

Our Lady of LaSalette Catholic Church

Faith Formation Handbook

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Our goal

We at Our Lady of LaSalette Catholic Church wish to foster spiritual growth and development for all people of the parish, regardless of special needs or circumstances. The goal of our faith formation program is to share the Roman Catholic tradition through family catechesis, personal prayer, group worship, community involvement, and service to others.

The experiences in our faith formation sessions are intended to compliment, not replace, the family experience of home prayer and worship at Mass.

A vital part of each person's spiritual development and growth is attendance at Mass, regular participation in catechetical sessions, and sacraments of the church. Everyone is expected to attend Mass and participate in the Sunday liturgy as well as Holy Days of Obligation.

As Christians we are called by
virtue of our Baptism to live the
values of the Gospel in
Discipleship to Jesus.

Welcome to Our Lady of LaSalette Catholic Church

We are a small parish with many active parishioners and families. We are a parish of prayer, fellowship, service, forgiveness, and joy. Our faith formation program shares the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, upholds current documents, including the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), the General Directory for Catechesis (GDC), and utilizes many programs through the Atlanta Archdiocese.

Our Lady of LaSalette is committed to offering the best parish-based but family centered faith formation program. There will be several opportunities throughout the year for family faith formation. We hope you take advantage of these occasions to grow and deepen your Catholic faith.

Parental Responsibilities

“Parents are the primary educators of the faith” (GDC 255).

“The Christian family has an evangelizing and missionary task” (CCC 2205).

Parents have the primary responsibility to educate their children. Through their words, guidance and example, parents form the child’s first experience of faith and continue to be the child’s most important faith teachers. Be sure to talk with your child about God and the Church. Spend time as a family in prayer. Be as involved as possible in what your child is learning in religious session. However possible please reinforce these lessons at home. Please become familiar with your child’s textbooks and requirements, as well as the need to aid them in their assignments and make-up work. Parents should, therefore, view this program as an extension of the religious training received at home – not as a substitute for it.

From time to time announcements for upcoming events may be made via email or phone for this reason please make sure the most current email and phone number are on file in the parish office.

Administrative Responsibilities of Our Lady of LaSalette

“The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ” (GDC 80). Keeping in mind that you as a parent are foundationally the first catechist for your child, fundamentally, according to GDC 85-86 the tasks of the catechist should include:

- Promoting knowledge of the faith
- Liturgical education
- Moral formation
- Teaching about prayer
- Education for community life
- Missionary initiation

The pastor of the parish has the ultimate responsibility for all parish Faith Formation. He oversees and guides the Parish Catechetical Leaders. Both work closely together to ensure the quality of faith formation for the families of our parish. The Parish Catechetical Leaders are

responsible for supervising the catechetical ministry and sacramental preparations. According to the Atlanta Archdiocese, “it should be understood that faith formation and sacramental formation are *distinct* and *separate*. Faith formation has a scope over several years and should continue throughout the life of the faithful person. Sacramental formation is narrowly focused on a preparation for reception of particular Sacraments” (Archdiocesan Guidelines 2002).

Curriculum Text

Only Diocesan approved curriculum is used in our Faith Formation programs. Please review your text and follow along throughout the year. Additional resources are available on the publisher’s website and the Atlanta Archdiocese website. Occasionally your parish catechist may use additional approved outside resources.

Child Responsibilities

Children in faith formation sessions must show respect for parish catechists, fellow children and church property. Any child who verbally or physically abuses another person, or causes damage to parish property, will be suspended or expelled from the program after consultation and review.

Children must show respect for the personal property of others while in session.

No eating or drinking is permitted during the sessions (this includes chewing gum).

Children must remember to bring their assigned textbooks and notebooks (which may include a Bible in some sessions) to session each week. At the end of each session, children are to take these books home.

Children are required to follow the Attendance/Absentee and Take home assignments/Make-Up Work policies outlined later in this handbook.

Cell phones or other electronics are to be used only under direct supervision of the parish catechist.

Sacramental Programs

Reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation and Eucharist ordinarily occur in the parish where the family is currently registered. Eucharist and Confirmation require participation in two full years of formal faith formation sessions in addition to sacramental preparation and sessions. Along with session time, there will be practice sessions, retreats, activities, and special liturgies scheduled throughout the year. Parents/guardians will be informed of these dates during the year as well as at the sacramental parent’s meetings. Please make sure the parish office has the most current contact email and phone number for your family.

All parents of children in a sacramental preparation program are expected to attend weekly parent meetings either in a separate faith formation session or in the same faith formation session alongside their children. These meetings will be during the same day and time as the

children's faith formation. Parents of children in their first year of sacramental preparation will meet separate from the children. Parents of children in their second year of sacramental preparation will meet alongside their child.

Reconciliation and Eucharist

Reconciliation: The children will celebrate this prior to Eucharist. A penance service is usually scheduled sometime in December. All first communicants are encouraged to attend this service. A day retreat is part of this preparation process and will take place before this sacrament.

Eucharist: Children will celebrate this sacrament sometime in May. A day retreat is part of this preparation process and will take place before this sacrament.

Appropriate dress for the celebration of the Eucharistic sacramental service is generally as follows:

All sacraments take us back to baptism. The proper garment for any sacramental service is the baptismal robe. This signifies our membership in the church. For this reason it is preferred to wear white during the service. Girls could wear a white dress with white dress shoes and nylons/tights or white anklet socks. Veils and gloves are optional. If girls choose to wear gloves, they should remove them before mass begins and leave them with you. Boys could wear a light colored dress shirt with possibly a tie, light colored dress pants and dress shoes with optional light colored jacket, vest or sweater.

Should special clothing be a financial hardship, please let us know. The church can provide white robes for participants to use during the celebration of their Eucharistic sacrament.

Confirmation

Candidates will celebrate this sacrament sometime in the fall. Participation in a retreat, service project, and other activities, separate from faith formation will be a necessary part of this formation process. Your candidate child must also attend Mass regularly. Candidates for confirmation will require a sponsor.

Sponsors: These individuals must be 16 years of age or older and fully initiated into the Roman Catholic faith. They must be active members of the Catholic Church. If he or she is not a member of Our Lady of LaSalette, a sponsor certificate is required from his/her home Parish. A parent may *not* serve as a sponsor. This responsibility to serve as a sponsor is a serious commitment. It should not be taken lightly. A sponsor serves as a mentor and companion working with the candidate in their spiritual journey in preparation for Confirmation.

Program Attendance Policies

PROGRAM

Non-Sacramental

EXCUSED ABSENCES

6

Sacramental Preparation Year* 4
Sacramental Receiving Year** 3

*In the traditional program this is ages 6 and 14

**In the traditional program this is ages 7 and 15

Sports and other extracurricular activities are not acceptable excuses for absence from faith formation. In the event of an absence, all make-up assignments must be completed.

Take home work/Make-Up Work

Take home work assignments are designed to reinforce work presented in session and may include written work, study assignments, projects, prayer, etc. Children will be given additional time during the breaks to complete any remaining make-up work. Failure to complete assignments and/or make up work may prevent your child from advancing to the next level of the program.

Parking

Please adhere to the parking procedures of our parish.

Special Needs

Parents are required to inform the parish office about their children who have health issues, learning disabilities and special needs. Be sure to complete this information on the registration form. In addition, prior to the first day of session, you must notify the parish office of any special arrangements that may be necessary for your child. All information provided will be kept confidential.

Food Allergies

Food allergies are a growing concern for children across the country. Even a miniscule amount of allergenic food is sufficient to cause a life-threatening reaction and inadvertent contact (via nose, eyes, mouth) can put a child in danger.

No food or drink of any kind are permitted during parish faith formation session. This includes foods that are considered "safe".

Parents and guardians of highly allergic children **MUST** make known the special needs of their child to the parish office and the catechist so that all precautions can be taken.

Dress Code

Appropriate attire is required of all catechists and children in faith formation. The parish office reserves the right to dismiss a catechist or child with inappropriate apparel including, but not limited to, tee shirts or other clothing with slogans deemed contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Visitors

For insurance and safety purposes, children are not allowed to bring guests with them to faith formation session.

Child Abuse

Child Abuse is of serious concern. Consistent with Diocesan policy and legal codes, parish catechetical staff has a moral and legal duty to comply with the law to ensure the welfare of a child. If a catechist or church employee suspects a child has been abused, Georgia Statutes require that the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) be notified immediately by calling toll free 1-855-GACHILD (1-855-422-4453) and that the Director of the Diocesan Office of Child and Youth Protection also be notified of the suspected abuse by calling 1-888-437-0764.

The Catholic Church teaches that the “human body shares in the dignity of the image of God” (CCC364). To that end, our parish participates in the “Protecting God’s Children” safe touching program. This safe environment training program offers developmentally appropriate training for each age group and includes content, videos, lessons, and activities that reinforce this message. Safe environment training is offered every year for new children and every four years for returning children.

On the registration form, parents are asked to give permission for their children to participate in this meaningful program. Parents are encouraged to review the material and may be given the opportunity to attend an informational session that will go over program materials. This program is a vehicle through which parents, catechists, children, and parish staff can give children and young people the tools they need to protect themselves from those who might do them harm. It is designed to empower youth to recognize inappropriate behavior by others, while practicing appropriate relationship boundaries in their own lives.

Illegal Drugs

Illegal drugs are not allowed on church grounds. If a child is found to be in possession of illegal drugs, the child will be detained until the police are notified. A child will not be allowed to be driven home by anyone who is noticeably impaired. The parish office reserves the right to call the child’s emergency number and inform authorities of any unsafe actions.

Evacuation Procedures

Fire drill

Fire drills are required by law and are an important safety precaution. Fire drills will be conducted at least once during the year. All parents, children and staff will be informed of the dates prior to the drill. It is essential that when the signal is given *everyone* promptly evacuate the building by the prescribed routes as quietly as possible. To help maintain order, an

atmosphere of quite calm must be observed during a fire drill. As parents, please calmly exit the building and allow your child to exit with their catechist. After the fire drill, children will return to the rooms for the remainder of the session. Please do not try to take your child out of the line up during the drill. Children and catechists are instructed to become familiar with exits and fire drill procedures. In the event of an actual emergency, parents will be allowed to reunite with their children outside the building.

Code Red

In the event of a code red, catechists have been trained and are instructed to care for your child until you can be reunited. In the event of a code red, please make every personal safety precaution for yourself. Depending on the situation we will make every effort to reunite you with your child as quickly as possible.

Media Release

To support and document faith formation activities photographs, video, or written activities with the children may be conducted. This material may be used in the session, website, facebook page, or other parish meetings or events. Please know the safety and security of the children and your family is a priority. On your registration form, you will be given the opportunity to grant permission for such recordings.

Registration

Only registered members of Our Lady of LaSalette Church are permitted to enroll in our faith formation program. Registration forms will be given out during the spring of the preceding year to renew for the upcoming year. Forms are also available on the parish website. All enrolled families must re-register before the deadline date (to be announced in the spring). New registrants must contact the parish office for a registration form as soon as they become enrolled parishioners. The parents of children who are new to our program are asked to provide documents of proof for any sacraments their child has received and any prior participation in faith formation programs in other parishes.

Fees

A schedule of fees is available for you on a separate sheet. The registration fee includes the cost of textbooks, supplies, and custodial services, etc. No child shall be refused registration in the faith formation program due to inability to pay. Please contact the parish office if a financial problem exists. This information will be kept confidential.

Session Hours

All programs receive a session schedule for the year. (see attached page)
Family program will meet once or twice a month with the exception of holy holidays. This program is a small group setting for parents designed to increase their faith and communion

with Jesus Christ. It is a wonderful opportunity to help parents receive additional parenting tools and resources to grow stronger in their faith community.

Vacation Bible school meets during the summer and is a one-week program which meets Monday- Friday 9 am to 12pm. Dates for this session are announced on a yearly basis.

Session Cancellations

The Pastor and parish office will determine if sessions will be canceled for inclement weather. In the event of cancellation, an email will be sent out; please be sure your most updated email address is on file. You may also check our online sources our website or our facebook feed. Look for and like our facebook page called "Our Lady of LaSalette Catholic Church Religious Education." This is the fastest way to keep up to date on the most recent news and announcements.

Records

All information is kept confidential. Permanent records for each family in the program will be kept on file in the parish office. Copies of the progress reports of each child are also kept on file. In the event of a move or transfer, please notify the parish office for the required documents necessary for verification of attendance.

The object of all catechesis is to put people into communion and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

It is our hope that the children and parents in our program not only learn the tenets of our faith, but grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

Parent Acknowledgement Form

Provided signature form must be returned. Our Lady of LaSalette reserves the right to revise this handbook as deemed necessary from time to time. Parents will be notified in the event of a change to the policies.

References

Holy See. *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*. New York: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994. Print.

Holy See. *General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)*. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1998.

Atlanta Archdiocese. "Archdiocesan Guidelines for the Sacraments of Initiation and the Sacrament of Penance." Atlanta, Ga: (2002). Print.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this year's Parent/Child handbook. I understand my parental responsibilities as they are outlined to me in this manual.

X_____

Printed name:

X_____

Date: _____