

*st. francis of assisi
catholic church*



2011-2012
*k-8 catechism
family handbook*

table of contents

	Page:
Family Prayer	3
Philosophy and Mission Statement	4
I. General Program Information	5
II. Sacramental Guidelines	6
A. Baptism, Confirmation & Eucharist	6
B. First Reconciliation/First Eucharist	6
C. Confirmation	6
III. Program Policies	6
A. Attendance	6
B. Parental involvement in program	6
C. Parent/Family Meetings/Retreats	7
D. Information about Records	7
E. Custodial Issues	7
IV. Communication	8
A. Contacting Teachers	8
B. Contacting Parish Staff	8
C. Making Appointments	8
D. Emergency Phone Numbers	8
V. Behavior Expectations	
A. Guidelines	9
B. Response to Inappropriate Behavior	9
C. Procedure for appealing actions or stating grievances	10
VI. Off-Site Activities	10
A. Events to take place	10
B. Permission Policy	10
C. Liability information	10
VII. Arrival/Departure of students	10
A. Policy for arrival and departure of students	10
B. Actions for non-compliance	11
VIII. Right to amend	11
X. Family Agreement Information	11

special family prayer

Blessing of a Family

*We bless your name, O Lord,
for sending your own incarnate Son
to become part of a family,
so that, as he lived his life,
he would experience its worries and its joys.*

*We ask you, Lord,
to protect and watch over our family,
so that in the strength of your grace
we may enjoy your blessings,
and, as the Church alive in the home,
bear witness in this world to your glory.*

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

“Bringing families closer to Christ and his Church.”

philosophy/vision statement

At the heart of the task of catechesis is the person of Jesus. (GDC #98) The missionary mandate of Jesus calls us to proclaim, witness, teach, celebrate sacraments and love our neighbor (GDC #46).

Parents are the primary educators of their children in the faith. It is through the witness of Christian life given by parents within the context of the family that children are formed to respond to the call of their Baptism. The care that is taken to model and explain the Christian and religious meaning of events together with parental support of formal catechesis provided by the parish’s catechetical program form children in faith. “Family catechesis precedes ... accompanies and enriches all forms of catechesis.” (GDC #226)

The priests, catechists, and parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church are dedicated to helping children grow in their personal relationship with Jesus Christ and in their love for and knowledge of the Catholic faith.

I. General Program Information

Pastor/Administrator:	Fr. John Assalone
Pastoral Vicar:	Fr. Steve Hoffer
Faith Formation Director:	J. Craig King, MA king@stfrancishenderson.org
Faith Formation Assistant:	Kristi Mayers mayers@stfrancishenderson.org
Parish Office Telephone:	(702)914-2175
Faith Formation Office:	(702)914-3529
Youth Ministry Office:	(702)914-6004
Faith Formation Office Fax:	(702)914-3563

I. Registration procedure/policy

- A. Registrations are accepted through August 12, 2011. From August 13 through August 28th we will fill open spaces on a person by person basis and a late fee of \$25 will be charged. No registrations can be accepted after August 28th .**
- B. To register for the program:**
- 1. Complete the Registration form(s)**
 - 2. Provide a copy of child's Baptismal Certificate**
 - 3. Return it to the Parish Office with appropriate fee**

Students are placed on a first come, first served basis. Class size is limited by classroom space and number of teachers.

II. Fees

\$100 For one child
\$140 For 2 Children
\$180 For 3 or More Children

III. Class times and locations

All K-8 Catechism classes are held on Sundays or Monday nights. All High School Confirmation classes will be held on Sunday. A class schedule will be mailed to families in late-August.

IV. Medical Information / Special Needs

If the child must receive medication you must make special arrangements with Craig King in advance. The Faith Formation Office must be informed in writing of any special needs that a child may have.

II. Sacramental Guidelines

A. Full Initiation: Children's Catechumenate (Baptism, Confirmation & Eucharist)

For those children *not* baptized as infants who have attained the age of reason (seven years), the Sacraments of Baptism, First Communion, and Confirmation will be prepared for at the same time. This is a two year long preparation consisting of weekly catechism classes and, in the second year, monthly "Days of Discovery." The weekly catechetical classes will be the same as those attended by students preparing for First Holy Communion. Additionally, in the child's second year of preparation they will attend monthly sessions called "Days of Discovery" held one Saturday morning or Thursday evening each month for the child and their parents together.

Children baptized in other ecclesial communities (other Christian "denominations") will prepare to make a Profession of Faith and then receive Reconciliation and Eucharist.

B. First Reconciliation/First Eucharist

Eligibility

- Child must be at least seven years of age and in second grade or above.
- The child must successfully complete **two consecutive years** of Communion Preparation Classes (see attendance policy).
 - The regular preparation is all of First and Second Grades.
 - Students beginning this process at a later age must also complete two consecutive years of catechetical preparation
- Parents or guardians must be registered members of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church.
- Attendance at the First Communion Retreat, for the child's appropriate grade level, is required.

Students who are not baptized at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church will need to submit a copy of their baptismal certificate before receiving First Reconciliation or First Communion.

C. Confirmation

High school age Confirmation preparation now falls under our youth ministry program. Registration for Confirmation Preparation is done separately from Kinder – 8th Grade Catechism. Confirmation guidelines will be outlined in the meeting for parents of Confirmation students.

III. Program Policies

A. Attendance

Children enrolled in the age-appropriate religious education sessions at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church and/or in a Sacramental Preparation process **must not exceed 4 absences during the year**. Students preparing to receive sacraments, and who miss more

than four classes, will be required to repeat the year. Parents should bring extenuating circumstances, such as prolonged illness, to the attention of the Faith Formation Office.

B. Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is essential to the faith formation of a child. The United States Bishops reinforce that the parents are the *primary educators* in the faith of their children. Parents are encouraged to become involved in the following ways:

- **Attendance at Mass every Sunday is expected.**
- Spend some time with your child during the week sharing scripture of the upcoming Sunday. You can easily find the readings for Mass at <http://www.usccb.org/nab/>
- Take time after class to review their lesson and work with them.
- Pray the grade-level prayer(s) they are learning as a family on a regular basis. Most of our books have the prayers written on the inside of the front and back covers of the book.
- Attend seasonal activities at the parish such as Lessons in Carols, the Parish Feast Day, and Stations of the Cross in Lent.

Parents are always welcome to visit our sessions. You must first check in with a member of the Parish Staff at the Faith Formation Office. Repeated visits (more than 1) would mandate that the parent meet the requirements of the Diocese of Las Vegas for catechists in order to ensure a safe environment for all of our children. This includes fingerprinting and attending a special class. Parents visiting a class are “observers” and may not have any interaction with the children.

C. Parent Meetings and Retreats

Parents are required to attend the beginning of the year Parent Meeting held on our first class day. Additional meetings may be held for students preparing for baptism of first communion. Parents will be informed of meetings with adequate time to schedule attendance.

Middle school students (grades 6, 7, &8) attend a retreat in the spring put on by the National Evangelization Team (NET). This middle school retreat is one afternoon/evening, usually in the early spring. This is considered a mandatory part of the catechetical program. The parish is usually notified of the dates of this retreat toward the middle of the summer. Please see the calendar for the date of the Middle School NET Retreat.

Students in grades 2 through 5 who are preparing to receive for First Holy Communion will attend a **First Communion Retreat on Saturday, March 19th, 2011**. This retreat is a mandatory part of their preparation for First Holy Communion.

D. Information about Records

Records of attendance are maintained for each child. These are kept in the Faith Formation Office. If a family moves or transfers to another parish, copies of the

children's records can be sent to the new parish when a written request is made. This request should include the complete address of the parish to which they will be sent.

Student information will be released to authorized persons. As a student receives the Sacraments of Initiation – Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation – they are recorded in Church records. If the original parish where a child was baptized is other than St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, the parish of baptism will be notified of reception of each new Sacrament.

E. Custodial Rights

This parish catechetical program abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, we will provide the non-custodial parent with unofficial copies of records. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, *it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the Director of Faith Formation with an official copy of the court order.*

And/or

We respectfully request that all divorced parents provide a copy of the custody section in the divorce decree which applies to the child(ren) being registered in St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church Religious Education Program. This information will help us to determine when, if ever, a child can be released to a non-custodial parent. *It is the parents' responsibility to provide this information.*

IV. Communication

A. Contacting Teachers –

Should a problem arise during the year with a student, the parent is encouraged to first speak to their child's teacher before or after class. Communication with the teacher should never be limited to problems only. It is equally important to maintain open communication concerning achievements and successes!

B. Contacting Parish Staff –

If you are unable to resolve a matter, both the parent and teacher must request a joint meeting with the Director of Faith Formation. If the matter remains unresolved, the final step is to request an appointment with the teacher, Director of Faith Formation and the Pastor. This should only take place when absolutely necessary.

C. Making Appointments –

To request an appointment call the Faith Formation Office at (702) 914-3529.

Craig and Kristi's availability on Sundays and Monday nights is determined by the needs of the classes, students, and teachers. Evening appointments can easily be arranged during the week when needed. Office hours do fluctuate based on things such as adult

classes, teacher training sessions, etc. Please call Craig or Kristi to make an appointment if you need to meet with them.

D. Emergency Phone Numbers -

We request that parents provide the office with emergency contacts and phone (and/or cell phone) numbers during the registration process. In addition, parents are asked to provide any necessary medical information regarding their child(ren). Parents are responsible to keep the information updated when changes occur. If a student has any type of special needs, the teacher will be informed at the beginning of the year.

E. Communication With Parents-

Sending home letters, flyers, and newsletters with students is the primary way in which we communicate with families. Additionally, we post announcements in the bulletin and on the parish web site. We ask parents to be sure to read all papers sent home and glance at the Faith Formation page of the bulletin. If you need any forms, such as the Catechism Calendar or Registration Forms, please check the parish web site (www.stfrancishenderson.org) under "Faith Formation" > "K-8 Catechism."

V. Behavioral Expectations

A. Guidelines

God calls each of us into relationship with himself and to respect the dignity of every person. To generate an understanding of this in our students, we must have mutual respect in our class sessions.

A student's behavior must not interfere with order in the classroom. Inappropriate behavior includes but is not limited to:

- Disruptive words or actions.
- Intentionally injuring another person with physical or verbal abuse.
- Defacing or destroying church property or the property of oneself or another.
- Bringing inappropriate items to class including but not limited to offensive or inappropriate clothing or accessories.
- Inappropriate dress: including immodest clothing (no stomachs, cleavage, underwear... should be visible) and clothing with inappropriate pictures, writing, or themes.

B. Response to inappropriate behavior

Children, who have been warned and whose parents have been notified, and continue not to adhere to these policies, may be asked to withdraw from the program. The appropriate measures explained below will be taken before such recourse is taken.

First Offense

Catechist will point out to the child the behavior that needs to be corrected.

Second Offense Catechist will send the child to the Coordinator of Faith Formation who *may* consult with a Parent. A meeting could be called for which could include parents, catechists, and the Director of Faith Formation to find ways to remedy the situation.

If an extreme situation occurs where a young person is suspected of having weapons or drugs in his/her possession, the following procedures could be undertaken:

1. Catechist and/or Coordinator of Faith Formation would express suspicion to the young person.
2. The young person would be asked to cooperate
3. If he/she refuses, a parent may be asked to come to the site and assist in a search.
4. If the parent refuses to cooperate the young person may be suspended from the program until the parent meets with the Teacher, Coordinator of Faith Formation and the Pastor.
5. Law enforcement authorities will be notified when warranted.

C. Procedures for appealing actions or stating grievances

If the parent is not satisfied with the action taken, they may request a meeting with the Pastor and the Director of Faith Formation. Be assured that our commitment is love and patience for all. If a child is asked to leave the program, it will only be after all other reasonable efforts have been made.

VI. Off-Site Activities

A. Events that *may* take place off property

Middle School Retreat or Conference

High School / Confirmation Retreats and Youth Conferences

Diocesan Youth Rally

Service Projects

B. Service Programs

These will be outlined at the Confirmation Parent Meeting.

C. Permission Policy

Any activity off the parish property will require Permission/Liability release forms (available from the Faith Formation Office) to be filled out by the parents. Students who fail to submit a proper form within the allotted time will not be allowed to participate in the field trip. All off site activities must be approved by the Director of Faith Formation and have the parents consent.

Telephone calls or parent notes will *not* be accepted in lieu of proper forms.

Parents/Guardians have a right to refuse to allow their child to participate in any field trip. Parents/Guardians are expected to sign any and all consent forms required for the activity.

D. Liability information

Field trips are privileges offered to students. No student has an absolute right to participate in a field trip. Students can be denied participation if they fail to meet program behavioral requirements.

VII. Arrival/Departure of Students

A. Policy for arrival and departure of students

To ensure proper supervision for all students, Catechism participants are *not* to arrive earlier than 10 minutes before designated class time. ***Children should not enter their classroom if the catechist or other supervisor is not present.*** All students should be met by a parent within 5 minutes of the regular time for class to end. If a parent is late picking up their child the catechist may bring the child to the Faith Formation Office to wait for their parent to pick them up.

ALL STUDENTS IN GRADES K-5 MUST BE PICKED UP FROM THEIR CLASS BY A PARENTS OR OTHER DESIGNATED ADULT!!!

B. Actions for non-compliance

If parents repeatedly refuse to pick up their children or are late doing so they will be asked to withdraw from the program. If a child is left over 45 minutes after the end of class without the parent contacting someone in the Faith Formation Office, the Faith Formation Office will contact Nevada's Department of Family Services. While this may seem extreme, our priority is to ensure the safety of the child. If an emergency comes up and you are forced to be this late, call the Faith Formation Office at 914-3529.

VIII. Right to Amend

The Faith Formation Office reserves the right to unilaterally change the policies contained in the handbook at any time, to cancel any policy as needed, or to decline to apply a particular policy to a given situation, if, in its discretion, to do so would serve the interests of the Diocese of Las Vegas or St. Francis of Assisi Parish. Parents will be given prompt notification of changes.

IX. Family Agreements

The Family Agreement is now located on the student's registration form and is signed as part of the registration process.