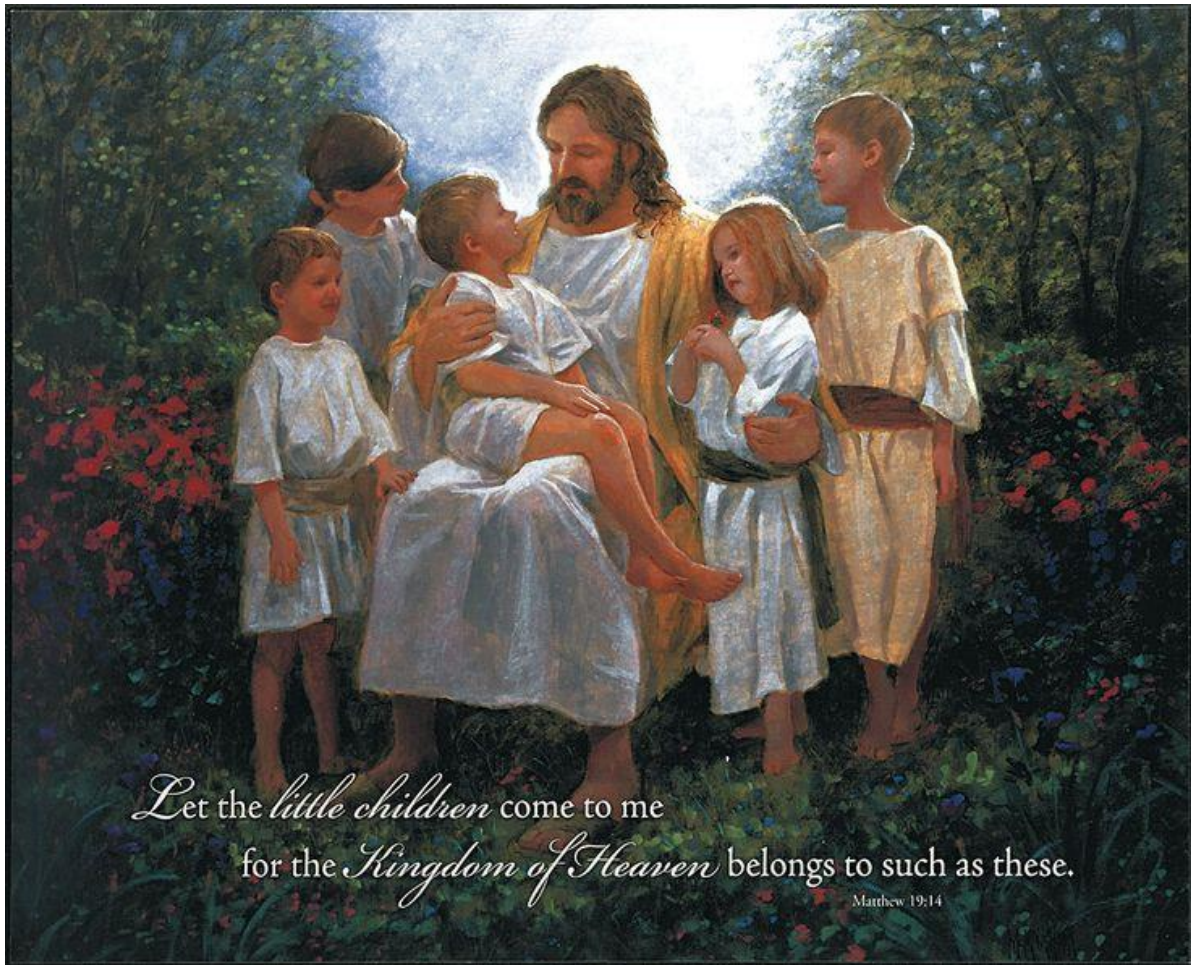


St. James School of Youth Faith Formation & Youth Ministry



Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Dear St. James Parents,

June 1, 2023

Welcome to St. James School of Youth Faith Formation & Youth Ministry. We are looking forward to another great year and encourage you and your entire family to participate in all of our offered faith enriching opportunities.

*In a world of contradictory values, young people need support and encouragement to develop into mature, responsible Catholic adults. Please remember that while our Sunday School program is an important part of your child's religious education, **you as parents are the first and primary educators of the faith, and an important role model for your children.***

*Life can become busy and complicated. It is tempting at times to put aside our responsibilities as Catholics to attend Mass on a weekly basis. It is tempting to not place a priority on regular attendance at Sunday School. It is very important to remember that faith formation extends from infancy to adulthood. **We are all life-long learners and educators of the faith.** It does not begin at First Communion or end with the reception of Confirmation. It is when our children are at their youngest (3-6 years old) that a nurturing relationship with a loving God is most readily developed. As the more concrete concerns of our older teens emerge, an even more serious obligation to provide for a child's spiritual development arises.*

We hope to be companions on your journey of faith with your children, preparing them for a way of life in faith that will be strong, rooted, and everlasting.

Blessings,

Fr. Tim Murphy

St. James School Staff

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (PreK – K)

Karen Mayfield

662-213-6593

stjamescgs@comcast.net

Director of Youth Faith Formation (DYFF) - (Grades 1-8)

Rhonda R. Swita

662-231-7671

rhondaswita13@gmail.com

CYO Coordinator (Grades 7-8)

Jai Eschete

662-322-3077

Escheteot77@bellsouth.net

Director of Youth Ministry – DYM (Grades 9-12)

Mary Frances Strange

662-871-6277

MaryFranStrange@gmail.com

Mission Statement

St. James School of Youth Faith Formation & Youth Ministry strives to provide quality Catholic education for our students. The goals for our program are:

- To share the Catholic Faith in a loving and safe environment.
- To encourage a personal relationship with Jesus.
- To grow in worship of God through prayer, the Sacraments, and the Mass.
- To develop Christ-like attitudes in facing positive and negative aspects of life.

Expectations

Basic expectations from our parents and students are as follows:

1. Strive for 100% student attendance.
2. Students arrive on time for class and stay in their designated learning area the entire time (i.e. no leaving the church premises).
3. Parents assist as classroom volunteers twice a year during at least one of their child's Faith Formation classes, (Grades 1-8), or they volunteer Wed. nights to help supervise Catechist's younger children (ages 6-12). We whole heartedly welcome parents to join us in their child's Faith Formation experience. This procedure also helps satisfy the Protection of Children safety rules whereby at least two adults must be present in the classroom at all times. Another benefit is that parents can take the lesson home and incorporate it into their daily life.
4. Students arrive with a good attitude and treat church property, catechists, volunteers and other students with respect.
5. Students dress modestly and appropriately.

Registration

Annual registration opens in June and ends the third week in July giving ample time to create class rosters and assign catechists, (as classes start in early August). Family contact information must be current and up-to-date as well. When contact information changes or when moving, please notify the staff accordingly.

Arrival and Dismissal

Timely arrival for class is imperative. Faith Formation Sunday morning classes start promptly at 10:45 am and end at 12:00 pm. Please also be prompt in picking up your child. **Children in the Level I Atrium , (Catechesis of the Good Shepherd), and students in Grades 1 and 2 will only be dismissed to a parent or older sibling.** Wednesday night classes begin at 6:00 pm and end at 8:00 pm. For grades 7-8, Faith Formation is from 6-7 pm followed by CYO from 7-8 pm. For grades 9-12, Life Teen is for a full two hours from 6-8pm. Please have your student to class on time.

At dismissal time, if parents of students of any age do not arrive promptly, students should wait in the building. **No students will be allowed to wait in the parking lot.**

Cell Phone Policy

Phones must be silent and out of sight during all instructional times unless they are used during class time for instructional purposes with the catechist's permission.

If a student is using their cell phone during instruction time the following will occur:

- 1st Offense: Verbal warning
- 2nd Offense: The phone is taken away until the end of class in which a parent must come to the classroom to retrieve it.

Discipline Policy

All our students are expected to show proper respect towards their catechists, their fellow classmates, all adult volunteers, and church property. Should disciplinary problems occur, they will be handled in the following manner:

1. The catechist will seek to resolve the problem by discussing the issue with the student.
2. If this is not successful, the catechist will refer the student to the designated Staff person, who will seek to resolve the problem by discussing the issue with the student.
3. If the student continues to misbehave over a period of time or if it is a more serious nature, the designated Staff person will notify the student's parents and a meeting will be held to discuss the issue and find a resolution. A parent may be asked to attend class with their child until behavior improves.
4. If a child leaves the church premises without giving any prior notice to a staff member, the student, parent and staff member will meet to discuss this issue. After a second occurrence and depending upon the severity of the situation, the student's future participation in the Faith Formation program may need to be re-evaluated.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a method of religious formation for children ages 3 to 12. It is rooted in the Bible, liturgy of the Church, Montessori principles, and is based in the belief that:

- The child and God have a unique relationship with one another;
- The child has an innate knowledge of God;
- The growth of this relationship is directed by the Holy Spirit;
- The environment plays a role in the spiritual development of the child.

The Atrium is a specially prepared place containing materials that aid in the child's relationship with God. It is a place of simplicity, order, prayer, and work. The child is given time to listen, wonder, work, pray, sing, and talk about God.

St. James Level I Atrium – Pre-K to Kindergarten

Level 1 explores the ever-present love of the Good Shepherd for His sheep. Joy and wonder are evoked as the children discover the mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven and the beauty of the Light that came into the world at Jesus' birth. The major themes for this age group are Gift, Light, and Protective Love. These themes are expressed not only through parables and sacred scripture, but also through liturgy. Eucharist becomes the Sacrament of Gift; Baptism becomes the Sacrament of Light.

Faith Formation 1st – 8th Grade

The curriculum encompasses learning objectives set by the Diocesan Faith Formation Program. St. James uses the series: "Finding God, Our Response To God's Gifts" by Loyola Press. The curriculum for each grade level is as follows:

- 1st Grade – God & Creator
- 2nd Grade – Eucharist & Reconciliation
- 3rd Grade – Church & Holy Spirit
- 4th Grade – Beatitudes & The Ten Commandments
- 5th Grade – Sacraments & Worship
- 6th grade – The Old Testament
- 7th Grade – Jesus Christ
- 8th Grade – Theology of the Body

The goal for each catechist is to provide a weekly lesson plan that teaches a certain religious theme. Each lesson should include fun and interactive teaching methods to promote an *engaging* learning environment for the student. Rhonda Swita is the Director of the Youth Faith Formation (DYFF) program.

CYO 7th – 8th Grade

The purpose of CYO (Catholic Youth Organization) is to help students develop a personal relationship with Christ and to live as *active* members of the Body of Christ. The students are encouraged to be *engaged* in their faith. To make all feel welcome, the CYO motto is: “Everybody is Somebody!” The curriculum includes activities that are spiritual, social and service in nature, while forming student comradery. This is accomplished through a combination of music, guest speakers, in-depth topics, small group discussions/faith sharing, games, and activities. Jai Eschete is the Coordinator of this program.

LIFE TEEN 9th – 12th Grade

Life Teen provides a unique combination of Faith Formation Education and Youth Ministry activities. Confirmation principles and themes are also woven into the program starting in the 9th grade. That is why it is imperative for students to attend on a regular basis so they are well prepared to receive the sacrament of Confirmation in the 11th grade.

Sacramental Programs

First Communion

Preparation begins when the child first enters the Level I Atrium, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program. The child’s faith formation journey continues through every year. An essential part of preparing to receive First Eucharist is experiencing the liturgy and witnessing the reception of Eucharist by the community during weekly Mass. Each year our children grow in their knowledge of the Catholic faith and in their relationship with God. Children who do not participate regularly in Faith Formation classes and Mass may not be ready to receive the sacraments. To be fully prepared for the sacrament, the student must fulfill all of the following

requirements or they will have to wait until next year to receive their First Communion:

- Candidates must provide a certificate of Baptism.
- Candidates must be in at least 2nd grade and have participated in a religious education program for *at least one year* prior to the 2nd grade.
- Students must have a minimum attendance record of at least 75% during the current sacramental prep year.

First Communion is typically celebrated in the 2nd Grade. However older children seeking the sacrament will be placed in an appropriate sacramental path on an individual basis.

Confirmation

Confirmation is celebrated in 11th grade. Youth in the 12th grade who have not been confirmed will also be accepted into this program.

The elementary and junior high religious education program is viewed as the remote preparation. Therefore, it is imperative that attendance at Life Teen classes and separate Confirmation classes/retreats is a requirement for Confirmation. To be fully prepared for the sacrament, the student must fulfill all of the following requirements or they will have to wait until next year to celebrate their Confirmation:

- Candidates must provide a certificate of Baptism and certificates or evidence of receiving the sacraments of First Reconciliation and Holy Communion, (unless already on file with the St. James office).
- Candidates must choose a sponsor to guide and support them.
- Candidates must attend at least one Confirmation retreat (Fall or Spring).
- Candidates must have a minimum attendance record of at least 75% during the current sacramental prep year.

Faith formation is a lifelong process. After Confirmation, candidates are expected to continue attending Sunday School through the 12th grade year and are encouraged to continue with faith formation throughout their adult years.