the message of Jesus and building up our faith community by working with the children of our parish. They work as teachers, teacher aides, and substitutes.

## All catechists are required to:

Be in good standing with the Catholic Church by living their Catholic faith in their daily lives.

Conform to all Diocesan requirements. All catechists, assistants, and parent helpers must do a background check through the Diocese and taking a certification training (VIRTUS) on prevention of sexual abuse.

They are also given copies of the policy of the Diocese of Charleston Concerning Allegations of Sexual Misconduct or Abuse by Church Personnel.

They must sign a Code of Conduct pertaining to their personal behaviour. They are aware of the parish's safe environment rules, and they know the procedure for reporting an allegation and also must be aware of mandatory reporter laws.

These teachers deserve respect and appreciation from all students and parents for their sacrifice of time and service that they offer to the families of our parish.

Faith Formation Director: Molly Pereda

(CGS) Pre-K, Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade: Karen Frey, Jessica Bonds, Chrissy Constantine

Second Grade: Cheryl Highfield

Fifth/Sixth Grade: Alicia Crosby

Eighth Grade: Kimberly Salmonowicz

Third/Fourth Grade: Imee Cusion, Dori Sanchez

Seventh Grade: Suzanne Gibson, Sarah McGowan

Adult Bible Study: Leanne Dalton

## General Information

Registration: Registration of new students and re-registration for returning students starts at the end of the Religious Education year in April/May and goes through the summer months. The process includes an online/paper registration form and payment of \$25.00 per child. Max of \$50.00 per family.

-No child will be refused admission to the Religious Education Program because of inability to pay tuition. Parents for whom tuition would cause a severe financial burden should contact the Pastor or Director of Religious Education.

## Needed Paperwork:

Presentation of a copy of a baptismal certificate for each child baptized in other churches. Need date of Baptism if baptized here at St. Joseph's.

For Confirmation: Copy of Baptism, First Communion and First Reconciliation certificates are required.

### **Accidents/Emergency Form**

The Faith Formation Office must have on file an emergency contact form with all information that may be vital to the safety and welfare of your child. This sheet was part of the Registration form for Faith Formation. In case of minor accidents, first aid will be given.

### **Announcements**

Students will frequently be given flyers containing information pertinent to the Faith Formation program. Announcements will also come in emails from the Faith Formation Director (Molly Pereda) or the teacher of your child's class. This information may refer to scheduling changes, attendance at church and class, and for any other special events. Please check with your child weekly if they have been given a flyer. Special announcements, changes in the calendar, etc., will also appear in the parish bulletin, and as a monthly newsletter in your email.

### **Arrival/Dismissal**

All students should be in the building at least five minutes before the beginning of class (9:10 a.m.). We do not want the children alone in the building before class. If you must come to the building early, please remain with your child until class time. Because of the limited amount of time for instruction, it is important that students be on time for Faith Formation. Scheduling and transportation problems that unavoidably result in regular tardiness should be discussed with the Faith Formation Director (Molly Pereda). Dismissal will be at 10:15 a.m.

### **Parents are required to come to the classroom to pick up their kids.**

Note: Be extremely careful in the parking lot area because other activities may be going on in the building. Please observe the Enter and Exit signs posted on the property. This allows for the safe flow of traffic.

No child should leave the building without a parent/guardian or carpool driver. Please be prompt for arrival and dismissal.

### **Bathroom Policy**

Please have your child use the bathroom before class! We get limited time with the students and we would like to have as much uninterrupted teaching time as possible.

### **Homework Assignments**

Students may have homework throughout the year. Check with your child each week for homework assignments. Parents will be notified of incomplete assignments and asked to see that all assignments are completed in a timely manner.

### **Cell Phone Policy**

Please do the following: 1) Do not send your child with a phone, or 2) If your child needs their phone, they are not allowed to take it out in class. This will be strictly enforced. If they take it out during class, the teacher can take it up until the end of class. If this continues, a conversation will be had, and Molly will call the parents.

## **Attendance/Absence**

Because our Faith Formation program has a very limited teaching time frame in which to provide a consistency of instruction, it is required that the children attend regularly.

Our program is sequential; therefore, it is expected that children will attend at all grade levels. Each grade level builds on the previous year.

All absences are considered as un-excused except for the following:

\*Illness of the student

\*Exceptionally urgent reasons that affect the child.

Sports, dancing, or other extracurricular activities are not acceptable excuses for absence or early dismissal from religion classes.

For every absence, a written statement signed by the parent or guardian is required on the day the student returns to class. Instead of a written excuse, you may send an email to the Faith Formation Director (Molly Pereda), before the class with the appropriate information.

No student is permitted to leave the building after arriving for class, except in the case of sickness or similar emergencies. In these cases, the student will wait at the office until the parent arrives. No student will be allowed to wait outside the Family Life Center. If a student needs to be dismissed early, a written statement from the parent must be sent on the day of the early dismissal and parents must meet the student inside the building. Parents should notify the office if someone other than the parent will transport the child.

### **Absence Allowance: 3 missed classes**

**(For First Communion and Confirmation Students, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade, 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Grade)**

**-After 3 missed classes, our sacramental students will be required to make up the class. Please schedule make up classes with the Faith Formation Director (Molly Pereda) by calling the office or sending an email.**

## **Discipline**

Discipline in behaviour and good habits are an important aspect of moral formation.

First offense-The teacher will take the initial action to correct the problem reminding the student of his/her responsibility to himself/herself as well as to the class.

Second Offense-The teacher will send the student to the Faith Formation Director (Molly Pereda) who in turn will speak to the student and, if necessary, call the parents.

Third Offense: The teacher will send the student to the Faith Formation Director (Molly Pereda). Parents will be called and informed that the student will be working independently under the supervision of the Faith Formation Director.

We trust this is as far as we have to go. However, if serious breaches of discipline occur, matters will be referred to Fr. Patrick.

### **Suspension**

Students may be suspended from religious education classes/activities for serious breaches of discipline.

These may include but are not limited to the following:

- Conduct endangering fellow students, teachers, or staff at St. Joseph's.

- Fighting

- Damaging or destroying Faith Formation Property.

- Insubordination

- Leaving the Family Life Center or grounds of St. Joseph without permission.

- Smoking or possession of drugs.

- Possessing, using, or selling controlled substances.

- Possessing or drinking alcoholic beverages.

- Violence of any type.

- Bringing weapons of any sort into the Family Life Center. Any infraction of this rule will result in an immediate call to the Charleston City Police Department.

(This includes not bringing in toy look-alikes)

Whenever an incident occurs that may lead to suspension, the Faith Formation Director and/or Priest shall investigate the alleged offense. This investigation shall include a discussion with the involved student and the student will be given an opportunity to be heard with regard to the alleged offense.

### **Harassment**

Our parish affirms the inherent value of every individual and upholds the respect due to each because of his or her uniqueness as a child of God. Therefore, we are committed to providing a safe working and educational environment which is free from physical, psychological, sexual or verbal harassment for its staff, students, and volunteers.

### **Medication**

The guidelines of the Diocese of Charleston will be followed regarding the procedures for distribution of medication during religious education. Parents are asked to administer medication before or after any religious education class or activity. Parents are permitted to come to the Family Life Center to administer medication to their children. If it is essential that a student receive prescription medication during a religious education class or activity, parents must first meet with the DRE to go over guidelines that will be followed. This will be done on an individual basis.

## **Safety**

Our goal is to create and maintain a safe environment for all children while attending Religious Education classes on the parish property. As previously mentioned, the DRE and catechists have been properly screened through background checks and Safe Environment training. The diocese has also mandated that all students, whether in Catholic School, Faith Formation, or Youth Ministry, participate in a Teaching Touching Safety Program. The creators of the Protecting God's Children program developed this additional series for children, and we are required to offer the class once a year. The program curriculum is offered in a cycle with age-appropriate material.

**This year, 2026-2027 is: Lesson 5: Being a Safe Friend**

**If you determine that you DO NOT want your child to participate, please find the opt-out form with this handbook or reach out the Faith Formation Director for one.**

## **Catechesis of the Good Shepherd: Pre-k-1<sup>st</sup> Grade**

Montessori style learning-students will be presented with lessons by our CGS trained teacher on how God loves them and how Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and in turn how to love the Eucharist with hands on learning activities. This includes setting up an altar, learning about the liturgical calendar and vestments, and practical life skills. In turn, we ask that you make sure you are bringing your children to Mass, which will reinforce what they are learning about the Eucharist in CGS.

## **Curriculum: Elementary Grades 2-6**

Gospel Weeklies-Worksheets that have the Gospel for each week with activities in them, definitions, and age-appropriate material for learning history of salvation through the Old Testament, the Sacraments and the Holy Spirit, living as community members of the Church, and living a moral life. Each grade level has its own theme or focus; however, all grades follow learning about God, Jesus, the Church, the sacraments, and morality.

## **Seventh Grade Curriculum:**

-First year of a two-year program for preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. We will be studying the old testament, new testament, as well as bringing in witnesses to talk about the Catholic faith in their lives, have open discussion on questions about the Catholic faith, and have group discussion on the Sacrament of Confirmation. Students will also learn about Saints and the essential beliefs and practices of the Catholic faith and having a personal relationship with Jesus. 7<sup>th</sup> Grade is a required year for Confirmation.

## **Eighth Grade Curriculum:**

Eighth graders will be preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Spring. They will be learning out of the Book Series: "Confirmed in the Spirit". We will also be using a journal called "Confirmed in the Joy of the Spirit" to discuss more saints and practices for Confirmation. Students will be doing Works of Mercy for the Parish and Community, as well as writing a Saint Report about their Confirmation Saint. They will also be studying the Eight Beatitudes, the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, and all the other sacraments and lives of several Saints. This year, we will also be using Life Teen's Confirmation Program called "Purpose" to lead small group discussions on Confirmation.

# Sacraments

## First Reconciliation/First Communion Program

Preparation for the sacraments is an integral and important part of the Religious Education Program. These celebrations mark important phases in the faith journeys of the children. They are special moments for reflection and renewal for the immediate family and the faith community. At Saint Joseph's, there is a two-year preparation period.

**Under the sacramental guidelines at St. Joseph's, the First Communion/First Reconciliation Program is a two-year program beginning with first grade and concluding with second grade.**

First Grade preparation by learning more about God's love and the Eucharist. Second Grade is preparation for the Sacraments.

The candidates are required to attend a half-day retreat, which will take place on a Saturday in the spring.

Children who come to the program from other parishes must bring a written record of previously completed levels.

Parental involvement in the sacramental preparation of children is of the greatest importance. Parents are expected to take an active role in the faith journey of their child. We will be coordinating having your family volunteer to take up the gifts in the Offertory procession during Mass. This ministry is meaningful to the child and helps him/her to be more involved in the liturgy.

It is the responsibility of the parents to: Foster an active family prayer life.

Nurture the spiritual life of the child by-Participation in weekly Saturday/Sunday Mass.

Be responsible for taking your child to First Reconciliation, the Retreat, and First Communion/rehearsal.

Participate in all parent meetings.

**First Reconciliation: Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2027 at 4:00 p.m.**

**First Communion Retreat: Saturday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2027 at St. John Beloved**

**Rehearsal: Sunday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2027 During Class**

**First Communion: Sunday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2027 during 10:30 a.m. Mass**

## Out of Grade Preparation

There are a number of reasons why a student may not be confirmed in eighth grade. Occasionally, families with high school students may move into the parish from another diocese where Confirmation is conferred in a later grade. In such cases, the DRE makes evaluation of readiness, and a thorough sacramental preparation program is offered to the candidate and his/her family.

For students receiving First Communion and First Reconciliation after 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, work will be done with the DRE and teacher during the Faith Formation class time to teach them about this Sacrament and prepare them for it. DRE will need to be notified of sacraments that have not been received.

## Confirmation Program

Under the sacramental guidelines at St. Joseph's, the Confirmation Program is a two-year program beginning with seventh grade and concluding with eighth grade with the celebration of Confirmation.

Since Confirmation is the second sacrament of initiation, it calls for priority of active participation by parents, candidates, sponsors, and the local faith community.

This year, we are required by the Diocese to start introducing a 7<sup>th</sup> grade confirmation retreat. This Retreat is required and will be held **Sunday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 12:00-5:00 p.m.**

Participation in religious instruction throughout the elementary and junior high school years by regular attendance in either a parish religious education program or a parochial school.

Candidate's parent participation in all sacramental meetings is necessary in assisting your son/daughter in their preparation for the sacrament.

All candidates are expected to contribute Works of Mercy to their Parish Community and to the wider community in Charleston. **8<sup>th</sup> graders will do 8 ministry hours by serving at Mass October-May, and will help with one faith formation event during the year.**

-Saint Trunk or Treat October 25th

-Breakfast with Santa December 13<sup>th</sup>

-Easter Egg Hunt March 7th

All 8<sup>th</sup> grade candidates are required to research the life of a saint and present a typed two-three-page report. The subject of this report is their chosen Confirmation Saint Name. Further instructions for this report will be given during the class. **Due date will be January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2027**

Attendance at the Group Confession before Confirmation: **Saturday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2027 at 11:00 a.m.**

Attendance/full participation in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Confirmation Retreat. **March 21st, 2027, 12:00-5:00 p.m.**

It is important for the candidates and their families to lead a sacramental life and attend Weekly Saturday or Sunday Mass.

**Candidates are also expected to attend Confession at least one Saturday a month at St. Joseph's as part of the process. Confession is from 4:00-4:30 p.m. Please scan the QR code in the confessional to track attendance.**

Parents are expected to take an active role in supporting their son/daughter for the sacrament. Parents are encouraged to share their own faith experience, participate in all sacramental meetings, attend major liturgical celebrations of the Confirmation program, assist the program wherever possible (i.e. classroom, retreat), and nurture the candidate in his/her spiritual development by sharing conversations about Church, faith and morality. Please pray together as a family daily and keep everything associated with Confirmation a positive experience for your candidate as well as for your entire family.